Commission for International Adult Education (CIAE)
of the
American Association for Adult and Continuing Education
(AAACE)

Proceedings
2023
International Pre-Conference

October 2-3, 2023
Lexington, Kentucky

Wendy Griswold, Ph.D., Co-Editor
Director, Commission for International Adult Education, AAACE, (2021-2023)
wgrswold@memphis.edu

Billie R. McNamara, M.S., Co-Editor
bmcnamar@tennessee.edu

Valeriana Colón, Ph.D., Technical Editor
colonv@vcu.edu

Commission for International
Adult Education
(CIAE)
of the
American Association for Adult and
Continuing Education
(AAACE)
72nd Annual Conference

CIAE Mission Statement

The Commission on International Adult Education (CIAE) of the American Association for Adult and Continuing Education (AAACE) provides a forum for the discussion of international issues related to adult education in general, as well as adult education in various countries around the globe. The following purposes summarize the work of the Commission:

- To raise awareness of global issues in adult education from a transnational, multi-directional, multicultural, and indigenous perspectives.
- To be the international arm of the American Association of Adult and Continuing Education (AAACE).
- To promote global linkages or exchanges with adult education associations and individuals in other countries.
- To invite presentations, conference participation, leadership, and webinars by interested adult educators around the world at all career stages.
- To collaborate or cooperate on research or other projects of mutual interest related to lifelong learning and adult education across the globe.
- To recognize and award achievements in international adult education – individual or collaborative learning, projects, research, and collaborations.

The Commission holds its annual meeting in conjunction with the AAACE conference.

Acknowledgements

These *Proceedings* are from the Commission for International Adult Education's (CIAE) 2023 International Pre-Conference. This year's *Proceedings* contain 23 papers from 38 submitters, representing CIAE's usual diversity of authors and topics.

Researcher and research sites include Bahamas, Canada, Cuba, China, Ghana, India, Ireland, Italy, Nigeria, Pakistan, and the United States. Major themes include adult learning during times of crisis, workforce learning, digital learning, transnational concepts of transformative learning, gender, older adults, language learning, and international student experiences. Some papers provide regional perspectives in exploring adult learning.

A special feature at this year's Pre-Conference is a focus on the 75th Anniversary of the United Nations Declaration on Human Rights. A presentation and discussion session on this crucial declaration is part of the Pre-Conference Agenda. To support our learning and conversation, copies of the Declaration will be available to on-site participants.

Wendy Griswold, Ph.D., Editor
Director, Commission for International Adult Education, AAACE
wgrswold@memphis.edu

Message from AAACE President

Welcome CIAE Pre-conference Attendees:

On behalf of the Board of Directors for the American Association for Adult and Continuing Education, welcome to Lexington, Kentucky, and the 2023 Commission for International Adult Education (CIAE) Pre-conference. Whether you came from around the corner or the other side of the globe, we are glad you joined us.

Under the passionate and dedicated leadership of Dr. Wendy Griswold and her team, CIAE promises another year of engaging conversation and informative sessions. From my personal experience of presenting at CIAE, I know you will have a wonderful learning experience. It will also be a great opportunity to develop relationships with people across the globe. With the knowledge you gain from the Pre-conference, you will have the opportunity to inform, reform, and transform adult education.

As you will see throughout the Pre-conference, while we may live and work miles or oceans apart, we have similar interests in and challenges with adult learners. Here, you will have an opportunity to share and gain practical knowledge and/or theory, which you can take home and apply to empower adult learners. Also, with representatives from around the world including Canada, China, India, Ghana, and the United States—to name a few—you have a great opportunity to expand your network.

Of special importance this year as part of the Pre-conference, CIAE will celebrate the 75th Anniversary of the United Nations Declaration on Human Rights. The Declaration's ambition has been to "infuse societies with equality, fundamental freedoms, and justice." How fitting, as CIAE's purposes include—among other things—encouraging exchanges between AAACE and associations from other countries and discussing how adult educators globally may cooperate on projects of mutual interest. Undoubtedly, with the knowledge disseminated throughout the Pre-conference, you can aid adults in fighting for equality, justice, and their fundamental freedoms.

Thank you for your contributions to the field of adult education. As we look to transform lives and communities, may you continue to make a difference in the lives of adult learners. After enjoying the CIAE Pre-conference, we look forward to your presence at the general AAACE conference where you will be exposed to even more opportunities for learning and sharing. Join us for business and pleasure, as the conference planning committee has scheduled some wonderful activities. Enjoy your time together as well as throughout the AAACE conference.

Sincerely,

E. Paulette Isaac-Savage, EdD
AAACE Board President, 2022-2023

Commission for International Adult Education (CIAE) of the AAACE International Pre-Conference 2023

Table of Contents

INTERSECTION OF GENDER, CULTURE, AND TEACHERS' PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT: THE CASE OF NIGERIA

Frances A. Alimigbe, Ph.D.[1]
Mejai B.M. Avoseh, Ph.D.[2]

ABSTRACT: Education is a powerful tool for bringing about desirable change in human lives, equipping them for a lifetime and contributing to general well-being and serving as a lasting means for meaningful employment. However, when such opportunities are given with qualified access, they foster inequity. Africa has been described as an epitome of diversity – especially cultural endowment. Culture is a factor in the African environment that is used to impose limitations and barriers on women. For instance, insisting that the African culture requires women are homestead upon which rest all domestic responsibilities. The cultural barrier of women as homestead reduces women to "housekeeping experts" whose task is to cater for entire family – including bearing children and ensuring their upkeep. Encumbered with these responsibilities, study time and job delivery are encroached upon, resulting in devastating consequences. The Teachers Registration Council of Nigeria (TRCN) being the regulatory body saddled with the responsibilities of regulating the teaching profession in Nigeria, determining who are teachers, setting standards that must be attained by teachers, and raising those standards from time to time, has mapped out many strategies towards the achievement of its mandates which includes, regulation and control of teaching in all its aspects and ramification. This implies that TRCN oversees the quality of teachers and teaching at all levels of education and assures quality in taught and learned content. Mandatory Continuous Professional Development is one of such tools the TRCN uses in raising the knowledge of in-service teachers from time to time. The trainings are usually done either by TRCN or at times in partnerships with International Development partners like UNESCO, UNICEF, British Council, Save the Children, and other critical education stakeholders. The MCPD usually occurs through workshops, conferences, seminars and the like. Over the years, these cultural impositions on women have adversely affected their dedication, attention, and commitment to learning. This study focuses on the interplay of gender, culture, and teachers' professional development within the context of Nigeria. It uses the role identity theory as a framework to analyze women's' narrative of lived experiences to understand how they construct themselves while learning. Findings drawn from the study will help to raise awareness of the interplay of some African cultural factors on women's performance and suggest strategies of some of these challenges especially as it relates to further interventions, time allotted for training and selection processes. The findings will enrich advocacy tools in advocating for consideration for women when planning trainings in terms of time allotment and delivery of training.

Keywords: gender cultural roles, intersection, teachers' professional development, Nigeria

The intersection of gender, culture, and teachers' professional development is a complex and multifaceted issue in Nigeria. Gender refers to the social roles, behaviors, and expectations society assigns to individuals based on their perceived sex, while culture includes the shared beliefs, values, customs, and practices of a particular group. Teachers' professional development, on the other hand, encompasses the ongoing learning, training, and growth opportunities that educators engage in to enhance their skills and knowledge. NESSE (2019) cited in Nwokeocha (2012, p. 162) identified that "gendered identities are constructed and multivalent – they intersect with social class, ethnicity, religion, culture, disability, sexuality and age." The American Psychological Association (2011) (as cited in Omokhodion et al. (2015) defined gender as "attitudes, feelings, and behaviours that a

---

[1] Planning, Research & Statistics, Teachers' Registration Council of Nigeria, Abuja, rashimama@yahoo.com
[2] School of Education, The University of South Dakota, Mejai.Avoseh@usd.edu

given culture associates with a person's biological sex. Behavior that is compatible with cultural expectations is referred to as gender normative; behaviors that are viewed as incompatible with these expectations constitute gender nonconformity" (p. 159). Similarly, the UN System in Nigeria (2013), cited by Omokhodion et al. (2015) states "Gender is a set of qualities and behaviors that societies expect from men and women (p. 160). The expectations give rise to a person's social identity. Teachers' professional development, on the other hand, encompasses the ongoing learning, training, and growth opportunities that educators engage in to enhance their skills and knowledge.

In Nigeria, there are several key aspects to consider when examining the intersection of gender, culture, and teachers' professional development.

- Gender Imbalances in the Teaching Profession: The teaching profession in Nigeria is heavily dominated by female teachers, particularly at the primary and lower secondary levels. This gender imbalance can influence the types of professional development opportunities available to teachers, and the content and focus of these trainings. For example, there may be a lack of gender-sensitive training programs that address the specific needs and challenges faced by different sexes in the classroom.

- Cultural Expectations and Gender Roles: Nigeria is a country with diverse cultural traditions and norms, which can impact teachers' professional development. Cultural expectations regarding gender roles and responsibilities may shape the types of training programs that are encouraged or discouraged for male and female teachers. For instance, traditional gender norms may discourage women from pursuing advanced professional development opportunities or leadership positions in education because of the home keeping roles expected of them.

- Gender Bias in Professional Development: Gender bias can also manifest in the delivery and content of professional development programs. For example, training sessions may be scheduled at times that are not conducive to female teachers' schedules due to their household responsibilities. Additionally, the content of professional development programs may not adequately address the unique challenges faced by male and female teachers in their specific cultural contexts.

- Addressing Gender and Cultural Issues in Professional Development: To ensure equitable and inclusive professional development opportunities for teachers in Nigeria, it is essential to address the intersecting issues of gender and culture. This can be done through the development of gender-sensitive training programs that take into account the specific needs and challenges faced by male and female teachers. Additionally, cultural norms and expectations need to be challenged and transformed to promote equal opportunities for professional development for all teachers, regardless of their gender or cultural background.

Women in the traditional African culture are designated as helpmates and support system to their husbands and as well the home keepers. This designation of the woman explains

why all the household burden rest, specifically on their shoulders. These culturally imposed burden on women is often demonstrated in domestic responsibilities associated to meals preparation, general upkeep of a home and family members, including the husbands, children school runs and assignments preparation, and attending to some other basic family concerns. Consciousness of these realities usually jolts the women back to reality while performing their professional functions, with attendant effects. Inability to match up to their male counterpart in areas of leadership, expertise are some attendant effects according to the African Union Commission (2021) explaining that women despite their huge population in Africa remain largely underrepresented in leadership roles across many borders like; financial, investment and entrepreneurial markets. Education International (2015) buttresses the underrepresentation of women in leadership with some statistical insights. Of the 775 million people in the world, 2/3 of them are women who cannot read, because of which they are more likely than men to live in poverty in 41 out of 75 countries. Thirty-two million girls are still out of school around the world, while women own only 1% of the titled land in the world. Globally, women earn on average 24% less than men do and 2.5 times more unpaid domestic work than men; Women are the majority in education trade union in most regions, but they are underrepresented in the union leadership; the higher the decision-making body, the lower the percentage of women, (Education International, 2015, p. 3).

James (1890) explains that people have many identities related to roles and groups with different expectations. and roles in society; parent, worker, spouse, or teacher role identity), or being members of specific *groups* in society (for example, a church, book club, or softball group identity), and as *persons* having specific characteristics that make them unique from others (for example, an athletic or artistic person identity), and they are of different kinds (Burke & Stets, 2009). These encumbrances have over time been discovered to have quite devastating effects on learning and work effectiveness. This could be likened to what Study.com idealized as job-role conflict.

Theoretical Framework – Role Identity Theory

This study focuses on the interplay of gender, culture, and teachers' professional development within the context of Nigeria. The study highlights the importance of valuing and understanding women's diverse experiences, voices, and perspectives in educational contexts. The role identity theory is used as a framework in this study to analyze women's narratives of lived experiences to understand how they construct themselves while learning. This is important to expound on how the different roles an African woman functions on (woman, wife, sister, mother, and teacher) interplay. Each role or position has its own meanings and expectations that are internalized as identity and have different expectations. Role identity theory suggests that the greater the commitment to an identity, the higher that identity is placed within that individual's salience hierarchy. As a result of achieving high placement within the salience hierarchy, an individual relies on an identity more often than less important ones. Women being referred in the study to avoid being found wanting in their expected roles at home, become engrossed in this role and neglect their professional life because they are repeatedly told that family is everything. sense of self or identity, the individual tends to

behave in accordance with this role identity (Callero et al., 1987) to gain verification of the identity (Petkus, 1996).

Role identity theory, also known as social identity theory or role theory, is a psychological framework that explains how individuals derive their sense of self and behavioral patterns from the roles they occupy in society. This theory suggests that people's sense of identity and behavior are shaped by their adherence to social roles and the beliefs, values, and expectations associated with those roles (Stryker, 2007). According to Stryker and Statham (1985), role identity theory posits that individuals have multiple social roles, such as being a teacher, parent, or spouse, and their behavior and self-perception are influenced by these roles. These roles provide individuals with a sense of purpose, belonging, and guidelines for behavior. As a result, individuals may adopt role-related beliefs, values, and behaviors consistent with the expectations of their social roles. In the context of teachers' professional development and the intersection of gender and culture, role identity theory can help explain how teachers internalize and enact gender and cultural norms in their professional roles. For example, female teachers in Nigeria may adopt role-related beliefs and behaviors that align with cultural expectations of femininity, such as being nurturing, supportive, and submissive (Balogun, 2019).

On the other hand, male teachers may adhere to role-related expectations of masculinity, such as being authoritative, assertive, and dominant (Adesoji & Oni, 2016). These gendered role expectations can impact teachers' professional development as they may influence the types of training and opportunities teachers pursue or are encouraged to pursue. For instance, female teachers may be more likely to engage in professional development opportunities focused on teaching methodologies, while male teachers may be directed toward leadership development programs (Oni & Adesoji, 2019).To address these gendered role expectations within teachers' professional development, it is essential to promote a more inclusive and equitable approach that challenges societal norms and supports the empowerment and advancement of all teachers, regardless of their gender or cultural background. Role identity theory suggests that the greater the commitment to an identity, the higher that identity is placed within that individual's salience hierarchy. As a result of achieving high placement within the salience hierarchy, an individual relies on an identity more often than less important ones.

Women's Existential Narratives and Learning

Exploring women's existential narratives and their impact on learning is an important area of research. The literature here sheds light on women's experiences, narratives, and learning journeys and delves into the transformative potential of women's narratives in enhancing learning outcomes and experiences.

The root base for these women's narrative sprang from observations during continuous professional development exercises for Nigerian teachers post-Covid and insights from available literature. African/Nigerian women are encumbered with domestic and cultural issues. As home keepers, all the responsibilities of the family rest on their shoulders. In general parlance, a woman's education ends in the kitchen. Narratives from women encountered during professional development exercises showed that they were doing a lot

of balancing between delivering on their jobs and motherly roles, this could be quite taxing, they admitted. Although w some agree that these were disruptions, others saw it as normal. These divergent opinions from women could be linked to the women's stage in life/perception. While some are still at childbearing age, others have passed that stage, and few others, see the role as cultural, as corroborated. personal attributes, and traits, thus highlighting the link between social structure and the self. Suffix to say that the teaching profession in Nigeria is dominated by women and this is for the basic reason that it gives some ample time allowance for the women to close early to be able to attend to their home care duties.

In this study, we examined the stories of four married women who are teaching and as well struggling to balance the home front. They admitted that they had to do some critical and dicey balancing to be able to meet up with the dictates of their teaching and stride for professional development as a way of keeping abreast with topical issues in their profession through mandatory continuous professional development strides. In this study, we have used three women being a representative of the 3 major tribes (Igbo, Hausa, and Yoruba) in Nigeria to illustrate the similarities in the women's struggles. So, we will be using pseudonyms to represent the women: Adeze, Auta (meaning lastborn), and Omolewa (meaning child is beauty).

Adaeze: - "as a Bachelor of Education holder with 10 years of teaching experience and children between the ages of 6- 2 years, it has not been easy. I have to juggle my teaching job with domestic care which most often causes burnout. The most challenging period for me is when I have to attend trainings extending beyond my 14:00 close time."

Auta: "…I cannot deny the fact that I have to sneak out of trainings just to be able to attend to my home front duties. As a matter of fact, there was these 3 days training I attended sometime in 2021, and as usual, I left before the training ended to enable me to attend some domestic demands. The next day I had to pay dearly for it as I could not follow up with the remaining training as I had missed some critical part…."

Omolewa: "… because I determined to finish the training module I was attending, my marriage almost crumbled, as I had to make a critical choice between continuing with my job and losing my marriage. Moreover, since then, however interesting, or critical the training was, I had to leave to attend to my domestic demands…"

A recurring theme runs through the women's narrative, the clash between their roles as nurturing mothers and that of being professional teachers. This espouses the critical balancing most nurturing mothers must do daily to fulfill cultural demands.

Gender and Culture

Culture, religion, and gender (CRG) are powerful weapons being used to expand and perpetrate all forms of inequity in Nigeria. These issues can be found as largely educational, and educators are vanguards to exploring some of these issues via the power of the spoken word. Inequality diminishes social justice, and all forms of exclusion thrive in Nigeria especially using the avenue of CRG. Gender and culture have been used as tools to disempower most of the population in Nigeria at formal and informal levels. This

has resulted in the limitation of opportunities, inequality, and marginalization of women and certain cultural groups within the country. The seemingly classified access to education for women amounts to exclusion. The crux of exclusion is denying the disadvantaged access to the power of education and fencing them out of participatory development. The implication of which are that development is less human-centered, participation is restricted, which fuel gender, and culture-based exclusion. Several reports have correlated the interconnectedness of economic and gender inequality and how they serve as self-reinforcers. The report exposes a myriad of discriminatory traditional and sociocultural practices that put the life of Nigerian women at a disadvantage compared to men. Some of the ways include low-paid and unskilled jobs, high level of illiteracy and so on, which makes women more likely to be poorer than men and keep being excluded from full participation in the country's educational, economic, social, and political life.

Furthermore, Harris (2012) revealed how women have been so relegated, that the men who face economic instability use women and children as coping mechanisms. Gender-based disaggregation has immensely relegated women to the background in variety of facets. The rising religious violence and banditry in the north put women and some religious groups at most risk. Women usually being construed as second-class citizens is more evident in northeast Nigeria, where schoolgirl's abductions by the Boko Haram have taken the center stage since 2013 until the present-day, more than 1,000 children have been abducted by Boko Haram in northeastern Nigeria, notable among which are the 276 girls taken from their school in Chibok in 2014 and the Dapchi girls, of which a Christian girl, Leah Sharibu tarries abductors custody, (UNICEF, 2018). These abduction cases, amongst others, scare parents from sending their girl children to school therefore deepening the gender divide. Data reveals that matters arising from the COVID-19 pandemic affecting women the most, thus flaring the gender disparity.

A United Nations report on women revealed women as the most vulnerable species suffering health and social issues, disproportionate job losses, heightened gender-based violence like rape, battering, and extreme poverty (add citation). A saddening event resulting from the COVID-19 pandemic school-imposed closures dealt a hard blow on girls from Northern Nigerian girls who had to stop school with the likelihood of early marriages. Save the Children (2020), highlights the reality of the risks of girls' not returning to school after the pandemic with child marriage possibility. Marriage at young ages can have devastating and lifelong consequences, beyond the immediate loss of their education, it puts girls at increased risk of a life of abuse, ill health, and poverty (Global Development, 2020).

Srivastava (2016) ascribes education as an agent of socialization, while teachers and educational institutions are socializing agents; thus, education serves as an instrument of desired change. Suppose education is a major instrument for social change, then the role of teachers in this is enormous, especially in the areas of promoting respect for the cultural diversity of students and the community. Good teaching builds upon cultural and language backgrounds. To envisage the desired change in a society, it takes a village. If well empowered, Teachers are strong vehicles for helping to resolve some issues around gender and religious based exclusion. The voices of teachers can become a formidable force in advocating for stakeholder's support. There can be no meaningful socio-

economic and political development in any country without teachers. Teachers make a difference in the success of their learners because they hold a fundamental belief that all learners believe strongly in the authority of the teachers as their leaders, mentors, guides and even seen as demi-gods in Nigerian culture.

Teachers as professionals who help disseminate knowledge can use their power of spoken words to enlighten and re-orientate, after all," knowledge is power." Little wonder, that gender issues and societal norms can be barriers to educational opportunities especially in areas where girls are expected to be seen and not heard. The girls form majority of the population of the out of schoolchildren in the northern part of Nigeria where it is largely construed that "Boko Haram" prohibition of schooling especially for women, several attacks and abductions of girls is clear evidence. Obviously, parents and guardians by these actions are petrified from sending their female children to school thus contributing to bigotry, economic hardships, and regurgitation of the circle of ignorance.

Teachers are a potent numerical force in Nigeria, and the lack of opportunities for interaction with female teachers in northern Nigeria exposes the inequity. No doubt, most women are open to new ideas especially using the classroom as a platform for exploring the power of the spoken and the written word. Interventions from International Development partners have been doing a lot in repositioning teachers for more gender-responsive pedagogy. The programs enable the use of strategies, tools, and approaches to make learning more gender responsive and aware (British Council, 2021). This is in cognizant of the fact that teachers are those voices that can open discussions around how gender inequality limits the potential of both girls and boys to fully develop their capabilities.

TRCN and Teachers Professional Development

The Teachers Registration Council of Nigeria (TRCN) is an Agency of the Federal Ministry of Education established by Decree 31 of 1993 now CAP T3 of 2004 to regulate and control the teaching profession in all aspects and ramifications and at all levels of the education system in Nigeria. TRCN, over the years, continues to partner with relevant stakeholders and International Development Partners to update of teachers' knowledge. Alimigbe and Avoseh (2021) observed that TRCN recognizing the potential inherent in partnership continues to collaborate with relevant International Development Partners like World Bank, United States Agency for International Development (USAID), United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), Foreign Cooperation Development Organization (FCDO) and British Council in attaining its mandates and other objectives. These interventions have often been engendered on needs and intervention basis with some of the partnership's activities included, digital literacy to teachers, accelerated continuing learning for teachers, stopping of corporal punishment, learn to read for primary school pupils, amongst others.

Professional development strides embarked on during post-COVID-19 period brought about many disclosures regarding the plight of Nigerian women teachers. The Strive for professional growth and relevance through Mandatory professional development by the Nigerian teachers gives a neat background for this study. Mandatory Continuous

Professional Development (MCPD) is a prerequisite for professional growth and a means of keeping abreast with innovations, transformations, and topical issues in any profession. Awodjii et al. (2020) in Alimigbe and Avoseh (2021, p. 35) uphold teachers' continuous professional development as a panacea for attainment of quality teaching. Wokocha (2013) endorses MCPD as having the potential to develop teachers' personal qualities and expand their knowledge and skills for better job execution. The reason why professionals regularly update their knowledge for relevance and ability to meet with the changing demands. It then becomes worrisome when women are meant to bear the brunch of non-completion of training courses/ workshops / seminars due to home concerns.

Past observations revealed that due to no cognizance of women's domestic roles, organizers of training usually elongate training hours, thereby making the women to make irrational balancing. This explains why some women leave training venues before they terminate to be able to attend to their care duties at home, and this obviously does not promote equity. This action portends dire consequences for the women's job delivery, delivery of their cultural roles and their mental health. Bolarin (2005) advocates for relevant measures to be put in place to remove barriers hindering women's access to higher education in Nigeria. She believes that this will help to increase their enrolment rate and participation and improve their academic achievement in higher education. This description explains why regardless of whatever status the woman attains in life; her primary duties remain aligned to her successes in the management of her home. The African woman is the homestead upon which rest all the responsibilities of house chores, and family upkeep. To this end, the woman is often jolted back to reality wherever or whatever she might be engaged in as soon as the reality and demands of the home beckons.

Culture and Gender as Assets

Culture and gender are important aspects to consider in teachers' professional development in Nigeria. Understanding and valuing the diversity of cultures and gender in the Nigerian context can enhance the effectiveness and inclusivity of teaching practices. To better help enrich public discourses on issues around gender using the teachers' potent numerical force and words a series of discourses and studies have been carried out surrounding gender disparities, but none has explored how teachers can be powerful voice in addressing the issue. Further research should focus on how culture, gender and religion have been used as powerful weapons to expand and perpetuate all forms of inequity in Nigeria and how the teachers can help address these issues.
In conclusion, relying on the African cultural values; the central role of the woman is to ensure stability, progress, and long-term development of the family, and, by extension, the nation. Women no doubt are natural educators, doctors, caretakers, farmers, entrepreneurs, confidence-builders, prime caretakers of t families, communities, and homesteads and living consciences. Education is a social institution through which society provides its members with important knowledge, skills, attitudes, and cultural norms for the development of self and the nation. To this end, this opportunity must be open for all baring all gender barriers to ensure no one is left behind. This aligns with the findings of Onoriode (2011) who submits that, women cannot be restricted from

participating in or benefiting from higher education because of their tasks and roles at home and in the larger society. Those who provide training should ensure that the dual roles of women are taken into cognizance while planning their training in such a way that extra time is not spent, and women are not doing some unnecessary balancing between learning and their roles at home. There is need for justice through equitizing educational opportunities for all concerned, men and women, children, and adults, whether able-bodied or a person with disabilities. The use of the power of a teacher's voice brings about the desired change through our speaking out and standing up for others or for acts of injustices in society.

References

African Union Commission (2021). *African ministers adopt common African position for more women in leadership positions*.

Adesoji, F. A., & Oni, A. A. (2016). Teachers' attitudes towards the inclusion of gender perspective in teaching science subjects. I*nternational Journal of Scientific Research in Education, 9*(3), 271-285.

Alimigbe, F. A. & Avoseh, M. B. M. (2021). International organizations and teachers' professional development in post COVID-19 Nigeria. Commission for International Adult Education (CIAE) of the American Association for Adult and Continuing Education (AAACE) Proceedings 2021 International Pre-Conference

Awodjii, O. A., Ogbudinkpa, I. C., & Agharanya, M. (2020). Teachers' professional development: A panacea to quality education in Nigeria. *International Journal of Educational Management, 18*(11), 11-23. https://www.researchgate.net/publication/344380042

Balogun, O. S. (2019). Teachers' perceptions of gender roles and cultural norms in primary schools: Implications for inclusive education in Nigeria. *Journal of Gender and Social Issues, 18*, 1-15.

Bolarin, T. A. (2005). *Women's participation in higher education in Nigeria: Values education; choices, and counter cultural traits*. Nigerian Academy of Education, 144–161.

Omokhodion, J. O., Nwokeocha, S., & Pemede, O. (2015). *Sociology of education*. Nigerian Academy of Education.

Onoriode, C. P. (2011). The academic performance of married women students in Nigerian higher education. https://www.researchgate.net/publication/317304529

Oni, A. A., & Adesoji, F. A. (2019). Gender policy implementation and inclusive education in Nigeria: Implications for national transformation. *Journal of Education and Practice, 10*(1), 33-43.

Stryker, S. (2007). Role theory. In R. M. Lerner (Ed.), *Handbook of child psychology: Vol. 1.* Theoretical Models of Human Development (6th Ed.). John Wiley & Sons.

Stryker, S., & Statham, A. (1985). Symbolic interaction and role theory. *Sociological Perspectives, 28*(2), 159-178.

Wokocha, A. M., (2013). The role of certification and licensing in improving teacher quality. *Nigeria Journal for Professional Teachers*, 3, 1-9.

GLOBALIZING ADULT EDUCATION: SHARING EXPERIENCES FROM J-1 SCHOLARS AND INTERNATIONAL STUDENTS STUDYING ABROAD

Raquel Anderson[1]

ABSTRACT: This paper focuses on the experiences of adult learners within the J-1 and other international learning programs. The choice of adult learners to seek education and scholarly experiences abroad is influenced by different factors such as availability of finances, perceived quality of education, and other motivators. It is important to understand that international learners begin their programs with expectations. This study seeks to explore their experiences in comparison to their expectations when beginning their programs. The findings of this study highlighted themes of cultural differences, quality of education, support systems, and language differences. Some of the learners have had positive experiences with the new cultures and language, while others have not. To some learners, the support system for adult learners studying abroad is not concrete; the students are not given enough guidelines on the available resources. The results of this study are important to the hosting nations and institutions; they can use these findings to improve the quality of life for their adult learners from outside the country.

Keywords: Adult learning, adult learning theories, adult learning motivation, study abroad experiences, cultural shock, language barrier, quality of education

Advancing educational achievement is becoming increasingly important in the current generation. The need among many people to acquire new knowledge and advance in their careers pushes them to enroll in adult learning programs. Brockett and Hiemstra (2018) define adult learning as the process of gaining knowledge, skills, attitudes, and competencies as an adult. It entails participating in educational activities and experiences intended exclusively for those who have finished their official schooling. According to Brockett and Hiemstra (2018), adult learning is self-directed, with people taking responsibility for their own learning and setting their own objectives. Training may happen in various contexts, including online courses, conventional classrooms, corporate training programs, and seminars. According to Brockett and Hiemstra (2018); Christie et al. (2015), adult learning is motivated by a desire to gain new skills, improve in a job, or follow personal interests.

Adult learning presents several challenges. One of the challenges is balancing job, family, and other commitments; this may make it difficult for people to devote time and energy to learning. The possibility of developing self-doubt or a lack of trust in one's capacity to acquire new things as an adult is highly witnessed among adult learners (Burns, 2020). The lack of affordable and flexible educational options also hampers adult education. Many individuals may find it difficult to locate programs or classes that meet their schedules or finances, restricting their potential to improve their education (Tennant, 2019). Moreover, the fear of failure or the stigma of returning to school as an adult might be discouraging. Despite this, conquering these challenges may result in greater self-esteem, expanded professional options, and personal contentment.

---

[1] University of Tennessee, Knoxville. rander52@utk.edu

Adult learners have the option of continuing their education domestically or overseas. The majority of students who travel overseas for higher study do so with sponsorships and other forms of support (Bain & Yaklin, 2019). However, there are several difficulties associated with studying abroad. For instance, there is a challenge of a language barrier since students have to pick up a new language to fully participate in their studies and interact with their new community (Bain & Yaklin, 2019). It can be challenging to communicate clearly in a foreign language, particularly when it comes to academic tasks like essay writing and participation in class discussions. Adapting to a new educational system may provide another difficulty for students studying abroad (Maxfield & Noll, 2017). The teaching practices and standards could change. Thus, it's up to the students to swiftly adjust and develop efficient study techniques.

This study aims to explore the experiences of adult students pursuing their education overseas. The study is formulated with an understanding that the experiences of students overseas can be either positive or negative depending on their study environment. The study also explores the support systems that have been put up in different study abroad programs, including the J-1 program in the United States. The results of this study provide important light on the success factors and difficulties encountered by adult students who study abroad. In order to improve the overall experience for international students, knowing the support mechanisms in place can also assist in identifying areas for improvement and guide future program development.

Factors Affecting Adult Abroad Learning

The choice to study abroad among adult learners is based on several factors. Some of these factors include the accessibility of desired programs or courses, the standing and reputation of the educational institution, the price of tuition, and living costs. They also consider prospects for jobs, the opportunity for personal improvement, and the cultural and social context of the host nation when making these decisions. According to Kent-Wilkinson et al. (2015), many nurses choose to extend their education overseas because of the associated benefits. Some of these anticipated benefits include gaining a global perspective and exposure to other healthcare systems can improve their professional abilities and expertise. Also, studying abroad presents possibilities for networking with experts from other backgrounds, which is beneficial for long-term job prospects.

It has been observed, however, that the primary challenges to studying abroad are employment obligations, financial constraints, and family responsibilities (Netz, 2015). Due to employment obligations, many adults may be unable to take extended breaks to study abroad. A significant barrier for many students may also be the cost of studying abroad, including tuition and living expenses (Maxfield & Noll, 2017). Additionally, it may be difficult to travel abroad for an extended period due to family responsibilities, such as caring for young children or elderly parents (Netz, 2015). This necessitates that individuals contemplating studying abroad evaluate the compromises between the benefits of advancing their studies abroad and the downsides of their decisions.

Adult learners are often required to adjust their lifestyles to meet the requirements of a new cultural environment. During this process, students frequently experience great

anxiety and uncertainty. In addition to these emotional obstacles, students may also encounter communication difficulties they have never encountered in their home country (Chen, 2017). Faced with these adaptation issues, some individuals may develop psychological and physical health problems if they cannot adequately integrate into their host cultures.

Students with high levels of success motivation are perceived to have a greater desire to study abroad. Past studies have revealed links between students' decision-making about studying abroad and other academic factors, including high school activity, attitudes about enrolling in college courses, and reading proficiency (Salisbury et al., 2010). The studies have shown that high school students who participated more in their education, showed a greater interest in reading and literacy, and took a wider variety of college courses were more likely to wish to study abroad (Salisbury et al., 2010). Motivation has been linked to students' academic actions; it also influences students' decisions to pursue an international education. This implies that students who are more motivated to make personal accomplishments are more likely to study abroad (Merriam & Baumgartner, 2020). Students with greater levels of accomplishment motivation may find studying abroad more appealing because it is one of their methods for breaking routine.

Adult Learning Theories

The concept of adult learning theory, also known as andragogy, was developed in Europe in the 1950s for behavioral change and experience (Merriam & Baumgartner, 2020). Malcolm Shepherd Knowles, an American practitioner and adult education theorist, developed it as a theory in the 1970s and held the view that pedagogy, art, and science support the adult learner and are connected to their social role. Information and knowledge have been fast-changing in this generation due to technological advancements. Adults have a choice of living without the new and advancing knowledge or stopping their learning and letting their skills become obsolete. According to AlSaadat (2018), continuous learning allows adults to gain new skills and expertise hence remaining relevant amid immense technological shifts.

Adult learning is immensely characterized by mutual respect among the learners and respect in their interaction with the instructors. According to Courtney (2018), respect forms a huge factor of consideration by adult learners; it helps in creating a safe learning environment. It is, therefore, important for the coordinators of adult education to ensure the learners are respected by the instructors for the best results. Maslow's theory of motivation also assists in understanding different factors that can affect adult learning. According to the theory, the individual's needs ascend from the basic level (shelter, food, and security) to the highest levels of self-actualization (Turabik & Baskan, 2015). Adult learners are immensely driven by the desire to achieve self-actualization. They need to reach their utmost educational levels as well as scale up the corporate/employment ladder. As the learners pursue their education, they need to feel appreciated and belonging. According to Abela (2009), instructors can be motivators of Fadult learners to succeed. It is, therefore, important to consider the adoption of student-focused learning for better learning outcomes. The instructors need to understand the needs and skills owned by their students for better integration of lessons.

Experiences of Adults Studying Abroad

According to Hamdullahpur (2020), colleges and other institutions of higher learning may leverage international collaboration to expand their reach across national and cultural barriers. The collaborations benefit both the educational institutions and the students engaged. According to Hamdullahpur (2020), universities have profited from fostering the flow of creative ideas that transcend cultures, conflicts, and boundaries. According to Lawless and Chen (2017), these scholars' adjustment might be difficult owing to cultural differences in their home country, xenophobia, and racism. Several of these scholars have faced instructional obstacles and communication concerns, which can lead to isolation. Partially, isolation is often caused by a lack of cultural understanding and resources needed for integration into social and professional groups (Krsmanovic, 2022). According to reports, J-1 scholars are more concerned with surpassing their American counterparts in order to gain permanent residency (Krsmanovic, 2022; Lawless & Chen, 2017). Such demands can have an impact on the J-1 scholar's achievement.

Although different studies have highlighted the factors that contribute to the decisions to study abroad among adult learners as well as the adult learning theories, there is an existing knowledge gap in terms of the nature of strategies implemented to support adult learners studying abroad. There is a need to understand the effectiveness of these strategies from the perspectives of adult learners. This study delves into exploring the experiences of adult students in different study abroad programs, including the J-1 program.

Research Methods

This study used a qualitative methodology to better understand the experiences of adult students studying abroad. Using a qualitative approach, the study intended to capture the diverse experiences and viewpoints of adult students studying abroad, especially J-1 scholars. This method provided for more in-depth knowledge of the issues they confront as well as potential solutions that may be adopted to promote their academic and personal development. I employed an interpretative data analysis technique, allowing me to delve into the meaning and relevance of the participants' experiences. This approach recognized the subjective character of people's experiences and highlights the role of the environment in affecting their perceptions and behaviors. The interpretative method was used to aid in finding underlying themes and patterns hence a more comprehensive understanding of adult students' educational adventures abroad.

Sampling and Study Sample

The study's population consisted of individuals studying abroad (both in J-1 and other international programs). I enlisted five people to answer the interview questions. Participants had to be enrolled in or have finished an overseas study program within the past five years. Purposive sampling was used to identify participants for the study; this strategy allowed me to carefully target individuals who had direct experience studying abroad. I chose volunteers from various nations and academic areas in order to acquire unique opinions. The study abroad participants included two undergraduate-level scholars

at a private residential institution in London, UK. The J-1 scholars in the USA included three participants at the graduate level in a public R1 university. Participants were required to provide their agreement to participate in the study without undue compulsion. Only those who gave their informed consent were approached for the interviews.

Data Collection and Analysis

Interviews were the primary data-gathering method used in the study. I conducted in-depth interviews with the chosen individuals to acquire full knowledge of their study-abroad experiences. These interviews thoroughly investigated the participants' ideas, feelings, and observations on numerous elements of their stay abroad, including cultural immersion, academic hurdles, and personal growth. Furthermore, I used a semi-structured interview method to maintain consistency while also allowing for flexibility in examining the participants' diverse viewpoints and experiences. Qualitative thematic analysis was used to analyze the data gathered from the interviews. Using this method, I was able to discover common themes and patterns in the participants' narrations. The data indicated a variety of experiences, ranging from deep cultural integration to homesickness, showing the complexity and diversity of studying abroad. Overall, qualitative theme analysis provided a thorough understanding of the participants' stay abroad and shed light on the complex nature of their experiences.

Study Findings

The qualitative thematic analysis of the collected data confirmed the existence of four themes from the responses of international scholars: education quality, support system, language, and cultural issues.

Quality of Overseas Education

Regarding the issue of education quality, many scholars confessed that they opted to study abroad due to the associated quality of education and the opportunity to enhance their curriculum vitae (CV). The quality of education is considered to be the main motivating factor among adult learners studying abroad. However, some learners cited some challenges regarding education, such as the use of systems different from those of their home country. For instance, Kurt, a Danish student studying in England, noted the difference in some IQ tests that were used during their studies abroad; "In an IQ test, we had a question like – if 'A' is the first letter of the alphabet and 'Z' is the last then you write '1.' If it is not so, you write '2' Now thinking in English, you obviously have to write '1' but if you are thinking in Danish, you have to write '2' because we have 3 extras in our alphabet after 'Z.'"   These differences in the education system can make some adult learners feel misplaced and develop the notion that their previously owned knowledge is useless.

Although some learners have had difficult experiences in their study abroad periods, others have had several positive highlights. A J-1 scholar from Brazil noted, "I feel like I am going in the right direction with my goals." The J-1 program had been exactly their expectations in terms of meeting specialists in the biomedical field as well as access to

quality lab facilities. Other scholars confessed that the study abroad program assisted them to learn studying on their own. For instance, an Indonesian scholar based in London indicated that their study abroad was a bit different since they were used to receiving constant directions from the teachers/lecturers. The ability to study on their own gives the adult learners studying abroad an enhanced capability to research and enhance their knowledge scope.

Support System for Students Studying Abroad

The theme of support system was predominantly discussed by the respondents. The respondents informed that although government bodies sponsor some of the programs, the onboarding process is not always perfect for new students. Some of the J-1 scholars explained that their process of obtaining the Visa was tedious and stressful; they did not receive assistance from the host institutions. Liana, a J-1 scholar from Brazil, stated that, "I feel that the visa process is stressful, expensive, and it is not the most efficient process…." Some scholars also complained about the problem with insurance in the United States; the new entrants have less information about the services, and they are left to explore them on their own. A different J-1 scholar based in the US noted, "US health insurance and other types of insurance are impossible to understand." The study noted cases of host institutions not guiding their adult scholars on available services. For instance, a respondent in the J-1 program explained, "There is no information about driving license, housing, public transportation, peculiarities of the US medical system." This shows there is limited support for adult learners from both the host institutions and the countries.

Language and Cultural Differences

Language and cultural differences were often cited as some of the challenges the adult scholars have to deal with for their survival abroad. Most times, the adults studying abroad are required to learn a new language. The learning of a new language can be challenging to handle when combined with other studies. Adult learners also experience difficulties learning in their second language. A respondent in the J-1 program explained, "Studying in a second language also gives some challenges because you come with knowledge and experience that is not always acknowledged." Such cases can immensely affect the performance of adult learners and prevent them from achieving their initial goals and expectations.

The theme of cultural differences was evident; most learners confessed to the fact of experiencing cultural shock upon their entry into their host countries. One scholar from Indonesia studying in an institution located in London, UK explained that "…we are not used to living alone, meaning we are tight and warm in family relationships… In Western culture, these things are rare." This shows that the adults studying abroad are sometimes compelled to live a life that they are not accustomed to. However, some of the respondents explained that it was not difficult for them to settle in the new culture. For instance, one of the adults studying abroad noted that "I was able to adapt well because of my experience when I was in college before, where I got along with friends from different cultures, religions, and ethnic groups." Another scholar from India who pursued

their studies in the Netherlands and France before moving to the US explained that it was not hard to adjust to the culture in the United States, especially the transportation methods; however, driving was an art they learned in the country and adjusted effectively just like the other cultural aspects. They narrate, "In the Netherlands was just a bicycle culture… So, I learned to drive only after coming here." Some of the participants revealed that they were able to adjust to different cultural practices, including clothing, food, and religion.

Discussion

Adult learners are focused on opportunities that can improve their knowledge, skills, and careers. In this process, they choose to study abroad due to the perceived quality of education and an opportunity to secure well-paying jobs in the future. It is, however, important to recognize that these learners have different experiences while they are studying abroad. According to the findings of Lawless and Chen (2017), international scholars are highly susceptible to cultural shock. It is, therefore, important that these learners get support from the host institutions. However, the study has also revealed that some of the learners have positive experiences with cultural differences. Most of the learners who anticipated learning new cultures reported positive experiences. However, there were other challenges, such as inadequate guidance of the abroad scholars. Some of the learners also report cultural shock since they are offered less cultural training at the beginning of their programs.

Researchers still fail to understand the dynamics around different services, contributing to learners' uncomfortable experiences. Besides the minimum knowledge of the services offered at their host institutions, the learners are also subjected to new and unfamiliar curricula. Maxfield and Noll (2017) adopt that learners are exposed to foreign curricula; such cases can cause discomfort among adult learners studying abroad. The institutions also do not consider implementing measures that make the learners adapt quickly to the new curriculum. The study has also revealed that the process of visa application and renewal is tedious, with a lack of support from the institutions. It is, therefore, important for institutions and governments to consider the experiences of these learners and implement appropriate response measures.

Implications of the Study

This research has effectively focused on the experiences of adult scholars studying abroad in different countries and from varied programs. The findings of this study are useful to the policymakers, administrators, and different faculties within the host institutions. The findings of this study suggest that the administrators and host institutions have the responsibility of creating a positive environment for international adult scholars. Such environments will allow them an opportunity to focus on their studies as well as career goals hence resulting in success. This study's findings are also useful to future research; researchers in the future will be able to use these findings as a basis for advancing the knowledge of international adult scholars. Future research should focus on the level of effectiveness associated with different strategies used by institutions to manage the experiences of adult scholars abroad. For instance, the studies can focus on

the impact of cultural competence training, orientation of adult learners, and departmental support on the success of adult scholars studying abroad.

Conclusion

This study highlights both positive and negative experiences of adult scholars in different countries. The study has found that the experiences of adult learners studying abroad vary according to the learner's initial expectations when moving into a new country and culture, as well as the support provided by the host institutions. The learners who had the initial goal of exploring the new culture had an easy time settling into their programs. In the same way, the success of the learners has been evidently affected by the level at which the institutions and professors support the adult learners. It is, therefore, clear that adult learners need to be supported in their studies to adjust to their new culture and curriculum.

References

Abela, J. C. (2009). Adult learning theories and medical education: a review. https://www.um.edu.mt/library/oar/handle/123456789/910

AlSaadat, K. (2018). Adult learning theories, methods, and techniques. *European Journal of Social Sciences Studies*.

Bain, S. F., & Yaklin, L. E. (2019). Study abroad: Striving for transformative impact. *Research in Higher Education Journal*, *36*.

Brockett, R. G., & Hiemstra, R. (2018). *Self-direction in adult learning: Perspectives on theory, research, and practice*. Routledge.

Burns, R. (2020). *Adult learner at work: The challenges of lifelong education in the new millennium*. Routledge.

Chen, J. C. (2017). Nontraditional adult learners: The neglected diversity in postsecondary education. *Sage Open*, *7*(1), 2158244017697161.

Christie, M., Carey, M., Robertson, A., & Grainger, P. (2015). Putting transformative learning theory into practice. *Australian Journal of adult learning*, *55*(1), 9-30.

Courtney, S. (2018). *Why adults learn: Towards a theory of participation in adult education*. Routledge.

Hamdullahpur, F. (2020). Global citizens for the twenty-first century: The role of international partnerships in university education. In *Successful Global Collaborations in Higher Education Institutions* (pp. 23-30). Springer.

Horta, H., & Patrício, M. T. (2016). Setting up an international science partnership program: A case study between Portuguese and US research universities. *Technological Forecasting and Social Change*, *113*, 230-239.

Kelleher, S., FitzGerald, S., & Hegarty, J. (2016). Factors that influence nursing and midwifery students' intentions to study abroad: A qualitative study using the theory of planned behavior. *Nurse education today*, *44*, 157-164.

Kent-Wilkinson, A., Leurer, M. D., Luimes, J., Ferguson, L., & Murray, L. (2015). Studying abroad: Exploring factors influencing nursing students' decisions to apply for clinical placements in international settings. *Nurse Education Today*, *35*(8), 941-947.

Krsmanovic, M. (2022). When experts become novices: A mixed-methods exploration of international scholars' experiences at a US university. *Journal of Comparative and International Higher Education*, *14*(n3A), 161-174.

Lawless, B., & Chen, Y.-W. (2017). Multicultural neoliberalism and academic labor: Experiences of female immigrant faculty in the US academy. *Cultural Studies↔ Critical Methodologies*, *17*(3), 236-243.

Maitra, S. (2012). The sweetest visa on earth: Protecting the rights of J-1 students in the US summer work travel program. *Colum. Hum. Rs. L. Rev.*, pp. *44*, 859.

Maxfield, R. J., & Noll, G. B. (2017). Epistemology and ontology: The lived experience of non-traditional adult students in online and study-abroad learning environments. *Journal of Organizational Psychology*, *17*(6).

Merriam, S. B., & Baumgartner, L. M. (2020). *Learning in adulthood: A comprehensive guide*. John Wiley & Sons.

Netz, N. (2015). What deters students from studying abroad? Evidence from four European countries and its implications for higher education policy. *Higher Education Policy*, *28*, 151-174.

Salisbury, M. H., Paulsen, M. B., & Pascarella, E. T. (2010). To see the world or stay at home: Applying an integrated student choice model to explore the gender gap in the intent to study abroad. *Research in Higher Education*, *51*, 615-640.

Shimmi, Y. (2017). Global: International visiting scholars: Brain-circulation and internationalization: International higher education, fall 2014, Number 77. In *Understanding Higher Education Internationalization* (pp. 255-257). Brill.

Tennant, M. (2019). Psychology and adult learning: The role of theory in informing practice.

Turabik, T., & Baskan, G. A. (2015). The importance of motivation theories in terms of education systems. *Procedia-Social and Behavioral Sciences*, *186*, 1055-1063.

EXPERIENCE OF TEACHERS' LEARNING IN NATURAL DISASTERS: A CASE OF BAHAMAS

Dr. Sara Bano[1]
Fredricka Saunders[2]
Isaac Mensah[3]
Amjad Barayan[4]
Frank Antwi-Boasiakoh[5]

Abstract: Using the Transformative Learning Theory lens, this qualitative case study examined the experiences of teachers as adult learners in the Northern Bahamas who taught before, during, and after a natural disaster. The initial findings of the ongoing study highlight the challenges faced by teachers during natural disasters, including disruptions to school infrastructure, limited access to resources, and heightened emotional stress. Despite these challenges, teachers demonstrated resilience by implementing adaptive strategies such as flexibility in class preparation, alternative teaching techniques, and collaboration with coworkers and community members. The emotional impact of natural disasters on teachers was also evident, with increased stress, anxiety, and burnout reported. Teachers emphasized the need for greater support systems and mental health resources to address these emotional challenges effectively. However, the study also revealed that teachers learned valuable lessons and experienced personal and professional growth through their experiences with natural disasters.

Keywords: transformative learning theory, Bahamas, natural disasters

Natural disasters are becoming more severe and frequent, exacting a staggering toll in terms of human and economic losses in recent years. Floods in Pakistan in 2010 killed nearly 2000 people, affected 20 million people, and submerged a fifth of the country (Thomas, 2017). In 2015, a heat wave in India killed 2,400 people, with temperatures averaging 40°C. Typhoon Ketsana hit Manila in September 2009, dumping more rain in a matter of hours than would typically fall in a month (Thomas, 2017). In January 2014, Jakarta was also hit by torrential rains, which brought the city to a halt. The recent earthquake in Turkey and the above occurrences are all evidence of climate change and its consequences (Hussain et al., 2019).

Climate change and natural disasters are confronting people worldwide. Thomas (2017) argued that no matter a country's advancement in education or economy, natural disasters impact every sphere of life, including the education sector and teaching and learning activities. Several studies have highlighted numerous challenges to teaching and learning in regions hit by natural disasters, such as limited access to bandwidth, physical conditions that are non-conducive for learning, and a lack of information technology infrastructure (Piryonesi & El-Diraby, 2021). However, Dahl and Millora (2016) argued that literature "on natural disasters has largely ignored individual learning and its consequences for school policy and programming" (p. 649). Therefore, our study aims to explore the impact of natural disasters on learning in disaster-prone regions from an adult

---

learning perspective. We focused on teachers and administrators to better understand how they as adult learners make sense of the disruptions caused by natural disasters and how they navigate these disruptions. This study aims to contribute to the existing literature and help teachers and administrators be better prepared to deal with the impact of natural disasters on teaching and learning activities.

Literature Review

According to Dhal and Millora (2016) the study of natural disasters from an adult and lifelong learning perspective is a relatively new focus in educational literature. However, Norris and Murrell (1988)'s earlier study investigated the natural disaster impact on anxiety symptoms in older adults. Tsai (2001) investigated students' perspectives on earthquakes after a natural disaster struck Taiwan. Dhal and Millora (2016) studied lifelong learning from natural disasters especially in the context of Philippine.

There are several studies which focused on transformational aspects of natural disasters for adult learners (e.g., Chen et al., 2020; Choudhary et al., 2021; Sharpe, 2016; Thomas, 2017). Sharpe (2016) focused on transformational aspects of natural disasters. Similarly, Thomas (2017) explored economic transformation and policy change due to climate change and natural disasters. Chen et al. (2020) studied anxiety and resilience in face of natural disaster. Hussain et al. (2019) studied climate change impacts, adaptation, and mitigation in Pakistan. Manurung et al., (2020) focused on the perceptions of EFL learners in implementation of blended learning post natural disaster at a university in Indonesia. Hoffmann and Blecha's (2020)'s study showed that adults affected by natural disasters have increased learning motivation and are more open to learning new information and skills to help them manage and recover. Similarly, Choudhury et al. (2021) concentrated on transformational learning and resilience to shocks caused by natural disaster, in southern coastal Bangladesh. The researchers highlight the complicated interaction between transformative learning and resilience formed by social-cultural factors. Ruiz-Mallen et al. (2022)'s recent study specifically investigated the community climate. These studies offered insightful information about how people affected by disasters learn and transform.

Despite the growing body of literature on adult learning in the context of natural disasters and climate change, some gaps persist, presenting opportunities for further research. Current research has mainly concentrated on adult learners and communal transformational experiences. There is a need to explore educational context by focusing on viewpoints of other stakeholders like teachers, administrators, parents, community leaders, legislators, and non-governmental organizations. Our study specifically focused on teachers' learning experiences during and after natural disaster. We focused on teachers to better understand how they make sense of disruptions caused by a natural disaster and how they navigate these disruptions. We wanted to understand the transformational aspects of their learning process and learn how it impacted their teaching practices after experiencing a natural disaster.

Research Questions

1. What were the lived experiences of teachers during the natural disaster, and how did they make sense of their experiences as teachers during crises?
2. In what ways did teachers change their teaching practices during and after experiencing a natural disaster?

Theoretical Framework

We used Transformative Learning Theory (TLT) by Mezriow (1978, 1991) as a theoretical lens because we wanted to explore the process of learning and understand learning as a kind of meaning-making process after experiencing a natural disaster. These life altering experiences are often considered transformative since they can challenge previously held beliefs and values.

Mezirow (2000) defined transformational learning as the process by which the learner transforms their taken-for-granted frames of reference (meaning perspectives, habits of mind, mind sets) to make them more inclusive, discriminating, open, emotionally capable of change, and reflective so that they may generate beliefs and opinions that will prove truer or be justified to guide action. Mezirow (1978) presented the following ten step transformation process.

- A disorienting dilemma
- A self-examination with feelings of guilt or shame
- A critical assessment of sociocultural, epistemic or psychic assumptions
- Recognition that one's discontent and the process of transformation are shared and that others have negotiated a similar change.
- Exploration of options for new roles, relationships, and actions
- Planning a course of action
- Acquisition of knowledge and skills for implementing one's plan
- Provisional testing of new roles
- Building of competence and self-confidence in new roles and relationships
- A reintegration into one's life based on conditions dictated by one's perspective.

However, Mezirow (1991) condensed the preceding ten steps into four major main components of the transformational learning process: (i) experience, (ii) critical reflection, (iii) reflective discourse, and (iv) action. The process begins with experience. According to Mezirow (1978), human beings have different experiences, and learning occurs from processing these experiences through critical reflection. This process helps the learners reflect on and examine their underlying assumptions and beliefs that influence the way they make sense of these experiences. Overall, TLT is a useful framework because it focuses on how learners construct meaning from their experiences and transform their values, beliefs, and behaviors based on these newly learned experiences.

Research Design

This study employed a qualitative case study as its research methodology. We used a qualitative research design for our study because it allows the researcher to explore research within the context of the research phenomenon (Yin, 2013). According to Creswell (2014), a qualitative research approach is used to explore and understand the meaning individuals or groups ascribe to a social or human issue. Creswell (2014) mentions several qualitative research designs. One approach is a case study. According to Glesne (2011), case studies can provide researchers with a chance to conduct in-depth analysis of a person, place, or phenomenon because cases are bound in terms of space and time.

Data Collection

Bahamas as Case Study

For data collection, we chose the Bahamas as our research site for our case study because it has experienced many natural disasters and is particularly vulnerable to the impacts of climate change. According to Inter-American Development Bank (2023) Bahamas is among the countries which are most prone to climate related natural disasters. The report mentioned that over the last 20 years Bahamas is impacted by 14 major disasters especially hurricanes which resulted in 50,000 individuals and incurred US$ 6.7 billion in damages. By selecting the Bahamas as the research site, the study can examine the specific challenges and experiences of individuals and communities in this context. The country's geographic location and susceptibility to natural disasters make it an ideal case study for understanding the impact of these events on adult learning. Furthermore, the Bahamas has a diverse population with varying levels of education and occupation, allowing for a rich and nuanced exploration of the demographic factors that intersect with the experience of natural disasters and climate change. Choosing the Bahamas as the research site provides a unique opportunity to investigate the interplay between natural disasters, climate change, and adult learning within a specific geographic and socio-cultural context. Studying the Bahamas can generate valuable insights into the adaptive capacities, transformative learning processes, and behavioral changes of individuals and communities in the face of environmental challenges. The findings from this study can inform the development of targeted interventions and policies to enhance resilience and adaptive capacities in similar regions worldwide.

Sampling

The study used purposeful snowball sampling to gather data, as suggested by Grossoehme (2014). Purposeful snowball sampling is a non-probability sampling technique that involves identifying initial participants with the desired characteristics or experiences relevant to the research topic. These initial participants are then asked to refer, or snowball, additional participants who meet the inclusion criteria. The advantage of purposeful snowball sampling is that it allows researchers to reach individuals who have specific knowledge or experiences related to a phenomenon. The process of

purposeful snowball sampling involved identifying the initial participants, contacting, and recruiting the initial participants, and snowball referrals, and continued recruitment and saturation. Overall, using purposeful snowball sampling in this study allowed us to identify and include individuals who deeply understand the impact of natural disasters and climate change in the Bahamas. This sampling method facilitated the collection of rich and diverse perspectives, experiences, and knowledge that may not be easily accessible through other sampling techniques.

Participants

The study focused on the experiences of 10 teachers from the Northern Bahamas who taught before, during, and after a natural disaster. The eligibility criteria required the teachers to have direct teaching experience during all three phases. The study received approval from an Institutional Review Board (IRB) for the interview protocol, ensuring ethical considerations were met. Interested teachers in the Northern Bahamas were invited to participate in the study. Out of the 15 invited teachers, ten chose to participate, forming the final sample for the study. The participants were two male and eight female teachers and their age ranged from 30-49 years. All the teachers interviewed held a bachelor's degree or higher. They had teaching experience from 7-15 years at primary, secondary, or high school. The subjects they taught included English, Mathematics, Health Science, General Science, and Biology. The participants represented different regions of Bahamas such as New Province, Grand Bahama, and Long Island.   All the participants were assigned pseudonyms for the study.

Interview

The interview is the most common source of data collection in qualitative research methodologies, especially in case studies (Yin, 2013). According to Bernard (2012), a researcher must conduct several interviews to obtain data for high-standard research. The researchers conducted semi-structured interviews for approximately one hour with each research participant. An Institutional Review Board (IRB) approved the interview protocol, and the researchers obtained the interviewee's consent before the interview process using the consent forms. All the interviews were conducted via Zoom during May and June 2023. During the interviews, the team of interviewers took notes to document the details and responses provided by the teachers. These notes captured vital points, quotes, observations, and relevant interview information.

Data Analysis

After the interviews were conducted, the research team transferred the recorded details from the interview notes onto a designated data sheet or template. Subsequently, the team uploaded the recorded details to a qualitative data analysis software called NVivo. NVivo is a commonly used software tool for managing, organizing, and analyzing qualitative data, allowing researchers to code, categorize, and explore patterns within the data (Røddesnes et al., 2019). Using NVivo, the research team can use the software's features to facilitate the analysis and interpretation of the collected data (Røddesnes et al., 2019).

It can support the team in identifying themes, conducting in-depth coding, and generating insights from the teachers' experiences and perspectives. The combination of note taking during interviews and subsequent data entry and analysis using NVivo demonstrates a systematic and rigorous approach to analyzing the qualitative data obtained from the interviews with the teachers.

Findings

Natural Disaster as Disorienting Dilemma

Teachers facing challenges during natural disasters, such as disruptions to infrastructure and limited resources, align with transformational learning theory. These disorienting dilemmas prompt teachers to reflect critically and adapt their teaching practices. Savannah shared challenges specifically related to teaching and learning and how she dealt with them.

> You were there with dusty floors and no tiles. I did not have a chalkboard to write on or teach. So, I remember teaching long division on the basketball court… And then I went to Bellevue later that afternoon, and I asked for the same kind of paper that you printed the house plans on. Can give me some of that for me, please? and they were so nice they didn't even charge me… I put it up that same afternoon… I wrote some morning work on it just to test it out.

Savannah's experience exemplifies teachers' challenges in the aftermath of a natural disaster. She had to teach in unconventional settings without proper resources. She creatively used alternative materials and spaces to adapt, such as teaching long division on a basketball court and utilizing laminated paper as a white board. Savannah's experience demonstrates resilience and adaptability, exemplifying transformative learning as teachers engage in reflective thinking and problem-solving to overcome obstacles and continue providing education. This highlights the transformative nature of learning during times of crisis.

Emotional Impact and Teacher Well-being

Natural disasters have a significant emotional impact on teachers, leading to increased stress, anxiety, and burnout. Ashley shared:

> Oh, man, that was a struggle that year for me personally. For me personally, it was a struggle because, you know, I had to mentally push on some days that I did not feel like I could push. There were days that I did not feel like coming to work. We just felt heavy. It just felt like a lot. And so, it was… it was a lot. And then, for students as well, try to motivate and encourage them. Sometimes I need motivation. I need encouragement. So, it was just a difficult, difficult year that specific year... But I will not dismiss the fact that it was a tough year for everybody.

Ashley not only mentioned her personal struggles but also pointed to collective hardship. Savannah said:

> I would tell the Government to ease up if you allow me to say that. I say that because when a storm happens, they say, oh, we care about you and all of this. But then you expect the teachers to be right back in the classroom, performing at their maximum. And some of these people lost loved ones and their houses, and they need more time to get it together. So, I think I need to do a thorough assessment… if the teachers are not well, they will not teach because, as simple as it sounds… But I am saying that this shakes people right up. It affects everyone, even family members of people who do not live where it is happening. It affects them as strangers in foreign lands, hearing about what happened. It affects them in some way. So, for the person who actually went through it, you do not demand so much of them so soon.

Savannah raises concerns about the expectations placed on teachers immediately after a natural disaster, noting that teachers may need more time to recover emotionally and physically. She advocates for a thorough assessment of teachers' well-being and emphasizes natural disasters' significant emotional impact on individuals and their communities. This highlights the importance of considering teacher well-being and providing appropriate support during challenging times.

To address the emotional toll incurred by experiencing natural disasters, teachers stressed the need for greater support systems and mental health resources. Ashley said:

> Teachers are people too. Teachers are people, too. It's important to factor in mental health days. We can't pour from empty cups. And so I would say that. You know, listen to the cries of the teachers who would need more mental health days to just catch themselves and give the students a better atmosphere for learning a better atmosphere for learning. And yeah, that's it.

Ashley's account highlights teachers' personal and collective struggles during natural disasters, emphasizing the need for greater support systems and mental health resources. She emphasizes addressing teachers' mental health needs and creating a supportive environment for teachers and students to thrive.

The theme of emotional impact and teacher well-being aligns with transformative learning theory, as natural disasters serve as disorienting dilemmas, prompting teachers to reassess their beliefs and values. The emotional toll experienced by teachers highlights the need for self-care and support systems. Their reflections and advocacy for change demonstrate critical reflection and dialogue, contributing to personal and professional growth. This theme underscores how natural disasters can catalyze transformative learning by challenging existing perspectives and promoting the recognition of teachers' well-being as integral to effective education.

Adaptation and Resilience Strategies

The theme of adaptation and resilience strategies aligns with transformational learning theory as it highlights the transformative process that occurs when teachers navigate and overcome challenges. Teachers' ability to adapt their approaches, seek collaboration, and find alternative ways to engage students reflects a shift in their thinking and practice. Melanie said:

> …collaborating more with teachers. You may have to come out of your comfort zone. So you go and, you know, ask for help.

Isabel said:

> I would not say relax, but they want us to focus, as they should. because of what they had going on, you had to find different ways to engage them. We had to find different ways to help motivate and encourage them. Whether it was, you know, throughout a lesson, or maybe one lesson, or one day, you just sit down and talked to them.

By embracing new strategies and stepping out of their comfort zones, teachers demonstrate transformative learning by expanding their capabilities and finding innovative solutions to address the unique circumstances brought about by natural disasters. This theme emphasizes the importance of continuous learning and growth in adversity, key aspects of transformational learning theory.

Lessons Learned and Professional Growth

Teachers identified valuable lessons from their experiences with natural disasters, such as the importance of emergency preparedness and building resilient school communities. Many teachers reported personal and professional growth, citing increased adaptability, problem-solving skills, and a greater appreciation for the role of education in disaster recovery and resilience-building. Natalia said:

> Hurricane Dorian has drawn more attention and caused me to focus a little bit more on adaptability. A lot of times, as educators, you get caught in the rhythm of teaching. And what your norm has become. We don't always think about making modifications, but I think it proves that if you do divert from the curriculum, if you do stray away for whatever those reasons are, perhaps you need a little bit more differentiation of instructions. You need to review a concept as opposed to moving forward. It has proven that sometimes you can pause to accommodate learning or cater to children more and then continue to progress because we were forced to do it with Dorian. Yet still, the children learned. The children were prepared for the national examinations.

Melanie also shared:

> You know you want to keep in contact with people in case you need help. You also develop a better relationship with your parents, so you can communicate with them when school is closed.

Natalia's experience during Hurricane Dorian led to lessons in adaptability and the importance of making modifications in teaching. She realized the value of pausing to accommodate learning and saw that students could progress despite disruptions.

Melanie's experience highlighted the significance of maintaining communication with others for support during crises, particularly with parents. This experience emphasized building relationships and effective communication channels in challenging times.

Discussion

This study explored teachers' experiences in the Bahamas before, during, and after natural disasters. This study contributes to the existing literature by exploring teachers' experiences in the Bahamas, a region prone to natural disasters. The preliminary findings align with theoretical perspectives on transformative learning, as teachers mentioned feeling disoriented after experiencing a natural disaster. However, they adapted to new circumstances and demonstrated resilience. The study also shows shifts in their worldviews, self-concepts, and capacity-building in response to the challenges faced. This study adds to the growing body of research on the impact of disasters on education and highlights the unique context of the Bahamas. The preliminary findings also emphasize the importance of teacher support systems during and after natural disasters. Providing teachers with adequate resources, training, and mental health support can enhance their ability to cope with the emotional toll of such events and foster their overall well-being. Additionally, the identified adaptive strategies employed by teachers during natural disasters provide valuable insights for teacher training programs, highlighting the need for ongoing professional development that equips educators with the skills and knowledge to navigate challenging circumstances.

Overall, this study highlights the critical role of teachers in the face of natural disasters and underscores the need for continued support, preparedness, and resilience-building efforts. By addressing the challenges identified and implementing recommendations derived from this research, educational institutions and policymakers can work towards creating a more resilient and adaptive educational system that ensures continuity of education even in the most challenging circumstances.

Limitations

While this study provides valuable insights, there are limitations to consider. The small sample size and focus on a specific geographical area restrict the generalizability of the findings. Future research could expand the scope by including a more extensive and diverse sample, examining long-term effects, and exploring the effectiveness of specific intervention strategies.

References

Apollo, A., & Mbah, M. F. (2021). Challenges and opportunities for climate change education (CCE) in East Africa: A critical review. *Climate*, *9*(6), 93. https://doi.org/10.3390/cli9060093

Bernard, H. R. (2012). *Social research methods: Qualitative and quantitative approaches*. SAGE.

Chen, S., Bagrodia, R., Pfeffer, C. C., Meli, L., & Bonanno, G. A. (2020). Anxiety and resilience in the face of natural disasters associated with climate change: A review and methodological critique. *Journal of Anxiety Disorders*, *76*, 102297. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.janxdis.2020.102297

Choudhury, M., Haque, C. E., & Hostetler, G. (2021). Transformative learning and community resilience to cyclones and storm surges: The case of coastal communities in Bangladesh. *International Journal of Disaster Risk Reduction*, *55*, 102063. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ijdrr.2021.102063

Creswell, J. W. (2014). *Research design: Qualitative, quantitative, and mixed methods approaches*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.

Dahl, K. K., & Millora, C. M. (2016). Lifelong learning from natural disasters: Transformative group-based learning at Philippine universities. *International Journal of Lifelong Education*, *35*(6), 648-663. https://doi.org/10.1080/02601370.2016.120958

Eaton, W. M., Brasier, K. J., Burbach, M. E., Whitmer, W., Engle, E. W., Burnham, M., ... & Weigle, J. (2021). A conceptual framework for social, behavioral, and environmental change through stakeholder engagement in water resource management. *Society & Natural Resources*, *34*(8), 1111-1132. https://doi.org/10.1080/08941920.2021.1936717

Glesne, C. (2011). *Becoming qualitative researchers: An introduction, 4th edition*. Boston.

Grossoehme, D.H. (2014). Overview of Qualitative Research. *Journal of Health Care Chaplaincy*, 20(3), 109–122. https://doi.org/10.1080/08854726.2014.925660.

Guest, G., Bunce, A., & Johnson, L. (2006). How many interviews are enough? An experiment with data saturation and variability. *Field methods, 18*(1), 59-82. https://doi.org/10.1177/1525822X05279903

Hoffmann, R., & Blecha, D. (2020). Education and disaster vulnerability in Southeast Asia: Evidence and policy implications. *Sustainability*, *12*(4), 1401. https://doi.org/10.3390/su12041401

Hussain, M., Butt, A. R., Uzma, F., Ahmed, R., Irshad, S., Rehman, A., & Yousaf, B. (2019). A comprehensive review of climate change impacts, adaptation, and mitigation on environmental and natural calamities in Pakistan. *Environmental Monitoring and Assessment,* 192(1). https://doi.org/10.1007/s10661-019-7956-4

Inter-American Development Bank. (2023, April 13). *Bahamas to enhance natural disaster risk management with IDB support.* https://www.iadb.org/en/news/bahamas-enhance-natural-disaster-risk-management-idb-support#:~:text=The%20Inter%2DAmerican%20Development%20Bank,its%20natural%20disaster%20risk%20governance.

Manurung, G. N., Manurung, K., Mertosono, S. R., & Kamaruddin, A. (2020). Perceptions of EFL learners in the implementation of blended learning post-natural disaster at a University in Indonesia. *Theory and Practice in Language Studies*, *10*(8), 959. https://doi.org/10.17507/tpls.1008.15

Mezirow, J. (1978). Perspective transformation. *Adult Education*, *28*(2), 100-110. https://doi.org/10.1177/074171367802800202

Mezirow, J. (1991). Transformation theory and cultural context: A reply to Clark and Wilson. *Adult Education Quarterly*, *41*(3), 188-192. https://doi.org/10.1177/0001848191041003004

Mezirow, J. (2000). *Learning as transformation: Critical perspectives on a theory in progress. The Jossey-Bass Higher and Adult Education Series*. Jossey-Bass Publishers.

Myhre, D., Bajaj, S., Fehr, L., Kapusta, M., Woodley, K., & Nagji, A. (2016). Precepting at the time of a natural disaster. *The Clinical Teacher*, *14*(2), 104-107. https://doi.org/10.1111/tct.12523

Norris, F. H., & Murrell, S. A. (1988). Prior experience as a moderator of disaster impact on anxiety symptoms in older adults. *American Journal of Community Psychology*, *16*(5), 665-683. https://doi.org/10.1007/bf00930020

Piryonesi, S. M., & El-Diraby, T. (2021). Climate change impact on infrastructure: A machine learning solution for predicting pavement condition index. *Construction and Building Materials*, *306*, 124905. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.conbuildmat.2021.124905

Røddesnes, S., Faber, H. C., & Jensen, M. R. (2019). NVivo courses in the library: Working to create the library services of tomorrow. *Nordic Journal of Information Literacy in Higher Education*, *11*(1), 27-38. https://doi.org/10.15845/noril.v11i1.2762

Ruiz-Mallén, I., Satorras, M., March, H., & Baró, F. (2022). Community climate resilience and environmental education: Opportunities and challenges for transformative learning. *Environmental Education Research*, *28*(7), 1088-1107. https://doi.org/10.1080/13504622.2022.2070602

Sharpe, J. (2016). Understanding and unlocking transformative learning as a method for enabling behaviour change for adaptation and resilience to disaster threats. *International Journal of Disaster Risk Reduction*, *17*, 213-219. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ijdrr.2016.04.014

Sukhera, J., Watling, C. J., & Gonzalez, C. M. (2020). Implicit bias in health professions. *Academic Medicine, 95*(5), 717-723. https://doi.org/10.1097/acm.0000000000003173

Tsai, C. (2001). Ideas about earthquakes after experiencing a natural disaster in Taiwan: An analysis of students' worldviews. *International Journal of Science Education*, *23*(10), 1007-1016. https://doi.org/10.1080/09500690010016085

Thomas, V. (2017). *Climate change and natural disasters: Transforming economies and policies for a sustainable future*. Taylor & Francis: Routledge.

Yin, R. (2013). *Case study research: Design and methods (3rd ed.).* Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

ADVISOR-ADVISEE RELATIONSHIP IN DOCTORAL EDUCATION: EXPERIENCES OF INTERNATIONAL DOCTORAL STUDENTS IN THE U.S.

Corina Caraccioli[1]

ABSTRACT: This paper discusses the advisor-advisee relationship in doctoral education and how international doctoral students in the United States experience this relationship. International doctoral students make significant contributions to U.S. campuses, communities, and research enterprises. Higher education stakeholders should attempt to understand these students' experiences in the socially and culturally constructed "*figured world*" of academia (Holland et al., 1998). The figured world of advising, considered as a branch of the figured world of academia, is explored in this qualitative study informed by hermeneutic phenomenology. Twenty-five international doctoral students at a Midwestern university participated in semi-structured, in-depth interviews. Out of this sample, nineteen students also participated in four heterogeneous focus groups and twenty-three shared photographs that best represented their experiences as international doctoral students. Five central themes emerged from the analysis of interviews and focus groups, and they all fall under the overarching theme of advising as an intercultural and inter-educational experience: advising as mentorship, advising as support, advising as caring, advising as employment, and advising as a dysfunctional relationship. Nonetheless, collision of the advisor's different approaches is possible. This study focuses on the figured world of advising that draws on the concept of figured worlds proposed by Holland et al. (1998).

Keywords: international students, advising, doctoral education, cultural diversity

Higher education stakeholders should demonstrate a commitment to creating an equitable and positive environment in which all students succeed; they should nurture safe educational contexts for all students and assist them in the successful completion of their degrees. The expansion of resources and cultural patterns across national borders have influenced the educational contexts in which United States (U.S.) universities operate (Taylor & Cantwell, 2015). The most recent Open Doors Report released in 2022 by the Institute of International Education indicates that 948,519 international students studied at U.S. higher education institutions in the 2021-2022 academic year.

International students contribute to the growing body of scientific research in the U.S. as they prepare to be part of a globally competent workforce (Galama & Hosek, 2009; Maskus et al., 2013). Accordingly, stakeholders in education such as faculty, staff, and policymakers should pay attention to these students' educational journeys and the factors that might impact their academic success because they bring important contributions to the U.S. economy, scientific and technical research, and to U.S. classrooms and communities. Multiple studies noted that a major issue impacting international students' successful completion of their degrees is the socio-cultural adjustment (Erichsen, 2009; Kim, 2006; Lee, 2011; Ogbonaya, 2010). It is important for hosting universities to understand how they can support these students because they add great value both to the university and the community through their diverse perspectives, new knowledge creation, financial support, and work performance (Maskus et al., 2013).

---
[1] Online & City College, Loyola University New Orleans, ctodoran@loyno.edu

International doctoral students are adult learners aiming to develop both professionally and personally. Because the doctorate is a terminal degree, their intrinsic and extrinsic motivation and their academic trajectories are more complex than for international undergraduate students. International doctoral students are educated adults with specific educational goals; special attention should be given to these students as their integration into doctoral programs may be slower or more difficult because of the diversity in their previous educational experiences. In comparison to their U.S.-born peers, international doctoral students "must often spend a great deal of time outside of class processing course content covered in class because of language and cultural issues" (Jang et al., 2014, p. 569). To better support these emerging scholars, stakeholders in education should be aware of and willing to understand their experiences and meaning-making processes. This kind of knowledge can lay the foundation for international doctoral student integration onto U.S. campuses and provide a more supportive and nurturing learning environment toward the completion of their programs.

Purpose of the Study

This study examines how international doctoral students build systems of meaning and perform in the "figured world" of academia and what they experience as they develop relationships with their advisors. The overarching research question is: How do international doctoral students experience relationships with their advisors?

For the purpose of this study, international students are defined as individuals who enter in the U. S. on a student or exchange visitor non-immigrant visa and who usually face various kinds of legal restrictions (Lee, 2011). In this study, research subjects are considered those students who entered the U.S. on an F-1 or J-1 visa, according to the U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS) classification of non-immigrant status. International doctoral students are considered students pursuing a terminal degree.

Doctoral advisors are defined in this study as faculty who guide doctoral students in their programs; they are also called dissertation chairs or doctoral supervisors. Barnes and Austin (2009) indicated that doctoral advisors are a source of reliable information, advocates, role models, departmental and occupational socializers.

Significance of the Study

This study adds critical perspectives to the existent body of literature focused on international students in the U.S. because it provides in-depth understanding about the experiences of a particular group of students whose academic journeys are not highly explored in the literature: international doctoral students in the U.S. Doctoral education plays an essential part in higher education and high attrition rates are extremely damaging to these institutions. Hence, there is a call to further explore the issues doctoral students might face throughout their academic journeys; this study seeks to reveal how stakeholders in higher education could provide a more supportive environment. In addition, while participating in this study, international doctoral students had the opportunity to reflect on their academic and cultural journeys. Students reflected and then

engaged in substantial conversations about their learning experiences and identity self-perception.

Conceptual Framework

This research study is informed by a developing body of literature focused on the concept of figured worlds (Holland et al., 1998), transformative learning theory (Mezirow, 1978; 1991; 2000), and various research studies exploring international students' experiences in the U.S. academic setting. In addition, the researcher's own personal experience as an international doctoral student in the U.S. informs this conceptual framework. The researcher's personal journey cultivated her interest in studying issues related to international doctoral students' experiences. Research on this topic reveals how various groups in academe can help students who deal with multiple layers of cultural novelty and who experience personal transformations during their studies. While these experiences are particularly salient and compelling for many international students, the conceptual framework is also applicable to the experiences of doctoral students across the board.

Figured Worlds Concept

The concept of figured worlds, developed by Holland et al. (1998), is a theory of self and identity that can be strongly connected to the lived experiences of international doctoral students. This concept outlines that individuals are considered subjects of constructed worlds, and these worlds are sites where identities are developed (Urrieta, 2007). Thus, figured worlds are seen as socially constructed settings in which students' identities are forming; relationships play an essential role in this ongoing process. Also, it is important to pay attention to the figured worlds in which international students perform as these worlds are organized by cultural means or meaning systems (Holland et al., 1998), where people are introduced to prescribed roles that might not be very familiar to international students. As a result, international students encounter challenges when seeking answers or mentorship within the academic environment. Accordingly, this study focuses on the figured world of advising.

Transformative Learning Theory

Transformative learning theory can be used as a lens to examine international doctoral students' cultural expectations and adjustment in figured worlds. Introduced by Jack Mezirow in 1978, transformative learning theory is generally understood as the process of learning and integrating new frames of reference (Mezirow 1978; 1991; 2000; Taylor, 1997). It thus provides a powerful framework that can be used to explore how international students' adjustment to the culture of the host country can catalyze personal transformations (Erichsen, 2009).

According to Mezirow (1991), the transformational process begins with a disorienting dilemma, an event that for international students might be interpreted as living in an unknown setting, and all that implies from a cultural, academic, and social standpoint

(Ritz, 2010). Students realize that their cultural context and things that were taken for granted are being replaced by a foreign context, and they face a series of difficulties such as language barriers, cultural and social adjustment, homesickness, and other adjustment issues (Lee, 2011). For this reason, it may be useful that people surrounding them are aware of the struggles international students are facing, and the transformations that occur throughout this process of learning to adjust to living in a foreign setting. In this context, international students are comparing socio-cultural worlds and educational systems, merging their identities (Erichsen, 2009) and constructing meaning through their personal experiences, while cultivating cultural competencies. The new academic and social worlds in which they function can be thought of as what Holland et al., (1998) call figured worlds. Thus, transformative learning can occur in these socially and culturally constructed settings in which international doctoral students are developing relationships with their faculty advisors.

Methodology

This qualitative study investigated the study abroad experience of international doctoral students and their transformative learning in the figured world of academia, with focus on the figured world of advising. The purpose of the research was to examine how international doctoral students make sense of their experiences and how they develop relationships with their advisors. The overarching research question is "How do international doctoral students experience relationships with their advisors?"

Twenty-five international doctoral students at a Midwestern university participated in semi-structured, in-depth interviews. Out of this sample, nineteen students also participated in four heterogeneous focus groups and twenty-three shared photographs that best represented their experiences as international doctoral students. This was helpful given that most international students' first language is not English, so they might face language barriers when it comes to oral communication.

Participants in this study were from 15 different countries: Algeria, Bangladesh, Chile, China (3), Germany, India (5), Iran (4), Japan, Nepal, Nigeria, Pakistan (2), Sri Lanka, Tajikistan, Turkey, and Zimbabwe. They represented 14 different doctoral programs across six colleges: College of Human Development and Education; College of Arts, Humanities and Social Sciences; College of Science and Mathematics; College of Agriculture, Food Systems, and Natural Resources; College of Engineering; and College of Business. The majority of participants were from STEM disciplines. Nine participants were females and 16 were males. Participants ranged from 27 to 41 years of age. Students were at various stages in their programs, from first semester to final semester (very close to graduation); eight had completed their master's degree in the U.S. Each participant chose a pseudonym that was used for data analysis purposes.

The approach for this study was informed by hermeneutic phenomenology. Accordingly, the methodological interpretation of this study was informed by the hermeneutic circle. Schwandt (2015) defined the hermeneutic circle as a methodological process in which "construing the meaning of the whole meant making sense of the parts and grasping the

meaning of the parts depended on having some sense of the whole" (p. 135). Hence, while aiming to explore international doctoral students' experiences with their advisors, the researcher considered various pieces of their overall experience as international students in the U.S. The interview and focus group questions included prompts about different aspects of their experience; these questions were also informed by the researcher's background as an international doctoral student.

After verbatim transcription of the interviews and focus groups, data were organized and analyzed using the NVivo software package (version 11) for qualitative data analysis. The researcher went through the photos sent by participants and the notes taken while collecting data. Annotations and memos were added, data pertaining to participants was added under cases for each of them, then nodes were created for each main theme based on the types of questions. For the first coding cycle a deductive analysis approach was used. The second coding cycle used an inductive approach as the researcher identified general patterns that were categorized in themes.

Consequently, data was analyzed, and meaning was assigned while considering the various parts of their academic and cultural experience. Nonetheless, it is important to note that this was a study looking solely at international students' experiences at a Midwestern university. The results of this inquiry may be transferrable, but they may not be generalizable.

Findings

Five central themes emerged from the analysis of interviews and focus groups, and they fall under the overarching theme of advising as intercultural and inter-educational experience (see Table 1): advising was experienced as mentorship leading to personal and professional development; as support in terms of motivation and sponsorship, leading to students feeling valued; as employment or a managerial relationship in which the advisor took the role of a boss who sometimes intimidated students; as a dysfunctional relationship in which students were controlled and experienced frustration, isolation, and anxiety; and as a caring and humanistic relationship in which students felt nurtured and respected.

In turn, the findings generated some advice for other international doctoral students and advisors. Study participants shared suggestions for new international doctoral students: making sure they will highly perform, as that was expected from advisors; being thoughtful when selecting and switching advisors; and communicating directly with their advisors to receive proper guidance while making sure they were tactful. Also, study participants would suggest their advisors spend more time with their advisees, be stricter in setting deadlines, know basic immigration rules that apply to international students, be aware of cultural differences and how those impact international students, and provide mentoring for careers after graduation.

The dynamics of the mentoring relationships varied because some students had one main advisor, while others had one main advisor and a co-advisor. Some students could choose

their advisors, while for others the advisor was assigned by the program. Some advisors were foreign-born and had the experience of being international students in the U.S., while others were domestic. Some students studied in the U.S. or other countries before starting their doctoral degrees; thus, they were somewhat familiar with navigating various education systems. Other students came to the U.S. with the sole purpose of pursuing a doctoral degree; hence the learning environment was totally new to them. Advising as an intercultural and inter-educational experience meant that students performed in a new culture of respect received from their advisors in the U.S., compared to the academic relationships that they experienced in their home countries.

A large number of students indicated that in their home countries advisors were "strict and hard" (John). On a similar note, White disclosed that she appreciated the fact that in the U.S. advisors did not shout at their students like they used to do in her home country, where the professors were authority figures. Mary stated that in her home country, advisors were "like Godly beings" and students were terrified by them. She shared that in the U.S., on the contrary, advisors "are professional and really simple […] they're really approaching, that's really different." In a similar fashion, Dacky, who is from a different country, shared that "back home if you look at teacher you are treating them like God, you know, you can't talk, you can't speak, you can't eat." Rose also mentioned that in her home country "there was some kind of wall between students and professors, but here we don't have such thing. The relationship here is still respectful, but somewhat closer." Strongly related to the issue of asking questions, Jeffrey indicated: "what I like most is that here it really makes it a free environment to ask questions, and to learn, and to know your mentors well, something I think I didn't see much of back at home."

As part of the intercultural and inter-educational advising experience, the vast majority of study participants discussed that in the U.S. the advisor-advisee relationship was less hierarchical; it was surprising that they could address their advisors by their first name, and it was a bit difficult for them to do that because in their home countries that was unusual. One exception regarding less hierarchical relationships was Sky's situation, who declared that his advisor was elder, came from a different country but with a cultural background similar with his, thus he did not accept to be called by his first name.

Table 1

Advising as an Intercultural and Inter-Educational Experience

Central theme	Subtheme
Advising as mentorship	Advisor as a role model
	Advisor as guide
	Advising as professional development
	Advising as personal development
Advising as support	Advisor as motivator
	Advisor as sponsor
	Availability
	Freedom
Advising as employment	Advisor as boss
Advising as dysfunctional relationship	Mismatching background
	Micromanagement
	Lack of openness
	Anxiety to switch
Advising as caring	Caring advisors
	Culturally sensitive advisors

Note. This table shows the five central themes and the subthemes emerged from data analysis; they fall under the overarching theme of advising as intercultural and inter-educational experience.

Discussion and Implications

The findings of this study revealed that advising relationships are crucial in doctoral education and have multi-layered implications; advising relationships not only influence the successful completion of the doctoral degree, but they can also impact students' job prospects after graduation. The findings reiterate the important role that advisors have in modeling behavior for international doctoral students. The themes described in this study

are comprehensive, yet they are not exhaustive; they can be considered as separate or complementary aspects in doctoral education, as experienced and perceived by international doctoral students in this study.

The findings reinforce the idea that international doctoral students across disciplines experience many layers of cultural novelty as they navigate the figured world of academia. In the figured world of advising, international doctoral students get to sense an intercultural and inter-educational experience. This ability to sense this figured world and understand how to perform becomes embodied in their mental structures over time (Holland et al., 1998), that is, students understand the happenings in that figured world and what they are expected to do or not do, and "learn to author their own and make them available to other participants. By means of such appropriation, objectification, and communication, the world itself is also reproduced, forming and reforming in the practices of its participants" (p. 53). In other words, it means trying new roles and integrating them into their perspective, which leads to transformative learning (Mezirow, 1991). Participants' advice to advisors and other students is an indicator of students' ability to reproduce this figured world of advising in their own way. For example, some students recommend others to switch their advisors if needed, even if that certain act might not always be considered acceptable in certain programs. Indeed, students mentioned that in some programs that was not acceptable, but in others the main issue was the fear of being stigmatized. In this context, study participants encouraged students to reform their practices of participation in the figured world of advising and to take a more active role in deciding their paths.

The overall recommendation emerging from this study's findings is a critical need for training advisors and acknowledging their work as cultural resources. When this study was conducted, the university that served as the research site for this study did not offer a formal training program for doctoral advisors working with international students. Moreover, advising is often given peripheral importance as part of the faculty load that includes research, teaching, and service.

Limitations

One of the main limitations of this study was that its findings were limited to these particular international doctoral students, from these particular countries, at this particular time in one state, at a Midwestern, land-grant university. The institutional culture and geographic area may have an impact on international doctoral students' experiences, and this study was limited to these students' stories. Thus, this sample did not necessarily represent the variety of international doctoral students' experiences in the U.S. A further limitation of this study was the low number of participants from Arts, Humanities, and Social Sciences. Out of 25 participants, only seven were from these disciplines. While this representation mirrored to a certain extent the number of international doctoral students in these fields at the university and national level, a high number of students from these disciplines would have strengthened the findings of this study. Future research in other parts of the country, at different universities, is needed to explore the diversity of

these students' doctoral journeys and how they navigate advising relationships across disciplines.

Conclusion

This paper does not attempt to propose a one-size-fits-all interculturally-proactive advising model. On the contrary, it argues that international doctoral students should be considered for their unique personhoods; no advising model works equally for all students. There is no general checklist that faculty advisors could and should use. Similar to domestic doctoral students, international students have different backgrounds, needs and aspirations that do not fit a certain model. Hence, the core attribute of an interculturally-proactive advising process is aimed at fostering familiarity with each student's world and, as a cultural resource, to facilitate their performance in the figured world of academia.

International doctoral students do not navigate advising relationships as a separate layer of their overall academic experience. There are a variety of aspects influencing their learning journeys and academic interactions that construct a holistic view of their experience. Accordingly, this study's findings also provide insight on how administrators and graduate enrollment management professionals can assist students. Administrators such as department chairs and associate deans should work collaboratively with advisors to support international doctoral students. An avenue to ensure that support is organizing professional development workshops for advisors and exposing them to the various challenges faced by this segment of the underrepresented student population. As Walker et al. (2008) argued, "being a good mentor is not an innate talent, or a function solely of 'chemistry'. It also involves techniques that can be learned, recognized, and rewarded" (p. 99).

The findings of this study inform various actors in higher education: faculty and staff, policy makers, current U.S. and international students, and prospective international students. The study raises awareness about how international doctoral students experience advising relationships and aims to initiate changes to university policies and the implementation of mentorship training for faculty advisors working with international students. The participation of all stakeholders in higher education is critical for supporting international doctoral students.

References

Barnes, B. J., & Austin, A. E. (2009). The role of doctoral advisors: A look at advising from the advisor's perspective. *Innovative Higher Education*, *33*, 297-315. https://doi.org/10.1007/s10755-008-9084

Chien, C. (2013). *International mobility of undergraduate and graduate students in science, technology, engineering, and mathematics: Push and pull factors.* (Publication No. 3607887) [Doctoral dissertation, University of Minnesota]. ProQuest Dissertations and Theses A&I.

Erichsen, E. A. (2009). *Reinventing selves: International students' conceptions of self and learning for transformation* (Publication No. 3387257) [Doctoral Dissertation, University of Wyoming]. ProQuest Dissertations and Theses A&I.

Galama T., & Hosek, J. (2009). Global competitiveness in science and technology and the role of mobility. In R. Bhandari and S. Laughlin (Eds*.) Higher Education on the Move: New Developments in Global Mobility* (pp. 95-111). The Institute of International Education.

Holland, D., Lachicotte, W., Jr., Skinner, D., & Cain, C. (1998). *Identity and agency in cultural worlds*. Harvard University Press.

Institute of International Education. (n.d). *Open Doors report on international educational exchange.* Retrieved July 20, 2023, from https://opendoorsdata.org/infographic/number-of-international-students-in-2021-2022/

Jang, Y. J., Woo, H., & Henfield, M. (2014). A qualitative study of challenges faced by international doctoral students in counselor education supervision courses. *Asia Pacific Education Review, 15*(4), 561-572. https://doi.org/10.1007/s12564-014-9342-9

Kim, S. (2006). Academic oral communication needs of East Asian international graduate students in non-science and non-engineering fields. *English for Specific Purposes, 25*(4), 479-489. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.esp.2005.10.001

Lee, K. O. (2011). *Experiences of international doctoral students in social science and humanities programs with their dissertation chairs at a research university* (Publication No. 3496914) [Doctoral dissertation, University of Florida]. ProQuest Dissertations and Theses A&I.

Maskus, K. E., Mobarak, A. M., & Stuen, E. T. (2013). Doctoral students and U.S. immigration policy. *Science*, *342*(6158), 562-563. https://doi.org/10.1126/science.1239572

Mezirow, J. (1978). Perspective Transformation. *Adult Education*, 28, 100–110. https://doi.org/10.1177/074171367802800202

Mezirow, J. (1991). *Transformative dimensions of adult learning.* Jossey-Bass.

Mezirow, J., & Associates (Eds.). (2000). *Learning as transformation: Critical perspectives on a theory in progress.* Jossey-Bass.

Ogbonaya, A. I. (2010). *A learner analysis of international female doctoral students' experiences at an American university*. (Publication No. 3428980) [Doctoral dissertation, University of Northern Colorado]. ProQuest Dissertations and Theses A&I.

Ritz, A. A. (2010). International students and transformative learning in a multicultural formal educational context. *The Educational Forum*, *74*(2), 158-166. https://doi.org/10.1080/00131721003608497

Schwandt, T. A. (2015). *The SAGE dictionary of qualitative inquiry* (4th ed.). Sage Publications.

Taylor, B. J., & Cantwell, B. (2015). Global competition, U.S. research universities, and international doctoral education: growth and consolidation of an organizational field. *Research in Higher Education, 56*(5), 411-441. https://doi.org/10.1007/s11162-014-9355-6

Taylor, E. W. (1997). Building upon the theoretical debate: A critical review of the empirical studies of Mezirow's transformative learning theory. *Adult Education Quarterly*, *48*(1), 34-59. https://doi.org/10.1177/074171369704800104

Urrieta, L. Jr. (2007). Figured worlds and education: An introduction to the special issue. *The Urban Review, 39*(2), 107-116. https://doi.org/10.1007/s11256-007-0051-0

U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services. (n.d.). *Students and employment*. Retrieved July 20, 2023 from https://www.uscis.gov/working-in-the-united-states/students-and-exchange-visitors

Walker, G. E., Golde, C. M., Jones, L., Bueschel, A. C., & Hutchings, P. (2008). *The formation of scholars: Rethinking doctoral education for the twenty-first century*. Jossey-Bass.

EDUCATION OF OLDER ADULTS IN CUBA: UNIVERSITY CHAIR FOR OLDER ADULTS IN ISLA DE LA JUVENTUD

Eliezer Colón-Rivera[1]
Raiza Peña-Cedeño[2]

ABSTRACT: This research article discusses and analyzes an education program for older adults in Isla de la Juventud, Cuba, called the Cátedra Universitaria del Adulto Mayor (University Chair for Older Adults). Our interest in studying this program for older adults stems from the peculiarity of its designation as a university chair and, simultaneously, being the education model for older adults in Cuba. We used a qualitative approach, combining methods to obtain data through observations, interviews, documents examination, personal experiences, and narratives to explore the program's goals, nature, possibilities, and limitations. We found that the program is highly valued in raising older adults' self-esteem and their success in the program, raising awareness of the significance of caring for older adults. Research by Cuban academics on the university chair for older adults also coincides with these outcomes. The study found that a factor affecting older adults in Cuba is that perhaps this population segment is most affected by inflation and the current economic crisis. The current situation in the country poses a significant challenge to educating older adults through the Chair, considering that education coverage through universities is limited compared to the number of older adults in the country. Furthermore, older adults have limited time and resources due to their daily struggle to obtain food and meet the most basic needs for everyday living.

Keywords: older adults, Cuba, education models

In Cuba, there is a contrasting panorama; on one side, the touristic attributes of lovely beaches in Varadero, the colonial buildings of Havana, and the legendary flavors of tobacco and rum. On the other side, a lesser-known narrative unfolds — one that revolves around the achievements of Cuba in the massification of education, like the campaign of alphabetization and the lesser-known of university programs for educating older adults and their daily life struggles. The authors aim to present a picture of older adults' education in Cuba through various methods, examination of documents, interviews with open-ended questions, personal interviews, and narratives.

Through this multidimensional exploration, we sought to understand the University Chair for Older Adults that aims to foster personal growth and empower older adults, furthermore, the difficulties and challenges those older adults face in the present living conditions in Cuba. To unravel the details of this adult education program in Cuba, we analyze documents that shed light on educational policies and frameworks. The examination of these materials provided a theoretical framework to contextualize findings.

The philosophy of the Cuban government is expressed officially as a commitment to creating an inclusive and accessible adult education system that addresses the needs of all its citizens.

---

[1] Ed. D Independent Researcher- eliezercolon.ec@gmail.com
[2] MS.C. President University Chair for Older Adults. University of Isla de la Juventud Cuba- rpenacedeno@gmail.com

Examining the mission and role of higher education in Cuba is important. Particularly the universities since they are part of a set of educational institutions framed in the perspective of a state that defines itself as socialist and that only public education exists.

The Cuban Revolution educational policy is aimed at providing comprehensive training for university graduates as revolutionary professionals. However, the collapse of the socialist bloc and USSR and the US government's economic and ideological aggression led to economic and social transformations in Cuba that contradicted socialist principles. Consequently, this led to losing values and influenced university professors and students. An integrated approach to education and political-ideological work was adopted to address this, emphasizing academic excellence and considering curricular, university extension, and socio-political dimensions. (Pulgarón Ramos, 2009).

Demographic Context

In 2019, 20.8% of Cuban women and men were 60 years or older; at the end of 2022, it was 22.3%, according to the National Office of Statistics and Information (ONEI). These numbers give a rounded estimate of a population of older adults of about 2,500,000. In its recent report, *The Aging of the Population. Cuba and its territories*, May 2023 edition, the ONEI maintain that the aging of its population is the foremost challenge for Cuba in the demographic (Fariñas Acosta, 2023).

This increase in the proportion of older adults to the rest of the population is associated not only with an increase in the proportion of older adults but also with a decrease in the proportion of children and young between 0 and 14 years old, which impacts the "economy, the family, services, the replacement of human capital, social security and the high costs of medical and epidemiological care "adds Fariñas Acosta (2023).

The Cuban Economic Context

At the beginning of 2021, an economic crisis marked Cuban society until today. The problem manifests itself in significant price increases in goods, a sharp increase in inflation, and a severe shortage of food and medicine (Frank, 2022). As of May 2023, the official inflation rate of Cuba is 45.48% (Trading Economics, n.d.).

The Cuban government attributes the current economic crisis to the decades-old U.S. trade embargo against Cuba, which the Trump administration tightened. It also attributes it to the effects of the Covid-19 pandemic (EcuRed, n.d.).

According to Arias Rivera (2021), the Helms-Burton Act in 1996 strengthened the blockade, while federal budget laws and the Trade Sanctions Reform and Export Enhancement Act of 2000 incorporated additional sanctions. The Torricelli Act codified the blockade's prohibitions for the first time in 1992, making it extraterritorial. It included sanctions on third nations with U.S. company subsidiaries and ships trading with Cuba. There were 243 actions taken against Cuba by the administration, including the suspension of company, ship travel, and U.S. airline flights to the entire island, except for

Havana; cancellation of consular services in Cuba and their location in third countries; obstruction of banking transactions; a first restriction, then a cessation, of (private) citizen bank transfers, followed by the subsequent closure of the operations of the Western Union company.

The economic and financial effects of geographic relocation of trade include income loss, decline in production, food scarcity, access to advanced technologies, population service reduction, economic and financial effects, emigration, and death of those denied access to healthcare. These damages include the scarcity of essential resources, difficulty accessing cutting-edge technologies, and impact on population services. (Arias Rivera, 2021).

Cuba's economy has encountered several difficulties due to the embargo, including limited access to technology, raw materials, and foreign investments. The embargo limits trade and financial transactions between the two countries, making it challenging for Cuba to access the vast U.S. market and obtain necessary resources and investments (EcuRed, n.d.).

A scholar, Dr. Leo Grande, said, "For sixty years, the economic embargo has failed to achieve any of its stated policy goals while exacting a high human cost, stifling the development of the Cuban economy and making daily life harder for Cuban families (Washington Office on Latin America (WOLA), 2022)."

Criticism of Economic Management

Critics of Cuban government economic policies argue that the Cuban embargo, imposed by the United States since the 1960s, has significantly impacted the country's economy. The blockade restricts trade and financial transactions between the two nations, making it difficult for Cuba to access the vast U.S. market and obtain vital resources and investments. As a result, the Cuban economy has faced various challenges, including limited access to technology, raw materials, and foreign investments.

However, they point out that the crisis is not only due to the embargo but also to the Cuban government's mismanagement of the economy. They argue that the Cuban government's poor management of the economy has led to inflation, food, and fuel shortages. Explaining that the centrally planned economy has not adapted well to market dynamics, resulting in inefficiencies, lack of innovation, and slow response to changing economic conditions. The Cuban economy is heavily dependent on industries like agriculture and tourism, making it vulnerable to external shocks like the COVID-19 pandemic, negatively impacting travel and tourism (Mesa Lago, 2023).

Mesa Lago (2023) states that Cuba's restrictive policies towards private enterprises and foreign investments have hindered the growth of a vibrant private sector that could contribute to economic resilience and job creation. For example, state-owned enterprises have been plagued by inefficiencies, mismanagement, and corruption, leading to a lack of productivity and effectiveness in many sectors. Cuba's fixed exchange rates and dual currency have hampered competition and created economic distortions.

In synthesis, critics of the Cuban government's economic policies acknowledge the detrimental impact of the U.S. embargo on the Cuban economy. However, they assert that the current inflation, food, and fuel shortages are also the result of poor economic management by the Cuban government, including centralized planning, limited private enterprise, and insufficient reforms to adapt to changing global economic conditions.

University Chair for Older Adults

Cuba currently has 50 universities, 113 specialties, and almost half its population holds a higher education degree, according to Jose Ramon Saborido, the country's minister of higher education (Guillen, 2019).

Today, over 2 million older adults are in Cuba, representing 20.8% of the population. Estimates show that between 2025 and 2030, this age group will exceed three million and represent more than 30% of the Cuban population (*Cuba en Datos: Población Cubana Decrece y Envejece*, 2022).

In Cuba, the universities of older adults program is known as University Chairs of the Older Adult (CUAM). Today they are formed by multidisciplinary groups with the objectives of research, project development, and gerontological training, as well as the development and direction in each province of the universities of the older adult. Today the essential work of the Chair of the older adult is the elaboration and development of the education of the older adult as an activity of university extension (Orosa Fraiz, 2020).

The University Chair of the Older Adult in Cuba was founded in 2000 in the Faculty of Psychology of the University of Havana with the support of the Central de Trabajadores de Cuba and the Asociación de Pedagogos de Cuba. It has its roots in the University of the Third Age movement (Aldama-Torreblanca, 2021). The University of the Third Age Movement was founded by Professor Vellas in 1973 at the University of Toulouse in France (Chamahiana, 2006). In the 1990s, this movement spread to several Latin American countries, such as Argentina, Chile, Costa Rica, and Ecuador. Chile, Costa Rica, and Ecuador, among others. According to Teresa Orosa Fraiz, the Chairs of the Older Adult "constitute the Cuban denomination of the so-called university programs, with an extensionist character and community existence, advised by each center of higher education in the country. " (2020, p.2).

Quiala-Batista et al. (2020) state that Cuban University has three main components: teaching-methodological, scientific, and extension. The Chair of the Older Adult (CUAM) is one of how the University relates to the region in the practice of extension work, through which specialists from different areas of knowledge contribute to cultural development, scientific and technical updating, and social continuity to the older adult participants of the experience.

The program has classrooms in urban and rural areas. It operates on university premises, cultural centers, local museums, health areas, agricultural cooperatives, and schools, among other community places. According to data from the Ministry of Higher

Education, there are 19 provincial Chairs for Older adults and more than 100,000 graduates nationally (Orosa Fraiz, 2020).

Orosa Fraiz (2020) explains that the system has three components. The first one is the basic course with a duration of one year that must be completed, directed to older adults today through modules. The second component today consists of continuity courses of great thematic diversity. It is also aimed at older adults who have graduated from the basic course. The third component is training and postgraduate courses in gerontology and related subjects aimed at people who participate as teachers in educating older adults.

Participation is voluntary, but a one-year introductory course is required, consisting of six modules: Propaedeutic; Human Development, a new approach; Education and health promotion; Social Security in Cuba; Contemporary Culture and Efficient Organization of Free Time. Once the older adults graduate from the basic course, they are expected to become multipliers. From the first year onwards, continuity courses are offered to graduates focused on lifelong education (Quiala Batista et al., 2020).

Module 1	Propaedeutic
Module 2	Human development, a new approach
Module 3	Health prevention
Module 4	Social Security in Cuba
Module 5	Contemporary Culture
Module 6	Efficient Organization of Free Time

Note: Upon graduation from the one-year course, they remain on continuity courses.

At the University of Isla de la Juventud, participants select supplemental courses based on their preferences and requirements. Some classes or presentations the participants have chosen include Handicrafts, Computers, Film Appreciation, Wine Culture, Nutrition, Popular, and Traditional Culture, Diseases in the Older Adult, Traditional Dances, Cultivation of Breadfruit and its Qualities, Medicinal Plants, and Vinegar Making. R. P. Cedeño (personal communication, May 26, 2023).

Quiala Batista et al. (2020) developed a didactic alternative called *La Nieve de los Años.* [The Snow of the Years] aimed to increase the participation of older adults in the Cueto municipality in the Holguin province who belong to the University Chair of Older Adults. Providing cultural activities (handicraft workshops, plastic arts, literature, theater, dance); sports (gymnastics, board games, tournaments); health talks, sex education, and hygiene; linking with circles of interest and municipality associations.

Addressing Some Questions About the Program

Attracting New Participants

We discussed several concerns regarding the program, including how to attract participants, which the coauthor addressed. R.P. Cedeño (personal conversation May 25, 2023).

The method of attracting recruits is through promotion on radio and television. Graduates or continuing students who have already gone through the basic course tell their friends and neighbors about their experiences in the class. It is a word-of-mouth transmission. In addition, those who continue and do handicrafts make exhibitions in the galleries and produce presentations in the houses of culture. People come to see, are interested, and ask what the Chair offers.

Enrollment

There is only one University and only one Chair for older adults. Among the reasons for the low enrollment, we can mention that some do not know about it, lack of interest, others retire and dedicate themselves to taking care of the grandchildren, others run errands or do not want to leave the house, some are in the nursing home, others are sick or bedridden. R.P/ Cedeño (personal conversation May 25, 2023)

Interviews with Older Adults from the Cátedra Universitaria del Adulto Mayor

Purposeful sampling was utilized to select the interview participants. This technique is primarily used in qualitative research to efficiently identify and select information-rich cases to use limited resources (Patton, 2002). Includes finding and choosing individuals or groups who are primarily well-informed about the issues to be studied (Creswell, 2013).

Individual interviews with fifteen older adults from the Cátedra Universitaria de la Isla de la Juventud were conducted on June 16, 2023, at the Julio Antonio Mella Municipal Library. The data from the interviews is presented as an illustration to point out the participants' opinions on specific aspects of the education program for older adults in the Cuban context.

Questions:
1. How did you get involved in the older adult chair group? Describe the things that got you involved.
2. Tell me about your positive and negative experiences.
3. Looking back on your experiences, how do you think they influenced your life?
4. Think about the things you have learned. Describe the things that others have learned from you.
5. What do you think is the legacy of your experience and learning for the next generation?
6. What are the situations of daily life that most affect the older adult on the Isle of Youth?
7. How do you think more older adults can be integrated into the activities?

Regarding Motivation for Involvement

An inner motivation, an unmet need, awakens a desire channeled by having information about activities in the community aimed at older adults. Emilia described how she gets involved:

> While going through a trying time—having been widowed and feeling incredibly lonely—, I saw the chairwoman on a program in the Isla Visión TV channel [Isla de la Juventud] explaining what the Chair consisted of and when and where it would start, and I invited a neighbor to accompany me.

Loneliness and having the closest family member in distant places on the island of Cuba are a factor that also motivates participation in the Chair, as Teresita pointed out:

> In the Chair group, I interact with other people; it allows me to continue learning and support to have a reason to live since the loneliness is overwhelming.

Positive and negative experiences.

Having new friendships, having close ties among the members stands out as an achievement of the seniors' Chair. For Ramona, this is an unexpected but very positive result from her point of view.

> For me, meeting new friends has been a blessing. It is like we were a family, and I have learned many new things. The meetings and talks with doctors from different specialties were very valuable. I feel that I am heard when I speak my criteria.

The negative experiences are related to the lack of resources and a fixed meeting location. Emilia says:

> For each group meeting, you have to go to a different place, and that causes many difficulties since transportation in Cuba is very poor, and the arrangements to be made beforehand change with the meeting place,

Influence of Chair of Older Adults

In Norma's opinion, a very important factor is the spiritual aspect she has found in belonging to the Chair for older adults. She highlights this aspect as a very positive influence in her life.

> I have a son who is a prisoner and felt isolated, and here I have found spiritual support and made new friends. I can count on them at any given time.

Francisca says that feeling useful positively influences her life and that she is not there only to care for the grandchildren and run errands. Feeling valuable in herself recognizes her worth as a human being.

I feel more valuable and do not just go to the bodega to buy bread or care for grandchildren. My eating habits and daily life have improved, and I have been more communicative in my area of residence. I talk to the neighbors about the Chair, I implement time better, and my character has changed. I have learned to value myself in the social and family environment.

Learning

Sofia expresses what seem to be unintended consequences of her participation. Even though the Chair conducts multiple activities of talks, workshops, and conferences ranging from medicine to crafts, Sofia expresses what seem to be unintended consequences of her participation.

I have learned to be calmer when difficulties arise in my life. I have also learned how to communicate more and express myself more assertively. To be optimistic, to live, to be patient, to be cheerful, to work with others, to be united, and to share.

Legacy for Next Generations

Juanita summarizes the legacy to the next generations in transmitting the skills of living well in the community and lifelong learning.

The experiences and motivation I have acquired should be transmitted to children and grandchildren; to try to communicate to the next generations because studying is fundamental, and what one learns is to develop knowledge and a more just society. The legacy I transmit is that learning here does not cost anything, regardless of age or sex, to continue learning.

Daily Life Situations Most Affect Older People on the Isla de la Juventud.

Ramona summarizes what situations affect the older adults in Isla de La Juventud and, ultimately, in Cuba:

There are long lines every day to buy food or medicine. With the checkbook [retirement pension], there is not enough to pay for a tricycle to move within the city from one place to another. Our daily lives are affected by living conditions, the few activities we can attend due to the salary, transportation, medicines, food shortage, the lack of medical specialists in one treatment area, and the high prices of products.

Integrating More Older Adults

Emilia summarized some things that can help attract more people:

Increasing television advertising, explaining and describing activities of the Chair, and bringing up the topic with friends and neighbors.

Findings and Discussion

Through this research on the University Chair of Older Adults Education, we understood the nature of the program as a university extension program for educating older adults that universities in Cuba manage. In the case of the Isla de la Juventud program, we had the opportunity to know its achievements, challenges, and difficulties. Isla de la Juventud participants demonstrate personal success in developing skills to face aging. However, Cuba's societal and economic problems impact older adults' participation in the program. The study highlights the program's value in raising self-esteem, raising awareness of the importance of caring for older adults, and overcoming stereotypes to give them respect in the community and society. Studies carried out by Cuban academic researchers like Pérez Sanchez et al. (2023 also affirm these aspects as achievements of the implementation of the Cátedra Universitaria del Adulto Mayor program.

The older adult population in Cuba has been facing significant challenges due to the economy's deterioration. Foreign currency stores only sell in MLC (freely convertible currency), and the person must recharge the bank cards in US dollars. Senior citizens in these stores face high food prices for their income, with pensions ranging from 1500 to 1800 Cuban pesos (CUP). The exchange rate has climbed to 240 CUP for one dollar. The devaluation of the Cuban peso against the dollar has led to generalized shortages, making it difficult for older adults to cover their basic needs. Food items, such as meat and dietary staples, are often overpriced, making it difficult for older adults to survive on their income. The scarcity of Cuban pesos has recently obliged older adults to wait in line for long hours, and the government has ordered them to perform transactions online with digital applications. It affects mostly older adults who do not have cell phones and do not have the money to buy one.

Although it is impossible to obtain official data on poverty in Cuba, research has shown that it has risen over the past ten years for a variety of reasons and that the poorest people are typically retired seniors, household heads, single mothers, and those who do not receive remittances within these groups (Acosta, 2017).

How can the University Chair of Older Adults address the education of an expanding older adult population within the hierarchical structure of universities? How to educate older adults who must devote most of their time to finding food to eat daily? How does scarcity affect their health and well-being? These are some pressing issues and questions for future research.

References

Acosta, E. (2017, June 9). *Más viejos y desprotegidos: Déficits y desigualdades en el cuidado hacia las personas mayores en Cuba*. Cuba Posible. https://cubaposible.com/cuidados-personas-mayores-cuba/

Aldama-Torreblanca, A. (2021). *Sistema de actividades para los adultos mayores continuantes de la CUAM en la Isla de la Juventud* [Thesis]. Universidad de la Isla de la Juventud-Jesús Montane Oropesa, Cuba.

Arias Rivera, M. (2021). El bloqueo estadounidense contra Cuba. Una actualización. *CLACSO*. https://www.clacso.org/el-bloqueo-estadounidense-contra-cuba-una-actualizacion/

Chamahiana, A. (2006). From the university of the third age of Toulouse to universities of all ages, a look back and the UTA constitution movement in France. In *Second Congress of the French Association of Sociology*.

Creswell, J.W. (2013). *Qualitative inquiry and research design: Choosing among five approaches*. Sage.

Cuba en Datos: Población cubana decrece y envejece. (2022, July 15). http://cuba.cu/economia/2022-07-15/cuba-en-datos-poblacion-cubana-decrece-y-envejece/60341

EcuRed. (n.d.). *Bloqueo económico de Estados Unidos contra Cuba* https://www.ecured.cu/Bloqueo_econ%C3%B3mico_de_Estados_Unidos_contra_Cuba

Fariñas Acosta, L. (2023, June 2). *Cuba en Datos: Envejecimiento y esperanza de vida, ¿qué dicen los indicadores demográficos?* Cubadebate. Retrieved July 3, 2023, from http://www.cubadebate.cu/especiales/2023/06/02/cuba-en-datos-envejecimiento-y-esperanza-de-vida-que-dicen-los-indicadores-demograficos/

Guillen, L. (2019). Cuba cuenta con 50 universidades, 113 carreras y casi la mitad de la población tiene nivel superior. NODAL. https://www.nodal.am/2019/03/cuba-cuenta-con-50-universidades-113-carreras-y-casi-la-mitad-de-la-poblacion-tiene-nivel-superior/

Mesa Lago, C. (2023, June 24). *The Magnitude of the Economic Crisis in Cuba and the Causes of the Recent Protests | Cuba Capacity Building Project*. https://horizontecubano.law.columbia.edu/news/magnitude-economic-crisis-cuba

Orosa Fraiz, T. (2020). Programa Cubano de educación de mayores en su XX aniversario: Lecciones aprendidas [Presentation]. Universidad XX, Havana, Cuba.

Patton, M. Q. (2002). *Qualitative research and evaluation methods*. Sage Publications.

Pérez Sánchez, L., Orosa Fraiz, T., & Pino Santos, P. H. (2023). Envejecer aprendiendo: Aportes de la primera cátedra universitaria del adulto mayor en Cuba. *Anales De La Academia De Ciencias De Cuba*, *13*(2). https://revistaccuba.sld.cu/index.php/revacc/article/view/1330/1760

Pulgarón Ramos, A. (2009). El trabajo político e ideológico en la universidad cubana de hoy. el socialismo en las nuevas condiciones del siglo XXI: Una opción viable. *Cuadernos De Educación Y Desarrollo*. https://www.eumed.net/rev/ced/29/apr2.htm

Quiala-Batista, Z., Ferrer-Banderas, E., & Carracedo-Ruiz, M. (2020). *Alternativa didáctica: La nieve de los años*. [Presentation]. Universidad XX, Havana, Cuba.

Trading Economics. (n.d.). *Cuba - Tasa de inflación | 2005-2023 Datos | 2024-2025 Expectativa*. https://es.tradingeconomics.com/cuba/inflation-cpi

Washington Office on Latin America (WOLA). (2022, February 4). *Understanding the Failure of the U.S. Embargo on Cuba*. https://www.wola.org/analysis/understanding-failure-of-us-cuba-embargo/

PROBING DEEPLY AN INTERNATIONAL ADULT EDUCATION ANDRAGOGICAL EPISTOMOLOGICAL FOUNDATION: ASPECTS OF WISDOM REALITIES

John A. Henschke, Ed.D.[1]

ABSTRACT: This paper recaps Henschke's 2022 CIAE paper on the premise that God's *agape* (unconditional, divine, love, loving-kindness toward humankind, which is everlasting, perfect, selfless, sacrificial) encompasses the other three loves: *eros* (sublime, intimate love); *storge* (I've got your back); *philea* (family relationships and common interests). Agape, God's kind of everlasting love is described as encompassing 15 different elements. Thus, when we realize that as stated in the Hebrew and Christian Scriptures (The Holy Bible, Old Testament, book of Psalms, Chapter 90) that God has been our dwelling place through all generations, we may ask Him each morning to satisfy us with His unfailing love that we may sing for joy to the end of our life. However, to make God's love operational in our human life, there had to be a practical process for that to take place. Enacting God's love may happen and be implemented by something defined as wisdom – good common sense. the power of true and right discernment, conformity to the course of action dictated by such discernment. It may be the highest exercise of all faculties. Moreover, some wisdom realities are addressed herein, such as: various descriptions and definitions of wisdom, Hebrew word for wisdom, Koine Greek word for wisdom, where do people find wisdom, Solomon's wisdom, where does wisdom come from, pillars of wisdom, andragogical learning change, conclusion, references with clarifying comments at the end.

Keywords: wisdom, knowledge, prudence, understanding, judgment, perception, acumen, discretion

God's *agape* (unconditional, divine, love, loving-kindness toward humankind, which is everlasting, perfect, selfless, sacrificial) encompasses the other three loves – *eros* (sublime, intimate love); *storge* (I've got your back); *philea* (family relationships and common interests). Agape, God's kind of everlasting love includes 15 elements, as follows: *1.* Endures long, *2.* Is patient, *3.* Is kind, *4.* Rejoices when right prevails, *5.* Rejoices when truth prevails, *6.* Bears up under anything that comes, *7.* Bears up under everything that comes, *8.* Is ever ready to believe the best of everyone, *9.* Hopes are fadeless under all circumstances, *10.* Endures everything without weakening, *11.* Never fades out, *12.* Never fails, *13.* Never becomes obsolete, *14.* Never comes to an end, and, *15.* Always trusts.

Various Descriptions and Definitions of Wisdom

According to Funk, (1957) enacting God's love may happen and be implemented by something defined as wisdom – good common sense, the power of true and right discernment, conformity to the course of action dictated by such discernment. Wisdom may be the highest exercise of all faculties. He included a few synonyms such as: attainment, depth, information, judiciousness, lore, sense, skill, prescience. In making something perfectly useless, there may be great skill, but no wisdom, just absurdity, miscalculation, shallowness, or silliness.

---

[1] Emeritus professor of andragogy, Lindenwood University, St. Charles, MO, USA. E-Mail: jahenschke@gmail.com; http://www.umsl.edu/~henschke/

Noah Webster (1828) indicates that wisdom is the right use or exercise of knowledge, the choice of laudable ends, and of the best means to accomplish them. This is wisdom in act, effect, and practice; it is the exercise of sound judgment either in avoiding evils or attempting good. In Scripture theology, wisdom is godliness, the wisdom which is from above. However, the wisdom of this world is mere human erudition; or the carnal policy of men, their craft and artifices in promoting their temporal interests; called also fleshly wisdom.

Webster (1939) defined wisdom as the quality of being wise; the faculty of masing the best use of knowledge; a combination of discernment, judgment, sagacity, and similar powers; understanding. He characterized human learning; erudition; knowledge of arts and of sciences; scientific or practical truth. For him quickness of intellect; readiness of apprehension; dexterity in execution; as, the workmanship wisdom of Belzaleel and Aholiab. He clarified wisdom as similar to natural instinct and sagacity. He described wisdom in Scripture, right judgment concerning religious and moral truth, true religion, goodness, piety, the knowledge and fear of God, and sincere and uniform obedience to his commands. He includes a statement that the seven wise men of Greece were philosophers, several of whom were legislators at an early period in Grecian history. They were: Perlander of Corinth, Pittacus of Mitylene, Thales of Miletus, Solon and Bias of Priene, Chilo of Sparta, and Cleobulus of Lindus.

In a personal correspondence with me, 3/25/23, Dr. Suwithida Charungkaittikul, born and raised in Thailand and Professor of Lifelong Learning, Chulalongkorn University, Bangkok, Thailand, shared that there are nine categories of local wisdom generated and operational in Thai Society: 1. Agriculture; 2. Industrial work and Handicraft; 3. Herbal doctors; 4. Management of natural resources; 5. Community's business and fund raising; 6. Art and Folk Drama; 7. Local Language and Literature; 8. Philosophy, religions and culture; and, 9. Traditional Thai foods and sweets.

Bartlett's Roget's Thesaurus first edition (1996, p. 346) has a multiplicity of phrases and words to expand on the word and concept of 'wisdom'. They are: sagacity, sagaciousness, sapience, reason, judgment, discretion, discernment, discrimination, perspicacity, penetration, perception, insight, intuition, understanding, comprehension, breadth of vision, profundity, knowledge, erudition, learning, experience, enlightenment, objectivity. soundness of mind, shrewdness, acumen, tact, levelheadedness, prudence, thoughtfulness, judiciousness, insightedness, foresight, forethought.

Hebrew Word for Wisdom

The ancient Hebrew word for wisdom transliterated into English is *"chokhmah"* which means wisdom, knowledge, experience, intelligence, insight, judgment. It is always used in a positive sense. True wisdom leads to reverence for the Lord (Job 28:28; Proverbs 2:2). In the Bible, *Chokhmah* is used to describe an entire range of human experiences: embroidering (Exodus 28:3), metal working (Exodus 31:3, 6), military strategy (Isaiah 10:13), diplomacy (Deuteronomy 34:9), shrewdness (2 Samuel 20:22), prudence, (Psalm 20:22), and practical spirituality (Isaiah 39:6) (Zodhiates, 1991, pp. 1612-1613).

Koine Greek Word for Wisdom

The ancient Koine Greek word for wisdom transliterated into English is *"sophia"* which means wisdom, the knowledge of how to regulate one's relationship with God, wisdom which is related to goodness (Matthew 12:42; Ephesians 1:8). When one is wise unto God, s/he is prudent with others, and knows how to regulate circumstances. Wise, applied to God and human beings both in respect to spiritual and heavenly wisdom; and also, of false and worldly wisdom; skillful, expert, sensible, judicious (Zodhiates, 1991, p. 1757).

Where Do People Find Wisdom?

So, one may ask the question, "do people know where one finds wisdom?" Not just some language definitions of wisdom, but actually the substance and essence of wisdom which may be used in one's life? (Job 28:12 ff). Job (our ever patient, troubled friend) asks,

> "But do people know where to find wisdom? Where can they find understanding? No one knows where to find it. It isn't among the living, It's not in the ocean or sea, nor can it be bought for gold or silver. Its value is greater than all the gold of Ophir, greater than precious onyx stone or sapphires. Wisdom is far more valuable than gold and crystal. It cannot be purchased with jewels mounted in fine gold. Coral and valuable rock crystal are worthless in trying to get it. The price of wisdom is far above pearls. Topaz from Ethiopia cannot be exchanged for it. Its value is greater than purest gold. But do people know where to find wisdom? Where can they find understanding? It is hidden from the eyes of all humanity, or sharp-eyed birds. Destruction and Death say, 'we have heard a rumor of where wisdom can be found'. God surely knows where it can be found, for He looked throughout the whole earth under all the heavens. He made the winds blow and determined how much rain should fall. He made the laws of the rain and prepared a path for the lightning. Then when He had done all this, he saw wisdom and measured it. He established it and examined it thoroughly. And this is what He says to all humanity; 'The fear of the Lord is true wisdom; to forsake evil is real understanding'."

Solomon's Wisdom

When Solomon was made King of Israel, he loved the Lord, walking in the statues of David, his father (I Kings 3:3ff). In Gibeon one night, God appeared to Solomon in a dream and asked, "What shall I give you?" Solomon answered by saying to God, "Give your servant an understanding heart to judge your people, that I may discern between good and bad: for who is able to judge your great people." Solomon's answer pleased God. God said to him,

> because you have made this request instead of asking for long life and riches for yourself, or your enemies' death; but rather you asked for yourself understanding to discern justice; I am doing what you requested. I am giving you a wise and understanding heart, so that there has never been anyone like you, nor will there ever again be anyone like you. I am giving you what you didn't ask for, riches and honor greater than that of any other king throughout your life. More than that, if

you will live according to my ways, obeying my laws and command more broadly like your father David, I will give you a long life.

Solomon was purported to be the wisest man throughout the whole earth. According to I Kings 5:9-14,

God gave Solomon exceptional wisdom and understanding, as well as a heart as vast as the sandy beach by the sea. Solomon's wisdom surpassed the wisdom of the people from the east and all the wisdom of Egypt. For he was wiser than everyone – wiser than Eitan the Ezrachi and wiser than Heiman, Kalkol and Darda the sons of Makol, so that his fame spread to all the surrounding nations. He composed 3,000 proverbs [of which only about one-third are in the Bible Book of Proverbs] and composed 1,005 songs. He could discuss trees, from the cedar in the Lebanon to the hyssop growing out of the wall; he could discuss wild animals, poultry, reptiles and fish. People from all nations came to hear the wisdom of Solomon, including kings from all over the earth who had heard of his wisdom.

Where Does Wisdom Come From?

Let us set a clear context for seeking to address this question. Wisdom is calling us, you and me. From Proverbs, Chapter 8: verses 6-31,

Listen! I *[wisdom]* will say worthwhile things; when I speak, my words are right. My mouth says what is true. Because my lips detest what is evil. All the words of my mouth are righteous; nothing false or crooked is in them. They are all clear to those who understand and straightforward to those who gain knowledge. Receive my instruction, rather than finest gold. For wisdom is better than pearls: nothing you want can compare with her. I, wisdom, live together with caution; I attain knowledge and discretion. The fear of the Lord is hatred of evil. I hate pride and arrogance, evil ways and duplicitous speech. Good advice is mine, and common sense; I am insight, power is mine. By me kings reign, and princes make just laws. By me princes govern, nobles too, and all the earth rulers. I love those who love me; and those who seek me will find me. Riches and honor are with me, lasting wealth and righteousness. My fruit is better than gold, fine gold, my produce better than fine silver. I follow the course of righteousness along the paths of justice, to endow with wealth those who love me and fill their treasuries. *ADONAI* [The Lord] made and personified me (wisdom) as one of His Divine attributes, as the beginning of His way, before the creation of the world, the first of His ancient works, I was created / appointed before the world, before the start, before the earth's beginnings - *before He created anything else* – I [wisdom] was established from everlasting, I belong to God, I am one of His attributes, He owns me. When I was brought forth, there were no ocean depths, no springs brimming with water. I was brought forth before the hills, before the mountains had settled in place, He had not yet made the earth, the fields, or even the earth's first grain of dust. When He established the heavens, I was there. When he drew the horizon's circle on the deep, when He set the skies above in place, when the fountains of the deep poured forth, when He prescribed boundaries for the sea, so that its water

would not transgress His command, when He marked out the foundation of the earth, I was with Him as someone He could trust. For me, every day was pure delight, as I played in His presence all the time, playing everywhere on His earth, and delighting to be with humankind.

Now, if God involved wisdom in His creative work, then it must follow that people need wisdom! So, wisdom belongs to God; it is His eternal possession. Wisdom is valuable – more precious than silver, gold, and rubies. Wisdom must be sought. Proverbs 2:1-6 says, My son, if you receive my words, and treasure my commands within you, so that you incline your ear to wisdom and apply your heart to understanding; If you seek her as silver, and search for her as hidden treasures; Then you will understand the fear of the Lord and find the knowledge of God. For the Lord gives wisdom; From His mouth come knowledge and understanding.

Solomon defined 'the fear of the Lord' by seven characteristics: They are:
1. The beginning of wisdom for the sage,
2. The beginning of knowledge for the learner,
3. The instruction of wisdom for the scholar,
4. The walk of righteousness for the saint,
5. The fountain of life for the failing,
6. A strong confidence for the faithful, and
7. The hope of the hereafter for the dying.

James' letter in the New Testament, Chapter 1: verses 5-6, declared,
> If any of you lack wisdom, let that person ask in faith with no hesitating or doubting of "the giving God [Who gives] to everyone liberally and ungrudgingly, without reproaching or faultfinding, and it will be given to that person.

Wisdom has excellent characteristics; is illustrated in nature; has prominent clients; pays the dividends of knowledge, life, longevity, security, wealth; and has profitable companions of prudence, knowledge and discretion. Do not reject her. There is nothing greater or grander in all of biblical literature, as setting forth the beauty and grace of that wisdom which has the fear of Jehovah as its chief part. But, do people know where to find wisdom? No one knows. It is hidden from our eyes. Notwithstanding, Job said, God surely knows where it can be found. We can get it from Him if we ask Him in faith.

Jesus had this to say in the Sermon on the Mount – the most important sermon He ever preached: Matthew 7:7-11
> Keep asking, and it will be given unto you; keep seeking, and you will find; keep knocking, and the door will be opened to you. For everyone who keeps asking receives; he who keeps seeking finds; and to him that keeps knocking, the door will be opened. Is there anyone here who, if his son asks for a loaf of bread, will give him a stone? Or if he asks for a fish, will give him a snake? So if you, even though you are bad, know how to give your children gifts that are good, how much more will your Father in heaven keep giving good things to those who keep asking Him!

Pillars of Wisdom

Pillars that undergird a building are important for it maintaining a steady and solid foundation. Likewise, Wisdom needs to have pillars to help undergird one's personal and professional life.

> The beginning of wisdom is: get wisdom! And with all your getting, get insight! Cherish her and she will exalt you; embrace her, and she will bring you honor; she will give your head a garland of grace, bestow on you a crown of glory. (Proverbs 4:7-9).

> Blessed be the name of God from eternity past to eternity future! For wisdom and power are His alone; He brings the changes of seasons and times; He installs and deposes kings; He gives wisdom to the wise, and knowledge to those with discernment. He reveals deep and secret things; He knows what lies in the darkness; and light dwells with Him. I thank and praise you, God of my ancestors, for giving me wisdom and power, and revealing to me what we wanted from you, for giving us the answer for the king's dream. (Daniel 2:20-23.)

> Who among you is wise and understanding? Let him demonstrate it by his good way of life, by the actions done in humility that grow out of wisdom. But if you harbor in your hearts, bitter jealousy and selfish ambition, don't boast and attack the truth with lies! This wisdom is not the kind that comes down from above; on the contrary, it is worldly, unspiritual, demonic. For where there are jealousy and selfish ambition, there will be disharmony and every foul practice. But the wisdom from above is, first of all, pure, then peaceful, kind, open to reason, full of mercy and good fruits, without partiality and without hypocrisy. And peacemakers who sow seed in peace raise a harvest of righteousness. (James 3: 13-18)

 "In the mystery of God the Father and Jesus Christ are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge" (Colossians 2:2-3). The Apostle Paul said to believers,

> We speak wisdom among them that are complete, yet not the wisdom of this world, nor of the princes of this world that come to naught. But we speak the wisdom of God in a mystery, even the hidden wisdom, that God ordained before the world to our glory. (I Corinthians 2:6-7)

God's wisdom is absolute, complete, perfect. The Apostle Paul also called Jesus the wisdom of God, and that Jesus is made unto us (who are believers) wisdom, righteousness, sanctification, and redemption" (I Corinthians 1:24, and 30) – but that is another topic for another day and paper. Hudson (2019) asserts "the seven pillars of wisdom are: prudence, sound judgment, knowledge and discretion, insight, fear of the Lord, power, and counsel." (Proverbs 8: 12-14; 9:1).

Andragogical Learning Change

Andragogical learning change in adult education focuses primarily on building and strengthening personal habits (competencies, abilities) for application in a specific situation. The process involves considerations to the change strategies relating to: knowledges, understandings, skills, attitudes, values, and/or interests.
Definitions of these would be as follows:
1. To develop KNOWLEDGE about…Generalizations about experience; Internalizations of information
2. To develop UNDERSTANDING of…Application of information and generalizations
3. To develop SKILL in…Incorporation of new ways of performing through practice
4. To develop ATTITUDES toward…Adopting new feelings through experiencing greater success with them than old feelings
5. To develop VALUES of…The adoption and priority arrangements of beliefs
6. To develop INTEREST in…Satisfying exposure to new activities/experiences.

A Definition of Competency (Ability, Habit): Competency is a cluster of knowledges, understandings, skills, attitudes, values, and interests that are necessary for the performance of a function.

Although none of these six andragogical elements say anything about wisdom, Milton Rokeach (1968), who had researched much on ends and means values, included 'wisdom – (a mature understanding of life)' as one of 18 beliefs to be chosen as the top priority guiding principle in one's life. To develop and clarify the value of wisdom and to determine its level of strength in one's life, seven questions need to be asked and answered. The more clearly and articulately you answer each question will show the strength of the value of wisdom in your life.

1. Are you *proud* of (do you prize or cherish) your position regarding wisdom?
2. Have you *publicly affirmed* your position regarding wisdom?
3. Have you chosen your position from *alternatives* regarding wisdom?
4. Have you chosen your position after *thoughtful consideration* of the pros and cons and consequences regarding wisdom?
5. Have you chosen your position *freely* regarding wisdom?
6. Have you *acted* on or done anything about your beliefs regarding wisdom?
7. Have you acted with *repetition*, pattern or consistency on this issue about wisdom?

Conclusion

In 1961, Bob Jones, Jr. published, and copyrighted the lyrics he had written of *The Bob Jones University Hymn,* titled "Wisdom of God." Bob Jones University (BJU) was my undergraduate *'alma mater'*. During the years I studied there, culture was very important throughout the BJU life, but primary in the 'artist series' we had each semester. Without exception, we had a Shakespeare Play performed each semester. Bob Jones, Jr., was

known as one of the 'top' Shakespeare Actors around the world. Thus, he played the leading role in every play, and his pronunciation and articulation of the Shakespeare English was impeccable and unmatched anywhere around the Globe. Because the BJU Hymn Jones wrote focused on the '*Wisdom of God*', I include it here as an important part of my addressing aspects of wisdom. He wrote the lyrics in Shakespear English, and it is presented that way. In the last verse. a few words are changed for adaptation to our place of learning outside BJU.

Wisdom of God, we would by thee be taught; Control our minds, direct our every thought. Knowledge alone life's problems cannot meet; We learn to live while sitting at Thy feet.

Light of the world, illumine us we pray, Our souls are dark, without Thy kindling ray; Torches unlighted, of all radiance bare, Touch them to flame, and burn in glory there!

Incarnate Truth, help us Thy truth to learn, Prone to embrace the falsehood we would spurn; Groping in error's maze for verity, Thou art the Truth we need to set us free.

Giver of life, we would not live to please Self or the world, nor seek the paths of ease; Dying Thou bringest life to sons of men; So may we dying live Thy life again.

Captain of Might, we yield to Thy command, Armored by faith, Thy Word our sword in hand; Fierce though the battle, Thine the victory, Bravely we'll strive & more than conq'rors be.

Eternal Lord, let heavens pass away, Earth be removed, no fear our hearts shall sway; Empires may crumble, dust return to dust; Secure are they, who in their Savior trust.

Unfailing love, we are so cold in heart, To us Thy passion for the lost impart; Give us Thy vision of the need of men, All learning will be used in service then.

Great King of Kings, this setting all is Thine, Make by Thy presence of this place a shrine; Thee may we meet within the learning walls, Go forth to serve Thee from these hallowed halls. Amen.

A summary of our discussion about wisdom, not only talk of it, but have confidence in it and take shape in the reality of the subsequent descriptions: The active operation of wisdom in our daily lives; enacting, governing and managing the details of wisdom moment by moment, hour by hour, day by day, week by week, month by month, year by year, decade by decade, century by century, and millennium by millennium. To emphasize the reality and substance of wisdom in action as designated above, I turn to a declaration made by the statesman – the apostle Paul - in his strongest and deepest treatise, (The Amplified Version of the Bible, the book to the Roman Church, chapter 11: verses 33 through 36): "Oh, the depth of the riches and wisdom and understanding of God! How unfathomable (inscrutable, unsearchable) are His judgments (His decisions)! And how untraceable (mysterious, undiscoverable) are His ways (His methods, His

paths)! For who has known the mind of the Lord and who has understood His thoughts, or whoever has been His counselor? Or who has first given God anything that he might be paid back or he could claim a recompense? For from Him and through Him and to Him are all things. [For all things originate with Him and come from Him; all things live through Him, and all things center in and tend to consummate and to end in Him.] To Him be glory forever! Amen" (so be it).

References

Bartlett's Roget's Thesaurus – 1st Edition. (1996). Little Brown & Company.

Funk, C. E. (1957). *Funk & Wagnalls new practical standard dictionary of the English language – Britannica world language edition, volume two q – z.* Funk & Wagnalls Company.

God's Wisdom for Daily Living, from the New King James Version: Every Word in Proverbs topically arranged. (1984). Thomas Nelson Publishers.

Hudson, C. D. (2019). *The most significant teachings of the bible: A quickview guide*. Unpublished Manuscript.

Jones, Bob Jr. (1961). Bob Jones University Hymn. In University Hymnal, Bob Jones University. Providence House Publishers.

Life Application Study Bible: New Living Translation (1996). Tyndale House Publishers, Inc.

Rokeach, M. (1968). *Beliefs, attitudes, and values*. Jossey-Bass Publishers, Inc.

Siewert, F. (1987). *The amplified bible, expanded edition*. Frances Siewert – Translator. Zondervan Corporation.

Stern, D. H. (2016). *Complete Jewish bible, revised edition.* Hendrickson Publishers Marketing, LLC.

Tenney, M. C. (1981). "Wisdom." In The Zondervan Pictorial Bible Dictionary. P. 896. Zondervan Publishing House of the Zondervan Corporation.

Thayer, J. H. (2007). *Thayer's Greek-English lexicon of the new testament - Coded with Strong's concordance numbers*. Hendrickson Publishers, Inc. pp. 119, 581-582.

Webster, N. (1828, 1995). *Noah Webster's first edition of the American dictionary of the English language.* American Foundation for Christian Education.

Webster, N. (1939). *Webster's twentieth-century of the English language: Being the unabridged dictionary.* Publishers Guild, Inc.

Zodhiates, S. (1991). *The Hebrew-Greek key word study bible: King James version: Revised edition.* AMG International, Inc.

*NOTE: All of the Bible Scriptures included in the Text of this paper are taken literally and/or mixed together from any one or more of the five versions mentioned in the above references: Stern's Complete Jewish Bible, Revised Edition; Stewart's Amplified Bible, Expanded Edition; Life Application Study Bible's. New Living Translation; God's Wisdom for Daily Living, from the New King James Version; or Zodhiates' Hebrew-Greek Key Word Study Bible-King James Version, Revised Edition. Each one was used for 'clarity of expression.'

THE PEDAGOGICAL POTENTIAL OF THE FACE-IT PORTAL: LEARNING FROM THE EXPERIENCES OF FACULTY AND STUDENTS

Marica Liotino[1]
Monica Fedeli[2]

ABSTRACT: The paper discusses the integration of technology in education, particularly in the context of engineering universities. It emphasizes the need for technology that aligns with pedagogical intentions and addresses the challenges faced by professors. The research is conducted in the context of a wider project, Face-it, which aims to develop a portal that supports teaching and learning by facilitating a graphical representation of course content, providing resources, and collecting feedback on learning. The research adopts an action research approach to investigate the portal's development and implementation in engineering courses. In the first phase, a standardized language between developers and users has been established by creating guidelines for describing course content and learning outcomes. Also, a new taxonomy is being developed to categorize skills and index teaching-learning resources; validating the taxonomy is part of the study as well. In the second phase, the study involves exploring the pedagogical affordance of the portal through activity system reconstruction. Data is collected through interviews and a survey with professors in the first phase, and through interviews with developers and professors, as well as surveys with students, in the second phase. The study's results aim to contribute to the existing literature on technology-enhanced learning in engineering education and guide future research directions for the Face-it project.

Keywords: engineering higher education, technology-enhanced learning, action research, taxonomy validation, educational technology, engineering, Face-it

Although several technological tools have been created to support the presentation and dissemination of content and the development of knowledge (such as computer-assisted instruction and massive open online courses), to support the management of curricula, instruction, and learners (i.e., learning management systems), or to provide immediate and personalized instruction or feedback (such as intelligent tutoring systems) varied are the problems still encountered by those teaching.

Among the most frequently encountered difficulties in undergraduate engineering teaching are the creation and presentation of adequate teaching materials, the creation of tools for assessment and evaluation of a wide range of skills from the simplest to the most complex, the actualization and application in the practical life of theoretical concepts, and the active involvement of the learner (Ouhbi & Pombo 2020, Zenger, 2018). Teachers also report as problematic for learners the understanding of existing connections between topics, which are often fragmented for reasons of curriculum design across different courses within university programs (Knorn et al 2019). Along with the use of specific teaching methods and techniques, the use of technological tools appears to be supportive in solving the problems listed above, but finding technologies appropriate to the intent and pedagogical needs of those teaching and the content they teach also appears to be problematic (Ouhbi & Pombo 2020). Moreover, factors related to the design of technology-supported learning environments, how technology is used to foster teaching and learning, and the effects generated by its use in engineering learning contexts at the

---

[1] University of Padua, marica.liotino@phd.unipd.it
[2] University of Padua, monica.fedeli@unipd.it

undergraduate level remain largely unexplored (Gottlieb et al.,2019). Indeed, over time, faculty members have developed technologies that are shoehorned into their teaching contexts, that could support their teaching needs and facilitate learning such as systems for formative assessment and learning progress monitoring (Rodrigues & Oliveira, 2014), dynamic concept maps with interactive response systems (Wang et al., 2008; Sun & Chen, 2016).

In the same vein, the Erasmus+ project group "Face It: Fostering Awareness on Program Contents in Higher Education using IT tools" is working on a portal for mapping program contents integrated with a database of exercises for learner self-assessment that responds to the needs of undergraduate engineering education. The effort here is to create a tool that responds to the needs of an educational community, triggering a shared process of developing the tool that is constantly informed by the research data itself. Not surprisingly, Face-it brings together engineers and pedagogies from different universities (Uppsala University, Université Libre de Bruxelles, Norwegian University of Science and Technology, University of Padua) to develop new shared methods for defining, collecting, managing, processing, and visualizing university program content in association with program learning objectives (PLOs), teaching-learning activities (TLAs), and intended learning outcomes (ILOs). The goal is to make the teaching-learning process visible by improving a common understanding of what is being taught, what is expected of those who are learning, and how teaching/learning is linked within a program. In addition, we aim to develop tools that in addition to visualizing expected learning can detect the status of learning, to provide data to the learning subjects themselves and to faculties to make informed choices. At the same time, the project aims to create common practices, requiring the interaction and collaboration of a variety of professionals committed to improving their competence through interaction and mutual support, generating true communities of practice (Lave, & Wenger, 1991; Wenger et al., 2002).

The study began by defining a shared process of content description by decomposing the teaching-learning process into a set of proximal outcomes expressed in terms of skills. In the second step, a categorization system for these skills was defined (the process of identifying the classification system and defining content will be explained in more detail in the methodology paragraph). In parallel, the portal for the graphical representation of teaching content and collection of teaching and assessment materials was developed. Initial initiatives to use the portal were then investigated, to explore the pedagogical potential of using such a tool when embedded in teaching-learning processes and to improve the functions of the portal itself. The pedagogical research work takes shape in this context, and the next section will add more information regarding its goals and theoretical approaches.

The Theoretical Framework

According to the definition given by the UNESCO International Bureau of Education (2016) when we talk about Technology Enhanced Learning (TEL), we mean the use of information and communication technologies (ICT) as tools to support student learning,

including assessment, tutoring, and instruction. It encompasses various applications such as web-based and computer-based learning, virtual classrooms, and digital collaboration. Content is delivered through electronic media, providing learners with access to new ideas for reflection and integration into their existing knowledge. Among different media, computers facilitate collaborative learning, encouraging teamwork and shared meaning, and social media/software applications like blogs and wikis enable communication, knowledge access, content creation, and online collaboration. So, when integrated into curriculum design, technology can enhance teaching practices and learning experiences. Other words used as synonyms are e-learning or digital learning, which utilizes technology to improve educational processes (UNESCO, 2016).

Educational Technology dwells on the pedagogical function of technology and, therefore, the investigation and development of methodologies and approaches to education using technology and the in-depth study of technological tools as a means to foster learning (Bonaiuti, et al., 2017). In an educational context, pedagogical affordances or educational features mean the potential support an ICT tool provides to achieve predetermined learning goals and include pedagogical approaches and learning activities (Analysis of Affordance, 2016). They are also defined as "those characteristics of an artifact that determine if and how a particular learning behavior could possibly be enacted within a given context" (Kirschner et al., 2004, p 51). For example, some affordances already identified in environments employing ICTs support science learning through four main effects: promotion of cognitive acceleration, provision of a wider range of experiences so that learners can relate science to their own and real-world experiences, increased learner self-management, and facilitation of data collection and presentation (Webb, 2005).

According to experts, a key step in the process of implementing TEL is to make room for reflection on users' needs, that is why initiatives that encourage the co-construction of such contexts seem to be more successful (Laurillard et al., 2009). Indeed, the incorporation of partially finished artifacts within a community allows them to be adapted to the interests and needs of the community, the artifact thus becoming the result of a process of participation and negotiation between those who develop it and those who use it (Laurillard et al., 2009). As Wenger (1999) confirms, when a new artifact is introduced into a group, it must go through a process of meaning-making before it can be used and introduced into practice. Also, according to Laurillard and colleagues (2009), holistic and systemic approaches should be favored in the adoption and implementation of TEL. There are also other aspects to consider according to the same authors. First, it is important to understand the professional context where the technology is implemented as this will also determine the curriculum, pedagogical choices, and assessment processes. Second, it is significant to make sure that there is consistency between the values of those who teach, and the innovation introduced and that faculties have time to reflect on their beliefs about learning and teaching because TEL requires a more structured and analytical approach to pedagogy. Third, it is important to promote co-development of TEL products and environments to create a sense of ownership through mutual involvement, it would also be optimal if the relationship of interdependence between those conducting the research and the user is highlighted in the research conducted. Fourth, to make the best use of technology, it appears necessary to accompany faculties

in breaking with institutional models of teaching and learning in favor of radical change. Finally, it is essential that those who teach collaborate in the design of teaching or activities that use technology (Laurillard et al., 2009, p 304).

A sociocultural approach characterizes this study in line with what has just been reported and the author's ideas. Indeed, in sociocultural thinking "artifacts are at the center of human learning and knowing," and their mediating function is a central element (Sutherland et al., 2009, p. 41). However, ICT tools alone do not create better teaching or learning, rather the inclusion of new ICT tools in an educational context is part of an overall process of redesigning and redefining content and methods (Sutherland et al., 2009).

The integration of different theoretical frameworks underlies this study; in fact, the use of the framework of pedagogical practices related to ICT use (Webb & Cox, 2004) along with activity theory (Engeström, 1987) provides a sufficiently rich lens for interpreting the processes of integration and portal use. Activity theory (Engeström, 1987) helps us analyze the process of implementing the Face-it portal in engineering classrooms, capturing the complexity of educational contexts. In line with what has been said so far, activity theory sees the integration of technologies as tools that mediate social action. Specifically, an artifact "to become a tool is to become part of someone's activity" (Christiansen, 1996, p. 177).

As shown in Figure 1, in addition to the subjects and instrument considered, the activity system also includes the object, that represents the goals, motivations, and purposes for which one engages in activities; the rules, that is, the mediating elements such as regulations, cultural norms, and practices of the people involved in the activities; the community, understood as the physical and conceptual environment where the activity takes place; and finally, the division of labor, thus variations in roles and responsibilities (Mwanza-Simwami, 2011).

Figure 1

Activity system
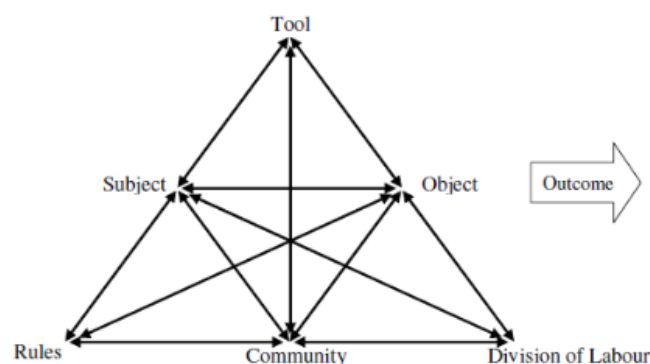
Source: Engeström, 2001

Such a framework also supports us in identifying contradictions within and between activity systems and the subsequent refinement of the instrument and its implementation processes (Ekundayo et al., 2012).

On the other hand, the framework for pedagogical practices related to the use of ICT proposed by Webb & Cox (2004) emphasizes the need to examine the values and beliefs of ideas along with pedagogical reasoning to identify ICT-related pedagogical approaches of those who teach. In this way, their practices of using ICT tools can be understood (Figure 2).

By pedagogical reasoning, the authors refer to Shulman's model of pedagogical reasoning and action (Shulman, 1987), a useful framework for exploring how decisions about teaching-learning processes are made (Starkey, 2010).

Figure 2

Framework for pedagogical practices relating to ICT use.
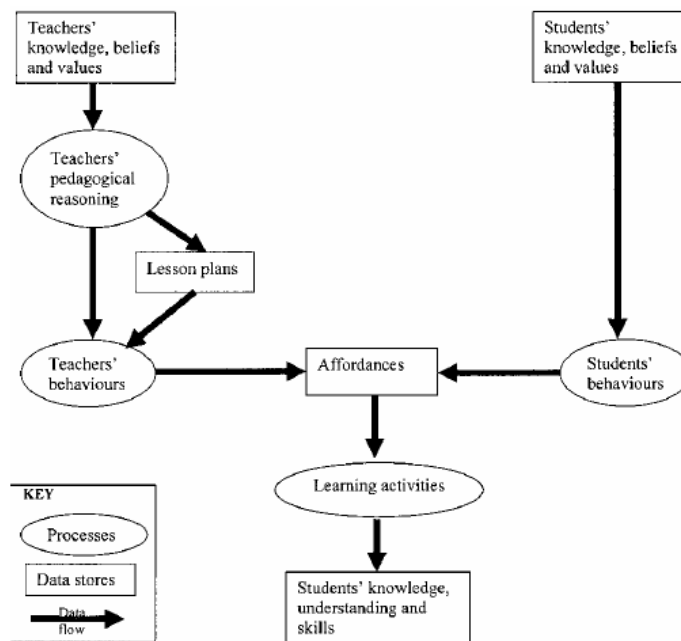
Source: Webb & Cox, 2004, p. 239

Methodology

The research work is articulated through action research, where the researcher and academic staff are co-participants (Trinchero, 2002; McNiff & Whitehead, 2009). The cornerstone of the research process is the action-reflection spiral, characterized specifically by two main phases (Figure 3). The first phase was devoted to determining a shared language useful for describing teaching content and defining its sequencing. The second phase, following the fine-tuning of the portal also based on previous

contributions, was devoted to deepening the pedagogical potential of the same and to the study of the first experiences of its use by faculties, students, and undergraduates in different university engineering courses.

Figure 3

Research process.
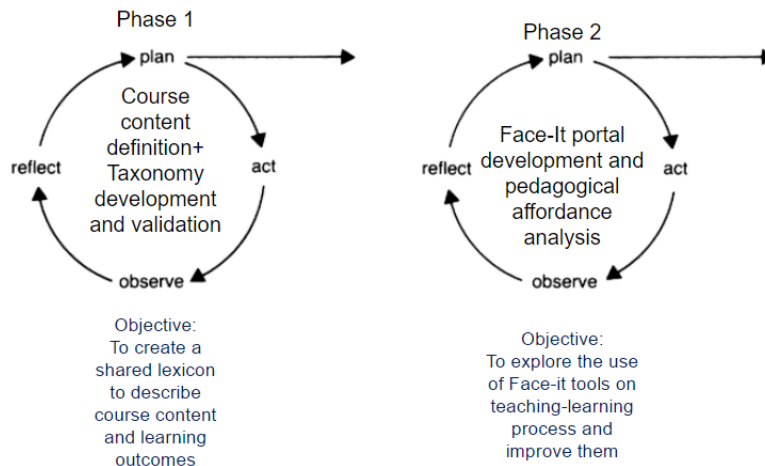
Source: Elaborated from McNiff & Whitehead, 2002, p.41

The following paragraphs will go on to briefly explain the references and actions taken in the two phases.

The Description and Categorization of Teaching Content

To ensure the use of a standard, shared language among the different project members and for all portal users, guides were generated about how to describe teaching content and expected learning. The literature search turned primary attention to curriculum development studies of the 1950s and 1960s, primarily focused on identifying educational goals and translating them into curricula. Related is constructive alignment, an approach to curriculum design that seeks to optimize the conditions for quality learning and create a coherent learning environment that aligns teaching methods and assessment practices with teaching objectives (McMahon & Thakore, 2006). It uses ILO definitions to describe what students should know and be able to do by the end of the course; a definition of TLAs to help students achieve the ILO; and an identification of assessment criteria and methods (Biggs, 2003). The curriculum design and development movements, focusing on sequential structuring and learning assessment, introduced taxonomies into educational contexts. Typically, they stem from behaviorist models of task analysis (analysis of the basic requirements for performing a task) and the construction of learning process feedback systems originated from the cognitivist framework (Bonaiuti et al., 2017). Bloom et al. (1956) first introduced the concept of the taxonomy of educational objectives intending to reduce the ambiguity of educational activities and sequentially organize the assessment process. The goal was to identify expected behaviors and the skills required for their achievement.

70

Such a tool married our needs to categorize the skills expected and possessed and to index the teaching resources in the portal. A review of the literature on engineering higher education challenged the use of existing educational taxonomies, prompting our choice to create one from scratch, inspired by existing taxonomies, but one that would best fit the needs of the academic community in question and the project. The scholarly literature did not suggest a satisfactory and validated process of taxonomy development and validation; therefore, the processes previously followed by other scholars to validate their taxonomies were studied. The process to be followed was based on taxonomy development and validation process reported by other scholars (Šmite et al., 2014; Zamanzadeh et al., 2014; Creswell, & Clark, 2007) and scale validation processes (Boateng et al., 2018) as a reference. In detail, a "conceptual-to-empirical" taxonomy/rubric development type was followed (Nickerson et al, 2017) following a deductive method, where typologies were derived qualitatively, but subsequently were evaluated quantitatively for their goodness of fit to collected data (Bailey, 1994).

As can be seen in Figure 4, the process consists of two main steps and six steps.

Figure 4

Taxonomy development and validation process
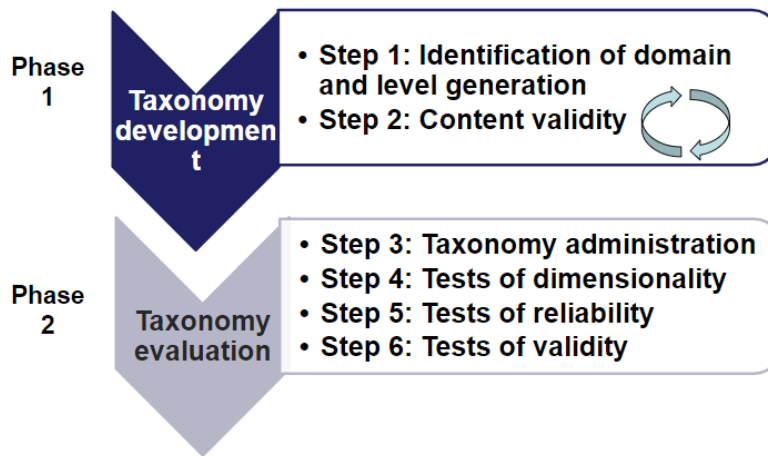
Source: Authors' creation

First, following a study of the literature, we identified the domain and generated the levels, creating a draft of the taxonomy. The new taxonomy emphasizes the difference between cognitive and practical skills and consists of two main dimensions USE and EXPLAIN. Each domain describes four levels of skill complexity.

We then evaluated the content validity of this draft taxonomy. According to Boateng et al. (2018), the assessment of content validity is best done through a combination of external expert judges and judges from the target population; therefore, ten faculties and subject matter experts were recruited through email (9 male, one female). They belonged to the professional network of the face-it educational community and were not involved in writing the taxonomy. Ten meetings (one for each participant) were organized using a

video call platform. All meetings were conducted in the same way: participants were asked to read the manual created to explain how to use the taxonomy. Then, they evaluated the taxonomy level of a series of 15 exercises. Each meeting ended with a semi-structured interview.

Based on the feedback collected the taxonomy was modified, and a rubric was also constructed to facilitate its use by professors and students. In addition, based on the interviews, a survey was created to test the taxonomy with a larger number of people. Content validity testing was performed a second time, recruiting new professors, and introducing testing by some students as well (five engineering professors, two pedagogy professors, and three students). This time the data collection was carried out through the survey, which was performed in my presence and contextually tested. The survey guided participants in discovering the taxonomy, applying it through 15 exercises, and collecting data on taxonomy validity. According to the new information gained during the second validity check both the taxonomy and the survey have been modified. At this time, the second phase of the taxonomy development and evaluation process has been undertaken and the survey has been sent via email to a statistically relevant sample. National and International members of the control systems engineering community have been involved in this phase.

The Pedagogical Potential of the Face-it Portal

Following the Educational Technology perspective and what is already mentioned in the theoretical framework, in the second cycle, the study sought to understand how the portal, in its current version, can support faculties in achieving their educational goals and those who are learning. Therefore, the goal is to measure the pedagogical potential/affordance of the tool designed and developed by the Face-it group to understand how it can be used to support teaching-learning processes. Specifically, this phase of the study analyzes the actual and perceived pedagogical aspects of the Face-it portal. The actual (or designed) affordances "are the full set of designed features or functions that the artifact can provide for its users to perform certain tasks. [...] Comparatively, the perceived affordances often refer to those features that are known to or often used by the user" (Wang et al., 2010, pp. 70-71).

Therefore, the developers' presentation of the portal's features is accompanied by the exploration of the opinion of engineering faculty who have employed the tool in their teaching. The study aims to analyze the processes of development and implementation of the Face-it portal, and the pedagogical opportunities offered by the integration of the tool in terms of improving teaching through the study of the first experiences of use in different contexts, delving into the complexity of each experience and giving voice to the different actors involved in the various contexts. So, at this stage, the research seeks to elucidate the decisions made by faculties when they opted to use the portal, how the portal was integrated into instructional design, the achievement of the goals it aimed to support, and why these choices were made. It also aims to explore how the implementation took place in teaching and learning processes and what the results were by listening to the voices of all members of the system.

Two cycles of semi-structured interviews with professors/developers and a survey of the students will help us to reconstruct the activity systems where the portal has been used.

Findings

Considering that the survey for the validation of the taxonomy is still active, as well as the conduct of faculty/developer interviews and the survey of students, who used the portal, only some partial data related to the taxonomy development and evaluation process will be presented here.

In the test of taxonomy content validity, five main categories are explored:

- Clarity, especially in terms of vocabulary, structure, and purpose, to see if the taxonomy is well and clearly described (Boateng et al., 2018; Mountrouidou et al., 2019; Wolever et al., 2020).
- Exhaustiveness, meaning integrity, i.e., compile all the dimensions and categories needed to practice difficulty classification (Huff et al., 1984; Mountrouidou et al., 2019; Tett et al., 2000).
- Effectiveness, i.e., whether the set goals were achieved, in this case, the difficulty of the exercise is graded and scored accordingly (Alvino et al., 2006; Bezzi, 2007; Pozzoli & Manetti, 2011).
- Relevance i.e., the usefulness to catalog the difficulty of exercises and to assess teaching-learning processes (Boateng et al., 2018; DeVon, 2007; Huff et al., 1984; Valentijn et al., 2015; Wolever et al., 2020).
- Distinctness between levels, i.e., whether the categories are confined, and each category is decoupled from the others (Spangler & Kreulen, 2002; Huff et al., 1984; Mountrouidou et al., 2019).

In the first test (with ten faculties and subject matter experts) the clarity of the taxonomy was generally understood, although some participants found the structure and lexicon less clear, with a few identifying critical issues in the wording. The explaining dimension was deemed less intuitive than the using dimension, possibly due to a lack of distinctness between levels. Participants felt uncertain about labeling choices during assessment compilation, indicating a need for clearer differentiation and additional examples in the manual. In terms of efficacy, all participants recognized the usefulness of the taxonomy for labeling exercises, although two expressed doubts about objectivity. The taxonomy was considered incomplete, lacking dimensions such as time and complexity. However, participants found the taxonomy relevant for teaching, as it helped align expectations, facilitate communication, and share materials within the community. For more details about the first version of the taxonomy and the first content validity test see Liotino et al., (2021).

Based on the feedback collected, the taxonomy was revised, and a rubric was created, i.e., "an assessment tool that explicitly lists the criteria for student work and articulates the levels of quality for each criterion", as well as the scoring strategy used to judge the

performance/process (Ragupathi & Lee, 2020, pp.73-74). In this rubric the levels of quality are identified following the new taxonomy implemented, to operationalize and facilitate the use of the taxonomy in teaching-learning processes.

We now consider what emerged from the second test (in which other seven faculty and three students were involved). Although the clarity of the vocabulary and structure of the second version of the taxonomy appeared to have improved over the previous version, participants still experienced some difficulties during the labeling exercises. The main reasons identified for these difficulties related to the clarity of the exercises used (those to be labeled) and a still unclear difference between the E2 and E3 levels. In addition, the second version of the taxonomy would still be missing dimensions related to metacognition, and categories related to real-life scenarios/problems. Nevertheless, most participants indicated the taxonomy as effective for the classification of assessment resources and the assessment process, some, however, expressed doubts about the real existence of a level 0 (in which only computational and not comprehension/explanation skills are required or vice versa depending on the dimension being considered, whether Using or Explaining respectively).

Based on what emerged in this second step the rubric and the taxonomy were further edited and translated into English by two professional translators who first identified their translation and finally delivered an agreed translation. The survey for the validation of the taxonomy was also modified under the results of this phase. One substantial change involved modifying, replacing, and removing some exercises used in the labeling phase, as their lack of clarity was found to compromise the taxonomy test.

Conclusions

In response to the difficulties expressed by engineering faculties in the scientific literature, in line with the European Commission's initiatives to digitize higher education and hinged on the work of the Face-it project, this research aims to promote a participatory process for defining a description of teaching-learning content that can be functional for the Face-it portal. At the same time the study seeks the exploration of the processes of choice, development, and implementation of the portal in teaching and learning activities and to understand the impact of such choice in teaching-learning processes.

The objectives defined the first two phases of the research. Although the data collection of the first and second phases has not yet been completed, it is possible to dwell on the results of the first steps of the first phase. These steps saw us engaged in defining the description of teaching-learning content through the study of literature and the production of guides. Subsequently, the use of a new taxonomy was identified as suitable for the classification of the intended learning outcome. The content validity of the first draft of the taxonomy (developed from existing taxonomies in the literature) was tested by ten subject matter experts who were then interviewed. The clarity of the taxonomy and the exercises used to use it prompted us to develop a second version and modify the tools provided to guide its use (manual and exercises). The second version was also tested in

terms of content validity by asking five faculties and three students to answer a questionnaire. Although the taxonomy was clearer, difficulties remained in distinguishing the levels within one dimension. The exercises (used as objects for the application of the taxonomy) also compromised the test of the taxonomy because they were poorly understood. These problems were overcome by modifying the survey and creating a third version of the taxonomy.

The results analyzed so far were informative for the progress of the face-it project. They have also highlighted a gap in the literature concerning the development and validation processes of taxonomies in the educational field, providing a contribution to reflection on this topic. The data being collected will contribute not only to the definition of the future research lines of the Face-it project but also to the literature on the use of TEL in engineering higher education, in the hope of promoting more informed processes in the choice and adoption of technologies for teaching.

References

Alvino, S., Busetti, E., Forcheri, P., & Ierardi, M. G. (2006). Networked learning and reusable teaching resources. *Italian Journal of Educational Technology* (IJET), *14*(3), 30-38. https://ijet.itd.cnr.it/article/view/403

Bailey, K. D. (1994). *Typologies and taxonomies: An introduction to classification techniques* (Vol. 102). Sage.

Bezzi, C. (2007). *Cos'è la valutazione: un'introduzione ai concetti, le parole chiave e i problemi metodologici*. Franco Angeli. https://books.google.it/books?id=tr4Lo3I3lf4C

Biggs, J. (2003). Aligning teaching for constructing learning. *Education*, *94*(11), 112106. https://doi.org/10.1063/1.3100776

Bloom, B. S., Engelhart, M. D., Furst, E. J., Hill, W. H., & Krathwohl, D. R. (1956). *Taxonomy of educational objectives: The classification of educational goals; handbook i, cognitive domain*. David Mckay.

Boateng, G. O., Neilands, T. B., Frongillo, E. A., Melgar-Quiñonez, H. R., & Young, S. L. (2018). Best practices for developing and validating scales for health, social, and behavioral research: A primer. *Frontiers in Public Health*, *6*(June), 1–18. https://doi.org/10.3389/fpubh.2018.00149

Bonaiuti, G., Calvani, A., & Ranieri, M. (2017). *Fondamenti di didattica: teoria e prassi dei dispositivi formativi*. Carocci.

Christiansen, E. (1996). Tamed by a rose: Computers as tools in human activity. In B. A. Nardi (Ed.), *Context and consciousness: Activity theory and human computer interaction* (pp. 175-198). MIT Press.

Creswell, J. W., & Clark, V. L. P. (2007). *Designing and conducting mixed methods research*. Sage Publications.

DeVon, H. A., Block, M. E., Moyle-Wright, P., Ernst, D. M., Hayden, S. J., Lazzara, D. J., ... & Kostas-Polston, E. (2007). A psychometric toolbox for testing validity and reliability. *Journal of Nursing scholarship*, *39*(2), 155-164.

Ekundayo, S. Wang, W., & Andrade, A. D. (2012). The use of activity theory and its principle of contradictions to identify and analyse systemic tensions: The case of a Virtual University and its partners. CONF-IRM 2012 Proceedings. 33. http://aisel.aisnet.org/confirm2012/33

Engeström Y. (1987). Expansive learning at work: Toward an activity theoretical conceptualization. *Journal of Education and Work*, *14*, (1), 133- 156.

Engestrom, Y. (2001). Expansive learning at work: Toward an activity theoretical reconceptualization. *Journal of Education and Work*, *14*(1), 133–156. https://doi.org/10.1080/13639080020028747

Gottlieb, M., Utesch, M. C., & Böhm, M. (2019, April). Beyond 2030: Challenges of engineering education in an information systems driven world-an extraction based on research topics. In *2019 IEEE Global Engineering Education Conference (EDUCON)* (pp. 458-466). IEEE.

Huff, S. L., Rivard, S., Grindlay, A., & Suttie, I. P. (1984). An empirical study of decision support systems. *INFOR: Information Systems and Operational Research*, *22*(1), 21–39.

Kirschner, P., Strijbos, J. W., Kreijns, K., & Beers, P. J. (2004). Designing electronic collaborative learning environments. *Educational technology research and development*, *52*(3), 47-66.

Knorn, S., Varagnolo, D., Staffas, K., Wrigstad, T., & Fjällström, E. (2019). Quantitative analysis of curricula coherence using directed graphs. *IFAC-PapersOnLine*, *52*(9), 318-323.

Laurillard, D., Oliver, M., Wasson, B., Hoppe, U. (2009). Implementing technology-enhanced learning. In N. Balacheff, S. Ludvigsen, T. de Jong, A. Lazonder, & S. Barnes (Eds.), *Technology-enhanced learning*. Springer, Dordrecht. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-1-4020-9827-7_17

Lave, J., & Wenger, E. (1991). *Situated learning: Legitimate peripheral participation*. Cambridge University Press.

Liotino M., Fedeli M., Garone A., Knorn S., Varagnolo D., & Garone E. (2021). A novel taxonomy to assess engineering students: The Face-it project. In *Proceeding of 70th Annual American Association for Adult and Continuing Education Conference, Moving the Needle: Digital Divide, Social Justice, and Adult Education* October 4-8, 2021, Miramar Beach, Florida.

McMahon, T., & Thakore, H. (2006). Achieving constructive alignment: Putting outcomes first. *Quality of Higher Education*, *3*, 10-19.

McNiff, J., & Whitehead, J. (2002). *Action research: Principles and Practice*, 3rd edition. https://doi.org/10.4324/9780203112755

McNiff, J., & Whitehead, J. (2009). *You and your action research project: Third edition*. https://doi.org/10.4324/9780203871553

Mountrouidou, X., Billings, B., & Mejia-Ricart, L. (2019). Not just another Internet of Things taxonomy: A method for validation of taxonomies. *Internet of Things*, *6*(2019), 100049. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.iot.2019.03.003

Mwanza-Simwami, D. (2011). AODM come quadro concettuale e modello per descrivere le esperienze dello studente con la tecnologia. *Journal of e-Learning and Knowledge Society-Italian Version* (until 2012), *7*(3).

Nickerson, R. C., Varshney, U., Muntermann, J., Nickerson, R. C., & Varshney, U. (2017). *A method for taxonomy development and its application in information systems. 9344*. https://doi.org/10.1057/ejis.2012.26

Ouhbi, S., & Pombo, N. (2020, April). Software engineering education: Challenges and perspectives. In 2020 *IEEE Global Engineering Education Conference (EDUCON)* (pp. 202-209). IEEE.

Pozzoli M., & Manetti, G. (2011). *Pianificazione e controllo per le aziende non profit. Valutazioni di efficacia, efficienza, economicità ed impatto socio-economico.* FrancoAngeli.

Ragupathi, K., & Lee, A. (2020). Beyond fairness and consistency in grading: The role of rubrics in higher education. In C.S.Sanger, & N. W. Gleason, *Diversity and inclusion in global higher education* (pp. 73-95). Palgrave Macmillan. ISBN 978-981-15-1628-3

Rodrigues, F., & Oliveira, P. (2014). A system for formative assessment and monitoring of students' progress. *Computers & Education*, *76*, 30-41.

Shulman, L.S. (1987). Knowledge and teaching: Foundations of the new reform. *Harvard Educational Review*, *57*(1), 1–22.

Šmite, D., Wohlin, C., Galviņa, Z., & Prikladnicki, R. (2014). An empirically based terminology and taxonomy for global software engineering. *Empirical Software Engineering*, *19*, 105-153.

Spangler, S., & Kreulen, J. (2002). Interactive methods for taxonomy editing and validation. *International Conference on Information and Knowledge Management, Proceedings*, (pp. 665–668). https://doi.org/10.1145/584792.584913

Starkey, L. (2010). Teachers' pedagogical reasoning and action in the digital age. *Teachers and Teaching: theory and practice*, *16*(2), 233-244.

Sun, J. C. Y., & Chen, A. Y. Z. (2016). Effects of integrating dynamic concept maps with Interactive Response System on elementary school students' motivation and learning outcome: The case of anti-phishing education. *Computers & Education*, *102*, 117-127.

Sutherland, R., Lindstrom, B., & Lahn, L. (2009). Sociocultural perspectives on technology-enhanced learning and knowing. In N. Balacheff, S. Ludvigsen, T. de Jong, A. Lazonder, & S. Barnes (Eds.), *Technology-Enhanced Learning* (pp. 39-54). Springer. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-1-4020-9827-7_17

Tett, R., Guterman, A., Bleier, A., & Murphy, P. (2000). Development and content validation managerial competence. *Human Performance*, *13*(3), 205–251.

UNESCO. (2016, May 23). *Technology-enhanced learning*. UNESCO International Bureau of Education. https://www.ibe.unesco.org/en/glossary-curriculum-terminology/t/technology-enhanced-learning

Valentijn, P. P., Vrijhoef, H. J. M., Ruwaard, D., Boesveld, I., Arends, R. Y., & Bruijnzeels, M. A. (2015). Towards an international taxonomy of integrated primary care: A Delphi consensus approach. *BMC Family Practice*, *16*(1). https://doi.org/10.1186/s12875-015-0278-x

Wang T. K., Huang, Y. M., Jeng, Y. L., & Wang, T. I. (2008). A blog-based dynamic learning map. *Computers & Education*, *51*(1), 262-278.

Wang, Q.Y., Woo, H.L., & Chai, C.S. (2010). Affordances of ICT tools for learning. In C.S. Chai & Q.Y. Wang (Eds.), *ICT for self-directed and collaborative learning* (pp. 70-79). Pearson/Prentice Hall.

Webb, M., & Cox, M. (2004). A review of pedagogy related to information and communications technology. *Technology, pedagogy and education*, *13*(3), 235-286.

Webb, M. E. (2005). Affordances of ICT in science learning: Implications for an integrated pedagogy. *International Journal of Science Education*, *27*(6), 705–735. https://doi.org/10.1080/09500690500038520

Wenger, E. (1999). *Communities of practice: Learning, meaning, and identity*. Cambridge University Press.

Wenger, E., McDermott, R., & Snyder, W. M. (2002). Cultivating communities of practice. *Harvard Business Review*, *80*(9), 56-67.

Wolever, R. Q., Kahn, J. A., Davis, J., Shields, D., & Schoenberg, P. L. A. (2020). Introducing the eMCCTM: A validated taxonomy to advance targeted application of mindfulness skills. *Mindfulness*, *11*(3), 698–708. https://doi.org/10.1007/s12671-019-01280-x

Zamanzadeh, V., Rassouli, M., Abbaszadeh, A., Majd, H. A., Nikanfar, A., & Ghahramanian, A. (2014). Details of content validity and objectifying it in instrument development. *Nursing Practice Today*, *1*(3), 163–171.

Zenger, K. (2018). Challenges and new directions in control engineering education. In E. Juuso, E. Dahlquist, & K. Leiviskä (Eds.), *Proceedings of the 9th EUROSIM Congress on Modelling and Simulation (EUROSIM 2016), The 57th SIMS Conference on Simulation and Modelling (SIMS 2016)* (pp. 819-823). (Linköping electronic conference proceedings; No. 142). LINKÖPING UNIVERSITY ELECTRONIC PRESS.

ADDRESSING THE IMPOSTER SYNDROME AS IT RELATES TO INTERNATIONAL STUDENTS ATTENDING AMERICAN COLLEGES

Angelo Marade, Ed.D.[1]

ABSTRACT: Recent studies examining college student behaviors in America, Australia, Bangladesh, Canada, China, India, Southeast Asia (Cambodia, Laos, Malaysia, Myanmar, Thailand, and Vietnam) and Turkey have each reported notable depression and anxiety rates among college students. During this time when college student depression and anxiety is being described as prevalent across many countries, international college students' fitting-in and feeling a sense of belonging in their respective academic environments is a focal point extremely worthy of attention. This study features primary resources and existing literature that detail international students' stress factors, anxiety related behaviors, and the roles these factors play in contributing to international students experiencing the Imposter Syndrome – that is, a lack of a sense of belonging. Factors found to be likely contributors to international students experiencing the Imposter Syndrome include language acquisition in academic and social settings, course implementation by instructors, course selection outcomes, and parent-student relationship pressures as they relate to parents' expectations and students' academic outcomes. Findings from this study can be useful to instructors, administrators, student counselors, and academic advisors of international students.

Keywords: International College Students, Anxiety, Cognitive Processing, ESL Learning Challenges, Alternative Learning Methods

Currently, when anxiety and depression among international college students is at concerning rates (Auerbach et al., 2018; Dessauvagie et al., 2022), a discussion about factors that contribute to international students' academic challenges and their linkage to anxiety and depression is warranted. This study surveys these factors and their influence towards international college students sensing a lack of belonging to such a degree that they can phase into a sphere known as the Imposter Syndrome (Brookfield, 2015). The study concludes with a discussion of cognitive attunement (Marade, 2021) and its role in helping to increase international students' sense of belonging and enhancement of their academic journeys as they attend varying levels of colleges in the United States.

Factors Contributing to Challenges for International Students

Numerous factors can create challenges for international college students. The varying array of challenges that international college students may experience have been attributed to institutional factors, social integration and academic situations (Schulmann & Choudaha, 2014). Schulmann and Choudaha (2014) explained that some students' challenges can even begin to manifest very early-on because they arise from the differences in pre-arrival expectations and on-campus realities once an international student arrives to their campus. According to Jones and Kim (2020) feeling out of place in a college campus community can certainly be a challenge for international college students. In fact, Jones and Kim (2020) stated that a "psychological sense of community and social connectedness are two of the most highly reliable estimates of a student's success (p. 81). Aljohani (2016) also found that international college students' challenges

---

[1] Director of Program Development - Global Teaching and Training, amarademphisedu@outlook.com

are as much of a social nature as an academic nature. Aljohani categorized several factors that can affect international college students. Some of the categories from the study included: social factors, institutional factors. student related factors, and family related factors.

In a relevant study, Le (2021) described some of the challenges that students of varying races and ethnicities experience in college. Many of the experiences discussed in that study coincide with factors discussed thus far. For example, Le mentioned the importance of both institutional and social support. She also mentioned that pre-conceived notions of others can be a challenge for some students. A notable excerpt from Le's study was her dialogue regarding some social conceptions about Asians. She stated that Asian American students are stereotyped as "hardworking, high achieving, and academic" (p. 124) and although these types of expectations are most likely meant to be positive, they can create anxiety and stress for some Asian students. This is because a consequence of high expectations for a student to always succeed is a student's lasting pressure of always being expected to excel.

When it comes to experiencing pressure to excel, many international college students sense pressure from their parents. Specifically, many international college student education programs are paid for by parents (Bodycott, 2009). Consequently, the parents will expect consistent positive results. Moreover, in many cases, the parents will also want a say in the academic endeavor – including the selection of a college major that the parents and/or family members feel will provide a sustainable work-career for their child (Bodycott, 2009), this can also be a challenge. As noted by Aljohani (2016), demands such as parents choosing a college major for a student, and high expectations of parents and family members can be considered as challenges for some international college students. The importance of pointing out and discussing these factors is the fact that these types of challenges can be precursors that lead students towards the mental path of phasing into the Imposter Syndrome (Brookfield, 2015).

The Imposter Syndrome

In defining the imposter syndrome, Murray-Johnson (2018) stated that the feeling of being an imposter is "widely characterized by a strong sense of personal inauthenticity and the general sense of feeling like a fraud." (p. 2). Impostership has also been characterized as having a feeling of "in-between-ness" (Olson, 2018, p. 8) which can be considered as, not fitting-in. For some, feeling like an imposter and feeling a lack of a sense of belonging can be the result of many types of perceived differences compared to others. For example, it can be perceived differences in academic competence compared to others. For some, it can be perceived differences in language skills compared to others. According to Brookfield (2015), impostership is any perception deeply seated in one's mind that leads them to think "they possess neither the talent nor the right to become college students" (p. 56).

An international student's perception that they are incapable and do not belong has the potential to interfere with their academic success (Hurtado & Carter, 1997; Strayhorn,

2012). In fact, Brookfield (2015) stated, if not attended to, these types of emotional twists and turns within a student's mind, have the potential to end the student's academic career. From a cognitive perspective, the scenario that Brookfield explained relates to cognitive interference (Marade, 2021). That is, the level of negativity within the individual can become so intense over time, it creates a cognitive interference affect strong enough to decrease momentum (see Figure 1). The resulting frustration can then lead to increasing anxiousness that causes a reduction in motivation, a loss of interest, and ultimately – withdrawal from the endeavor altogether (Miceli & Castelfranchi, 2000).

Figure 1

The Cognitive Interference Affect – (Adapted from Marade, 2021)
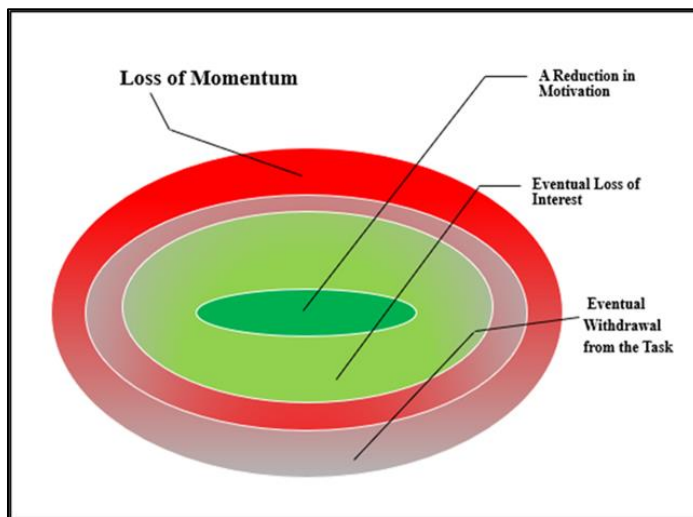
Changes in Motivation and Interests

Marade and Brinthaupt (2018) explained the importance of the relationship between interests and academics as it pertains to completing a college program. Illeris (2007) also addressed student interest. In fact, he considered a lack of interest to be a barrier to learning for students. In speaking of adult learners, which many international college students are, Illeris stated, "adults are not very inclined to learn something they are not interested in" (Illeris, in Radovan & Đorđević, 2004, p. 27). The Illeris points regarding students' interests and academics help us to understand that a lack of interest relates to a lack of motivation. Further, if the path continues, a lack of motivation equates to a lack of achievement (DePasque & Tricomi, 2015). More specifically, "changes in motivation facilitate processing in areas that support learning and memory" (DePasque & Tricomi, 2015, p. 175). Finally, as noted by Miceli and Castelfranchi (2000), anxiousness, feelings of incapability, and loss of motive can lead to feelings of dread of attending classes, and eventual withdrawal. Taken together, as motivation diminishes, successful achievements diminish – and as successful achievements diminish, feelings of incompetence increase that can lead to voluntary cognitive withdrawal (Marade, 2021).

Some confuse voluntary cognitive withdrawal with procrastination. Chowdhury and Pychyl (2018) clarify this misconception as follows: "The fundamental flaw associated with the definition of active procrastination is that Chun and Choi (2005) have misconstrued purposeful, deliberate delay as procrastination" (p. 7). As was discussed in Marade (2021), it is important to differentiate between the two. That is, voluntary cognitive withdrawal is a result of anticipatory dread, and it is a deliberate delay of task because of a lack of interest and motivation (see Figure 2).

Figure 2

Voluntary Cognitive Withdrawal (Marade, 2021)
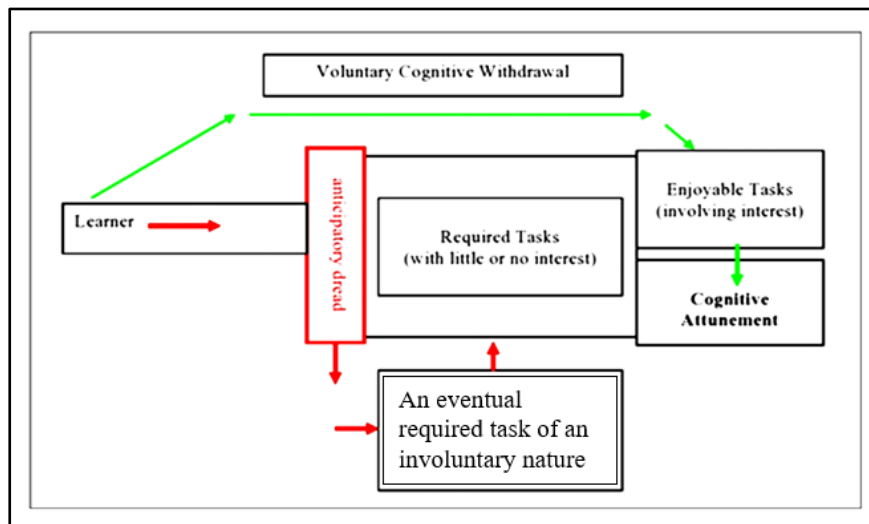
Hence, whereas procrastination is a much simpler issue that deals with the putting-off of a task, voluntary cognitive withdrawal can lead to withdrawal altogether. It follows that, maintaining a sound emotional state, and maintaining student interest and engagement can help to reduce the likelihood of international college students phasing into imposter syndrome anxiousness that can lead to withdrawing from academic tasks.

The Interaction – Cognitive Interference, the Imposter Syndrome, and Anxiety

Explanations from Brookfield (2015), DePasque and Tricomi (2015), and Miceli and Castelfranchi (2000) clarify that there can be an interwoven interaction of imposter syndrome perceptions and anxiousness that can cause cognitive interference among international college students. Khoshlessan and Das (2017) examined international students' anxiety as it relates to higher education, they explained several situations that are capable of instigating anxiety for international college students. Some of the situational contexts noted by the researchers included test-taking anxiety, language learning anxiety, family anxiety, and classroom setting social anxiety.

In a study examining college student anxiety and mental health, Dessauvagie et al. (2022) reported data representing 5351 university students from six Southeast Asian Nations. Many of the determinants of anxiety and mental health issues affecting college students such as: fear of poor grades, internalizing problems, and negative self-views (Dessauvagie et al., 2022), coincide with challenges that Brookfield (2015) stated are likely instigators of college students phasing into the imposter syndrome (see Figure 3).

Figure 3

The Interaction – Cognitive Interference, the Imposter Syndrome, and Anxiety (Adapted from Marade, 2021)
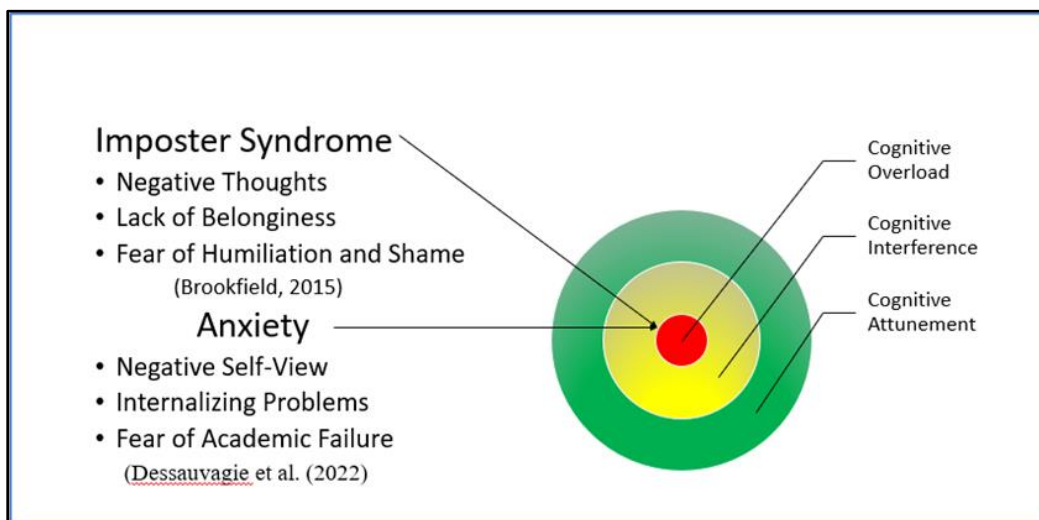
Some may think that these types of challenges are simply adjustment issues that will resolve with time, and in some cases they may. However, it has been found that many of these types of challenges tend to increase international students' negative self-view over time. Hirai et al. (2015) analyzed international students' psychological adjustment trajectories. In their study, the researchers found that "somewhat unexpectedly, the majority of the students decreased slightly in positive psychological adjustment (i.e., self-acceptance and personal growth)" (Hirai et al., 2015, p. 448). Hirai et al. (2015) attributed the decreases in students' psychological adjustment to both non-native language challenges, and challenges adjusting to a novel education system.

In another study examining international students' adjustment, Bastien et al. (2018) revealed, "Academic adjustment involves more than a students' potential to be academically successful" (p. 1201). The researchers stated, "students reported difficulties with academic reading (e.g., content difficulty), "cultural norms in the classroom" and "understanding the teacher and taking notes during lectures and seminars" (p. 1201). Taken together, the findings from these studies help us to better understand that there can be internal negative thoughts circulating and percolating within the mind of some international college students to such a degree that they reach a point of self-defeat unless

these types of situations are addressed. Xu et al. (2018) explained that there is clearly a relationship between social-psychological behavior and academic success. Jackson (2019) also pointed out that there is a relationship between students' mental-behavioral stability and their academic success. It follows that, a goal should be to develop methods that will help students eliminate any cognitive interference that they are experiencing and help them to re-establish the status of being cognitively attuned (Marade, 2021).

Cognitive Attunement

Cognitive attunement can be described as a process wherein incremental interferences in learning environments are normal. However, interferences must be resolved, and the learner must return to a state of cognitive attunement in order to successfully continue the task at hand (Marade, 2021). Accordingly, being cognitively attuned as a state of mind can be described as the mental state in which the most favorable conditions for processing information exist within an individual (Marade, 2021). In academic environments, cognitive attunement is typically disrupted by short periods of cognitive interference. That is, during the learning process, a student can reach a point where outside assistance may be needed before the student can continue the learning task at hand (see Figure 4).

Figure 4

Cognitive Attunement as a Process (Marade, 2021)
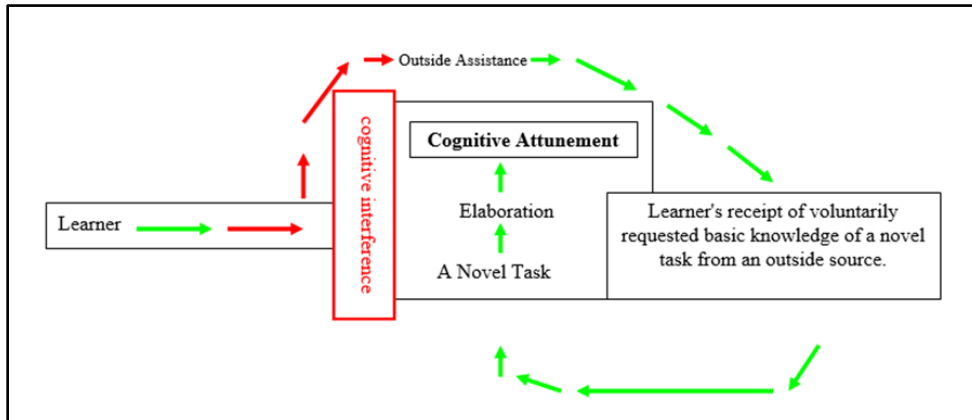
On the other hand, if the learning material is too far beyond the learner's grasp of understanding, for instance, minimal assistance is not sufficient – it is likely that the typical amount of cognitive interference may not be resolved. Consequently, the learner could phase into cognitive overload (Sweller, 1988). Sweller (1988) explained the relationship between learning and cognitive overload. In his explanation, he stated that a learner trying to resolve problems in a lesson chapter that they vaguely understand would demand such a cognitive load, the construction of knowledge on the subject-matter can become overshadowed by trying to comprehend the general premise of the subject itself. That is, "the cognitive-processing capacity needed to handle this information may be of

such a magnitude as to leave little for schema acquisition, even if the problem is solved" (Sweller, 1988, p. 260).

Cognitive overload is relative to international college students because it relates to the challenges that many international college students can experience. This is especially true when it comes to English courses and other required courses in the United States that necessitate extensive English language skills. For example, there are math courses and computer science courses that demand low to moderate English language skills. On the other hand, there are general science courses, chemistry courses, and biology courses that require extensive applications of English language terms. In a recent conversation, it was mentioned that a typical college level biology course can require up to 664 English language terms (M. Wilkes, personal communication, March 15, 2023), and this type of cognitive load can be a challenge for those international students whose English language skills are not as proficient as others.

Emotional and Cognitive Processes

Cognitive load can affect international students academically. Simultaneously, cognitive modulation resulting from anxiety can affect them physiologically. Consequently, these multi-sequence cognitive and neural activities can interfere with students' concentration. According to Steimer (2002), this is mainly because "emotional and cognitive processes cannot be dissociated" and this is because "the cognitive apprehension of events and situations is critically involved in emotional experiences" (p. 244). Etkin (2009) found similar results and stated that "some of the same regulatory circuitry is involved in the cognitive control of emotion as in non-emotional forms of cognitive control" (p. 260). Understanding that the cognitive and neural circuitry is indeed intertwined, one option is gradually altering the cause of the interference. More specifically, cognitive and emotional processes can be re-synchronized. This can be achieved via gaining a change of perspective and ultimately minimizing the negative emotional responses (Cassady & Finch, 2020; Decety & Lamm, 2006; DePasque & Tricomi, 2015), and re-gaining attentional control (Moran, 2016).

Going one step further, Decety and Lamm (2006) noted, while regulation and control can each be affective maintenance strategies to control anxiety levels – cognitive change strategies can contribute to the potential of eliminating negative emotion-eliciting stimuli. Hence, a cognitive change strategy would likely be most beneficial in establishing a more direct attentional focus on learning because of its role in diminishing cognitive interference. Educators can be a powerful force in creating cognitive change strategies. In fact, in a discussion of skillful teaching, Brookfield (2015) addressed ways to confront and resolve issues related to students experiencing the imposter syndrome. Brookfield's strategy and the strategies of others are addressed in the following paragraphs pertaining to the science of learning.

The Science of Learning

The learning context has been described as the situation in which learning occurs (Figueiredo & Afonso, 2006; Merriam & Caffarella, 1999). Song and Hill (2007) explained that a learning context involves both program design and support. Therefore, the learning context should be situated in a way memorable learning experiences can take place via classroom experiences and group interactions that can lead to support-group scenarios. Brookfield (2015) discussed a situation in which students could become a support-group for each other. He recommended facing the imposter syndrome head-on as a group. Brookfield explained that the thing most students do not understand about the imposter syndrome and feeling of a lack of belongingness is – they are not alone. Other students experience the same types of thoughts and feelings. Hence, by bringing the issue out into the open, students can experience some relief in knowing that they are not alone in how they feel, ultimately lessening their self-negativity.

Van Galen (2017) also demonstrated the value of community bonding in an academic setting. Van Galen, being very familiar with her students, and very much aware that some students had painful personal histories and were reclusive – assigned a project requiring them to present a personal narrative. Van Galen's logic of choosing a presentation of a personal narrative over an academic paper was that the sharing of a memorable personal experience would be much more powerful and beneficial to them as students. This example also helps to demonstrate the value of students coming together to learn that they are not the only person experiencing disruptive events and thoughts in their life.

Feelings of anxiety are attributed to a fear of the unknown (Craig et al., 1995; Steimer, 2002) and the types of activities described by Brookfield (2015) and Van Galen (2017) can be effective methods to help international college students relate to other students because they can learn first-hand that their peers also have challenges and conflicting thoughts. There are other effective methods of learning that can serve as approaches to resolve conflicts in learning as well. These include visual mapping (Santiago, 2011), connection mapping (Barker & Griswold, 2019), multimedia learning (Mayer, 2010), and the Tzafilkou et al. (2021) game-based learning suggestions (see Figure 5).

Figure 5

Effective Methods of Learning (Adapted from Marade, 2021)
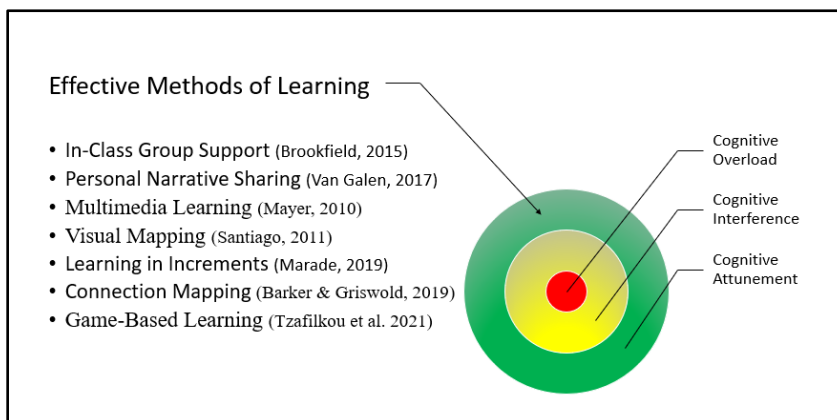
These learning techniques can be helpful in reducing student negativity and anxiety by improving their performance in both skills and grades. Mayer (2010) explained the negative effects of interference on the capacity to process information in learning environments. More specifically, the cognitive theory of multimedia learning, (Mayer, 2010) points out that multimedia learning involves multi-path cognitive processing. Given the fact that the capacity of working memory is limited, hence the capacity to process information is limited, more meaningful learning can occur via multiple channels of cognitive processing (Mayer, 2010; Santiago, 2011).

In his dicussion of visual mapping, Santiago, (2011) pointed out some the benefits of multi-channel cognitive processing. For example, visual mapping was found to be helpful with both information comprehension and recalling information. A process such as visual mapping can give international students opportunities to explore details at their own pace, and in a repititive fashion as needed (Marade et al., 2011) in order to help them process information in increments adaptable to their individual needs (Marade, 2019). This process can allow students to progressively explore, analyze, and synthesize information needed to fulfill their academic requirements with the liklihood that more information will be retained in memory (Santiago, 2011). In a related discussion, Barker and Griswold (2019) explained connection mapping. A connection map is a "visual note that combines writing and graphics in an organized structure to convey meaning" (Barker & Griswold, 2019, p. 51).

Barker and Griswold (2019) pointed out the need for meaningful learning, and the need to make sense and obtain meaning during the learning process. They also point out that there are scenarios in which it is more appropriate to communicate ideas through visuals rather than solely in writen form. This can be especially true in learning scenarios regarding international college students, because as Barker and Griswold (2019) stated, there are learning scenarios where "images resonate more effectively than written language" (p. 51). Finally, another teaching strategy that can be an effective method of learning is game-based learning (Tzafilkou et al., 2021). Aside from releasing students from a non-productive boring and disengaging environment (Tzafilkou et al., 2021), there are other benefits from game based-learning. Mainly, the low-level anxiety typically associated with healthy competitive activities can help to reduce the higher-level anxiety associated with conflicts in learning. In fact, according to Tzafilkou et al. (2021), game-based learning was found to have positive affects on students' emotions, and it was also found to increase student engagement.

In sum, these types of learning methods can be effective because they involve the activation of multiple cognitive pathways that help to reinforce learning. Some of these learning methods involve class participation and collaborative efforts which also have benefits. That is, collaborative learning "tends to reduce cognitive load" (Tzafilkou et al., 2021, p. 7511). Whereas, the importance of effective methods of learning are of course, learning – other important factors as they pertain to learning and academics are student emotions, interest, and engagement. It follows that, for international college students, and all students for that matter, cognitive attunement, interest and student engagement are key elements for their success. Speaking of international students specifically, in their totality,

these cognitive considerations and approaches can help to reduce the likelihood of international college students phasing into long-term imposter syndrome negative self-perceptions and increase the chances of a sound academic journey alongside their peers from other nations.

Conclusion

It takes a great amount of courage for a college student to take the risk of traveling alone to a foreign country to accomplish their goal of earning a college degree from a country other than their own. This demonstrates their determination and their motivation to succeed. However, international college students can face a new dimension of life's circumstances. These include cultural differences, a novel education system, parental matters, and social integration. Accordingly, circumstances and events can create challenges of both an academic and social nature. Consequently, self-perceptions may change and create cognitive interference that can lead to anxiousness, loss of motivation, and eventual withdrawal from the program. The cognitive approaches discussed here can be useful methods of both prevention and resolve when implemented by administrators, instructors, academic advisors, and student counselors of international college students.

Implications for Future Research

This survey of literature presents several factors worthy of empirical examination. For example, do social challenges outweigh academic challenges as it pertains to impostership? Additionally, are parental expectations more of a driving force than personal expectations during international college students' academic endeavors? Finally, institutional factors were noted as challenges for international college students. Future research should examine institutional factors such as advising practices, social integration techniques, and course availabilities as they relate to visa regulations and compliance.

References

Aljohani, O. (2016). A review of contemporary international literature on student retention in higher education. *International Journal of Education and Literacy Studies*, *4*(1), 40-52.

Auerbach, R. P., Mortier, P., Bruffaerts, R., Alonso, J., Benjet, C., Cuijpers, P., ... & Kessler, R. C. (2018). WHO world mental health surveys international college student project: Prevalence and distribution of mental disorders. *Journal of abnormal psychology*, *127*(7), 623.

Barker, J., & Griswold, W. (2019). *Visualizing thinking: Developing a critical self through connection mapping*. In Proceedings of the 2019 International Pre-Conference (p. 51). AAACE.

Bastien, G., Seifen-Adkins, T., & Johnson, L. R. (2018). Striving for success: Academic adjustment of international students in the US. *Journal of International Students*, *8*(2), 1198-1219.

Benoit, A. C., Olson, J. S., & Johnson, C. (Eds.). (2018). *Leaps of faith: Stories from working-class scholars*. IAP.

Bodycott, P. (2009). Choosing a higher education study abroad destination: What mainland Chinese parents and students rate as important. *Journal of Research in International Education*, *8*(3), 349-373.

Brookfield, S. D. (2015). *The skillful teacher: On technique, trust, and responsiveness in the classroom*. John Wiley & Sons

Cassady, J. C., & Finch, W. H. (2020). Revealing nuanced relationships among cognitive test anxiety, motivation, and self-regulation through curvilinear analyses. *Frontiers in Psychology*, *11*, 1141.

Chowdhury, S. F., & Pychyl, T. A. (2018). A critique of the construct validity of active procrastination. *Personality and Individual Differences, 120*, 7-12.

Craig, K. J., Brown, K. J., & Baum, A. (1995). Environmental factors in the etiology of anxiety. In F.E. Bloom, & D.J. Kupfer (Eds.), *Psychopharmacology: The Fourth Generation of Progress* (pp 1325–1340)*.* Raven Press.

Decety, J., & Lamm, C. (2006). Human empathy through the lens of social neuroscience. *Scientific World Journal, 6,* 1146–1163.

DePasque S., & Tricomi, E. (2015). Effects of intrinsic motivation on feedback processing during learning. *Neuroimage, 119,* 175–186.

Dessauvagie, A. S., Dang, H. M., Nguyen, T. A. T., & Groen, G. (2022). Mental health of university students in southeastern Asia: A systematic review. *Asia Pacific Journal of Public Health*, *34*(2-3),172-181.

Etkin, A. (2009). Functional neuroanatomy of anxiety: A neural circuit perspective. *Current Topics in Behavioral Neurosciences*, *2*, 251-277.

Figueiredo, A. D., & Afonso, A. P. (2006). Context and learning: A philosophical framework. In A. D. Figueiredo, & A. P. Afonso, (Eds.), Managing learning in virtual settings: The role of context (pp. 1-22). Information Science Publishing

Hirai, R., Frazier, P., & Syed, M. (2015). Psychological and sociocultural adjustment of first-year international students: Trajectories and predictors. *Journal of Counseling Psychology*, *62*(3), 438.

Hurtado, S., & Carter, D. F. (1997). Effects of college transition and perceptions of the campus racial climate on Latino college students' sense of belonging. *Sociology of Education, 70,* 324–345.

Illeris, K. (2007). *How we learn: Learning and non-learning in school and beyond*. Routledge.

Jackson, L. (2019, January 18). Looking to improve students' mental health? Ask what they need. *The Chronicle of Higher Education*. Retrieved from: https://www.chronicle.com/article/Looking-to-Improve-Students-/245516?cid=wcontentlist_hp_latest

Jones, A., & Kim, Y. (2020). The role of academic self-confidence on thriving among international college students in the US and Canada. *Journal of Underrepresented & Minority Progress*, *4*(2), 165-191.

Khoshlessan, R., & Das, K. P. (2017). Analyzing international students' study anxiety in higher education. *Journal of International Students*, *7*(2), 311-328.

Le, L. (2021). Unpacking the imposter syndrome and mental health as a person of color first generation college student within institutions of higher education. *McNair Research Journal SJSU*, *17*(1), 10.

Marade, A. (2021). "Examining the process of advising adults at community colleges". *Electronic Theses and Dissertations*. 2662. https://digitalcommons.memphis.edu/etd/2662

Marade, A. (2019). Higher education for working-class adults — Together, we can make it work. *Adult Higher Education Alliance*. https://eric.ed.gov/?id=ED597806

Marade, A. A, & Brinthaupt, T. M. (2018). Good and bad reasons for changing a college major: A comparison of student and faculty views. *Education, 138*(4), 323-336.

Marade, A. A., Gibbons, J. A., & Brinthaupt, T. M. (2011). The role of elaboration in songwriting success. *The International Journal of Creativity & Problem Solving, 21*(2), 91-106.

Mayer, R. E. (2010). Applying the science of learning to medical education. *Medical Education, 44,* 543–549.

Miceli, M., & Castelfranchi, C. (2000). Nature and mechanisms of loss of motivation. *Review of General Psychology*, *4*(3), 238-263.

Merriam, S. B., & Caffarella, R. (1999). *Learning in adulthood: A comprehensive guide* (2nd ed.). Jossey-Bass.

Moran, T. P. (2016). Anxiety and working memory capacity: A meta-analysis and narrative review. *Psychological Bulletin*, *142*(8), 831-864.

Murray-Johnson, K. (2018). The imposter syndrome: An educator's perspective. In C. Barker, B. Conley, & M. Murphy (Eds.), *Self-actualization through literacy*. Carnegie Writers Inc.

Radovan, M., & Đorđević, N. (Eds.) (2004). *Current issues in adult learning and motivation - 7th Adult Education Colloquium.* Slovenian Institute for Adult Education.

Santiago, H. C. (2011). Visual mapping to enhance learning and critical thinking skills. *Optometric Education*, *36*(3), 125-139.

Schulmann, P., & Choudaha, R. (2014, September 5). International student retention and success: A comparative perspective. *World Education News and Reviews*, *5*. International Student Retention and Success: A Comparative Perspective (wes.org)

Song, L., & Hill, J. R. (2007). A conceptual model for understanding self-directed learning in online environments. *Journal of Interactive Online Learning*, *6*(1), 27-42.

Steimer, T. (2002). The biology of fear and anxiety-related behaviors. *Dialogues in Clinical Neuroscience 4*, 231-249.

Strayhorn, T. L. (2012). *College students' sense of belonging: A key to educational success for all students*. Routledge.

Sweller, J. (1988). Cognitive load during problem solving: Effects on learning. *Cognitive Science*, *12*(2), 257-285.

Tzafilkou, K., Perifanou, M., & Economides, A. A. (2021). Negative emotions, cognitive load, acceptance, and self-perceived learning outcome in emergency remote education during COVID-19. *Education and information technologies, 26*(6), 7497-7521.

Van Galen, J. (2017). The power of personal narratives in the classroom. Retrieved from: https://www.washington.edu/trends/the-power-of-personal-narratives-in-the-classroom/

Xu, D., Solanki, S., McPartlan, P., & Sato, B. (2018). EASEing students into college: The impact of multidimensional support for underprepared students. *Educational Researcher*, *47*(7), 435-450.

IT'S THE GLOBAL "DECADE OF HEALTHY AGEING" — HOW CAN HIGHER ED MEET THE CHALLENGE?

Billie R. McNamara, MS[1]

ABSTRACT: The United Nations (UN) declared 2021-2030 as the "Decade of Healthy Ageing." The World Health Organization (WHO) and other global programs developed initiatives in support of UN's goals, which include focus on lifelong learning. WHO refers to the "transformative pathway" in its 2021 *Decade of Healthy Ageing Baseline Report*, arguing there is no "typical" older person. Lifelong learning in the context of education for and about elder individuals has a wide and deep history spanning a century of scholarship; however, lifelong learning's meaning is inconsistent across disciplines, cultures, policy-makers, and constituents. This paper introduces and develops these concepts and argues higher education is positioned to bridge stakeholders' interests, lead taxonomic homogenization, identify universal gaps, establish protocols for filling them, and — in the end — advance and bolster the industry in the wake of unprecedented cultural upheaval and declining enrollments. The paper includes a selection of questions and options higher education institutions can evaluate and implement to meet the UN's challenge of transforming lifelong learning in the Decade.

Keywords: decade of healthy ageing, lifelong learning, older adults

On December 14, 2020, the United Nations General Assembly (UN) proclaimed the years spanning 2021-2030 "The Decade of Healthy Ageing" (Decade) as part of the UN's 2015 master agenda, known informally as the organization's *Sustainable Development Goals* (*SDG*) (UN, 2015, 2020). UN's *Resolution 75/131* (*Resolution*) was a prong of its 2002 *Resolution 57/167* that endorsed the *Madrid International Plan of Action on Ageing* and several corresponding recommendations (UN, 2020). Among 17 goals and 169 targets described as "integrated and indivisible" (*SDG*, "Declaration" para. 18), *SDG* Goal 4 aims to "Ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all." Despite its expansive sub-parts, Goal 4 only refers indirectly to elder learners: "By 2030, ensure that all learners acquire the knowledge and skills needed to promote sustainable development..." with a distinct focus on "global citizenship" (*SDG*, para. 4.7). Lifelong learning is directly mentioned one time in the *SDG*s, again with no specific reference to elder persons (*SDG*, "Declaration" para. 25).

The *Resolution* referenced the World Health Assembly's parallel decree of the "Decade of Healthy Ageing 2020-2030" and "call[ed] upon" the World Health Organization (WHO) to collaborate with multiple UN departments and commissions and "lead the implementation." The *Resolution* includes education among crucial "goods and services" necessary to "fully and effectively enjoy their human rights and fully develop their human potential" (UN, 2020, pp. 2-3), but the document deals more with health, cultural inclusiveness, and financial stability than with learning. Notwithstanding the CoVid-19 pandemic that consumed WHO's attention and resources in 2020 and 2021, WHO published the *Decade of Healthy Ageing Baseline Report* (WHO, 2021) with a focus on interrelationships among Functional Ability, Intrinsic Capacity, and Environments. The word "learning" appears 56 times in the *Baseline Report*. The phrase "lifelong learning"

---

[1] University of Tennessee – Knoxville, Educational Leadership & Policy Studies/Adult Learning Program, <bmcnamar@tennessee.edu>

is sparser: once in conjunction with working, once in context with technological proficiency for "digital inclusion" (p. 68), and several times in a section entitled "Ability to Learn, Grow & Make Decisions" (pp. 122-127) primarily promoting lifelong learning as an informal activity aimed to enhance health-related matters.

Despite barely mentioning lifelong learning – mostly in conjunction with health care, safety, workforce, and inequity – in its *World Report on Ageing and Health*, WHO (2015b) acknowledged the importance of "abilities to learn, grow and make decisions include efforts to continue to learn and apply knowledge, engage in problem solving, continue personal development, and be able to make choices" as individuals age. Continued learning permits older persons to "do what they value" and make independent decisions to retain a "sense of control" (p. 174). Further, continued learning engages older persons socially, increases their self-fulfillment, reduces ageism, and enhances intergenerational camaraderie and trust.

A year later, WHO (2016) described the five-year process for creating the Decade as a collaborative effort by 82 countries. The US-based Global Coalition on Aging joyously reported achievement of four Decade milestones by the end of 2022; however, none of those milestones addressed lifelong learning (Hodlin, 2022). The European Union (EU, 2020) endorsed the *Resolution* at its announcement, saying "healthy ageing is about enabling citizens to lead a healthy, active and independent life in older age," but the EU's endorsement did not mention lifelong learning (para. 3). Later, the EU touted Japan, home of the world's oldest-aged population, as a barometer for assessing and implementing initiatives to meet the Decade's goals. None of the EU's benchmarks mentioned lifelong learning (D'Ambrogio, 2020). Further, AGE Platform Europe (2021) delineated the Decade's action areas but ignored lifelong learning. Success is not subjective, yet none of the directives or pronouncements mentioned above specifies a method for evaluating the Decade's effectiveness.

1*"The Platform" Advanced Search Screen Capture, June 15, 2023.*

WHO launched and continues to maintain a website named *The Platform* (decadeofhealthyageing.org) to provide resources and information for and about older persons. Highlighted "Decade Action Area" topics on the website are limited to "Age-friendly Environments," "Combatting Ageism," "Integrated Care," and "Long-term Care." As depicted in Figure 1, a site-wide search provides no results on the phrase *lifelong learning* (without delimiting quotation marks). Thus, WHO's mission to promote global health underscores its engagement with the Decade but does not respond to the *Resolution*'s challenge for WHO's leadership on lifelong learning in *SDG* Goal 4.

Similarly, other organizations fail to provide guidance or even information about *SDG* Goal 4. In June, 2023, my searching selected websites returned the following results for the phrase "decade of healthy ageing" (delimited with quotation marks):

- United States White House (whitehouse.gov) – zero results
- United Nations (un.org) – six results
- American Society on Aging (asaging.org) – zero results
- UNESCO (unesco.org) – two results, one of which was the CONFINTEA VII Programme
- Seventh International Conference on Adult Education (CONFINTEA, 2022) (uil.unesco.org/en/confinteavii-programme-details) – one session

A cursory literature review in academic databases, including directed searches in adult education and gerontology journals, resulted in little scholarship related to the Decade.

UNESCO Institute for Lifelong Learning (UIL)'s website (uil.unesco.org) search returned 182 results. UIL hosted a virtual global event in June, 2023, to announce publication of two new reports exploring practices and trends among international higher education institutions. Director Borhene Chakroun opened the webinar, entitled *Lifelong learning: An imperative for higher education*, with a reference to *SDG* Goal 4, stating the collaborators' "common value" was "to embrace the transformative power of lifelong learning in shaping healthier, more prosperous, and more inclusive societies" — with a sweeping definition of "lifelong" to encompass "people for all ages...everywhere" (UNESCO, 2023).

UNESCO states it "actively helped to frame the Education 2030 agenda which is encapsulated in SDG 4," and is "entrusted ... to lead and coordinate Education 2030 through guidance and technical support within the overall SDG agenda" (UNESCO, n.d.-a, *SDG*s para. 3). Chakroun noted two watershed UNESCO events in 2022: Barcelona "centered on reimagining higher education"; while CONFINTEA VII "focused on adult learning and education." Chakroun included all ages in the scope of "lifelong learning" while describing changes necessary for the higher education industry to meet *SDG* Goal 4: "flexible learning pathways," "innovative pedagogies," and expansive life and career counseling services. Essentially, higher education institutions should reframe themselves as the central information hub for adults throughout their lifetimes (UNESCO, 2023).

Neither UIL publication mentioned the Decade or UNESCO's engagement – nor did UIL's 2022 *Annual Report*, which touted "1,000+ representatives, from 149 UNESCO Member States, mobilized to strengthen adult learning and education" at CONFINTEA VII (UIL, 2023). The 3rd UNESCO World Higher Education Conference (WHEC) ratified global stakeholders' support for the Decade and *SDG*s through "defin[ing] and prepar[ing] a roadmap for a new era of higher education... conceived as an open, living document..." that "looks at both the higher education systems...and institutions" (UNESCO, n.d.-b, para. 3). Withnall (2012) described research identifying five lifestyles that separate older learners into two axes: work-engaged and non-work-engaged. Statistical data framing the published reports placed older learners as a target for lifelong

learning well below "labor market-oriented" individuals and above remote and marginalized populations (UNESCO, 2023, fig. 13). Paradoxically, UN (2019) reported that lifelong learning focused on older persons while the global population ages aids support for "[p]rogress toward the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals...as the share of working-age population shrinks" (p. 27).

Describing the global escalation in number of older persons, Manheimer (2005) observed, "Never before in history will there have been such a demographic shift toward later life" (p. 211). UN (2019) reported the global population age 65 and over was 703 million — 9% of the total — in 2019, with that number projected to reach 1.5 billion persons by 2050. By 2100, 61% of the global population will be over age 65. In terms of worldwide sustainability focus, aging ranks in importance with climate, economic development, public health, and political balance of power. Manheimer proposed this demographic will create an "age-irrelevant society" that "reject[s] age categories as an imposed, artificial, and prejudicial label" (p. 211).

What Is Lifelong Learning?

As a new 20th century term, "lifelong learning" spawned a taxonomy with multiple definitions and synonyms in scholarship and popular literature across numerous disciplines. Arguably, the first use of the phrase "lifelong learning" occurred in the historically fascinating 1919 UK government-sponsored report (A. Smith, 1919) describing adult education as a "permanent national necessity, an inseparable aspect of citizenship" that "should be both universal and lifelong" (p. 5). However, M. Smith (2004) proposed "The notion of learning through life is hardly new, as a glance at Plato's *Republic* reveals" (para. 2). Plato's philosophical germination began with Socrates; therefore, one can argue lifelong learning began with history's greatest teacher.

In the past quarter century, especially, the concept of lifelong learning has developed to encompass Lindeman's (1926) belief that "education is not "preparation for life; [e]ducation is life" (pp. 6, 204). Lindeman maintained "[t]he whole of life is learning" (p. 6), and education should continue "so long as life lasts" to "rebuil[d] the total structure of life's values" (p. 28). Twenty-first century scholars generally extend "lifelong" to mean an individual's entire lifespan. For example, in early editions of *Lifelong Learning in Higher Education* (1985, 1991), Knapper and Cropley limited lifelong learning to adults; by their third edition (2000), the authors defined lifelong learning as something "deliberate" that "can and should occur throughout each person's lifetime" (p. 1).

UIL Policy Brief 14 (UIL, 2022) embraced lifelong learning as "the overarching concept and vision for education as reflected in ... SDG 4" (para. 1). The document profoundly captured the nature of lifelong learning as "rooted in the integration of learning and living ... in all life-wide contexts" (para. 1). Yet, the writers barely mentioned older learners and only in conjunction with intergenerational experiences.

"Lifelong" in the Context of Older Persons' Learning

The notion of educating and training elder citizens has been an ever-present consideration of modern US-based adult educators from the earliest mention of learning aimed at older adults by Howard McClusky, David Peterson, and their colleagues in the 1970s — to MacArthur Foundation's *Study of Successful Aging* beginning in 1988 and reported at length by Rowe and Kahn (1998) — through a plethora of academic and popular organizations and serialized publications — to wide-ranging debates among thought-leaders of the 21st century. The flagship peer-reviewed journal *Educational Gerontology* is in its 49th volume. My recent literature review indicates approximately forty years ago, international adult educators and policy-makers focused on learning needs among rapidly growing older adults, and international response outstripped United States' stakeholders'. Bespoke communities of practice — notably the brain trust of the UK-based *International Journal of Lifelong Education* — prodigiously publish extensive research.

Geragogy emerged as a term for the juncture of adult education and gerontology in the mid-20th century (Schuetz, 1982). Yet, scholars continue to disagree on the word's definition and scope. Hence, a large number of euphemistic terms for older people's education evolved and exist in the literature, including "Silver Learning," "Learning in Later Life," and "Third — or Fourth — Age Education" (see, e.g., Formosa, 2019; Istance, 2019; Laslett, 1987). McClusky (1976) reported "evidence of the fact that older people are learning and can renew their faith in their ability to learn. As a consequence, we must find ways to help people rediscover, reinvigorate and reactivate their latent interests and talents they never thought they had" (p. 119). McClusky (1973) noted "a climate of optimism" pervaded educators' perception of aging learners (p. 60). Balogová and Gazdová (2019) argued a geragogy department that trains future "geragogues" could benefit higher education institutions (p. 39).

WHO (2015a) proclaimed "[t]here is no typical older person" (para. 2). Renowned educational gerontologist Alexandra Withnall (2004) reported research suggesting older persons embraced learning and acknowledged its importance for their quality of life. According to McClusky's *Theory of Margin*, knowledge positively affects learners' Power-Load-Margin balance, and learning that leads to change and improved life satisfaction enhances a positive margin (McClusky, 1970, 1971, 1972).

Withnall (2012) questioned limiting "lifelong" to an old-age construct, asking whether the aging global population required "a new guiding principle for the twenty-first century" (p. 649). Hachem (2020) recounted Glendenning and Battersby, Percy, and Formosa provided "statements of first principles" for critical educational gerontology over a two-decade period, suggesting critical theory and praxis provide a framework for expanding the framework to clarify and find balance "between a humanist tradition and a transformational one" that meets all learners' needs (p. 466).

Older Learners' Transformation

As spirituality and aging began to flow together in the 1980's, older people realized "aging is a social construction that has been further reified by the field of gerontology itself" (Manheimer, 2005, p. 208). Older persons and their support systems sorted into multiple sub-cultures and began looking at learning as a way to evoke personal change and achieve goals.

McClusky (1972) described education for older persons as "essentially an affirmative enterprise" that "can be invested with a climate of optimism" and is "highly attractive" (p. 60). In the context of *SDG* Goal 4, lifelong learning under the aegis of the Decade *Resolution* should focus on transformation of the oldest learners. Mezirow (1997) said transformation is the goal of adult learning. WHO (2021) referenced a "transformative pathway" in its *Baseline Report* on the Decade. Peterson (1974) proposed "through learning, change can result which will improve the quality of a person's life"; change represents "positive potential" for growth that can affect destiny and improve condition (p. 50). McClusky (1971) described transformation as transcendence, identifying it as a need for older persons to overcome limitations and achieve positive margin.

Gerotranscendence as a Potential Solution

Swedish gerontologist Lars Tornstam first published the term *gerotranscendence* in 1989. Yet, little has been published about the theory in the adult education discipline. Gerotranscendence draws from Jung and Erikson (Tornstam, 2011) and has been equated to Self-transcendence, similar to Maslow's Self-actualization (see, e.g., Moody, 2006). Tornstram described gerotranscendence as "a developmental pattern that implies a shift in meta-perspective" (2011, p. 166) "from a material and rational vision to a more cosmic and transcendent one, usually followed by an increase in life satisfaction" (1989, p. 60). Tornstam (1997) further identified the concept as "the contemplative dimension of aging" (p. 143). Through reflection, individuals become less Self-centric and more socially focused. Tornstam proposed humans cognitively transform and maintain control of their lives through reflecting on aggregated experience as they age.

How do such shifts typically occur? Learning! Foreshadowing Mezirow (1997), Wacks (1987) argued Self-transcendence is a purpose of adult education. Brookfield (1985), however, had a more pragmatic view, stating adult education is not simply "a joyful, wholly fulfilling experience in self-actualization" (p. 44); rather, Brookfield argued adult learning aims to provide a framework within which adults can develop control over their lives. Nonetheless, Brookfield contended adult learning leads to an "internal change in consciousness" resulting from "critical reflectivity" (p. 46) that aligns with Tornstam's (2011) definition.

What does gerotranscendence look like in other cultures? Is gerotranscendence relevant? Can it be taught? Is it a legitimate goal? Hong (2021) posited gerotranscendence aligns with non-Western cultures because its continuous process and existential nature fit with individuals' notions of Self, their relationship to the world, and social order. Worth and

Smith (2021) argued Self-transcendence is achieved by following a path centering on curiosity and incorporating experiences individually and with others. Enter education!

Echoing the preponderance of scholars who believe gerotranscendence is innately spiritual, McCarthy and Bockweg (2012) maintained gerotranscendence is a component of aging successfully. Jewell (2014) argues the perspective shift may be both intellectual and spiritual. Reed (2009, as cited in McCarthy & Bockweg, 2012) found lifelong learning activities fostered Self-transcendent growth.

Heylen (2010) posited gerotranscendence "is seen as a normal, natural accompaniment of maturity and wisdom, and may imply a decreasing need for social contacts" (p. 1182). But what about lessons learned from the CoVid-19 pandemic? Higher education can lead the way toward global transformation. Framing their suggestion in terms of Mezirow's (1991) adaptive strategy, Eschenbacher and Fleming (2020) presaged the pandemic's effects on adult learners as they adapted in the face of disruption. While the authors wrote in the context of learning throughout life, they posited the pandemic would jump-start lifelong learning activities so people would be better prepared for future crises. A systematic review of 10 studies found "greater loneliness is associated with lower cognitive function" (Boss et al., p. 552), resulting in potentially detrimental physiological effects among older persons who have insufficient social contact.

The pandemic taught global society important lessons about the need for older citizens to be engaged with others. Lemon et al. (1972) distilled previous research to conclude "activity in general, and interpersonal activity in particular, seem to be consistently important for predicting an individual's sense of well-being in later years" (p. 512). Their study reported social activity with friends and life satisfaction were positively related among older persons. A search of academic databases shows literature continues to cite this article 51 years later. The nature of social relationships changed dramatically, especially in the digital age, with a complete paradigm shift resulting from the CoVid-19 pandemic.

Higher Education's Opportunities

I submit change – and the Decade's success – will come from higher education institutions, not governments or agencies. Adult education, via higher education-framed and supported programming, is better positioned to respond to older persons' diverse learning needs and interests than other service providers.

I propose educators put more industry-wide focus on measures the academy can take to meet the UN's Decade challenge. Higher education's institutional efforts can remedy the deleterious and negative effects of aging by providing specialized programs and courses that provide opportunities to develop social relationships. Research suggests cognition does not necessarily decline with age (Gunstand et al., 2006). Thus, universities should be unconcerned about long-term prospects when marketing to older learners. Kidahashi and Manheimer (2009) proposed a variety of opportunities in which higher education can

engage older learners. In summary, their research promoted creativity in finding niches that respond to learners' diverse lifestyles and interests while anticipating their needs.

Singer (2004) introduced narrative identity research in psychology with a focus on meaning-making across individuals' lifespans. Meaning-making as a pillar of adult education is well-established (Merriam & Heuer, 1996). Singer noted cognition is related to affective processes, and adults develop meaning from the stories of events and experiences. Fraser (2018) proposed wisdom and meaning form through language, especially through metaphor and shared vignettes. Sharing stories in higher education settings provides learning and bonding, especially intergenerationally. McClusky (1990) encouraged intergenerational learning, which he described as a "community of generations" (p. 59). Such a community is possible today, and higher education institutions are positioned to provide the foundation.

Adult education through lifelong learning as formal programs (not just informal, nonformal, or non-credit/auditing) has the potential to bring senior/elder adults into the higher education learning space to enhance their lives through guided intergenerational learning and socialization. WHO (2015b) pointed out "policy-makers need to consider how resources are distributed across the life course and not only to younger populations, which is currently the case" (p. 175). Acknowledging significant barriers to older learners' participation, WHO enumerated strategies for removing the obstacles within learners, their immediate circles, service providers, and the community at large.

Senior/elder learners can expand the population base for higher education institutions facing upheaval resulting from declining enrollments. Designation as an Age-Friendly University (dcu.ie/agefriendly) is a popular option encouraged by WHO. Manheimer (2005) provided an overview of Institutes for Learning in Retirement, Elderhostel (now Road Scholar), Universities of the Third Age, and Osher Lifelong Learning Institutes. Formosa (2019) described rifts and suggested further research to create a comprehensive catalogue of resources.

Internationally, higher education is often free or low-cost for everyone. A benefit of aging in the United States is tuition-waiver for senior/elder students in many states. Long and Rossing (1978, 1979) surveyed individual states following amendments to the *Higher Education Act of 1965* (20 U.S.C. 1001; Public Law 94-482) in 1976 authorizing federal grants to states for lifelong learning – defined to include "education for older and retired people" (§§ 132 & 133). Every US state sets its guidelines, and some actively market to senior citizens. In most states, older learners can complete programs up to, and including, advanced certifications and terminal degrees.

Conclusion

Over the 50 years since lifelong learning in the context of society's older learners became an education-industry focus, little has changed in the adult education discipline's services to this population. Peterson (1974) observed, "Gerontology is pointing to the potential of education to meet numerous growth and maintenance needs of the older population. ...

The role of gerontology in adult education is to bring to light a neglected clientele group which should be served...for an adjustment in the attitudes of the adult education programmers which will allow all of this to occur" (p. 67). Peterson explained, "In order to respond to the challenge of the various educational needs of older adults, it will be necessary for the field of adult education to adjust in at least five ways. These include expansion of programming, adjusted emphasis in the psychological base, alternative financing mechanisms, expanded recruitment, and a changed philosophical stance" (p. 51).

Withnall (2012) recommended educators and policy-makers consider a "dynamic model of learning throughout life" that includes every age and individual circumstance (p. 662) — a plan that sets the stage for the next generation of older persons. Peterson put forth the challenge: "Education for older people has been sorely neglected in the past. It must not be so in the future" (1974, p. 67). McClusky (1974) echoed Peterson: "In brief, it is believed that we are at a point in societal development when the growing domain of lifelong learning promises to transform both the character and dimensions of the entire educational enterprise" (p. 106).

What are you — and your organization — waiting for?

References

AGE Platform Europe. (2021, September 13). *UN Decade of Healthy Ageing: Get on board!* https://www.age-platform.eu/policy-work/news/un-decade-healthy-ageing-get-board

Balogová, B., & Gazdová, V. K. (2019). Are Slovak universities prepared to create the department of geragogy and train future geragogues? *Acta Educationis Generalis, 9*(1), 39–55. https://doi.org/10.2478/atd-2019-0003

Boss, L., Kang, D.-H., & Branson, S. (2015). Loneliness and cognitive function in the older adult: a systematic review. *International Psychogeriatrics, 27*(4), 541–553. https://doi.org/10.1017/s1041610214002749

Brookfield, S. (1985). A critical definition of adult education. *Adult Education Quarterly, 36*(1), 44–49. https://doi.org/10.1177/0001848185036001005

D'Ambrogio, E. (2020). *Japan's ageing society*. European Parliamentary Research Service. https://www.europarl.europa.eu/RegData/etudes/BRIE/2020/659419/EPRS_BRI(2020)659419_EN.pdf

Delegation of the European Union to the United Nations in New York. *General statement by the European Union and its member states and aligning countries at the 75th session of the United Nations General Assembly on the Resolution A/75/L.47: United Nations Decade of Healthy Ageing, 2021-2030 under Agenda item 131* (Dec. 14, 2020). https://www.eeas.europa.eu/delegations/un-new-york/eu-general-statement-%E2%80%93-united-nations-general-assembly-un-decade-healthy_en

Eschenbacher, S., & Fleming, T. (2020). Transformative dimensions of lifelong learning: Mezirow, Rorty and COVID-19. *International Review of Education, 66*(5-6), 657–672. https://doi.org/10.1007/s11159-020-09859-6

Formosa, M. (2019). Educational gerontology. In D. Gu & M. E. Dupre (Eds.), *Encyclopedia of gerontology and population aging* (pp. 1–8). Springer. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-319-69892-2_411-1

Fraser, W. (2018). *Seeking wisdom in adult teaching and learning: An autoethnographic inquiry*. Palgrave Macmillan. https://doi.org/10.1057/978-1-137-56295-1

Gunstad, J., Paul, R. H., Brickman, A. M., Cohen, R. A., Arns, M., Roe, D., Lawrence, J. J., & Gordon, E. (2006). Patterns of cognitive performance in middle-aged and older adults: A cluster analytic examination. *Journal of Geriatric Psychiatry and Neurology, 19*(2), 59–64. https://doi.org/10.1177/0891988705284738

Hachem, H. (2020). Is there a need for a fourth statement? An examination of the critical and humanist statements of educational gerontology principles. *International Journal of Lifelong Education, 39*(5–6), 465–477. https://doi.org/10.1080/02601370.2020.1801869

Heylen, L. (2010). The older, the lonelier? Risk factors for social loneliness in old age. *Ageing & Society, 30*(7), 1177–1196. https://doi.org/10.1017/S0144686X10000292

Hodlin, M. W. (2022, December 29). The silver economy powers economic growth and healthy aging. *Global Commission on Aging*. https://globalcoalitiononaging.com/2022/12/29/silver-economy-powers-economic-growth-and-healthy-aging/

Hong, S. (2021). Aging, cultivation, and transcendence in Confucianism. *Spirituality Studies, 7*(2), 36–47.

Istance, D. (2019). Seniors' learning. *European Journal of Education*, 54(1), 9–12. https://doi.org/10.1111/ejed.12317

Jewell, A. J. (2014). Tornstam's notion of gerotranscendence: Re-examining and questioning the theory. *Journal of Aging Studies, 30*, 112–120. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jaging.2014.04.003

Kidahashi, M., & Manheimer, R. J. (2009). Getting ready for the working-in-retirement generation: How should LLIs respond?. *LLI Review, 4*, 1–8.

Knapper, C. K., & Cropley, A. J. (2000). *Lifelong learning in higher education* (3rd ed.). Stylus.

Laslett, P. (1987). The emergence of the Third Age. *Ageing and Society, 7*(2), 133–160.

Lemon, B. W., Bengtson, V. L., & Peterson, J. A. (1972). An exploration of the activity theory of aging: Activity types and life satisfaction among in-movers to a retirement community. *Journal of Gerontology, 27*(4), 511–523.

Lindeman, E. C. (1926). *The meaning of adult education*. New Republic.

Long, H. B., & Rossing, B. E. (1978). Tuition waivers for older Americans. *Lifelong Learning: The Adult Years, 1*(10), 10–13.

_____. (1979). Tuition waiver plans for older Americans in postsecondary public education institutions. *Educational Gerontology, 4*, 161–174. https://doi.org/10.1080/0360127790040206

Manheimer, R. J. (2005). The older learner's journey to an ageless society: Lifelong learning on the brink of a crisis. *Journal of Transformative Education, 3*(3), 198–220. https://doi.org/10.1177/1541344605276055

McCarthy, V. L., & Bockweg, A. (2012). The role of transcendence in a holistic view of successful aging. *Journal of Holistic Nursing, 31*(2), 84–92.

McClusky, H. (1976). What research says about adult learning potential and teaching older adults. In R. M. Smith (Ed.), *Adult learning: Issues and innovations: Information Series No. 8* (ED131197) (pp. 112–122). Northern Illinois University Dept. of Secondary and Adult Education; ERIC Clearinghouse in Career Education; Illinois State Office of Education, Adult and Continuing Education Section. ERIC. https://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/ED131197.pdf

McClusky, H. Y. (1970). A dynamic approach to participation in community development. *Journal of Community Development Society, (1)*1, 25–32. https://doi.org/10.1080/15575330.1970.10877417

_____. (1971). *Education: Background issues* (ED057335). White House Conference on Aging. ERIC. http://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/ED057335.pdf

_____. (1972). Education and aging. In A. Hendrickson (Ed.), *A manual on planning educational programs for older adults* (pp. 59–72). Florida State University.

_____. (1974). The coming of age of lifelong learning. *Journal of Research and Development in Education. 7*(4), 97–107.

_____. (1990). The community of generations: A goal and a context for the education of persons in the later years. In R. H. Sherron & D. B. Lumsden (Eds.), *Introduction to Educational Gerontology* (3rd ed.) (pp. 59–83). Hemisphere.

Merriam, S. B., & Heuer, B. (1996) Meaning making, adult learning and development: A model with implications for practice. *International Journal of Lifelong Education, 15*(4), 243–255. https://doi.org/10.1080/0260137960150402

Mezirow, J. (1997). Transformative learning: Theory to practice. *New Directions for Adult and Continuing Education, 1997*(74), 5–12. https://doi.org/10.1002/ace.7401

Moody, H. R. (2006). Later life and the farther reaches of human nature. *The Gerontologist, 46*(5), 695–698. https://doi.org/10.1093/geront/46.5.695

Peterson, D. A. (1974). The role of gerontology in adult education. In S. M. Grabowski & W. D. Mason (Eds.), *Education for the aging: Living with a purpose as older adults through education: An overview of current developments* (ED099541) (pp. 41–60). ERIC Clearinghouse on Adult Education. http://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/ED099541.pdf

Rowe, J. W., & Kahn, R. L. (1998). *Successful aging*. Pantheon.

Schuetz, J. (1982). Geragogy: Instructional programs for elders. *Communication Education, 31*(4), 338–347. https://doi.org/10.1080/03634528209384702

Singer, J. A. (2004). Narrative identity and meaning making across the adult lifespan: An introduction. *Journal of Personality, 72*(3), 437–459.

Smith, A. L. (Ed.). (1919). *Ministry of Reconstruction Adult Education Committee final report presented to Parliament by command of His Majesty*. H.M. Stationery Office. https://www.google.com/books/edition/Final_Report/0RBOAAAAMAAJ

Smith, M. K. (1996, 2001). Lifelong learning. *The encyclopedia of pedagogy and informal education*. Retrieved June 15, 2023, from https://infed.org/mobi/lifelong-learning/

Tornstam, L. (1989). Gero-transcendence: A reformulation of the disengagement theory. *Aging, 1*, 55–63. https://doi.org/10.1007/bf03323876

_____. (1997). Gerotranscendence: the contemplative dimension of ageing. *Journal of Aging Studies, 11,* 143–155. https://doi.org/10.1016/S0890-4065(97)90018-9

_____. (2011). Maturing into gerotranscendence. *The Journal of Transpersonal Psychology, 43*(2), 166–180.

UNESCO. (n.d.-a). *UNESCO and sustainable development goals*. https://en.unesco.org/sustainabledevelopmentgoals

_____. (n.d.-b). *World Higher Education Conference 2022*. https://www.unesco.org/en/higher-education/2022-world-conference

UNESCO Institute for Lifelong Learning. (2022). *Transforming higher education institutions into lifelong learning institutions: UIL Policy Brief 14*, Doc. UIL/2022/PB/14. https://uil.unesco.org/transforming-higher-education-institutions-lifelong-learning-institutions

_____. (2023, June 6). *Lifelong learning: An imperative for higher education*. [Video]. YouTube. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=bePumrUZPgw

_____. (2023b). *Annual report, 2022*. https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000384704

United Nations General Assembly. (2020). *Decade of Healthy Ageing (2021–2030)*, G.A. Res. 75/131, U.N. Doc. A/RES/75/131 (Dec. 14, 2020). https://digitallibrary.un.org/record/3895802

_____. (2015). *Transforming our world: the 2030 agenda for sustainable development*, G.A. Res. 70/1, U.N. Doc. A/RES/70/1 (Sept. 25, 2015). https://www.un.org/en/development/desa/population/migration/generalassembly/docs/globalcompact/A_RES_70_1_E.pdf [see also UN Department of Economic & Social Affairs. (n.d.). *Transforming our world: the 2030 agenda for sustainable development* https://sdgs.un.org/2030agenda]

United Nations Department of Economic & Social Affairs Population Division. (2019). *World population ageing 2019: Highlights*. https://www.un.org/en/development/desa/population/publications/pdf/ageing/WorldPopulationAgeing2019-Highlights.pdf

Wacks, V. Q. (1987). A case for self-transcendence as a purpose of adult education. *Adult Education Quarterly, 38*(1), 46–55. https://doi.org/10.1177/0001848187038001005

Withnall, A. (2004). Is lifelong learning a reality for older people? *Nursing & Residential Care, 6*(3), 140–142. https://doi.org/10.12968/nrec.2004.6.3.12142

_____. (2012). Lifelong or longlife? Learning in the later years. In D. N. Aspin, J. Chapman, K. Evans, & R. Bagnall (Eds.), *Second International Handbook of Lifelong Learning* (pp. 649–664). Springer. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-94-007-2360-3_39

World Health Organization. (2015a, October 30). *Misconceptions on ageing and health*. World Health Organization. https://www.who.int/news-room/photo-story/photo-story-detail/ageing-and-life-course

_____. (2015b). *World report on ageing and health*. World Health Organization. https://apps.who.int/iris/handle/10665/186463

_____. (2021). *Decade of Healthy Ageing baseline report.* World Health Organization. https://www.who.int/publications/i/item/9789240017900

Worth, P., & Smith, M. D. (2021). Clearing the pathways to self-transcendence. *Frontiers in Psychology, 12*(64838), 1–6. https://doi.org/10.3389/fpsyg.2021.648381

ASIA-EUROPE LIFELONG LEARNING HUB: INTERNATIONAL RESEARCH, POLICY AND PRACTICE IN ASIA AND EUROPE

Séamus Ó Tuama[1]

ABSTRACT: The ASEM Education and Research Hub for Lifelong Learning (ASEM LLL Hub) is a key ongoing project of ASEM (Asia Europe Meeting), an intergovernmental process that engages with 51 countries in Asia and Europe as well as the ASEAN Secretariat and the European Commission. Under the patronage of the Government of Ireland the Hub has set out to facilitate a vibrant and impactful research community, built on partnership and parity of esteem between the two regions. It is also consciously framed in the context of global sustainability challenges, which adds a layer of complexity both conceptually and diplomatically This paper examines its activities, its challenges, successes, and philosophical underpinning.

Keywords: lifelong learning, Asia, Europe

Background Context on the ASEM Lifelong Learning Hub

The ASEM Education and Research Hub for Lifelong Learning (ASEM LLL Hub) was established in 2005 in Copenhagen, with the goal of extending research and policy advice around lifelong learning in the ASEM Region, which encompasses 51 countries in Asia and Europe as well as the ASEAN Secretariat and the European Commission. The term ASEM refers to the Asia-Europe Meeting, which is an informal inter-governmental process, which was established in 1996. It does not have a central secretariat, instead it relies on the coordinating function of the ministries of foreign affairs of its members. The ASEM LLL Hub was initially hosted by Denmark, it is currently hosted at University College Cork in Ireland, through the support of the Government of Ireland.

The rise of neoliberalism since the 1980s has tended to create a more pragmatist or technocratic orientation in adult education/lifelong learning. The acceleration of climate change and a cocktail of significant other global challenges are creating a context that requires an urgent reappraisal of neoliberalism. This has specific resonance in adult education/lifelong learning, which in the 1970s was engaging with the 'global nature of social problems' (Gouthro, 2022, 108), before the onset of the neoliberal turn. At the inception of the Irish residency of the ASEM LLL Hub, there was already a growing concern about sustainability amid a cocktail of global challenges and there is an explicit call out to address these challenges in its five-year plan. That document was framed during the COVID-19 pandemic, but before the flashing lights generated by subsequent dramatic climate episodes like those experienced in the northern hemisphere in 2023. The ASEM LLL Hub is then more than just a collaborative enterprise across 51 countries, it is a process that is conscious of a need to address, with urgency, the critical issues of our day. It cannot be framed as a business as usual process, but one that has 'a willingness to engage with complex ideas, seemingly obtuse language, and perspectives that can challenge one's worldview and create discomfort' (Gouthro, 2022, 116). In a network of this scale and diversity not all participants will necessarily share agreement on the current

---

[1] Chair, ASEM LLL Hub & Director, Adult Continuing Education, University College Cork

crisis, but nonetheless the hub's success will not ultimately be about the extent of its membership and its outputs, but the degree to which it has in fact challenged worldviews and created discomfort.

Objectives and Philosophical Rationale

The ASEM LLL Hub was established within the ASEM framework to enhance collaboration between the two regions in the field of lifelong learning. Ireland, in taking on stewardship for the initiative, endorsed its original mission, but also sought to shape its next phase in line with international policy frameworks and a restated philosophical understanding of lifelong learning. The ASEM LLL Hub's understanding of lifelong learning closely aligns with how it is described on the homepage of the UNESCO Institute for Lifelong learning, which frames it as 'being rooted in the integration of learning and living', applying to everyone from children to older adults, in all life's contexts, regardless of how and where it is generated and that it meets the needs and demands of the learner (https://www.uil.unesco.org/en/unesco-institute/mandate/lifelong-learning#:~:text=Lifelong%20learning%20is%20rooted%20in,and%20through%20a%20variety%20of). These principals were outlined in University College Cork's bid for support from the Government of Ireland (see Ireland Hosting ASEM Education and Research Hub for Lifelong Learning, 2019). In terms of a policy frame, it referred to instruments such as the Global Commission on the Future of Work which supports a push towards a 'universal entitlement to lifelong learning'; the OECD report Envisioning the Future of Education & Jobs; the United Nations Agenda 2030 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and the World Economic Forum's assessment of future skills needs. It also wove in more specific Asia-Europe statements of intent, including a history of dialogue between the European Union and ASEAN dating back to 1977. It drew on the ASEAN-EU Plan of Action (2018 – 2022), which supports 'mutually beneficial cooperation', including Priority 3. Socio-Cultural Cooperation. It referenced Connecting Europe and Asia - Building blocks for an EU Strategy, which seeks to increase cooperation in education, research, innovation, culture, sport and tourism, helping to promote diversity and the free flow of ideas.

Philosophically, the Irish hosts subscribed to the view that universities, as elite institutions, should be "addressing the complexities of contemporary social, political, economic, environmental and wellbeing challenges" (Ó Tuama, 2019, p. 95). These complexities, often described as global challenges, include climate change, migration, security, including food and health security, advances in communications and technologies like AI that impact ordinary people, very often disproportionally negatively impacting the most vulnerable. Lifelong learning is key to enabling everyone in society better understand, appreciate the complex nature of the challenges and enable them to respond in considered, proactive and novel ways to mitigate their impacts locally and globally. In the context of the ASEM LLL Hub that also includes the concept of "learning to live together" as understood in the Delors Report (1996).

In its approach, the ASEM LLL Hub seeks to address how lifelong learning is essential in myriad ways in helping people stay current in areas like skills and careers, but equally in

terms of having the basic toolkit to be an actively engaged member of society. This approach understands lifelong learning almost as an essential software or operating system, that allows individuals to engage across the full spectrum of life's challenges and opportunities, and like software in need of regular upgrades and indeed bug fixes. It subscribes too to the idea that lifelong learning is an enabler of cognitive flexibility, an 'openness to consider ideas, concepts, and solutions that are novel and emerging from worldviews to which we may not personally subscribe' (Ó Tuama, 2019, 95). From these premises, it set about re-energising the ASEM LLL Hub drawing on the traditions, state-of-the-art, innovations and potentials in Europe and Asia to drive a research agenda that would not only extend scholarship, but also help shape policy and practice.

Adopting a Mission and Vision

In September 2021 the ASEM LLL Hub adopted a strategic vision: *A Framework for Lifelong Learning Research in the ASEM Region*: 2020-2025, to cover the period of Ireland's stewardship. In this vision it sets out why lifelong learning is critical in helping society address the many grand challenges impacting people in their ordinary lives all the way up to major global ones. At a global level we are increasingly impacted by climate change, which is part of a complex cocktail that includes sustainability, migration, security, food security, health, the future of work among others, to which we should add the changing landscape posed by advances in AI (artificial intelligence). Through its then six research networks (now seven), the ASEM LLL Hub sought to support a research agenda, which is scaffolded by leading international researchers, but also includes the voices of practitioners and policymakers, to generate evidence that would deepen our understanding of lifelong learning and influence practice and policy in the ASEM region.

In the vision statement it set out a ten-point statement of intent and adopted a common research agenda, these have shaped the core of its work. The statement of intent is framed in an ambition to 'enable people to thrive in a carbon-neutral, digital age', and to flourish in a time of unprecedented uncertainty. It acknowledges global challenges like climate change, mass migration, economic transformation, the Covid-19 pandemic, which have been layered since by huge concerns around security and the potential impacts of artificial intelligence. It made a strong commitment to partnership building both regionally and within the ASEM process itself. In its 'Common Research Agenda' it set out a very clear statement that specifically called out: 'equity and inclusion; identity, respect and dignity; digital education and ICT; demographic trends such as ageing and migration; knowledge, policy and capacity building in lifelong learning across the ASEM region; and engagement with civil society and community-based lifelong learning' as core priorities.

This vision and mission have been bolted onto new governance structures to support the process. Ensuring parity between Asia and Europe in the leadership, fostering collaboration between the two regions and enhancing impact have been prioritised. Some of the research networks transitioned from the period when the Hub was hosted in Denmark, but as there was a hiatus before the transfer to Ireland some had lost

momentum. Six research networks were included in the 2021 framework document, with a seventh network established in 2023.

Research Network 1, e-ASEM, was rejuvenated under new leadership and extended its remit to also consider advances in artificial intelligence. Research Network 2, Workplace Learning, remained active through the transfer period and continued under the existing leadership. Research Network 3, Professionalisation of Adult Teachers and Educators, in ASEM Countries, transitioned to a new leadership and adopted a new programme of activity. Research Network 4, National Strategies for Lifelong Learning, continued through the transfer period, and the existing leadership continue in place. Three new Research Networks were generated in 2021. Research Network 5, Learning Transitions, which addresses the lifelong learning challenge on how to facilitate the many transitions people need to increasingly make in and out of education throughout their lives and especially how under-represented populations can transition in. Research Network 6, Learning Cities and Learning Regions, is engaged around the upsurge in the development of learning cities, is aligned very closely with UNESCO Global Network of Learning Cities (https://uil.unesco.org/lifelong-learning/learning-cities) and other networks of learning cities and regions. Research Network 7, Non-formal, Informal Learning, and Civil Society, is the newest network, established in 2023. It aims to both raise the visibility of non-formal, informal learning, community learning and civil society activity in this field, and to drive a research agenda that can support policy formation and leverage existing good practices in both regions.

Indicative Activities and Achievements of the Research Networks

Each network develops an annual work plan, aligned to the overall mission of the ASEM LLL Hub. This is supported by an annual budget from the Hub, progress is reported at regular meetings of the Council of Research Network Coordinators, and additional support is offered by a small secretariat located at Cork, Ireland. An indicative list of recent activities gives a better sense of the kinds of activities the networks currently support.

Research Network 1, e-ASEM, organized a webinar, aimed at graduate students, drawing from the Asia-European Open Class project, which focused on digital learning design. They also hosted virtual sessions on "AI - A Changing Landscape of Learning" and 'The Digital University,' drawing on the work of its researchers.

Research Network 2, Workplace Learning, initiated and edited a special thematic issue of the Hungarian Educational Research Journal focused on workplace learning in changing contexts. The thematic issue was guest edited by an international group from the research network, comprising Karen Evans (UK), Helen Bound (Singapore), and Gabor Erdei (Hungary). They showcased current research and trends in workplace learning, emphasizing its importance across diverse contexts. The research network relates to how workplaces serve as lifelong learning spaces, offering different types of learning opportunities. They also covered topics such as workplace learning in higher education,

the challenges of connecting academic learning with professional practices, informal and non-formal learning in the IT sector, and the impact of remote working.

Research Network 3, Professionalization of Adult Teachers and Educators, organized a webinar entitled "Developing a Professional Qualification for Adult Educators," sharing the good practices from the new postgraduate programme at University College Cork, Ireland and has devised a new research trajectory under its new leadership.

Research Network 4, National Strategies for Lifelong Learning, has published a report on National Lifelong Learning Policies and Learning Cities. It discussed the limited evidence of national policies for adult education and lifelong learning explicitly linked to learning city development in the ASEM 51 countries, with some exceptions in China and the Republic of Korea. It highlighted national and supra-national initiatives in the United Kingdom and Germany, funded by the European Social Fund (ESF), emphasizing the importance of considering the policies of the European Union as a whole and the role of the European Commission and city administrations in learning city development. It also mentioned the significance of place in learning, exemplified by Community Learning Centers (CLCs) and research on neighbourhoods.

Research Network 5, Learning Transitions, is leading a special issue in the journal *Studies in Adult Education and Learning*. At the 2023 International Council for Adult Education (ICAE) World Assembly, Bali will host a symposium exploring four themes on transitions in lifelong learning, which will also feed into a peer-review publication. It will host a hybrid conference in India also in 2023. Research Network 5 collaborated with Research Network 6 in delivering a workshop at the 10th ESREA Triennial Conference (2022), entitled "New Communities of Learning: Sowing Seeds of Change in post-Covid adult education". Like other networks, Research Network 5 is organised into sub-clusters to facilitate a greater level of granularity in the research, regional focus and devolved leadership across the two regions.

Research Network 6, Learning Cities and Learning Regions, is working in partnership with EUCEN (European University Continuing Education Network) towards the publication of a book on learning cities globally, which is due to be published in 2024. It has also led a number of webinars including one on "New Trends of Learning Cities & Learning Communities in Japan". It highlighted the unique approach of considering the entire city as a campus and promoting interaction among different generations. Besides the shift to online learning during the pandemic, the importance of offering free classes and the need for dialogue platforms were important. The webinar also showcased Japan's efforts in lifelong learning and emphasizes the commitment to collaboration and promoting learning opportunities. It has also collaborated with the COLLO (Coalition of Lifelong Learning Organizations) and with individual learning cities on webinars.

In 2023 Research Network 7, informal and non-formal learning, and civil society, was launched. It hosted a webinar pulling together research and case studies from Asia and Europe, specifically from Ireland, Greece, Thailand, and The Philippines, attracting an

audience of over two-thousand across both regions. It is currently developing research on the impacts of civil society in informal and non-formal learning in Asia and Europe.

In 2022, the ASEM LLL Hub hosted a global lifelong learning week in Cork, Ireland, which was its first major post-Covid in-person event. In line with its stated objective to work closely with national and international partners, this week drew on the activities of its own six research networks, and included contributions, events in collaboration with UNESCO Institute for Lifelong Learning, Higher Education Lifelong Learning Ireland Network (HELLIN), Empower Competences for Online Learning in Higher Education (ECOLHE), International Adult and Continuing Education Hall of Fame, and Cork Learning City. Researchers from 22 countries contributed to the event.

Benefits and Challenges of Research Collaboration between Two Key Global Regions

The ASEM Lifelong Learning Hub is not a research fund per-se, what it does is create the conditions for collaborative research, supported by very modest funding. The intention is to generate long-term, sustainable, collaborative relationships between researchers in the two regions and to demonstrate the value in a culture of collaboration between the two regions. These collaborations can address the realisation that 'cooperation in humanities and social sciences often takes a long time, only by identifying high-quality collaborators, can the sustainability and scalability of research be ensured' (Zhe et al., 2021, p.1). Zhe et al.'s (2021) analysis also indicates that 'international collaboration in scientific research is conducive to improving the quality of scientific research output,' that 'international collaboration has a positive impact on the research performance of the institution' (p.2) and that 'the impact of international research collaboration papers is higher than that of local papers (p.3). These conclusions are not surprising in themselves; they confirm some key central assumptions about the value of international research. However, Zhe, Lu, & Xiong point out that much international collaboration can enhance the Matthew effect, where well placed individuals and institutions gain dipropionate advantage. They also point out that overcomplexity, like excessively large consortiums and administrative burdens can limit the advantages of international research. Lauerer (2023) speaks against the Matthew effect and the primacy of the administrative or efficiency imperatives of an overly pragmatic orientation. Addressing research in a different field of the social science, journalism studies, Lauerer (2023), advocates for placing a strong focus on inclusivity. They espouse an inclusive open science approach, while ensuring that the diversity of voices shapes the research. Inclusivity is about who people are and where they are in their careers as much as where they are on the planet. In succinct terms they see this inclusive approach as a bulwark against 'research imperialism' and that 'true international collaboration illuminates blind spots' (p. 395).

In their critique of the concepts of North and South to delineate the world between relatively richer and poorer countries, (Sabzalieva et al., 2020) highlight the inherent problems with the model. They specifically point out that it 'overemphasizes national contexts while obscuring the specific capabilities and constraints of those engaged in research partnerships' (p.3). In the case of the ASEM LLL Hub, the designation might be

more East and West, but nonetheless, there still exists in Europe a bias that assumes that European practice, policy and research in the field of lifelong learning is more advanced than in Asia. Countering that narrative, through ensuring shared leadership in the network was a stated aim from the beginning. The idea is that each region has its relative advantages and deficits in all three spheres. A mutually respectful acknowledgement of this can enable the leveraging of experience, reputation and achievement from both regions and simultaneously support emerging researchers and help advance new research, policy and practice themes emanating from either or both regions.

Dusdal and Powell (2021) list key determinants of successful international collaboration. These include 'existing relationships, repeated interactions, and intellectual synergies', the social, cultural, and institutionally complex contexts in which team members' work give rise to 'constraining and enabling factors' that need to be addressed; individual motivations as diverse as 'personal reasons include friendships …, the ambition to maximize personal scientific output'; a well-functioning communications strategy that facilitates 'valuable opportunities to advance scientific knowledge production, yet also imply challenges, risks, and drawbacks' (p. 237). These realities exist within the ASEM LLL Hub too, but overall, it has achieved a reasonable geographical spread of researchers across the two regions; there are researchers from 33 countries currently active in the seven networks. The Hub also has a good balance between early career researchers and more established ones, and the research addresses issues across both regions.

The ASEM LLL Hub process has inherent advantages and disadvantages and significant challenges. It operates with a very low budget and is not entirely in tune with a new public management drive that pushes universities into a constant race to improve their ranking in various international league tables. League tables are not always consistent with this sort of process, which may explain why Weinrib & Sá (2020) noted less willingness by Norwegian academics to participate in the Norwegian Program for Development, Research and Education (NUFU). They factor in their assessment of why NUFU lost vitality, due to a Norwegian Agency for Development Cooperation (NORAD) push towards 'setting the agenda and ensuring the delivery of preestablished outcomes' which operates against NUFU's traditional 'decentralized and bottom-up approaches' (Weinrib & Sá, 2020. p.20). Norway was able to articulate a narrative, for a considerable period, that was against promoting asymmetrical relationships, but a changing political climate made that more difficult. This demonstrates clearly that a project like ASEM LLL Hub which has neither the resources nor the heft of an entire national policy behind it, has to be modest in terms of what it can realistically achieve. It can make progress in the margins rather than turning the tide. However, it is critical that the process endeavours to swim against that tide, which has strong currents of counter discourse. Skupien & Rüffin (2020) list among these as 'a superior knowledge of what is needed to develop a country according to a certain (Western) model,' 'categorizing countries according to their scientific capacities along a model of deficiency' and the assumption of 'an objective truth' (p. 20) that makes it easier to transfer the idea of the best model from one national context to another.

Conclusion

The ASEM LLL Hub was established to promote university level research around lifelong learning in the ASEM region, which encompasses 51 countries, the ASEAN Secretariat and the European Commission. From its inception in 2005 it was supported by the Danish government and hosted at Aarhus University. In 2021 the hosting moved to Ireland, with the support of the Government of Ireland with University College Cork the new location of the Chair. This shift led to a refocus of the Hub's mission statement and objectives and the revitalisation and expansion of its research networks. In this process, greater emphasis was placed on partnership building, a closer alignment with international policy frameworks around lifelong learning, and an explicit acknowledgement of the serious global challenges like climate change, migration, and sustainability. It also led to a broadening of its membership to include a wider range of stakeholders, while university-based researchers still constitute the vast majority of its members, there is now greater visibility of policymakers and practitioners. Three new networks were also added, bringing the current total to seven, covering e-learning, workplace learning, professionalization of adult teachers, national strategies for lifelong learning, learning transitions, learning cities and regions, and non-formal and informal learning and civil society. The Chair, delivers keynotes, leads workshops, and contributes to conferences and webinars to raise the international profile of the Hub. He also engages in networking, in partnership with international organisations, universities, cities, civil society, governmental organizations and the Irish diplomatic service, to extend the active membership in both Asia and Europe.

While each of the seven research networks develops its own annual work plan, they also meet regularly to encourage collaboration and to share information. The Hub itself has an overall mission which was developed in 2021, reviewed in 2022 and is seen as a broad roadmap for its activities. It adheres to a strong commitment to inclusion, ensuring perspectives of both regions are equally represented and that the research agenda aligns with the UNESCO call that no one should be left behind. It operates with a relatively low budget, which limits the extent to which it can support the work of the individual networks.

Its role is therefore more as an enabler of research, the leadership of each of the networks is voluntary as is the general membership. However, it is producing significant research, organising seminars, webinars, and international publications. It is of significant scale and is a key factor in the research field around lifelong learning in Europe and Asia. Being embedded in both regions, which accounts for over 60% of the world's population and GDP, it is an influential voice in global lifelong learning research and policy.

References

ASEAN, & EEAS (Eds.). (2018). ASEAN-EU plan of action (2018 – 2022). *Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN)*. Retrieved July 19, 2023, from https://asean.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/08/ASEAN-EU-POA-2018-2022-Final.pdf

ASEM Education and Research Hub for Lifelong Learning. (2019). *Ireland Hosting ASEM Education and Research Hub for Lifelong Learning*. Retrieved July 18, 2024, from https://asemlllhub.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/07/ASEM-LLL-Hub-Gov-of-I-Sept-2019.pdf

ASEM Education and Research Hub for Lifelong Learning. (2020). *A Framework for Lifelong Learning Research in the ASEM Region: 2020-2025*. Retrieved July 19, 2023, from https://asemlllhub.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/11/ASEM-LLL-Hub-5-Year-Plan-1.pdf

Dusdal, J., & Powell, J. J. W. (2021). Benefits, motivations, and challenges of international collaborative research: A sociology of science case study. *Science & Public Policy, 48*(2), 235-245. https://doi.org/10.1093/scipol/scab010

European Commission. (2018). *Connecting Europe and Asia - Building blocks for an EU Strategy*. EEAS Website. Retrieved July 19, 2023, from https://www.eeas.europa.eu/sites/default/files/joint_communication_-_connecting_europe_and_asia_-_building_blocks_for_an_eu_strategy_2018-09-19.pdf

Evans, K., Bound, H., & Erdei, G. (2021). Workplace learning in changing contexts. *Hungarian Educational Research Journal, 12*(4), 367–369. https://doi.org/10.1556/063.2022.00200

Gouthro, P. A. (2022). Lifelong learning in a globalized world: The need for critical social theory in adult and lifelong education. International Journal of Lifelong Education, 41(1), 107-121. https://doi.org/10.1080/02601370.2022.2033863

International Commission on Education for the Twenty-First Century, & Delors, J. (1996). *Learning, the treasure within: Report to UNESCO of the International Commission on Education for the Twenty-first Century*. UNESCO Pub.

International Labour Organisation. (2019). *Work for a brighter future – Global Commission on the Future of Work. Geneva, Switzerland: International Labour Organisation*. Retrieved from https://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---dgreports/---cabinet/documents/publication/wcms_662410.pdf

International Labour Organisation. (2020). Work for a brighter future – Global Commission on the Future of Work. *Geneva: International Labour Organisation*. Retrieved from https://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---dgreports/---cabinet/documents/publication/wcms_662410.pdf

Lauerer, C. (2023). Balancing efficiency and inclusivity: Open science principles and practices in international collaborative research projects. *Digital Journalism, 11*(2), 390-398. https://doi.org/10.1080/21670811.2022.2123020

Ó Tuama, S. (2019). Community-engaged universities: Approaches and context. *Adult Learning, 30*(3), 95-98.

OECD. (2019). Envisioning the future of education and jobs – Trends, data and drawings. *OECD Publishing*. Retrieved from http://www.oecd.org/education/Envisioning-the-future-of-education-and-jobs.pdf

Osborne, M. (Ed.) (2022). *National lifelong learning policies and learning cities: ASEM Lifelong Learning Hub*. ASEM Education and Research Hub for Lifelong Learning.

Sabzalieva, E., Martinez, M., & Sá, C. (2020). Moving beyond "North" and "South": Global perspectives on international research collaborations. *Journal of Studies in International Education, 24*(1), 3-8. https://doi.org/10.1177/1028315319889882

Skupien, S., & Rüffin, N. (2020). The geography of research funding: Semantics and beyond. *Journal of Studies in International Education, 24*(1), 24-38. https://doi.org/10.1177/1028315319889896

UNESCO Institute for Lifelong Learning. (2019). The global report on adult learning and education: Leave no one behind: Participation, equity and inclusion. *Hamburg: UNESCO Institute for Lifelong Learning*. Retrieved from https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000372274.locale=en

UNESCO Institute for Lifelong Learning. (2021). *UNESCO global network of learning citie*s. Retrieved July 19, 2023, from https://uil.unesco.org/lifelong-learning/learning-cities

United Nations. (2023). The sustainable development agenda. *United Nations Sustainable Development*. Retrieved from https://www.un.org/sustainabledevelopment/development-agenda/

Weinrib, J., & Sá, C. (2020). Policy ideas and North-South research cooperation: The case of Norway. *Journal of Studies in International Education*, *24*(1), 9-23. https://doi.org/10.1177/1028315319896756

World Economic Forum. (2019). *The Future of Jobs Report 2019*. Retrieved from https://www3.weforum.org/docs/WEF_Future_of_Jobs_2020.pdf

Zhe, C., Lu, X., & Xiong, X. (2021). Analysis of influence factors on the quality of international collaboration research in the field of social sciences and humanities: The case of Chinese world-class universities (2015–2019). *SAGE Open*, *11*(4), 215824402110503. https://doi.org/10.1177/21582440211050381

TRANSFORMATION AMONG NIGERIAN IMMIGRANTS IN ITALY AND THE UNITED STATES: A MIXED-METHODS EXPLORATION

Taiwo Isaac Olatunji[1]
Monica Fedeli[2]

ABSTRACT: Research has indicated that resultant cross-cultural experiences from migration are precursors of transformative learning. This study explores transformative learning processes and outcomes for perspective transformation among Nigerian immigrants in Italy and the United States. Multiple-case study and convergent mixed-methods research designs were utilized for this narrative inquiry. Through a narrative analysis of two participants' stories and quantitative analyses of the Transformative Learning Survey questionnaire, results showed that the learning processes—such as critical reflection, discourse, spirituality, and dialogue/support—mainly transversed the cognitive/rational and extra-rational domains of transformative learning. Transformative learning outcomes among the participants included acting differently, self-awareness, and worldview shift. The absence of significant differences at between Italy and the US in transformative learning outcomes reaffirms the universality of these outcomes among Nigerian immigrants. A significant contrast emerged in the "Discourse" process, with a higher average percentage in Italy (96%) compared to the US (83%), highlighting a distinct emphasis on communication and experience-sharing in the Italian context. This study illuminates the shared and unique aspects of transformative learning experiences among Nigerian immigrants in Italy and the United States. The study provides a unique perspective on the use of mixed data in the exploration of transformative learning in cross-cultural contexts.

Keywords: transformative learning, cross-cultural experiences, Italy, the United States, mixed-methods narrative inquiry

Nigeria is the most populous country in Africa, and it is estimated that about 15 million Nigerians live in the diaspora. In recent years, there has been a significant increase in the number of Nigerian immigrants living abroad. The United States (the US) and Italy are among the top destinations for Nigerians outside Africa. Meanwhile, migration experiences can become transformative (Onosu, 2020). Research has indicated that resultant cross-cultural experiences from migration are precursors of transformative learning (TL) (Olatunji & Fedeli, 2022a). It is important to understand if and how Nigerians gain perspective transformation through their cross-cultural experiences. Hence, this study explored, using mixed methods, TL processes and outcomes among Nigerian immigrants in Italy and the US. The questions that guided the study include: What are the TL processes and outcomes among Nigerian immigrants in Italy and the US in the context of their cross-cultural experiences? How do TL experiences vary between Nigerian immigrants in the Italian context and those in the American context?

Theoretical Framework

TL refers to processes that result in significant and irreversible changes in the way a person experiences, conceptualizes, and interacts with the world (Hoggan, 2016). TL leads to perspective transformation by challenging and critically reviewing the taken-for-

---

[1] University of Padova, Italy; taiwoisaac.olatunji@phd.unipd.it
[2] University of Padova, Italy; monica.fedeli@unipd.it

granted assumptions that underpin one's habits of mind and consequent points of view (Mezirow, 2000). This study adopted Stuckey et al.'s (2013) and Stuckey et al.'s (2022) multiple perspectives on TL including cognitive/rational, extrarational, and social critique domains. As Table 1 shows, each perspective/domain has various processes of TL.

Table 1
TL Processes

Strand	Process	Description of domain
Cognitive/rational		
	Critical reflection Action Experience Disorienting dilemma Discourse	The cognitive/rational perspective emphasizes rationality, critical reflection, and ideal conditions for discourse. This is a constructivist and universal view of learning, explaining a process of constructing and appropriating new or revised interpretations of the meaning of one's experience with a goal of greater personal autonomy and independence.
Beyond rational/extrarational		
	Arts-based Dialogue/Support Emotional Imaginal/ Soul work Spiritual	The second perspective has been called an extrarational perspective. It emphasizes the emotive, imaginal, spiritual, and arts-based facets of learning, those that reach beyond rationality. This view of TL recognizes personal, intuitive, and imaginative ways of knowing that lead to individuation (the development of the self as separate from, but integrated with, the collective of humanity).
Social critique		
	Ideology critique Unveiling oppression Empowerment Social action	The third is the social critique perspective that emphasizes ideological critique, unveiling oppression, and social action in the context of TL. Its goal is social transformation by demythize reality, where the oppressed develop critical consciousness.

Note. Based on Stuckey et al. (2013, p. 213-214) and TLS results template

The framework, as Table 2 shows, essentially categorises the behavioral or cognitive effects that occur after a transformational event into four outcome domains: acting differently, self-awareness, open perspective, and worldview shift (Stuckey et al., 2013; Stuckey et al., 2022). The framework has an accompany online survey tool called Transformative Learning Survey (TLS) hosted on https://sites.psu.edu/transformativelearning/.

Table 2

TL Outcomes

Outcome	Description
Acting Differently	As a result of TL, individuals revise their perspectives, values, and beliefs, and they then act differently based on these revised perspectives. Acting differently might be reflected in acting differently in relationships and how people go about their everyday life.
Self-awareness	As a result of critical reflection, introspection, imagining alternatives, relational learning, and spiritual experiences, individuals increase their awareness of who they are. This means that they develop their understanding of their values, beliefs, and assumptions, both at a personal level and in their relation to others.
Openness	One outcome of TL is becoming more open to considering and understanding others' perspectives, values, and beliefs.
Shift in Worldview	TL is often described as a deep shift in perspectives. This can take place in relation to a person's world view (philosophy, religious beliefs, political views).

Note. Based on Stuckey et al. (2013, p. 213-214) and TLS results template

Methodology

Multiple-case study and convergent mixed-methods research designs were utilized for this narrative inquiry. The multiple-case study design was employed to investigate the Nigerian immigrants' perspective transformation in two different contexts – Italy and the US (Yin, 2018). The convergent mixed-methods design was employed to provide multiple ways of addressing the research question by collecting and analysing qualitative and quantitative data simultaneously (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2018). This study involved the selection of 27 participants using a criterion sampling technique (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016) for narrative interviews and the completion of the TLS questionnaire. Due to the constraint of word limit, this paper reports only a narrative analysis of two of the narratives, and quantitative analyses of the completed questionnaire. Narrative analysis offers insights into individuals' lived experiences, perspectives, and meanings they attribute to their experiences (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000; Riessman, 2008). The process involved transcribing the interviews and getting familiar with the data, inductive coding, categorising codes and identifying themes, and interpreting the emerging categories and themes (Riessman, 2008).

Results

In this section, findings from the narrative analysis of the interviews with the participants and from the analysis of their TLS results are presented with the aim to exploring the TL processes and outcomes among Nigerian immigrants in Italy and the US.

Participants in Italy and the US

The sample included 27 participants (14 Nigerian immigrants in Italy and 13 in the US). Most participants fall within the 25–34 age range, with a total of 13 participants. Others fall within 18–24 and 35–44 age ranges. There are more male participants (16) than female participants (11) overall. The gender distribution is fairly balanced in both Italy and the US. Most participants are married, with 18 in total. Regarding language proficiency, most participants in Italy have a basic level of proficiency in the local language, while participants in the US have mostly improved their proficiency in English language since moving to the US. Most participants have been living in their respective countries for less than 10 years, while 8 participants have been residing abroad for 10 years or more. The participants' profiles further reflect the varied backgrounds of the participants in terms of ethnicity, religion, occupation, education qualifications, and immigrant status. This demographic overview is valuable for understanding the participants' personal and socio-cultural backgrounds in the context of cross-cultural transition and TL.

Summarized Findings from Narrative Analysis

To set the tone for the quantitative results, we provide below two summaries of findings from stories that were shared by two of the participants, one from Italy and one from the US.

The Case of Olivia in Italy

Olivia, a Nigerian immigrant to Italy, faced a journey filled with challenges, resilience, and transformation. Although her marriage served as the driving force behind her migration, immigration experience was complex and significant. Her qualifications obtained in Nigeria were recognized, hindering employment prospects. Determination led Olivia to discover her knack for trading snacks and offering crucial document processing and translation services to fellow Nigerians, highlighting her adaptability and resourcefulness. Olivia's narrative underscored self-reflection and the need to consider career aspirations prior to immigration. As a Nigerian woman in Italy, she confronted discrimination, yet her entrepreneurship and immigrant support efforts endured. Amid moments of despair, Olivia centered on the positive – nurturing her children, engaging in church, and finding solace in cooking. She aspired to relocate to another country, driven by her desire to let her children acquire education in an English-speaking environment and her disappointment with Nigeria's conditions. Olivia's perspective on the advantages and disadvantages of being an immigrant in Italy is nuanced, as she actively challenges discrimination and champions integration. Throughout, she acquired lessons in maintaining values, preserving reputation, and embracing integration. Her Italy experiences molded her into a stronger, empathetic individual. While regretting her initial choice of coming to Italy, Olivia embraced gratitude for all she had benefited and optimism for a brighter future (elsewhere). Her narrative encapsulates immigrants' intricate emotions, resilience, and determination.

The Case of Kunle in the US

Kunle shared his experiences of immigrating to the US, recounting the challenges he had encountered and the support he had received along the way. He spoke about the emotional journey that came with relocating and how that process had left a lasting imprint on his life. Throughout his narrative, Kunle emphasized the pivotal role that his support system played in helping him navigate the intricate path of immigration. He highlighted the significance of seeking guidance and remaining open-minded as he undertook the transformative journey. The emotional impact of leaving behind familiarity and stepping into the unknown became a central theme in Kunle's story. The adjustments to a new culture, language, and way of life were hurdles he faced with determination. He spoke passionately about the value of embracing these challenges as opportunities for growth, even when they felt overwhelming. Kunle's words resonated with the importance of learning from every experience encountered on his immigration journey. In his narrative, Kunle concluded with a poignant reminder of the power of asking questions and connecting with others who had walked a similar path. He acknowledged that the camaraderie of those who had shared similar struggles proved to be an invaluable source of information and solace. Kunle's story served as a testament to the idea that the immigration journey was not solely a physical transition but a transformative process that shaped him in profound ways.

Results from Quantitative Analyses

In this sub-section, we present the results from our quantitative and qualitative analyses, including percentage, regression, and ANOVA analyses.

Nigerian Immigrants' TL Processes

Ongoing analysis showed that the participants experienced TL processes such as critical reflection, taking action, experiencing new perspectives, encountering disorienting dilemmas, engaging in discourse, embracing arts-based approaches, seeking dialogue and support, navigating emotions, exploring the imaginal realm, connecting with spirituality, engaging in ideology critique, unveiling oppression, empowering themselves/others, and taking part in social action. Table 3 indicates that across most of the TL processes, the percentages are relatively high for both Italy and the US. The highest average percentages for TL processes in both Italy and the US are observed for "Discourse" (96% in Italy, 83% in the US) while the average grand totals in "Arts-Based" (56%) and "Empowerment" (61%) are the lowest. Analysis further indicated that there are no statistically significant differences at a 95% confidence level in the average percentages on TL processes except for "Discourse" measure.

Table 3
Average Percentages of Nigerian Immigrants' TL Processes

Processes	Italy	US	Grand total	Statistically significant
	M	*M*	*M*	
Arts-based	61%	49%	56%	FALSE

Dialogue/support	84%	75%	80%	FALSE
Emotions	85%	77%	82%	FALSE
Imaginal/soul	76%	73%	75%	FALSE
Spiritual	87%	88%	88%	FALSE
Action	88%	83%	86%	FALSE
Critical reflection	70%	69%	70%	FALSE
Disorienting dilemma	64%	67%	65%	FALSE
Discourse	96%	83%	90%	TRUE
Experience	86%	84%	85%	FALSE
Empowerment	58%	64%	61%	FALSE
Social action	90%	81%	86%	FALSE
Unveiling oppression	85%	75%	80%	FALSE
Ideology	81%	69%	76%	FALSE

Note. "Statistically significant" results show the comparison of average percentages in Italy and the US at $p < 0.05$.

Nigerian Immigrants' TL Outcomes

Analysis further reflected the second dimension of perspective transformation, the various possible outcomes that signal fundamental and permanent changes among the immigrants. The participants achieved TL outcomes, such as acting differently, developing deeper self-awareness, having more open perspectives, and experiencing a shift in their worldview. Table 4 shows that the overall percentages for TL outcomes are also relatively high for both Italy and the US. The highest average percentages for TL outcomes in both Italy and the US are observed for "Self-awareness" (Italy: 89%, US: 84%) while the lowest average are for "Openness" (Italy: 75%, US: 72%). Also, there are no statistically significant differences between Italy and the US in terms of TL outcomes at a 95% confidence interval.

Table 4
Average Percentages of Nigerian Immigrants' TL Outcomes

Outcomes	Differently	Self-awareness	Openness	Shift in worldview
	M	M	M	M
Italy	85%	89%	75%	79%
US	77%	84%	72%	81%
Grand total	81%	86%	74%	80%
Statistically significant	FALSE	FALSE	FALSE	FALSE

Note. "Statistically significant" results show the comparison of average percentages in Italy and the US at $p < 0.05$.

Inferential Statistics on TL Processes and Outcomes

Two composite dependent variable regression analyses were carried out. In the first one, socio-demographics and all TL processes served as the independent variables while the average of TL outcomes was the dependent variable. The most important independent

variables were identified through iterative preliminary analysis using the random forest technique. Variables that met the threshold of 5% in at least one outcome were retained. To remove the problem of multicollinearity. We iteratively removed the variables with the highest correlation. As Table 5 shows, our conclusion is that the model has an explanatory power of 75% (*adj. R^2 = 0.746*) whereby Critical Reflection, Spiritual, Imaginal/Soul, Years Spent and Dialogue/Support were found to be significant at $p <$ 0.05.

Table 5
Regression of Socio-demographics and TL Processes

Measure	$P > t$
Years Spent	0.003*
Arts Based	0.092#
Dialogue/Support	0.042*
Emotions	0.419
Imaginal/Soul	0.039*
Spiritual	0.020**
Action	0.540
Critical Reflection	0.001***
Experience	0.195
Empowerment	0.189

Note. #$p \leq 0.1$; *$p \leq 0.05$; **$p \leq 0.01$; ***$p \leq 0.001$.

In the second composite dependent variable regression analysis carried out, socio-demographics and the three TL process domains—rational, extrarational, and social critique (composite or grouped variables)—were the independent variables while the average of TL outcomes was the dependent variable. The most important independent variables were identified through iterative preliminary analysis using the random forest technique. Variables that met the threshold of 5% in at least one outcome were retained. To remove the problem of multicollinearity, we iteratively removed the variables with the highest correlation As Table 6 shows, our conclusion is that the final model has an explanatory power of 47% (*adj. R^2 = 0.472*) and rational domain of TL process was found significant at $p < 0.05$.

Table 6
Regression of Socio-demographics and TL Process Domains

Measure	$P > t$
Rational	0.001***
Age Range	0.092#
Researcher	0.198
Business	0.116

Note. #$p \leq 0.1$; *$p \leq 0.05$; **$p \leq 0.01$; ***$p \leq 0.001$.

Furthermore, ANOVA model was used to determine if there is a difference in the TL experiences between Nigerians in Italy and the US based on the participants' responses on TL processes and TL outcomes. As Table 7 shows, with the *PR(>F)* = 0.33 which is

greater than $p = 0.1$, there is no difference observed between the experiences of Italy and US respondents.

Table 7
Analysis of Variance in Nigerians' TL Experiences in Italy and US

	sum_sq	df	F	PR(>F)
X_anova ['US']	0.0072	1.0	0.9592	0.3372#
Residual	0.1790	24.0		

Note. #$p \leq 0.1$

Discussion

Using a multiple-case mixed-methods narrative inquiry, this study aimed to explore the TL processes and outcomes among Nigerian immigrants in Italy and the US. The study also explored possible variation in how the immigrants' cross-cultural experiences result in TL in Italian and American contexts. This discussion section presents an interpretation of the findings.

TL Processes among Nigerian Immigrants

The narratives of Olivia and Kunle vividly illustrate the TL processes experienced by Nigerian immigrants in Italy and the US. Olivia's journey in Italy showcases how critical reflection, seeking dialogue and support, and taking action facilitated her transformation (Mezirow, 2000; Taylor, 2017). Her exploration of various business ventures and her determination to adapt in the face of obstacles exemplify the transformative process of action. Olivia's emphasis on self-reflection and adapting her approach also reflects critical reflection, an essential component of TL. On the other hand, Kunle's narrative in the US exemplifies TL through encountering new perspectives and embracing challenges. His emphasis on learning from experiences and the importance of maintaining an open mind aligns with TL's notion of experiencing disorienting dilemmas. Kunle's narrative embodies the process of engaging in discourse or dialogue, as he highlights the power of connecting with others who have undergone similar experiences, a testament to the transformative process of seeking dialogue and support. These narrative findings are complemented by the quantitative analysis. The similar levels of engagement in processes like critical reflection, dialogue/support, and spirituality suggest a commonality in the TL experiences of these immigrants across both regions. This cohesion underscores the universal aspects of TL processes in the context of migration, transcending geographical boundaries. However, the significant difference observed between Italy and the US regarding the TL process "Discourse" could be attributed to a combination of socio-cultural and contextual factors. This disparity might indicate greater levels of need for and engagement in communication "weighing evidence and making rational judgments" (Stuckey, 2013, p. 222) in Italy due to availability and effectiveness of support systems in the face of apparent challenges such as language barriers.

Critical reflection, spiritual exploration, engaging in dialogue/support emerged as significant factors in predicting TL outcomes. These factors resonate with the

participants' narratives, where introspection, connecting with others, and engaging with spirituality were pivotal to their transformative experiences. The inferential results suggest that cognitive/rational and extra-rational TL processes as well as years spent in the host country would predict perspective transformation among Nigerian immigrants. This finding contradicts Stuckey et al.'s (2022), where rational and social critique process domains where more significantly associated with TL outcomes. In any case, critical reflection retains a prominent role among TL processes (Mezirow, 2000). As Olivia's narrative showcases, the immigrant's critical reflection in a cross-cultural context can be bidirectional, in the sense that they challenge not only the assumptions inherent in their origin society but also those that underlie their host society (Olatunji & Fedeli, 2022). Moreover, the quantitative analysis mirrors the narrative themes of open-mindedness, engagement with challenges, and learning from experiences. This congruence underscores the interplay between personal reflection and social interaction in shaping TL outcomes. Olivia's and Kunle's narratives align with the statistical findings, collectively reinforcing the influence of various processes on their transformative journey (Stuckey et al., 2013; Stuckey et al., 2022).

TL Outcomes Among Nigerian Immigrants

Olivia and Kunle's narratives also illuminate the TL outcomes (Mezirow, 2000; Taylor, 2017) experienced by Nigerian immigrants. Olivia's story underscores the outcomes of acting differently, developing deeper self-awareness, and experiencing shifts in worldview. Her determination to support her family, engage in entrepreneurship, and actively challenge discrimination demonstrates the transformative process of acting differently and developing self-awareness. Kunle's experience in the US mirrors these transformative outcomes, emphasizing shifts in worldview and deeper self-awareness. His recognition of the value of embracing challenges and learning from them exemplifies the process of experiencing a shift in worldview. Furthermore, his engagement with a supportive network and his openness to connecting with others with similar experiences showcase the transformative outcome of experiencing deeper self-awareness.

The quantitative analysis supports these narrative outcomes, indicating that both Nigerian immigrants in Italy and the US exhibit high percentages in TL outcomes. The similarities in results on self-awareness, shifts in worldview, and acting differently suggest that these TL outcomes are not bound by geographical context. Instead, they appear to be intrinsic to the journey of Nigerian immigrants, regardless of where they settle. The non-manifestation of the TL outcome "Openness" in the two narratives and the relative low scores in both groups (75% in Italy and 72% in the US) might be explained with more narratives and cross-contextual details, which are beyond the limit of this paper. The ANOVA analysis reinforced that there was no significant difference in these experiences between the two groups. This finding resonates with the shared narratives of Olivia and Kunle, suggesting that while geographical context varies, the fundamental nature of the TL journey remains consistent. Meanwhile, some nuanced differences and similarities might be uncovered in the TL experiences of Nigerian immigrants in the cross-analysis between Italy and the US due to socio-structural factors. For instance, Olivia's lamentation on her inability to secure a job and her ambition of relocation from Italy to an

English-speaking country is a pointer to the centrality of language in cross-cultural experiences as the lingua franca (Olatunji & Fedeli, 2022a). Overall, these findings underscore the universality of TL principles and its relevance within the diverse settings of Nigerians in Italian and American societies.

Conclusion

In conclusion, the narratives of Olivia and Kunle, combined with the quantitative analysis, reveal that the TL processes and outcomes among Nigerian immigrants in Italy and the US are remarkably consistent. Both geographical contexts seem to provide avenues for critical reflection, seeking dialogue and support, and embracing challenges, leading to outcomes of acting differently, developing self-awareness, and experiencing shifts in worldview. These findings emphasize the universal nature of TL experiences and outcomes within the context of Nigerian immigration. The findings underscore the significance of cross-cultural experiences and migration in facilitating personal transformation among immigrant populations. These insights could be considered in designing interventions and support systems that facilitate the personal growth and promote positive outcomes for immigrant populations. This study had some limitations. First, it was an exploratory study with criterion-sampled participants, and only two narratives were presented in this short paper. These limit the generalizability of the findings. Longitudinal studies and surveys with a larger sample can provide a more comprehensive understanding of the dynamics of perspective transformation.

References

Clandinin, D. J., & Connelly, F. M. (2000). *Narrative inquiry: Experience and story in qualitative research*. Jossey-Bass.

Cranton, P. (2016). *Understanding and promoting transformative learning: A guide to theory and practice.* (3rd ed.). Stylus Publishing.

Crawley, H., & Jones, K. (2020, September 2). Beyond here and there: (Re)conceptualising migrant journeys and the 'in-between.' *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies*, *47*(14), 3226–3242. https://doi.org/10.1080/1369183x.2020.1804190

Creswell, J. W., & Plano Clark, V. L. (2018). *Designing and Conducting Mixed Methods Research* (3rd ed.). Sage.

Hoggan, C. D. (2016). Transformative learning as a metatheory. *Adult Education Quarterly*, *66*(1), 57–75. https://doi.org/10.1177/0741713615611216

Merriam, S. B., & Tisdell, E. J. (2016). *Qualitative research: A guide to design and implementation* (4th ed.). Jossey Bass.

Mezirow, J. (2000). Learning to think like an adult: Core concepts of transformation theory. In J. Mezirow & Associates. *Learning as transformation: Critical perspectives on a theory in progress,* (pp. 3-33). Jossey-Bass.

Olatunji T. I. & Fedeli, M. (2022a). (Non)preparation to live in another country: Cross-cultural experiences as precursors of transformative learning among Nigerian immigrants in Italy. In W. Griswold (Ed.), *Proceedings of 2022 International Pre-Conference (71st, Milwaukee, Wisconsin,*

October 10-11, 2022) (pp. 62–72). Commission on International Adult Education (CIAE) of the American Association for Adult and Continuing Education (AAACE). https://eric.ed.gov/?id=ED629033

Olatunji, T. I., & Fedeli, M. (2022b). What is critical in transformative learning theory? A critical review of the research on transformative learning in intercultural contexts (1990–2020). In P. Faller, K. Del Simone & D. Holt (Eds.), *Telling, Evaluating, and Deepening our Story. Proceedings of the 14th International Transformative Learning Conference.* (pp. 317–320). International Transformative Learning Conference 2022. https://itlc2022.intertla.org/past-conferences-proceedings/

Onosu, O. G. (2020). Cultural immersion: A trigger for transformative learning. *Social Sciences*, *9*(2), 20. https://doi.org/10.3390/socsci9020020

Riessman, C. K. (2008). *Narrative methods for the human sciences.* Sage Publications, Inc.

Stuckey, H. L., Peyrot, M., Conway, R., & Taylor, E. W. (2022). A conceptual validation of transformative learning theory. *Social Science Quarterly*, *103*(6), 1459–1474. https://doi.org/10.1111/ssqu.13205

Stuckey, H. L., Taylor, E. W., & Cranton, P. (2013). Developing a survey of transformative learning outcomes and processes based on theoretical principle. *Journal of Transformative Education, 11*(4), 211–228. https://doi.org/10.1177/1541344614540335

Taylor E. W. (2017). Critical reflection and transformative learning: A critical review *PAACE Journal of Lifelong Learning, 26*, 77-95. https://www.iup.edu/pse/files/programs/graduate_programs_r/instructional_design_and_technology_ma/paace_journal_of_lifelong_learning/volume_26,_2017/taylor.pdf

Yin, R. K. (2018). *Case study research and applications: Design and methods* (6th ed.). Sage.

ADULT EDUCATION SCHEME FOR NON/NEO LITERATES IN INDIA– A CASE STUDY OF JAN SHIKSHAN SANSTHAN - MINISTRY OF SKILL DEVELOPMENT AND ENTREPRENEURSHIP INITIATIVE

Yugant Patra[1]

ABSTRACT: The Jan Shikshan Sansthan (JSS) (translated into English as People's Education Institute) is an initiative of the Ministry of Skill Development and Entrepreneurship, Government of India to improve occupational skills and technical knowledge of non/neo literates and persons having a rudimentary level of education but not completing high school in rural and semi-urban areas. The initiative aims to increase efficiency, increase productive ability, and enhance livelihood opportunities for such individuals specially targeted towards underprivileged sections of society. With the transformation in the open economy and social setup of India over the years, this initiative has become important in the economic development of the population by imparting essential skills training, thereby enabling the growth of local vocational trades, and creating new opportunities for the local communities. This case study will provide an overview of the JSS structure, setup of centers and institutions, popular courses, and growth opportunities of the scheme. It will provide insights into the scheme's promotion of self-employment and facilitation towards better financial inclusion. It will also highlight the importance of polyvalent educational institutions like JSS in the march towards the digital economy of India.

"Jan Shikshan Sansthan" in Hindi—the national language of India—stands for "Jan" meaning people, "Shikshan" meaning education or training, and "Sansthan" meaning institute. Jan Shikshan Sansthan started as "Shramik Vidhyapeeth" translated into English as a worker's college in Mumbai, India, in 1967. The scheme was started under the purview of the Ministry of Human Resource Development (MHRD), Government of India, with a mission to provide vocational education and training to people. The scheme was launched in response to the steep growth in the working-age population in post-independent India with growing cluster-based industrial development causing human resource migration from rural to urban areas (Directorate of Adult Education, 2004). The scheme allowed this migrant population to avail vocational and life skills training to address the socio-economic challenges of urban and semi-urban environments. This section of the demography without occupational skills only had daily wage labor as one of the limited earning options. The scheme was renamed Jan Shikshan Sansthan (JSS) in 2000, and its beneficiary catchment was expanded beyond just migrant urban workers to include neo-literates, semi-literates, and illiterates across the country.

A neo-literate, as Richardson (1983) defines it, is an adult or adolescent who has, at some period, acquired the basic techniques of reading but has yet to develop the skill to the point where reading is done fluently and with complete understanding. However, it is Witbooi's (1995) definition of a neo-literate as adults, 15 years and above, from poor, disadvantaged communities who have very little or no formal schooling and who have managed to attain skills of reading, writing, and numeracy at a mature age is more in line with the developing economies context such as India. Semi-literates are adults or

---

[1] Kansas State University, ypatra@ksu.edu

adolescents with low levels of formal education and have dropped out of formal education after primary schooling (5th – 8th grade). Both neo-literates and semi-literates can lapse into illiteracy due to the lack of practice and usage in reading and writing over time (Joshi & Ghose, 2006), hence the need for policy interference to contain the same.

JSS was transferred from the purview of the Ministry of Education (erstwhile Ministry of Human Resource Development) to the Ministry of Skill Development and Entrepreneurship in July 2018. The Ministry of Skill Development and Entrepreneurship (MSDE) was established as the governing ministry for all skill development initiatives of the Government of India under a single umbrella, with K-12 and formal undergraduate, graduate, and post-graduate education policy and implementation being retained under the Ministry of Education (MoE). The mission of the Ministry of Skill Development and Entrepreneurship is to co-ordinate all skill development efforts across the country, remove the disconnect between the demand and supply of skilled workforce, build the vocational and technical training framework, skill up-gradation, building of new skills and innovative thinking not only for existing jobs but also jobs that are to be created (National Skill Development Mission, 2020). The premise of the ministry is to promote employability through education, skill development, competence upgradation, and training. With total literacy campaigns leading to the emergence of a significant number of neo-literates, the charter of the JSS scheme has shifted from just the migrant urban and semi-urban workers to the numerous neo-literates and unskilled and unemployed youth and high school dropouts joining the "proverbial" workforce.

Jan Shikshan Sansthan Directorate

The Directorate of Jan Shikshan Sansthan (DJSS), a sub-ordinate office of MSDE, is the governing body for the scheme. The JSS scheme is implemented through a network of Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) with 100% grant support from the Government of India. The Jan Shikshan Sansthans are registered under the Government of India Societies Registration Act of 1860. The affairs of Jan Shikshan Sansthan are managed by respective Boards of Management (BoM) approved by the government. Each BoM consists of twelve members comprising local government officials and local elected officials or their representatives, social workers, and the region's key employers. The Directorate is responsible for the approval of the annual action plan, the release of grants, administrative and technical support services, supervision, and monitoring, including site visits, curriculum development, and coordination with other skill development organizations under the umbrella of MSDE. The DJSS is headed by a director-level government functionary reporting to the joint secretary in MSDE and currently comes under the budgetary outlay of the ministry.

Jan Shikshan Sansthan Scheme

The scheme's mission is to provide vocational skills in a non-formal mode to non-literate, neo-literates, and individuals with a rudimentary level of education. JSS is micro-adult learning in mission mode, with beneficiaries being trained at small centers or door-to-door mode, requiring minimal infrastructure and resources, as represented in Figure 1. The scheme is aimed at marginalized sections of society. At present, there are 301 JSS

centers in 26 states (provinces) and 7 Union Territories, which are functional with the annual coverage of beneficiaries being around half a million, out of which 85% of the beneficiaries are women (Jan Shikshan Sansthan, 2023a). The scheme identifies appropriate target areas and groups by developing socio-economic profiles based on the region it serves. The courses are designed by considering these profiles and changes in emerging environments. Some of the training programs and curriculums are geared towards local traditional skills, focusing on creating wage-based or self-employment opportunities. The beneficiary demographics, course curriculum, available assistance, relevance of the scheme, and challenges are all important aspects of the program. The holistic premise is to shape the beneficiaries into self-reliant and self-assured employees or entrepreneurs who can manage their time, finances, communication, technology, and digital tools in conjunction with their vocation.

Figure 1

A typical JSS Institute in rural India and training sessions (clockwise) in Interior Design and Decoration, Embroidery, Assistant Computer Operator, Motor and Transformer Rewinding courses

Note. From the photo gallery of the Jan Shikshan Sansthan website. (Jan Shikshan Sansthan, 2023b)

Target Demographics

The target demographics of the scheme include school dropouts post 8th grade in the 15-45 age bracket. This bracket is indicative of two items. First, the formal age of labor in India by law is the completion of age 14 (The Child and Adolescent Labor – Prohibition and Regulation Act 1986), which has an impact on the second item - the highest percentage dropout rate in India is at the secondary level (grades 6 through 10). Hence individuals unable to continue with formal education due to socio-economic reasons enter the workforce as unskilled labor and drop out of schooling at age 15 or later, most of them having completed some form of secondary school, as shown in Table 1. Certain relaxations to this age bracket and literacy levels exist for the further underprivileged

such as tribal populations, individuals with special needs, and below-poverty-line beneficiaries.

Table 1

Average Annual Drop-Out Rate in School Education in India (In Percentage), 2014-2015

Grade	Boys	Girls	All
Primary	4.36	3.88	4.13
Upper Primary	3.49	4.6	4.03
Secondary	17.21	16.88	17.06
Senior Secondary	0.25	NA	NA

Note. Adapted from Educational statistics at a glance (p. 13), by National Institute of Educational Planning & Administration, 2018, Government of India. Copyright 2018 by Ministry of Human Resource Development, Government of India.

The scheme is also targeted towards women as the key beneficiaries. The literacy gap between men and women in the 15 and above category is 22% in rural areas and 12% in urban areas, as shown in Table 2. To address this disparity, much of the curriculum and course training is geared towards women for employment-generating opportunities.

Table 2

Literacy Rates in India, 2014

Age	Literacy Rate					
	Rural		Urban		Rural& Urban	
	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female
Age 5 & above	80.3	62.4	91	80.9	83.6	68.1
Age 7 & above	79.8	61.3	91.1	80.8	67.1	75.4
Age 15 & above	75	53.1	89.7	77.9	60.8	70.5
All ages	72.3	56.8	83.7	74.8	62	69.1

Note. Adapted from Educational statistics at a glance (p. 4), by National Sample Survey Office, 2018, Government of India. Copyright 2018 by Ministry of Human Resource Development, Government of India.

Courses

Courses under the JSS scheme are focused on improving the livelihood conditions for neo-literates, semi-literates, and illiterates who reside in isolated and neglected areas and are disadvantaged sections of the society because they could not be a part of the already laid educational system and thus could not take advantage of the formal learning system due to their socio-economic conditions (Varma, 2020). Course training runs for 1-2 hours

per day. JSS centers now offer 50 courses in 23 sectors, which meet local market demand in the field. Popular courses include food processing, information technology, handicrafts, electronics, and hardware. A detailed listing of the courses, along with the syllabus, can be viewed on the scheme's website (Jan Shikshan Sansthan, 2023c). The courses are developed and tailored based on the socio-economic profile of the region. However, some courses have universal demand. With India's transition from an agricultural-dominated economy to services and industries, the JSS courses are aligned in the same trajectory. Even the agri-business courses focus more on value addition and mechanization, and the more universal courses focus on machinery operation and technology.

The impact of the courses on the beneficiaries depends on the course selected. Field studies indicate that computer applications, beauty and wellness, and nursing assistant courses led to higher-paying jobs after the training completion and certification (Council for Social Development, 2012).

Theoretical and practical training as per the courses is prepared by the experts and approved by the DJSS. Each course covers planning for personality development, consumer protection, and health education as subjects necessary for life improvement. In addition to sector and job role-based training, participants are imparted 60 hours of employability skills training covering digital, financial, and legal literacy areas. It also includes topics on basic communication, time management, and customer service skills. Upon completing the course, participants receive a certificate issued on behalf of the Government of India. This certificate acts as proof of the vocational training undertaken and becomes a stepping-stone for organized employment and a gateway to demand higher wages based on skill. Upgradation programs are also provided to key resource persons, master trainers, and trainees during scheduled reviews and according to the changing needs of the updated programs and the needs of the neo-literates. There is also a provision for assigning knowledgeable people to help these new learners and taking feedback for changes in the course curriculum.

Assistance to Beneficiaries

The entire training program costs less than a dollar—approximately Indian National Rupee (INR)50 for the beneficiaries. The training allows beneficiaries to step up in the economic labor market. Without the same, they would be classified as daily wage workers, putting them at the lowest rung on the economic and wage ladder. The scheme allows for better financial inclusion with more skilled labor entering a growing economy and entry-level jobs, leading to a better standard of living and financial security. Since such working adults cannot be a part of schools, colleges, and other higher institutions, there is a need for educational institutions such as JSS to provide educational opportunities for such adults.

JSS centers work by the idea that such adults are experienced and have practical knowledge and have already acquired specific skills in due course of their jobs via informal means; hence the main priority of these institutions is to provide market-

oriented skills and knowledge to adult learners (Varma, 2020). This means such skills are needed in the market for better jobs and technical teaching, which can help them be more efficient and technically advanced in their respective fields. These learners always need to improve themselves in contemporary aspects to create more lucrative livelihood options, especially in a hyper-digital economy with a curriculum to their employment needs, small business initiatives, entrepreneurship, and service sector demands.

Relevance

The JSS scheme is a key initiative for India in its journey towards becoming a $ 5 trillion economy before the end of this decade. To achieve the same, the skill and economic disparities in the populace must be addressed. The march forward will only be possible if a substantial portion of the adult population can improve their self-marketability and digital skills to jump the rungs of the economic ladder. Youngman (2000) states that adult education is a powerful concept for promoting democracy, justice, gender equity, and scientific, social, and economic development. Initiatives like the JSS scheme are key to economic rejuvenation, especially in developing economies. With a growing youth bulge entering the workforce, the neo-literate and semi-literate demography is at further risk of being left behind unless upskilled through JSS-like schemes and continuing adult education programs. The more this group strives for self-development, the greater the probability of productive activity in their immediate economic sphere. Hence the emphasis on vocational, digital, and soft skills as part of this training program. JSS addresses the need for a convergence between basic literacy, skill upgradation and remediation, introduction and integration with information and communication technology tools as a single integrated project with elements of the combined theory, practice, and fieldwork experience.

Challenges

The scheme has challenges in achieving its further potential mainly due to scalability. The top two reasons for beneficiaries entering the JSS scheme are the need for employability and a rise in income level (Munavar & Veerabhadrappa, 2017). The yearly number of approximately half a million beneficiaries represents less than 0.028 percent of the population of India; hence without scalability, the true impact of the scheme is minimal. With 301 JSS institutes operational today, the coverage is less than 50% of India's total number of districts (National Portal of India, 2023). In addition to that, the demographic profile of each district is very different from having a uniform program structure. Certain districts with sparse and spread-out populations will benefit more from a technology-enabled delivery method, and districts with much higher populations need more extensive infrastructure for a higher intake of students or multiple institutes in each district. Other challenges include the limited outreach in rural areas and aspirational districts where the need for such programs is becoming even more relevant. Limited program outlay is an additional issue. Figures for recent years are not available on the ministry's website or are subsumed under other skill development budgetary outlays. The last publicly available data is from the financial year 2005-2006, with a budgetary outlay of just 4.2 million INR to cover 1.7 million beneficiaries, as shown in Table 3.

Table 3

JSS Funds outlay and number of beneficiaries, 2002-2006

Year	2002-2003	2003-2004	2004-2005	2005-2006
Funds Outlay	2.33 M INR	2.58 M INR	2.78 M INR	4.20 M INR
Number of Beneficiaries	1,473,548	1,669,028	1,391,200	1,761,740

Note. Adapted from the Scheme of Jan Shikshan Sansthan: Report of Evaluation (pp. 7-8), by National Literacy Mission, 2009, Government of India. Copyright 2009 by Directorate of Adult Education, Department of School Education & Literacy, Ministry of Human Resource Development, Government of India.

Further data available from the Planning Commission of India, as shown in Table 4, showed an increase in planned program outlay for the 11th five-year plan. With the Planning Commission of India being dissolved in 2014 (Roberts, 2020), all JSS expenditures and outlays were subsumed either under MoE or MSDE budget items. Limited literature is available on studies on the economic upliftment achieved through the scheme's implementation. Thereby data to influence policy decisions and drive further benefits, including more courses, beneficiaries, and training partners, is lacking. Without the availability of such data, the request for higher outlays to drive scalability and acceleration will be difficult, rendering such an important program to become notional in nature. The criteria for sanctioning JSS should be based on the economic backwardness of areas under consideration apropos low literacy rates—especially low literacy rates among women, high drop-out-rate prone districts, and tribal and remote locations, which are also susceptible to social disturbances.

Table 4

11th 5-year Plan Estimates for JSS

Year	Estimate (in Millions INR)
2007-2008	10.35
2008-2009	12.43
2009-2010	14.5
2010-2011	16.58
2011-2012	18.65
Total	72.52

Note. Adapted from the Scheme of Jan Shikshan Sansthan: Report of Evaluation (p. 92), by National Literacy Mission, 2009, Government of India. Copyright 2009 by Directorate of Adult Education, Department of School Education & Literacy, Ministry of Human Resource Development, Government of India.

Dedicated placement cells and credit support groups aligned with the institutes can transform the training outcome and provide the beneficiaries with additional professional support as part of the scheme. JSS can be the medium linking local capital-intensive government projects and private industry clusters with graduating beneficiaries to provide skilled labor. Formal government-backed recognition of the course completion certificates can enhance employability. A directive to all government-run employment exchanges to recognize JSS certificates as a valid skill classification on the lines of industrial training institutes (ITIs) and national open universities would further legitimize the beneficiary's training, leading to increased awareness and employability (National Literacy Mission, 2009). The formalization will also drive the branding and marketing of the JSS scheme, hence positively impacting the beneficiaries.

Conclusion and Implications

As India has become the most populous nation in the world, and its government's primary focus is on empowering people through education, Jan Shikshan Sansthans play a crucial role in bringing together the left behind. The scheme is vital to adult education with its uniqueness in design and impartation. With a more camaraderie and community-based teaching method in providing vocational skills and practical information to neo-literates and semi-literates, it is an essential tool to bridge the digital and skill divide. The need is for further expansion to reach a higher number of beneficiaries. Further research is required to establish firm evidence between the training imparted and the financial accretion achieved and its implications on the social position of the beneficiaries. Such data can drive future policy decisions of the government. The model can be potentially replicated across middle and lower-income countries with significant adult populations classified as unskilled labor. Schemes like JSS provide a viable mechanism for human capital value addition in such countries.

References

Council for Social Development. (2012). *Impact evaluation of Jan Shikshan Sansthan Gwalior (Madhya Pradesh): A report.* Directorate of Adult Education, Department of School Education & Literacy, Ministry of Human Resource Development, Government of India. http://www.csdindia.org/pdfs/Project-reports/JSS,Gwalior.pdf

Directorate of Adult Education. (2004). *Scheme of Jan Shikshan Sansthan (institute of people's education): Guidelines for management, planning and programming.* Department of Elementary Education & Literacy, Ministry of Human Resource Development, Government of India. https://www.education.gov.in/sites/upload_files/mhrd/files/upload_document/JSS_Guidelines.pdf

Jan Shikshan Sansthan. (2023a, July 13). *Courses offered.* https://jss.gov.in/staticPages

Jan Shikshan Sansthan. (2023b, July 13). *JSS scheme.* https://jss.gov.in/staticPages

Jan Shikshan Sansthan. (2023c, July 13). *Picture gallery.* https://jss.gov.in/staticPages

Joshi, S., & Ghose, M. (2006). Reading material for neo-literate and semi-literate adults. In S. Y. Shah (Ed.), *Participatory lifelong learning and information and communication technology* (p. 78). Jawaharlal Nehru University.

Munavar, V., & Veerabhadrappa, B. P. (2017). An analysis of economic upliftment of beneficiaries through JSSs skill development programmes in Karnataka: With special reference to Davanagere district. *International Journal of Engineering Development and Research, 5*(4), 1518-1523.

National Institute of Educational Planning & Administration. (2018). *Educational statistics at a glance.* Ministry of Human Resource Development, Government of India.

National Literacy Mission. (2009). *Scheme of Jan Shikshan Sansthan: Report of evaluation.* Directorate of Adult Education, Department of School Education & Literacy, Ministry of Human Resource Development, Government of India.

National Portal of India. (2023, July 27). *Districts of India.* https://www.india.gov.in/india-glance/districts-india

National Sample Survey Office. (2018). *Educational statistics at a glance.* Ministry of Human Resource Development, Government of India.

National Skill Development Mission. (2020, January 14). National skill development mission: A framework for implementation. https://www.msde.gov.in/sites/default/files/2019-09/National%20Skill%20Development%20Mission.pdf

Richardson, J. (1983). Libraries and the neoliterate. *International Library Review*, *15*, 9-13.

Roberts, A. (2020). Abolishing India's Planning Commission: The results after five years. *Social Science Research Network*. https://doi.org/10.2139/ssrn.3644479

The Child and Adolescent Labor – Prohibition and Regulation Act of 1986, 61-1986. 1986. https://labour.gov.in/sites/default/files/the_child_and_adolescent.pdf

Varma, N. S. (2020). Analyzing Jan Shikshan Sansthans (JSS) for adult education in India. *International Education & Research Journal*, *6*(7), 60-62.

Witbooi, S.L (1995). Neo-literates as information users: Problems or challenge. *South African Journal of Library and Information Science*, *63*(1), 19-23.

Youngman, F. (2000). *The political economy of adult education and development*. Zed Books.

MULTICULTURAL TRANSFORMATIVE LEARNING EXPERIENCE: AN AUTOETHNOGRAPHIC NARRATIVE OF BEING AN INTERNATIONAL CHINESE STUDENT

Ruoyi Qiu[1]

ABSTRACT: This reflection is a narrative autoethnography that explores the transformative multicultural learning experiences of an international Chinese graduate student. The experiences encompass the journey from a master's to a doctoral degree, spanning approximately six years of study in both English-speaking and non-English-speaking countries. The purpose of this reflection is to comprehend the roles of being an international student and academic researcher, while also delving into approaches for enhancing intercultural competence. Through an individual perspective, this narrative autoethnography presents an inter-/multi-cultural integration model known as the ME–WE–OUR–ME model, which provides a deeper understanding of the multicultural transformative learning experiences and complements the transformative learning theory. The insights gained from this reflection have the potential to optimize international adult education and programs.

Keywords: transformative learning experience, Chinese graduate student, autoethnographic narrative, international adult education

"AS AN INTERNATIONAL STUDENT AND YOUNG RESEARCH SCHOLAR, I AM TRANSFORMING BY LEARNING."

There has been a significant increase in the number of international students (IS) in higher education, leading to a surge in research on international sojourn (Brooks & Waters, 2011; Brown & Jones, 2013; Findlay et al., 2012; Van Mol & Timmerman, 2014). It appears that the international sojourn directly influences students' learning outcomes (Commander et al., 2016). Learning in an international setting is a process that is described as "difficult to describe, interpret, and conceptualize" (Erichsen, 2011, p. 111) and is characterized by a high level of uncertainty, both in terms of the process itself and the outcome (Schrittesser et al., 2014, p. 152). According to Kolb (1984), "learning is the process whereby knowledge is created through the transformation of experience" (p. 38). Ritz (2010) argues that adults are better equipped than children to evaluate the validity of their understandings, beliefs, and ways of constructing meaning from new experiences. On one hand, the transformative learning process involves self-critical reflective thinking that focuses on learners' beliefs, values, and understanding of various learning concepts (Brookfield, 1986, 1995; Cranton, 2002; Mezirow, 2000). On the other hand, it involves adult learners making sense of their experiences (Cranton, 1994; King, 1997b, 2005; Mezirow, 1991a, 1995, 2000). Therefore, it is necessary for experts to investigate the trends and factors that facilitate transformative learning among adult learners, specifically international adult learners (Taylor, 2008).

Moreover, Taylor (1994) highlights that existing research focuses heavily on participants' characteristics that contribute to the success of intercultural experiences, but there is a lack of research from a learning perspective that examines participants' ability to develop intercultural competency. According to Spencer-Oatey (2018), universities worldwide are striving to enhance the cultural diversity of their students; however, research indicates that successful integration remains challenging. While students may value the resources, engagement opportunities, and other initiatives implemented by institutions to create a diverse and multicultural campus environment, adapting to new academic, social, and cultural surroundings can still be stressful

---

[1] University of Padova, ruoyi.qui@studenti.unipd.it

(Bastien et al., 2018; Mesidor & Sly, 2016). Moreover, the previous reviews on transformative learning, culture, and/or difference have demonstrated a limited understanding, with minimal research exploring how culture, diversity, and difference act as catalysts for transformation in IS (Taylor, 2007). Consequently, this study concentrates on exploring the international learning experience from the personal perspective of an international student.

Above all, the aims of this study are twofold. Firstly, it seeks to reflect upon my personal intercultural experience with the intention of fostering transformative growth. Secondly, it aims to utilize my personal experience as a means to enhance the understanding of the significance of international adult education among scholars, universities, and international education policymakers. This study adopts a cross-sectional approach through narrative autoethnography, in line with the definition of international adult education, which encompasses learning experiences in both home and host countries, including participation in international academic events, as well as short-term and long-term programs abroad. My reflection on the international experience revolves around three main questions: Why did I decide to participate in international programs? What have I learned from these international programs? How have they influenced me as a researcher and an international student?

Transformative Learning Theory

The stress-adaptation-growth process of transition contributes to the development of an intercultural identity that is described as "open-ended, adaptive, and transformative" by Kim (2008, p. 364). Hviid and Zittoun (2008) propose that "every transition in which a person is engaged demands or provokes some responsiveness from the environment, which feeds further transitional processes" (p. 125). Several empirical studies indicate that IS are highly motivated to adapt and actively make significant efforts to do so (Amiotet al., 2010; Chirkov et al., 2007; Tian & Lowe, 2009; Zhou & Todman, 2009). While cultural differences may increase the challenges of adaptation (e.g., Suanet & Van deVijver, 2009), there is extensive empirical evidence demonstrating that the majority of students adapt and achieve despite these challenges (Chirkov et al., 2007; Gu & Schweisfurth, 2006; Gu et al., 2010). Moreover, studies focusing on binary adaptation highlight personal transformation. For instance, a two-year study examining the transitions and intercultural adaptations of first-year IS in the United Kingdom revealed that intercultural learning experiences are both transitional and transformational. The authors concluded that this process is interconnected with the growth of students' maturity and interculturality (Gu et al., 2010, p. 20).

Transformative learning occurs during the international sojourn (Jones, 2013). Mezirow (2000) regards intercultural learning as a form of transformative learning. According to Mezirow (1996), transformative learning is well grounded in human communication, learning is seen as the process of utilizing prior interpretations to construct new or revised interpretations of one's experiences, which then guide future actions. Hoggan (2016) presents a typology of transformative learning outcomes that encompasses worldviews, self, epistemology, ontology, behavior, and capacity. Transformative learning involves cultivating greater reflection, critical thinking, and openness to others' perspectives (Mezirow, 1994), ultimately altering "the way we see ourselves and the world in which we live" (Merriam et al., 2007). However, in the book "Thinking, Fast and Slow," psychologist Kahneman (2011) suggests that individuals often have a flawed understanding of themselves, stating, "You think you know yourself well, but you're actually wrong." Consequently, personal changes or transformations may go unnoticed. Due to the busy lives and academic pursuits of many IS, we may not prioritize or engage in self-reflection regarding our intercultural learning experiences. Thus, this study aligns with the principles of transformative learning theory, as well as the purpose, questions, and methodology conducted.

138

Methodology: Scholarly Personal Narrative But Autoethnography

In November 2022, I was invited by Dr. Amy Pickard, an Assistant Professor in the Adult Education Program at Indiana University School of Education, to deliver a presentation titled "International Chinese Doctoral Students' Intercultural Learning Experiences." Following the presentation, I received some valuable feedback from the students, for instance:

> I think a major conclusion for me following the presentation is that globalization makes for more educational opportunities and helps bring people and cultures together, however, without the additional elements of awareness and kindness and empathy, the individual experience can be a lonely one. These thoughts and questions made me appreciate Ruoyi's use of narrative inquiry - what are the stories people tell about themselves and their decision to pursue an education, particularly one abroad? As I am figuring out the best approach/study design for my dissertation research, this was especially timely and clarifying!

I was pleasantly surprised by the feedback I received from the students at Indiana University who attended my presentation. It made me realize the profound impact of sharing a personal narrative about individual experiences. However, it also underscored the need for greater visibility and recognition of international adult education.

Moreover, storytelling is a powerful and effective method that deeply resonates with readers or listeners. It serves as a means of communication between the storyteller and the audience. Scholarly personal narratives (SPN) employ personal storytelling to construct knowledge and meaning within scholarly research (Heidelberger & Uecker, 2009). In this study, as the researcher, I share narrative accounts of my own experiences with outbound or out-of-country study and exchange programs, allowing for in-depth and insightful reflections. Furthermore, this process of reflection serves as a transformative self-learning journey, fostering personal growth and understanding through the examination of these experiences. Additionally, narrative, by its very nature, possesses transformative qualities. Adult educators recognize autoethnography as a potent and imaginative approach for exploring narratives associated with transformative learning (Mc Cormack et al., 2020). Therefore, this study utilizes narrative autoethnography to reflect on two primary aspects of my international experience: participation in international events, and engagement in international short- and long-term exchange programs.

My Story: Overview of Six-Years International Learning Experience

It has been six years since I commenced my graduate studies in 2017. Throughout this period, I have studied or am currently studying on four different continents, namely Asia, America, Europe, and Australia. There were moments when I woke up in the morning or walked the streets of a foreign country, and I was astounded by the reality of living and studying in such an unfamiliar environment. I cannot help but question myself, "Is this real? Am I truly experiencing life and education here?" Each time this inquiry arises, I was reminded of the philosophical ponderings on origins and destinations encapsulated by the questions, "Where do I come from? Where am I going?" These inquiries were initially posed by Plato, as fundamental philosophical propositions. When contemplating and addressing these philosophical inquiries, it becomes even more crucial to reflect on one's own experiences and seek answers through introspection of personal intercultural learning experiences. As an international researcher, these reflections align with the realm of international adult education.

Due to disparities in education systems, only a limited number of students in China have the opportunity to participate in short-term or long-term study abroad programs. Factors such as motivation, preparation, and the duration of the trip can influence individuals' ability to experience transformative learning during their time abroad (Falk et al., 2012). Throughout my six years of study and learning, my international experiences have been limited, with only four instances. I commenced my graduate studies at Guangzhou University in China, in 2017. Firstly, in terms of international events, I attended a seven-day conference in Hong Kong in July 2018 and July 2019, a four-day conference in United Kingdom, and a four-day conference in the United States. Out of these events, only two were geographically distant from mainland China. Secondly, regarding short-term exchange programs, I participated in a fourteen-day program at the University of Western Australia in Perth, Australia, in 2018; a month-long program at the University of British Columbia in Vancouver, Canada, in August 2019; and a five-month program at Texas State University in San Marcos, Texas, in September 2022. Lastly, for long-term international programs, I am currently pursuing a three-year doctoral degree at the University of Padova in Padova, Italy, starting from October 2020. This is my first and only experience of studying abroad for a degree-seeking program thus far.

Everyone's experiences are unique, and the acquired sense of experience varies among individuals. Based on my personal experiences, I have categorized them into four aspects: "Frog in a well" and the support of international education policy; Informal learning: Going out and building my international social network; Experiencing different education systems in formal learning; The identity transformation: from individual to global citizenship.

"Frog in a Well" and the Support of International Education Policy

"You are the second female doctoral student in our village!" My mom sometimes brings it up in our conversations. From my parents' generation to mine, educational resources were not abundant in some rural areas of China. Very few students had the opportunity to attend college or university, and studying abroad was almost unheard of. Growing up in such an environment, on the one hand, my vision was limited, and on the other hand, it sparked my curiosity about the world. Postgraduate study, under international education policies, has completely opened the door to the world for me. I believed that I was a "frog in a well," who had a limited perspective and narrow understanding of the world due to my limited experiences and exposure. In Chinese, there is an idiom "Ignorant of the world; to be living under a rock" (zuò jǐng guān tiān), which comes from *Yuan Dao* by Han Yu of the *Tang* Dynasty. The idiom serves as a metaphor for having limited vision and insight. I was confined within my own small world and lacked awareness of the greater world beyond my immediate surroundings. Moreover, I did not have the opportunity to venture outside my home country or local community. However, everything has changed with the international education policies at the university in Guangzhou, China, which is about 480 km from my hometown.

The international education policies in my mater university have provided me with opportunities to study abroad, which include provisions for scholarships and financial support. These scholarships can cover tuition fees, living expenses, and travel costs, making studying abroad more affordable and accessible for me. For instance, I had the chance to participate in a summer cooperative exchange program between universities, which allowed me to go to Australia and Canada. Attending international academic conferences in Hong Kong on two occasions also broadened my international perspective. The short-term programs helpt me overcome the limitations of being a "Frog in a well" by providing them with a broader perspective, intercultural competence, and a deeper appreciation for the diversity and interconnectedness of the world. These experiences planted the seed of a desire to "go abroad" in my heart. Consequently, I had

the opportunity to live in Italy and the United States for an extended period of time. Short-term and long-term programs offer different experiences and have varying impacts on my personal growth. Short-term programs tend to be driven by curiosity and a thirst for new experiences, without much consideration for the challenges of studying and living in a foreign country, resulting in a "pure experiential" mode. On the other hand, long-term programs involve not only "pure experience" but also "pure life." In other words, a long-term program focuses on learning how to integrate into a new environment and navigate the challenges of living and studying in a foreign country.

However, the visa policies of Western developed countries are not particularly accommodating for Chinese students, given the relatively lower value of the Chinese passport. Obtaining a visa for the destination country is the initial step in studying abroad. However, visa-related issues pose significant challenges for many international students, as they often involve extensive document certifications and various processes, with the potential for rejection. Whether it is Australia, the UK, Canada, the US, or Italy, obtaining visas can be a demanding and time-consuming process that requires substantial effort. If study abroad policies were more streamlined and convenient, I would be able to allocate more time and energy to my studies or research. The visa application and waiting period can be lengthy, arduous, and burdensome, placing significant restrictions on international students.

There were challenges and opportunities faced by me, a female doctoral student from a rural area in China, with limited educational resources. International education policies at my university have opened doors for me to study abroad, but visa policies in Western developed countries pose significant challenges for Chinese students. Obtaining a VISA required the expenditure of significant time, energy, economic, and social capital (Fong, 2011, p. 77). Despite obstacles, I have benefited from international programs, enhancing my perspective and fueling my desire to explore the world. However, visa-related issues continue to hinder my academic pursuits abroad.

Informal Learning: Going Out and Building My International Social Network

One of the valuable aspects of my international experience has been the opportunity to engage in informal learning by actively participating in social activities and building my international social network. Through interactions with people from different cultural backgrounds, I have gained insights, perspectives, and knowledge that extend beyond formal classroom settings. By immersing myself in the local community and actively seeking out social opportunities, I have been able to engage in informal learning that goes beyond textbooks and lectures. These informal learning experiences have allowed me to deepen my understanding of different cultures, enhance my intercultural communication skills, and broaden my worldview.

First, whether I go to Hong Kong, the UK, or the US to attend academic conferences, I feel the importance of "going out". However, while in China, I felt a sense of control and active participation. On the contrary, engaging in academic exchange activities abroad can be unfamiliar and somewhat insecure, despite maintaining a strong curiosity for everything. Furthermore, scholarly communication serves as a means of constructing social networks. Whether attending academic conferences or engaging in short-term or long-term learning experiences, these activities allow for the expansion and development of social connections. Initially, there may be certain constraints, but as I attended more events and established new connections, my understanding of the world deepened. These interactions not only provided insights into the field of international education but also exposed me to a community of scholars within the discipline. As a result, I gained exposure to new ideas, customs, and perspectives, enabling the development of a more nuanced understanding of the world. Overall, participating in academic conferences

and engaging in scholarly communication offers an opportunity to overcome limited perspectives, broaden horizons, and establish meaningful connections within the academic community. It is through these interactions that I have been able to expand my knowledge and gain a deeper appreciation for the diversity and complexity of the world.

In fact, mentorship plays a crucial role in establishing valuable social networks. Mentorship in short-term programs is relatively straightforward as it follows an academic schedule and involves collaboration with mentors. However, long-term degree-seeking programs differ in nature. As they involve a long-term commitment, they require a deeper understanding of each other's personalities, research areas, interests, and collaborative integration. Communication and cooperation are essential for progress and development in this context. As an international student, additional barriers arise due to cultural and language differences. Language barriers, particularly in countries where English is not widely spoken, hinder effective communication. For instance, coming from China, a non-English speaking country, to another non-English speaking country Italy, understanding the culture and thoughts of individuals becomes even more challenging when there are difficulties in perceiving, hearing, and speaking. This obstacle hampers the establishment of an international social network in a new environment and contributes to misunderstandings of roles and situations. Developing a strong relationship with mentors and other scholars is a stepping stone to academic success. I am continuously learning how to effectively communicate with my mentors and colleagues, as well as how to comprehend their ideas and respond appropriately. Overcoming language and cultural barriers is an ongoing process that requires active effort and a willingness to bridge gaps in understanding. By striving to improve my communication skills and deepen my cross-cultural understanding, I aim to foster meaningful connections and cultivate a supportive academic network. Through persistence and a commitment to effective communication, I believe that I can enhance my academic journey and contribute to collaborative success.

Experiencing Different Education Systems in Formal Learning

The formal learning experiences of different educational systems were gained in Italy and the US. During my studying abroad experiences, which spanned several years or months in a foreign country, I actively immersed myself in the pursuit of knowledge and acquired a plethora of valuable skills. The process involved delving deep into the art of conducting research, honing my abilities to integrate seamlessly into diverse academic courses, and engaging wholeheartedly in a myriad of extracurricular activities.

Firstly, upon my arrival in the United States, I initially perceived five months as a long period of time. However, in reality, the process from completing CITI program training to obtaining research plan approval from the Institutional Review Board (IRB) took a total of four months due to various meetings and other factors. During times when I needed assistance and guidance, my advisor helped me overcome feelings of being overwhelmed. Gradually, I realized that I did not need to excessively worry, but rather, I needed to carefully plan and manage my time to progress with my research plan. The psychological pressure turned out to be stronger than I had anticipated, leading to excessive concern and fear, which, in turn, impacted the execution of the study. Conducting empirical research in the United States involves a more intricate procedure compared to China and Italy.

Secondly, in terms of the curriculum, the PhD program, for instance, incorporates relevant foundational research courses. In terms of format, classes primarily consist of a combination of lectures and open discussions. This relatively flexible and systematic learning approach differs significantly from the lecture-based approach in Italy and China. In terms of content, both China

and the United States have a more structured framework of required and elective courses, while Italy's approach is more generalized and diffuse. Regarding composition, China and Italy tend to have relatively younger students and a more direct progression, whereas the United States includes both active and retired PhD students.

Lastly, in terms of participation in activities, the initiative ranking would be US > China > Italy, which is largely influenced by the language used in the activities. In the US, activity information is transparent and typically communicated via email to each student, with content that is meaningful, interesting, and selectively chosen. In China, there is no language barrier, fostering active and positive engagement. However, the information is not always transparent and may require deliberate searching as it may not be sent to everyone's inbox. In Italy, due to the language barrier, even though many activities are sent via email, there is a tendency to resist or develop a habit of not reading Italian emails, leading to a psychological attitude of "It is not my business."

Overall, the experiences in Italy and the US have provided me with valuable insights into the complexities and nuances of different educational systems, shaping my understanding of research, curriculum structure, and student engagement in diverse cultural contexts.

The Identity Transformation: From Individual to Global Citizenship

The transformation of identity from an individual to a global citizen is a significant process that involves a shift in perspective and a broadening of one's sense of integration and belonging. This transformation occurs as individuals engage with diverse cultures, societies, and global issues, expanding their awareness beyond their immediate surroundings. It involves recognizing the interconnectedness of people and communities worldwide and embracing a sense of shared responsibility for the well-being of the planet and its inhabitants. This transformation of identity reflects a deeper understanding of the complexities and interdependencies of our increasingly interconnected world.

Adult education provides an opportunity to discover oneself by interacting with people in different stages of life. Short-term exchanges are driven by curiosity and the desire to explore new experiences, without attachments to one's home country or feelings of anxiety. While long-term learning necessitates the ability to adapt and integrate into a new environment. Long-term communication in a foreign setting often carries with it a sense of stress, anxiety, or even melancholy. Having lived and studied in the Chinese educational system for over 25 years, I have become keenly aware of the differences between the Chinese and Western educational systems. Initially, when I experienced the Italian and American education systems, I felt a sense of ignorance. This lack of knowledge led me to adopt a passive approach to living and studying in these new environments. However, through various international adult education exchanges, a remarkable and unexpected transformation in my self-identity occurred. I began to realize that I was undergoing a change, or had already changed, in how I identified myself. Previously, I saw myself solely as a Chinese individual yearning for a broader understanding of the world. Now, I not only see myself as Chinese but also as a global citizen. The most surprising aspect of this transformation is the shift in my worldview, which gradually unfolded and became visible to me. This realization of a transformed worldview has left a profound impact on me, highlighting the power of international adult education in broadening perspectives and uncovering previously unseen aspects of oneself.

China has long placed great importance on the study of ancient texts left behind by scholars. One notable example is the "Four Books and Five Classics," which are considered the foundational

texts of Chinese Confucianism, spanning from ancient times to the present. These texts have shaped various aspects of Chinese society, from the historical imperial examination system to the modern-day college entrance examination. Since my childhood, I have been exposed to these books and have been influenced by these ideas, both passively and actively. Consequently, when encountering information from abroad or engaging in daily or academic exchanges in an international context, cultural differences and clashes can give rise to certain misunderstandings. These misunderstandings may involve how to think, communicate, and respond effectively. After experiencing cultural disequilibrium, individuals may encounter an unexplained sense of loss. However, this experience has also fostered greater tolerance and understanding towards the diversity and differences present in the world. The transition from being a Chinese citizen to becoming a global citizen is a subtle and gradual process that unfolds over a period of six years. Nevertheless, it is the transformation in one's consciousness that truly signifies a profound change.

Discussion

Through reflecting on my experiences, I have come to realize that the oscillation between my identities as an educational researcher and an international student has highlighted the profound impact of various factors such as policies, culture, society, and academia. However, ultimately, it is my own growth and transformation that are influenced, leading to either personal benefits or challenges.

International adult education policies have a direct or indirect impact on the mobility and learning experiences of IS, thereby influencing the sustainable development of higher education internationalization, which encompasses diversity and inclusion within higher education. Adult education at the higher education level serves not only to impart knowledge but also to cultivate individuals as human beings. It should prioritize human well-being rather than being solely student-centered or teacher-centered. National policies in international adult education should be more accommodating and supportive of IS. As an academic doctoral student, research plays a significant role in my life. However, encountering a different education and research system can lead to a lack of understanding and uncertainty, contributing to feelings of fear. The mental health of IS should be given serious consideration, as they are more susceptible to depression, nervousness, anxiety, and fear compared to local students in an unfamiliar country. This vulnerability is particularly pronounced for IS who are experiencing life away from home for the first time, making them psychologically fragile.

IS from various countries encounter difficulties and challenges upon entering a new environment, which stem from cultural disequilibrium. The cultural differences serve as the potential for idea clashes and the initiation of cultural innovation. Cultural disparities extend beyond traditional culture itself and encompass the environment, language, thinking, and expression. The ability to see, hear, and speak serves as the foundation for communication, interaction, and integration into the new environment. As an international researcher, I have the opportunity to not only gain diverse experiences but also to deepen my exploration and understanding of international adult education research. In my role as a student, I experience and perceive the myriad differences and collisions present in the world. Simultaneously, as an international adult education researcher, I observe and contemplate the causes, outcomes, and impacts of these phenomena. Most importantly, the focus lies on the process of self-growth through learning. The ultimate aim is to integrate oneself with the values and beliefs of the world. Indeed, when IS contemplate how to adapt to their surroundings, they engage in transformative learning, enabling them to gain new perspectives, understandings, and ideas, thus transforming their worldview. In any case, it is crucial for international students to "learn new ways to bring balance back into their lives"

(Taylor, 1994, p. 169). Through transformative learning experiences, particularly in past and present international learning and living encounters, IS continuously seek opportunities to enhance their life circumstances.

Conclusion and Implications

This narrative autoethnography delves into the potential of narratives shared by IS from non-English speaking countries, focusing on intercultural adaptation and self-transformative issues. These reflections hold significance within the context of a globalized educational landscape. The author articulates the study abroad experience through a first-person narrative, which is overtly personal and collective. Throughout the process of storytelling and summarization, the author discovers that exposure to diverse cultures and the experience of living and studying in different countries contribute to transformative personal growth, despite encountering various cultural dilemmas during the transition and integration phases.

For IS, studying abroad entails the reception and integration of new information and cultures. It not only enhances IS' intercultural competence but also fosters social and cultural effects in the destination country. IS should step out of their comfort zones (Lilley et al., 2015). According to Confucian philosophy, Mencius states,

> When heaven is about to place a great responsibility on a great man, it always first frustrates his spirit and will, exhausts his muscles and bones, exposes him to starvation and poverty, harasses him by troubles and setbacks so as to stimulate his spirit, toughen his nature and enhance his abilities.

IS bring certain benefits to both their home and destination countries. The cultural backgrounds of IS are diverse, contributing to the diversity and inclusiveness of universities. Improving the student experience is an important strategic priority for universities (Baranova et al., 2011; Shah & Richardson, 2016). Furthermore, understanding and exploring IS' experiences in international education support policy development and implementation. However, more exploration and understanding in this field are necessary.

Moreover, improving diversity and inclusiveness in higher education is a crucial aspect of international adult education. Cultural differences and their impacts lead to global integration through a series of interactions. Additionally, time plays a significant role, especially for IS. Education is a gradual process, and students' personal growth takes time to be achieved. Assisting students in their growth is the primary goal of education. Therefore, providing specific guidance is of utmost importance, particularly for IS. Another way universities can support IS is by guiding and assisting them in establishing better relationships with foreign professors and teachers. This involves understanding communication and interaction styles, etiquette, and content, among other factors. Developing a harmonious relationship with their mentors is essential as they provide significant academic support and guidance to IS.

Above all, an inter-/multi- cultural integration model was created according to the multicultural transformative learning experiences to better explain and understand variable multicultural transformative learning experiences to improve the intercultural competence, that is ME–WE–OUR–ME model (abbreviated MWOM model), which is an intercultural learning process: Me is the learning experience before I went abroad; We is the learning process where I start to interact with the people around me; Our is the process of integration to the community and the world; while the last Me is the process of transforming and becoming a better me. Thus, this could be a model to help reflect the inter-/multi- cultural integration process, focusing on the individual

perspective. Meanwhile, this model is the support and complement of the transformative learning theory. Such a model can facilitate an understanding of how individuals engage with diverse cultures, navigate cultural differences, and develop intercultural competence. By focusing on the individual experience, this model can contribute to the transformative learning process by encouraging self-reflection, critical thinking, and the reevaluation of existing beliefs and assumptions. It can also promote empathy, open-mindedness, and the acquisition of new knowledge and skills necessary for effective intercultural communication and collaboration. This study fully affirms the applicability of transformative learning theory in the field of reflection related research in terms of theoretical perspective.

References

Amiot, C. E., Terry, D. J., Wirawan, D., & Grice, T. A. (2010). Changes in social identities over time: The role of coping and adaptation processes. *British Journal of Social Psychology*, *49*(4), 803-826. https://doi.org/10.1348/014466609X480624

Baranova, P., Morrison, S., & Mutton, J. (2011). Enhancing the student experience through service design: The University of Derby approach. *Perspectives: Policy and Practice in Higher Education, 15*(4), 122–128. https://doi.org/10.1080/13603108.2011.599883

Bastien, G., Seifen-Adkins, T., & Johnson, L. R. (2018). Striving for success: Academic adjustment of international students in the U.S. *Journal of International Students*, *8*(2), 1198–1219. https://doi.org/10.32674/jis.v8i2.143

Brookfield, S. D. (1986). *Understanding and facilitating adult learning*. Jossey-Bass.

Brookfield, S. D. (1995). *Becoming a critically reflective teacher*. Jossey-Bass.

Brooks, R., & Waters, J. (2011). *Student mobilities, migration and the internationalization of higher education*. Springer.

Brown, L., & Jones, I. (2013). Encounters with racism and the international student experience. *Studies in Higher education, 38*(7), 1004-1019. https://doi.org/10.1080/03075079.2011.614940

Chirkov, V., Vansteenkiste, M., Tao, R., & Lynch, M. (2007). The role of self-determined motivation and goals for study abroad in the adaptation of international students. *International Journal of Intercultural Relations*, *31*(2), 199-222. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ijintrel.2006.03.002

Commander, N., Zhao, Y., Gallagher, P., & You, Y. (2016). Cross-national online discussions: International learning experiences with American and Chinese students in higher education. *Innovations in Education and Teaching International*, *53*(4), 365-374. https://doi.org/10.1080/14703297.2015.1006524

Cranton, P. (1994). *Understanding and promoting transformative learning: A guide for educators of adults*. Jossey-Bass.

Cranton, P. (2002). Teaching for transformation. In J. M. Ross-Gordon (Ed.), in *Contemporary viewpoints on teaching adults effectively* (pp. 65-66). *New Directions for Adult and Continuing Education*. Jossey-Bass.

Falk, J. H., Ballantyne, R., Packer, J., & Benckendorff, P. (2012). Travel and learning: A neglected tourism research area. *Annals of Tourism Research*, *39*(2), 908-927. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.annals.2011.11.016

Findlay, A. M., King, R., Smith, F. M., Geddes, A., & Skeldon, R. (2012). World class? An investigation of globalisation, difference and international student mobility. *Transactions of the Institute of British Geographers*, *37*(1), 118-131. https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1475-5661.2011.00454.x

Fong, V. (2011). *Paradise redefined: Transnational Chinese students and the quest for flexible citizenship in the developed world*. Stanford University Press.

Gu, Q., & Schweisfurth, M. (2006). Who adapts? Beyond cultural models of 'the' Chinese learner. *Language, Culture and Curriculum*, *19*(1), 74-89. https://doi.org/10.1080/07908310608668755

Gu, Q., Schweisfurth, M., & Day, C. (2010). Learning and growing in a 'foreign' context: Intercultural experiences of international students. *Compare*, *40*(1), 7-23. https://doi.org/10.1080/03057920903115983

Heidelberger, C. A., & Uecker, T. W. (2009). Scholarly personal narrative as information systems research methodology. *MWAIS 2009 Proceedings, 22*. https://aisel.aisnet.org/mwais2009/22/

Hoggan, C. D. (2016). Transformative learning as a metatheory: Definition, criteria, and typology. *Adult education quarterly*, *66*(1), 57-75. https://doi.org/10.1177/0741713615611216

Hviid, P., & Zittoun, T. (2008). Editorial introduction: Transitions in the process of education. *European Journal of Psychology of Education*, *23*, 121-130. https://doi.org/10.1007/BF03172740

Jones, E. (2013). Internationalization and employability: The role of intercultural experiences in the development of transferable skills. *Public Money & Management*, *33*(2), 95-104. https://doi.org/10.1080/09540962.2013.763416

Kahneman, D. (2011). *Thinking, fast and slow*. Macmillan.

Kim, Y. Y. (2008). Intercultural personhood: Globalization and a way of being. *International journal of intercultural relations*, *32*(4), 359-368. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ijintrel.2008.04.005

King, P. K. (1997). Examining activities that promote perspective transformation among adult learners in adult education. *International Journal of University Adult Education*, *36*(3), 23-37.

King, P. K. (2005). *Bringing transformative learning to life*. Krieger.

Kolb, D. A. (1984). *Experiential learning*. Prentice-Hall.

Lilley, K., Barker, M., & Harris, N. (2015). Exploring the process of global citizen learning and the student mind-set. *Journal of Studies in International Education, 19*(3), 225-245. https://doi.org/10.1177/1028315314547822

Mezirow, J. (1991). *Transformative dimensions of adult learning*. Jossey-Bass.

Mezirow, J. (1994). Understanding transformative theory. *Adult Education Quarterly, 44*, 222-232. https://doi.org/10.1177/074171369404400403

Mezirow, J. (1995). Transformation theory of adult learning. In M. R. Welton (Ed.), *In defense of the life world* (pp. 39-70). SUNY Press.

Mezirow, J. (1996). Beyond Freire and Habermas: Confusion a response to Bruce Pietrykowski. *Adult Education Quarterly*, *46*(4), 237-239.

Mezirow, J. (2000). *Learning as transformation*. Jossey-Bass.

Merriam, S. B., Caffarella, R. S., & Baumgartner, L. M. (2007). *Learning in adulthood: A comprehensive guide* (3rd ed.). Jossey-Bass.

Mesidor, J. K., & Sly, K. F. (2016). Factors that contribute to the adjustment of international students. *Journal of International Students, 6*(1), 262–282.

McCormack, D., O'Neill, J., Ryan, M. B., & Walsh, T. (2020). Autoethnography in, and as, adult education: eavesdropping on a conversation. In *Doing critical and creative research in adult education* (pp. 73-85). Brill.

Ritz, A. (2010). International students and transformative learning in a multicultural formal educational context. *Educational Forum*, *74*, 158-166.

Shah, M., & Richardson, J. T. E. (2016). Is the enhancement of student experience a strategic priority in Australian universities? *Higher Education Research and Development, 35*(2), 352–364. https://doi.org/10.1080/07294360.2015.1087385

Spencer-Oatey, H. (2018). Transformative learning for social integration: Overcoming the challenge of greetings. *Intercultural Education*, *29*(2), 301-315. https://doi.org/10.1080/14675986.2018.1425828

Suanet, I., & Van de Vijver, F. J. (2009). Perceived cultural distance and acculturation among exchange students in Russia. *Journal of Community & Applied Social Psychology*, *19*(3), 182-197. https://doi.org/10.1002/casp.989

Taylor, E. W. (1994). Intercultural competency: A transformative learning process. *Adult education quarterly, 44*(3), 154-174. https://doi.org/10.1177/074171369404400303

Taylor, E. W. (2007). An update of transformative learning theory: A critical review of the empirical research. *International Journal of Lifelong Education*, *26*, 173–191. https://doi.org/10.1080/02601370701219475

Taylor, E. W. (2008). Transformative learning theory. In S. Merriam (Ed.), *Third update on adult learning theory* (pp. 5-15). *New Directions for Adult and Continuing Education*, No. 119, Jossey-Bass.

Tian, M., & Lowe, J. (2009). Existentialist internationalisation and the Chinese student experience in English universities. *Compare*, *39*(5), 659-676. https://doi.org/10.1080/03057920903125693

Van Mol, C., & Timmerman, C. (2014). Should I stay or should I go? An analysis of the determinants of intra-European student mobility. *Population, Space and Place*, *20*(5), 465-479. https://doi.org/10.1002/psp.1833

Zhou, Y., & Todman, J. (2009). Patterns of adaptation of Chinese postgraduate students in the United Kingdom. *Journal of Studies in International Education*, *13*(4), 467-486. https://doi.org/10.1177/1028315308317937

FACILITATIVE TEACHING, DIGITAL STORYTELLING AND MEDIA MAKING: CREATING CONNECTIONS OR MISSING OPPORTUNITIES?

Annalisa L. Raymer[1]

ABSTRACT: Digital storytelling (DST) dovetails well with facilitative teaching and is frequently lauded as an avenue to positive outcomes within and outside of educational institutions. Ascribed results include empowering marginalized voices, building community and fostering engagement, deepening cultural identity and understanding, engendering empathy, and facilitating dialogue. In my experience as a community practitioner and as an educator, I have witnessed many of these transformative impacts. A setting in which diverse university students and international service employees work together in learning partnerships seems an ideal scenario for DST and its attendant benefits. Nevertheless, I have developed some hesitancy regarding my use in the context just mentioned, and of education's perhaps indiscriminate embrace of digital storytelling. In this paper, I first characterize the genre, reflect on the complementary resonance of the form with facilitative teaching, and locate digital storytelling within the spectrum of educational philosophy. Next, I describe my teaching context with undergraduate students mentoring employee adult learners, provide examples of my experiences with media-making, and problematize co-creative digital storytelling.

Digital Storytelling Today

Over recent decades, the growth in digital storytelling (DST) has markedly expanded into many venues, including multiple types of educational settings. Singaporean scholars Wu and Chen (2020) found in their systematic review of educational digital storytelling that the practice is expanding in the United States and increasingly gaining adoption in European and Asian countries. Whereas media-making once required expensive equipment and numerous people with specialized or professional preparation, now nearly anyone with a phone can produce digital communications. Instructors have embraced digital storytelling with gusto, citing numerous potential educational benefits. In their research covering studies published during the decade of 2008 to 2018, Wu and Chen identified eight areas of development attributed to incorporating media-making into the classroom: "affective, cognitive, conceptual, academic, technological, linguistic, ontological, and social" (p. 1).

Furthermore, digital storytelling is lauded as an avenue to positive outcomes within and outside of educational institutions. Ascribed results include empowering voices (Chapple, 2023; Nilsson, 2010; Tacchi, 2009), building community and fostering community engagement (Davaslioglu & Lizarazo, 2022; Rouhani, 2019), deepening cultural identity and understanding (Darvin & Norton, 2014; Humairoh, 2022; Karakuş et al., 2020), engendering empathy (Hess, 2012; Vaudrin-Charette, 2013), and facilitating dialogue (Yearta et al., 2018; Iseke & Moore, 2011). In my experience as a community practitioner and as an educator, I have witnessed many of these transformative impacts. Nevertheless, I have developed some hesitancy regarding my own use in the context just mentioned and

---

[1] Cornell University, alr26@cornell.edu. ORCID: 0000-0001-6459-7385

of education's perhaps indiscriminate embrace of digital storytelling. In this paper, I first characterize the genre, reflect on the complementary resonance of the form with facilitative teaching, and locate digital storytelling within the spectrum of educational philosophy. Next, I describe my teaching context with undergraduate students mentoring employee adult learners, provide examples of my experiences with media-making, and problematize co-creative digital storytelling.

Figure 1.

Ngram: Occurrences of "digital storytelling" in books published in English, 1980-2018
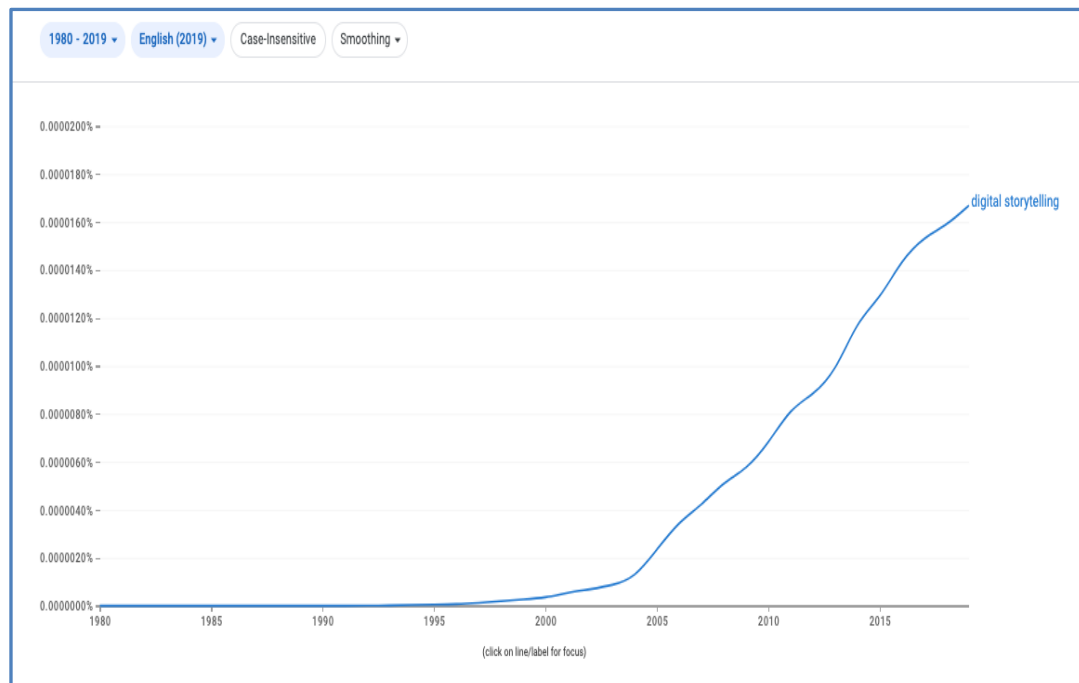
Digital Storytelling and Media Making

For some, a digital story refers specifically to a personal narrative of a short, set length, although the exact minutes in length may vary. However, many take a broader view. As communications scholar Amanda Hill explains:

> Digital storytelling, as an overarching term, can encompass a range of meanings beginning with a broad understanding where all 'mediatized' stories, those stories told using digital media and media-based storytelling methods and practices, are included. Understood in this way, the term can encompass diverse storytelling platforms including video games, video essays, and social media posts, all of which can make use of the tenets of storytelling in digital spaces using digital tools (Hill, 2023, pp. 1-2).

Professor Bernard Robin, who has written extensively on the educational value of media making, does not limit digital storytelling solely to personal narrative (2008, pp. 224-

225). Digital storytelling is greatly about the social experience of deep listening, being heard, and working together during the course of developing the resulting media. The ancient craft of storytelling has been fostering understanding and connection since the emergence of human communication, and a wider scope of participatory media-making seems apt for increasing comprehension and respect not only on an individual basis but also among people of differing nationalities, places, and cultures. Andragogical approaches align well, and educationists have been advocating for utilizing digital storytelling with adult learners for years (see e.g., Panchenko, 2021; Prins, 2016, 2017; Rossiter & Garcia, 2010).

Facilitative Teaching and Philosophical Affinities of Digital Storytelling

The mode of introducing and working with digital storytelling is facilitative (Engle, 2010; Lambert 2009). Andragogy and facilitative education have been intertwined since Malcolm Knowles (1977) observed that great teachers in antiquity viewed "learning as being a process of enquiry in which the learner had an active role, in fact the primary role, and the role of the teacher was that of a guide to the enquiry, a facilitator of the enquiry" (. 202).

In my andragogical practice, I impress upon learners that they are the primary directors of their own learning; that we each have contributions and responsibilities for creating a collaborative climate; and that students have input into designing some of the assignments and meaningful evaluative tools. Through fieldwork, I add, we'll be looking to apply what we learn. In short, I share with them my belief that we learn democracy by doing democracy–i.e., by acquiring and practicing the skills, attitudes, and knowledge entailed in reasoning together, bringing out the best in one another's thinking, challenging each other, and engaging together to frame issues and queries, problem-solving and innovating, and coming to considered decisions.

As collaboration and co-creation are emphasized in digital storytelling, the manner of facilitation employed aligns with Lev Vygotsky's social constructivism (1978). Vygotsky's socio-cultural theory emphasized the role of social interactions and cultural tools in the development of knowledge and understanding (Overall, 2007). According to Vygotsky, learning takes place through social collaboration, where learners engage in joint activities with more knowledgeable peers or instructors.

Yet, typologies of educational philosophies, like all typologies, are heuristic devices we create to make sense of boundaryless realities. Digital storytelling, especially of the genre limited to personal narrative, can also be framed as humanism with its paired emphases on self-actualization and individual potential fulfillment that would please Abraham Maslow (1971, 1979). In crafting and sharing their stories, individuals are empowered to reflect on their experiences, values, and aspirations, fostering a greater understanding of themselves and their place in the world.

Nonetheless, the radical educational theory of Paulo Freire most informs my practice (1985, 1998). Freire was quite a lover of story, and his communication style reflects this

(Cruz, 2013. The radical stance in educational philosophy advocates for raising consciousness and driving societal change. Freire emphasized the importance of dialogue, critical reflection, and praxis (action and reflection) in education. He believed that education should not be a one-way transfer of knowledge but rather a transformative process that empowers learners to critically analyze social inequalities and work toward societal change. Digital storytelling aligns with Freire's vision by providing a platform for individuals and groups to share their diverse stories and challenge dominant narratives or social norms. Through digital storytelling, marginalized voices, untold stories, and alternative perspectives can be amplified, promoting empathy, understanding, and the recognition of social injustices.

This Particular Learning Setting—Global and Adult Learning Context

I oversee the Education Minor's andragogy curriculum and direct an exceptional adult education program called the Community Learning and Service Partnership (CLASP) at Cornell University. CLASP matches campus staff members, primarily UAW Local 2300 service employees, with students enrolled in our adult learning courses. This unique partnership pairs one student with one employee, with a focus on the employee's learning goal. Students utilize their knowledge of andragogical practices to mentor adult learners, while employees gain a supportive colleague to help them pursue their largely self-selected educational goals. Through these partnerships, students learn from the wisdom and experience of adults, and employees gain a dedicated mentor and ally. Both partners grow individually and together, gaining new perspectives on the campus community and the world at large. Participating in CLASP leads to significant changes in knowledge, confidence, life circumstances, and career paths for both employees and students. As many Cornell students go on to influential positions after graduation, those involved in CLASP can draw upon their understanding and appreciation of the lives and experiences of those who are often underrepresented.

Reciprocal relationships are the heart of CLASP. Many participating adults are first- or second-generation immigrants, and a considerable number of Cornell students in education courses are international students as well. While most of our andragogy courses are offered at the undergraduate level, we also welcome graduate students and staff members on a space-available basis. For learning partnerships, beyond our primary commitment to service employees, we accept professionals and faculty adult learners into CLASP. These individuals often desire a study partner as they pursue a degree or seek opportunities to practice their language skills. The most commonly requested areas of study among CLASP participants, in addition to English, include computer skills, career development, preparation for vocational certifications and non-English language study, such as American Sign Language. Importantly, a growing number of the employee/adult learners want to create digital media. Today CLASP receives many requests for photography, filmmaking, web design and media production. We have a diverse range of adult and international learners engaged in the student-employee partnerships. Therefore, our academic courses incorporate soft skills, intercultural communication, and relational learning. For CLASP employee/adults, we offer optional orientations to adult learning.

Audio-Visual Adventures

Being from a state often maligned in popular culture (Kentucky), I deeply appreciate the wisdom and power of community members' telling their own stories–speaking for themselves–rather than being spoken about by others. I am particularly thankful for the Appalshop collective whose members have been making community-based media in the state and elsewhere since the late 1960s (Charbonneau, 2009), and their example influences my teaching. Over the years, I have incorporated digital storytelling and media-making in various ways, including:

- Conducting interviews with adult learners for StoryCorps' Great Thanksgiving Listen (National Public Radio, 2016)
- Guiding students in creating digital stories to depict their journey as educators and learners.
- Assisting students in producing radio segments that explore their cultural identities.
- Analyzing how media portrayals of cultural motifs influence one's sense of self.
- Collaborating with adult learners on digital stories for Any Person Many Stories, a Cornell initiative aimed at exploring the university's history of inclusion and exclusion through storytelling, fostering conversation and a sense of belonging.

These projects have been highly meaningful and significant experiences for students, as indicated in their written reflections. I will share just a single example that resonates with the sentiments expressed by other students:

> During the course, I discovered my most authentic and engaged self when given the freedom to experiment with visual design and when the course content connected to my own life experiences…While creating a digital story based on my personal narrative, I exceeded the time limit, choosing instead to focus on the lived experiences of others. Annalisa, our instructor, graciously allowed me to explore this direction. This assignment sparked a strong desire within me to pursue similar work, leading me to embark on a personal project—a podcast in the form of a digital story…This type of learning, which challenges students while giving them space to explore their passions, honors the learner and ignites a sense of enthusiasm. I believe there should be more opportunities for self-directed learning to intersect with the structured college curriculum, as the creation of this digital story represents the most authentic learning experience, I've had this semester (Student, 2017).

In this specific case, the student deviated from crafting a personal narrative and opted to interview individuals of varying ages about the books that profoundly impacted their childhoods. The resulting digital story not only highlighted the influence these books had on participants' lives, but it also emphasized the enriching power of sharing and listening to spoken narratives. As mentioned before, employee/adult learners enjoy making media with their student learning partners. Recent projects have included art films, instructional videos, and creating a digital guide to stress relieving exercises.

Problematizing Media Making

In their chapter on threshold concepts, digital story innovators Hessler and Lambert (2017) present a thought-provoking scenario. "Consider this," they wrote:

> two videos of similar quality in terms of format, topic, and style; each three minutes long, telling a first-person story through voiceover narration and a sequence of images. Both done as academic homework assignments. One was produced through a process of guided critical reflection, story-sharing, and collaborative making; the other was assembled in a rush to meet a deadline—the student read the assignment, was skillful enough as a writer and video editor to compose a nice project on her own, and completed the whole thing in a few hours—the same as she might crank out any other homework task (Hessler & Lambert, 2017, p. 20).

They then posed a pair of questions; the first, whether both products are digital stories, which they answered in the affirmative. Next, they asked whether both projects are examples of digital stories, and to this, they answer dually yes and no before calling attention to a need for a "… sensitive understanding of the principles and practices that make digital storytelling a potentially transformative educational experience…" (p. 20).

What conditions facilitate transformative digital storytelling? In my Fall 2021 course, I set out to foster a conducive learning environment that encouraged teamwork and camaraderie as we created digital stories for the Any Person Many Stories initiative. I incorporated critical reflection, facilitated workshop story circles, and considered practical aspects such as the adult interviewees' schedules and parking needs when scheduling course meetings.

Upon reflection, I realized that I overlooked an important aspect: more meaningful engagement of partners, i.e., the employee adult learners. I had not adequately laid the groundwork to generate interest and involve employees in project planning. Considering my experience with community-engaged learning, this realization came with a good dose of chagrin. Expanding the focus of digital storytelling beyond autobiographical accounts requires a more thoughtful consideration of community engagement responsibilities and ethics. I failed to fully grasp the extent to which this aspect of the coursework relied on individuals outside of the course itself. Although the course was generally well-received and left a positive impact on students and the adults interviewed, I question to what extent the project truly forged connections or fostered a sense of belonging.

In her 2018 paper, media professor Nassim Parvin noted the rise of scholars and others, "collecting, archiving, and sharing stories to advance social justice…These practices differ in their aims and scope, yet they share a common conviction: that digital storytelling is empowering especially when curating and disseminating life stories of marginalized groups" (p. 515). Parvin took issue with the assumption and asks, "is it possible that such practices take away from what is found to be meaningful and

worthwhile in practices of storytelling and listening, and, if so, how?" (p. 515). This particular passage jolted:

> An understanding of justice highlighted by reciprocity could limit our appreciation of what's at stake in collecting and sharing stories, as it leaves out qualities of relationships that are mediated in the acts of storytelling and listening. That could risk reducing the relational nature of storytelling and listening to a transactional process, starting with the assumption that stories are ready-made commodities for exchange and that consent—that is others' willingness to share their story—is sufficient for doing justice to stories. (Parvin, 2018, p. 524)

Parvin asserted that stories are not commodities, that they result from dynamic social exchanges (p. 524). In my view, the transformative aspect of story work (the processes of eliciting and producing narrative media) lies in its ability to foster relationships. Having grown up in an environment that cherishes, teaches, and produces stories, I only truly grasped the profound impact of these practices upon moving away. Consequently, I have taken my students to The Highlander Center for Research and Education (2023), facilitated screenings and discussions of Appalshop films, and participated in grassroots theater productions with Maryat Lee, the creator of EcoTheater and a friend of Flannery O'Connor (French, 1998). In each of these exceptional organizations, the creative process is intertwined with relationship-building and community. Previously, during my time as an undergraduate student, I worked in the college audio-visual department (now known as media production). Collaboration there was less of an intentional endeavor to deepen human connection and more of an essential requirement for coordinating equipment and meeting tight deadlines, akin to individuals' spontaneously coming together after a natural disaster. Although different, it too was exhilarating and quite possibly one of my greatest learning experiences.

Recently, when I felt a sense of unease about the class digital storytelling project, I pondered whether the absence of the adrenaline rush that accompanies traditional media production—requiring cooperation, on-the-spot problem-solving, and heightened sensory awareness during location filming—was the cause. I shared this speculation with my colleague Melina Ivanchikova, co-creator of the Any Person Many Stories digital story initiative designed to capture accounts from our university's positive and negative history to prompt authentic conversations about belonging and exclusion (Ivanchikova & Vanderlan, 2023). My colleague remained unconvinced. "I think the idea of feeling fully alive gets to the heart of why learning is so exiting and empowering. Some people doing the digital work seem to experience it—is it being generated in ways we aren't observing?" (M. Ivanchikova, personal communication, June 12, 2023).

What To Do Better?

In retrospect, where I went wrong was in my failure to fully appreciate that digital storytelling was not simply another teaching method. In her chapter, "Not Media About, but Media With," Mandy Rose (2017) wrote about "co-creation as convening" (p. 50). She pointed to the work of Manuel Castells (2023) and others to highlight the idea of co-

creation as an avenue for those convened to become a *public*, "a group conscious of itself and its shared sense of purpose" (Rose, 2017, p. 52) While we had interested stakeholders who visited class, and the course members themselves went through a collaborative, iterative process in constructing their digital stories, we did not have story circle gatherings with all interviewees and interviewers together. Thus, those outside of the course were not part of anu communal identity as members of a shared endeavor, collectively experiencing the compelling power of deeply listening to vulnerable fellow humans. That some students and partners found the experience transformative was by serendipitous.

Others encountering ethical quandaries pertaining to digital story include academics such as Lisa Dush (2013) who raised "ethical complexities" about sponsored projects and development practitioners such as Lara Worcester (2012) who argued for fully understanding the co-creative nature of DST. More recently, Amanda Hill (2023) published the book, *Digital Storytelling as Ethics: Collaborative Creation and Facilitation*. As I write this, I am reminded of being interviewed previously by a student for an ArcGIS StoryMap project in a colleague's course. The semester ended without hearing about the finished story or the resulting map, and my emails to both the student and the colleague went unanswered. I am experienced firsthand an instrumental use of story collection rather than a convened, co-creative media project. Personal narrative does entail considerations of trust, responsibility, and compassion; yet it is one matter for storytellers to decide how to recount their experiences and how to represent themselves and quite another to give a story to someone else and only to be consulted during the media making, rather than collaborating as a true co-creator.

Before undertaking another multiparty media project, i.e. one that extends beyond personal narratives and involves other people, I want to think through four questions.

1. When attempting genuinely co-creative media making, how do we recognize the boundaries of time and energy interviewees care to give to a project? Do we work only with those who, for their own reasons, want to be fully involved?
2. Does the prior question imply that community-based media making can only be undertaken in settings in which a pre-existing role for digital storytelling is present?
3. How do instructors plan for alternate media expeditions in the event that neither enough available and interested partners nor a pre-existing situation amenable to digital storytelling can be identified?
4. Is the most ethical option for digital storytelling in a course context to set the parameters for personal narratives?

Educators, including adult educators, can use the power of digital storytelling to facilitate transformative learning to deepen understanding and create moments of insight and appreciation across differences. At the same time, we must carefully think through the design of our assignments, especially if those projects entail students working with other people to make stories of experiences other than their own. Multiparty story work is not simply an alternate format for a student-centered exercise. Instructors and researchers

wanting to undertake co-creative media work will need to use the same care and time to build reciprocal relationships as they would with any other responsible community engagement endeavor.

References

Chapple, H. (2023). Voice and agency in digital storytelling. *English Journal*, *112*(3), 16–18.

Cruz, A. L. (2013). Paulo Freire's concept of conscientização. In Lake, R., & Kress, T. (Eds.), *Paulo Freire's intellectual roots: Toward historicity in praxis* (pp.169-183). Bloomsbury.

Darvin, R., & Norton, B. (2014). Transnational identity and migrant language learners: The promise of digital storytelling. *Education Matters: The Journal of Teaching and Learning*, *2*(1), 55-66. https://cdm.ucalgary.ca/index.php/em/article/view/62890

Davaslioglu, T. M., & Lizarazo, T. (2022). Learning with Maryland's immigrant communities: Digital storytelling as community engagement. *Journal of Community Engagement and Higher Education*, *14*(1), 41-56. https://eric.ed.gov/?id=EJ1343196

Dush, L. (2013). The ethical complexities of sponsored digital storytelling. *International Journal of Cultural Studies*, *16*(6), 627-640. https://doi.org/10.1177/136787791245

Engle, A. (2010). *Digital storytelling: Everyone has a story to tell. A workshop manual*. https://web.archive.org/web/20091229142254/http://www.todaysteacher.com/Digital_Storytelling/Digital_Storytelling_Workshop_Manual.pdf

Freire, P. (1985). *The politics of education: Culture, power, and liberation* (D. Macedo, Trans.). Bergin & Garvey.

_____ (1998). Pedagogy of freedom: Ethics, democracy, and civic courage (P. Clarke, Trans.). Rowman & Littlefield.

French, W. W. (1998). *Maryat Lee's EcoTheater: A theater for the twenty-first century*. West Virginia University Press.

Hess, M. (2012). Mirror neurons, the development of empathy, and digital storytelling. *Religious Education*, *107*(4), 401-414. https://doi.org/10.1080/00344087.2012.699412

Hessler, B., & Lambert, J. (2017). Threshold concepts in digital storytelling: Naming what we know about storywork. In J. A. Hartley & K. McWilliam (Eds.), *Digital storytelling in higher education: International perspectives* (pp. 19-35). Routledge.

Highlander Research and Education Center. (2023, July 22). In *Wikipedia*. en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=Highlander_Research_and_Education_Center&oldid=1166603780

Hill, A. (2023). *Digital storytelling and ethics: Collaborative creation and facilitation*. Taylor & Francis.

Humairoh, M. F. N. (2022). Building undergraduate students' cultural identity through digital storytelling. *Communication Teacher*, *(37)*3, 235-245. https://doi.org/10.1080/17404622.2022.2127820

Iseke, J., & Moore, S. (2011). Community-based Indigenous digital storytelling with elders and youth. *American Indian Culture and Research Journal*, *35*(4), 19-38.

Ivanchikova, M., & Vanderlan, R. (2023, June 09). *Any Person, Many Stories: Histories of Exclusion and Inclusion at Cornell. Project Statements from Melina Ivanchikova and Rob Vanderlan.* https://blogs.cornell.edu/manystories/about

Karakuş, M., Türkkan, B. T., & Namli, N. A. (2020). Investigation of the effect of digital storytelling on cultural awareness and creative thinking. *Egitim Ve Bilim/Education and Science*, *45*(203), 309-326.

Knowles, M. S. (1977). Adult learning processes: Pedagogy and andragogy. *Religious Education*, *72*(2), 202-211.

Lambert, J. (2009). Where it all started: The center for digital storytelling in California. In Hartley, J., & McWilliam, K. (Eds.). *Story circle: Digital storytelling around the world* (pp. 77-90). Wiley & Sons.

Manuel Castells. (2023, July 19). In *Wikipedia*. en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=Manuel_Castells&amp ;oldid=1166151146

Maslow, A. H. (1971). Peak experiences in education and art. *Theory into Practice*, *10*(3), 149-153.

———— (1979). Humanistic education vs. professional education: Further comments. *Journal of Humanistic Psychology*, *19*(3), 17-25.

National Public Radio. (2016, November 19). *'The Great Thanksgiving Listen': Storycorps asks listeners to record conversations*. All Things Considered. https://www.npr.org/2016/11/19/502717963/the-great-thanksgiving-listen-storycorps-asks-listeners-to-record-conversations

Ngram, G. (2023). *Ngram: Occurrences of "digital storytelling" in books published in English, 1980-2018* (Unpublished screenshot). June, 2023. Google Ngram Viewer. http://books.google.com/ngrams

Overall, L. (2007). Big theory 3: Vygotsky and social constructivism. In Overall L. *Supporting children's learning: a guide for teaching assistants* (pp. 73-84). SAGE.

Panchenko, L. (2021). Digital storytelling in adult education: Barriers and ways to overcome them. *Educational Technology Quarterly*, *2021*(4), 673-688. https://doi.org/10.55056/etq.41

Parvin, N. (2018). Doing justice to stories: On ethics and politics of digital storytelling. *Engaging Science, Technology, and Society*, *4*(2018), 515-534. https://doi.org/10.17351/ests2018.248

Prins, E. (2016). Digital storytelling in adult education and family literacy: a case study from rural Ireland. *Learning, Media and Technology*, *42*(3), 308–323 https://doi.org/10.1080/17439884.2016.1154075

———— (2017). Digital storytelling in adult basic education and literacy programming. *New Directions for Adult and Continuing Education*, *2017*(154), 29-38.

Robin, B. R. (2008). Digital storytelling: A powerful technology tool for the 21st century classroom. *Theory Into Practice*, *47*(30), 220-228. https://doi.org/10.1080/00405840802153916

Rogers, C. (1983). *Freedom to learn for the 80s*. Merrill.

Rossiter, M., & Garcia, P. A. (2010). *Digital storytelling in adult education: Toward a conceptual framework*. New Prairie Press. http://newprairiepress.org/aerc/2010/papers/67

Rouhani, L. (2019). Using digital storytelling as a source of empowerment for rural women in Benin. *Gender & Development*, *27*(3), 573-586. https://doi.org/10.1080/13552074.2019.1664140

Student, G. S. (2017). *Project reflection.* [Unpublished raw data]. Education Course, Cornell University. https://cals.cornell.edu/education/degrees-programs/education-minor

Tacchi, J. A. (2009). Finding a voice: Digital storytelling as participatory development in Southeast Asia. In J. Hartley & K. McWilliam (Eds.), *Story circle: Digital storytelling around the world* (pp.167-175). John Wiley & Sons.

Vaudrin-Charette, J. (2013). *Cooking cultural empathy through digital storytelling: Stories of identity and "transformance"* [Prezi slides]. Prezi. International Conference on Experiential Learning (ICEL*)*, Lima, Peru, July 15-19th. https://prezi.com/vgwf8xt65bpx/cooking-cultural-empathy-through-digital-storytelling/

Vygotsky, L. (1978). *Social constructivism: Mind in society.* Harvard University Press.

Worcester, L. (2012). Reframing digital storytelling as co-creative. *IDS Bulletin*. *43*(5), 91-79. Institute of Development Studies. Blackwell.

Wu, J., & Chen, D. T. V. (2020). A systematic review of educational digital storytelling. *Computers & Education*, *147*, 103786–103716. https://doi:10.1016/j.compedu.2019.103786

LIFELONG LEARNING AND EDUCATION POLICY IN CANADA AND THE UNITED STATES

Elizabeth A. Roumell[1]
Florin D. Salajan[2]

ABSTRACT: Lifelong Learning (LLL) has become a pliable term in educational discourse running the risk of meaning both everything and nothing, making it necessary to look at how the notion of LLL has been taken up in different contexts, especially within the context of policy development. Because of the inconsistent ways LLL has been peppered throughout national legislation in North America, the aim of the presentation is to characterize LLL policy development in Canada and the United States using broad brush strokes, and to provide an overview of the evolution of the concept and its contemporary applications. An overview of LLL policy development in Canada and the US is provided. While there have been promising policy developments in recent years in both countries, LLL has been narrowly conceived and only tenuously supported.

Lifelong Learning (LLL) entails "all learning activity undertaken throughout life, with the aim of improving knowledge, skills and competences within a personal, civic, social and/or employment-related perspective" (European Commission, 2001, p. 9). LLL policies in Canada and the US tend to highlight learning that takes place post compulsory schooling or post-college or university. Many policies focus on working-age adults and on skills development for the workforce, rather than on promoting a more encompassing understanding of lifewide adult education.

The emphasis on employment and integration into the economy has remained the dominant justification for policy development and educational programming. LLL has been used more frequently in Canadian government policy documents than in the US. Canadian reports framed under "lifelong learning" can be found from the 1990s forward. In the US, policy specifically regarding, or framed as, LLL remains underdeveloped. In both countries, LLL related policies pertain almost entirely to adults of working age—generally up to 65 years old, which continues to be considered the age of retirement in both countries.

Both Canada and the US have participated and played important roles in conceptualizing how adult skills and competencies are to be measured for international benchmarking and comparison. Another common trend in policy discourse includes the shared concern about the heavy emphasis in LLL policies on human capital development. Evidence suggests that Canada and the US, even though considered highly developed, have yet to cultivate the policy and system capabilities necessary to meet their national LLL needs. The intent for this paper is to offer an overview of the application of LLL in Canada and the United States.

---

[1] Texas A&M University
[2] North Dakota State University

Lifelong Learning in Canada

Canada is a leader in lifelong learning. It has the highest percentage of people with a post-secondary education in the Organisation for Economic Coordination and Development (OECD, 2021). Recent data show that participation in adult learning and education is above the OECD average, though highly correlated with prior formal education attainment (OECD, 2019). Canada has also had global influence in LLL policy. It played a key role in the development of the OECD International Large-Scale Assessments (IALS) (see Elfert & Walker, 2020), starting with IALS in the mid-1990s which went on to influence the subsequent adult skills assessment surveys, Adult Literacy and Lifeskills (ALL) and the Programme for the International Assessment of Adult Competencies (PIAAC). Yet Canada has no holistic lifelong education system or joined-up policy to support lifelong learning. There are no standardized measures of assessment or clear blueprint for what is going on around the country in terms of adult education provision and outcomes, and there is a lack of sharing of best practices.

As a federated nation with no central department or ministry of education, each province and territory set its own agenda and has its own ministries of education, often one of which is concerned with compulsory schooling and the other with everything to do with the education of adults. There are formal systems provincially/territorially: adult basic education is provided through school boards and through post-secondary institutions; regulatory bodies require and facilitate professional development and continuing education; and, each province or territory offers an array of skills training for employment or trades training through many different organizations and institutions with many initiatives directed to certain groups. In addition, a network of community centers, neighborhood houses, and migrant service centers offer an assortment of educational programming which may be vocational, social, or personal.

While administration and management of education tends to be municipal or provincial/territorial, there are federal institutions that support LLL across the country. The most important is arguably Employment and Social Development Canada (ESDC) which administers grants and supports adult education programming. It developed Canada's Essential Skills framework and the recently launched Skills for Success office and skills typology. Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada supports language education for adults across the country in the two official languages. Other ministries also fund and administer various forms of adult education nationally. For example: Indigenous Service Canada hosts the Indigenous Skills and Employment Training Program; Veteran Affairs offers vocational rehabilitation and other programming; and Correctional Service Canada has a host of programming through that focus on employment and employability skills.

The only government-issued report on "lifelong learning in Canada focuses on results from a 2008 survey on access and support to education and training for people aged 18-64 years old (Knighton et al, 2009) reflecting a focus on learning for employment. LLL is associated almost entirely with adult education, whether that be returning to complete one's high school diploma, undertaking a university degree later in life, or participating

in a range of non-formal education for personal, social, or professional reasons. The argument of workers possessing insufficient skills for the workplace has continued to drive government policy from when the IALS results were first released to now, which has seen an added urgency related to the 'wicked' problems (Peters, 2017) of accelerating automation, global climate change, decolonization, multiculturalism, pandemic-related challenges, among others.

Constructing and Demolishing a LLL 'System'

The country's interest in supporting adult learning and skills for the workforce has been traced back to the 1960s (Shohet, 2001). By 1991, there were six major adult literacy organizations supporting adult education across the country which were directly supported by the National Literacy Secretariat (NLS, see Elfert & Walker, 2020). The then Human Resources Development Canada (HRDC) launched its Essential Skills framework, consisting of nine Essential Skills viewed as necessary for employability and job success. From this, the federal government created the comprehensive National Occupational Classification (NOC) database, which contains between 200-350 skill profiles related to skill demands that are seen as necessary in particular occupations.

In the late 1990s and early 2000s things appeared to be looking better for the creation of a national adult education and skills system. In 1999, the country's Lifelong Learning Plan (LLP) was launched which allows adults to withdraw up to $10,000 per calendar year from their registered retirement saving plans (RRSPs) to finance full-time training or education for themselves or their spouses/common-law partners (Canada Revenue Agency, 2021). Then, in 2002, the government proposed the creation of a pan-Canadian Learning Institute which soon after became the Canadian Council on Learning (CCL). The CCL was an institution that "work[ed] with Canadians, provinces, sector councils, labor organizations and learning institutions to create the skills and learning architecture that Canada needs," including "building our knowledge and reporting to Canadians about what is working and what is not" (Wikipedia, 2019). CCL mapped and facilitated lifelong learning across the country and worked toward doing so over its short existence.

It is hard to measure the impact of these initiatives since comprehensive research has not been undertaken. LLL participation likely increased, the types of learning that were happening across the country were being mapped, and employers had a standardized set of skill profiles, with the intent of identifying learning needs and to better meet demands of the labor market. However, there were no recorded improvements of Canadians' skill levels in the 2005 results of the OECD's subsequent Adult Literacy and Lifeskills Survey (OECD, 2015). Similarly, the Lifelong Learning Plan demonstrated only limited use to a narrow group of people given its conditions. Furthermore, there was evidence of inadequate record keeping in the NLS and increasing overall demands for accountability which were not deemed satisfactory to the federal government (Elfert & Walker, 2020).

It was not surprising that with the 2006 shift in government, significant changes were implemented that initiated the dismissal of the CCL. Months after the Stephen Harper (Conservative Party) government's election, it announced it would cut $17.7 million in

funding to adult literacy, effectively removing the NLS (cited in Delacourt, 2006). The CCL was subsequently defunded and dismantled in 2010 (Jerema, 2010). Following that, the Office for Literacy and Essential Skills (OLES)—the successor to the NLS—began to make applying for grants more competitive and bureaucratically cumbersome for adult education providers, which had a devastating effect on community organizations (Smythe, 2015); much of its allotted budget went unspent year-to-year until 2017, both because of barriers to applying and many organizations were not deemed eligible or worthy under changing government priorities (Hayes, 2018). The undoing of federal support for adult basic education reached a culmination in 2014 and 2015 when all national literacy organizations were defunded (Elfert & Walker, 2020).

Since the re-election of the Liberal Party in 2015, there has been a renewed urgency for investing in adult skills and education, driven by an array of factors including: increasing automation; changing demands of the labor market caused by responses to climate change; and changing demographics through aging and immigration. The Federal government has announced a series of funding initiatives over the past few years to support workforce development, skills, and the construction of national and cross-Canadian programming. A flurry of programs was created in 2018, including: 1) *Skills Boost*, launched to "give adult learners the support they need to succeed in the workforce"; 2) *Futureworx*, funded by the Office of Literacy and Essential skills (OLES) to "explore the need for and how best to develop a pan-Canadian soft skills framework." (See Futureworkx, 2018); and arguably most fundamental 3) the national *Future Skills Program*. First proposed by the government's Advisory Council on Economic Growth, the program comprises a Future Skills Council, a diverse group that advises the government on "national and regional skills development and training priorities," and a Future Skills Centre, which supports adult education research and programming. As of mid-2021, the Future Skills Centre had funded over 120 projects partnering with over 5,000 organizations, companies, and institutes (Scott, 2021; see https://fsc-ccf.ca/).

The 2019 budget increased targets for student work placement and for supporting programs designed to "ensure skills align with labor market needs" (Government of Canada, 2019, para. 3) with the onus placed on employers. As stated in a 2019 ESDC publication entitled Supporting Lifelong Learning, increasing automation means "that upskilling will be a must for most Canadian workers, and employers can do more" (Government of Canada, 2020a). The budget announced two other programs (Government of Canada, 2019, pp.37-42): 1) the *Canadian Training Benefit* whereby eligible workers between the ages of 25 and 64 would accumulate a credit balance at a rate of $250 per year, up to a lifetime limit of $5,000, to refund up to half the costs of taking a course or enrolling in a training program; and, 2) the *Employment Insurance Training Support Benefit* which would provide workers with up to four weeks of income support through Employment Insurance (EI) system to help workers on training leave and not receiving their regular paycheck cover their living expenses, such as rent, utilities and groceries. The benefit was accompanied by the introduction of the EI Small Business Premium Rebate to offset the costs incurred by small businesses.

The 2020 Speech from the Throne announced "the largest investment in Canadian history in training for workers" (Government of Canada, 2020b, p. 21). The latest 2021 budget announced $100 million+ investment in the Youth Employment and Skills Strategy and focuses on supporting workforce development, apprenticeships, and transitioning workers to new jobs (Government of Canada, 2021). What has most caught the attention of the research and practitioner community is the launch of a new centralized Office of Skills for Success, located within the portfolio of the HRSDC's successor, Employment and Social Development Canada (ESDC). Skills for Success has been allotted over $300 million over the next three years for programming. For comparison, as adult education policy veteran Brigid Hayes (2021a) points out, its predecessor, OLES, was operating on a budget of $23 million annually. Hayes (2021b) expressed concern that the Skills for Success program only had definitions and preliminary proficiency levels of skills, and that it will take years to get 'Skills for Success' to reach a level comparable to the Essential Skills project. While adult education and lifelong advocates are skeptical of these renewed policy and programming efforts, some progress has been made toward establishing a semblance of a national LLL learning system.

Lifelong Learning in the U.S.

In the US, Adult and Workforce Education (AWE) policy has been primarily been initiated at the national level, with the following areas serving as its foundation: training and education in response to economic crises and transition; preparation for military duty or reintegration after military service; assimilating newly arrived Americans by offering language and citizenship courses and employment training; opportunities to recover lost educational opportunities; and to support the socioeconomic mobility of vulnerable populations. The 1964 Adult Education Act formally initiated programming to provide literacy, basic, and secondary educational opportunities for adult learners, and became the official system of "adult education." States were provided federal block grants and mandated to create AWE services and systems locally. The term "lifelong learning" seldom occurs in US federal legislation, but when used, it refers mostly to continuing education, upskilling, jobs training, and similar forms of work-related learning.

In the late 1990s, legislators acknowledged that an expanded scope was needed for adult learning to not only improve basic literacy skills and high school equivalency, but also obtain postsecondary education, work skills certification, and other industry recognized credentials. The 1998 Workforce Investment Act (WIA) began a major reformation of the diversified and complex AWE delivery systems, installing new federal requirements to be met to qualify for funding. WIA also reflected the shift of AWE programming from the purview of the Department of Education to the Department of Labor, and a growing emphasis on linking literacy, education, social, and employment services. WIA was framed as providing workforce investment activities, through statewide and local workforce investment systems, to improve the quality of the workforce, reduce welfare dependency, and enhance national productivity and economic competitiveness. WIOA worked to consolidate job training programs and streamline processes with the intent of helping adult learners receive needed services and support earlier. Title II of WIOA legislation also replaced requirements for a performance accountability system, and

mandated participating agencies to require eligible AWE providers to demonstrate measurable goals for participant outcomes and other specified program elements.

Architecture of the System

The US lacks an LLL-specific national coordinating body to ensure a systematic, national LLL policy agenda, but it does have a federal-level Office of Career, Technical, and Adult Education (OCTAE) within the Department of Education. The US system is a federalized system where the majority of the educational and fiscal responsibilities for education lie with states. Adding to this distribution of responsibility for education, US federal responsibility for publicly funded AWE programming is also distributed across at least seven different federal agencies. Typically, elements of AWE policy are also subsumed under other general federal legislation, with intermittent clauses worked into other mainstream national educational or workforce reform frameworks. While legislation over the past 20 years has been moving toward bringing the various federal agencies and education sectors into alignment, there has been no overarching federal plan for creating an integrated, public, lifelong education system.

Under the Career Pathways initiative, the following guidelines were provided for program design, implementation, and evaluation: (a) building cross-agency partnerships and clarifying roles, (b) identifying industry sectors and engaging employers in business and industry, (c) designing integrated education and training programs, (d) identifying and combining funding needs and sources for implementation, (e) aligning policies and programs between federal, State, and community agencies, and (f) measuring system change and performance (Alamprese & Lymardo, 2012). This framework reflects an increasing integration of initiatives at the national level in the US to coordinate AWE policy development and programming. These requirements for partnering and cost-sharing are intended to reduce redundancy of programming, and to help adult learners gain more strategic access to employment, educational, and social services. WIOA mandates have also brought standards, data and performance requirements, and programming aims into alignment, establishing an architecture for a quasi-AWE-system.

Framing of Policies

From inception, AWE policy has been framed in terms of helping adults become more economically independent. Policy rhetoric related to learning in adulthood remains heavily centered on socioeconomic matters such as unemployment, the need for labor to reskill and upskill, and the cultivation of human and intellectual capital to remain competitive and economically viable internationally. This framing of federal policy has translated the LLL notion into an active tool for the reform of education and to tackle market mandates and economic shifts. Even though the framing and scope of LLL-related policies in the US remain narrow, a number of interesting initiatives have recently emerged.

Policy Trends

Career Pathways (CP)*.* The 2006 CP initiative was instigated with the purpose of helping adult learners find pathways to and through postsecondary education and the workforce. CP programs and systems deliver intentionally structured curriculum and student-focused supports that enable learners to pursue occupationally, technically, and professionally oriented postsecondary education and workforce training. CP include a wide range of core program elements, including curriculum and instruction, work-based learning opportunities, industry-recognized credentials, proactive student supports, career guidance, and job placement. Career progression also includes strategies that enable adult learners to advance in postsecondary education and training beyond entry level to secure multiple—including stacked—credentials (certificates, licenses, and degrees), to enter and progress through careers that provide financial stability (Bragg et al., 2019). Based on an analysis of state and national level evaluations, Bragg's team asserts that there are significant differences in basic skills gains, college credits, and entry-level credentials earned by participants in CP programs, as well as improved program retention and credential attainment.

Integrated Education and Training. Another major trend is the integration of academic and workplace skills development in a more realistic workforce-oriented context. Integrated education and training (IET) provide simultaneous instruction in basic academic skills and occupational or industry-specific training. IET provides postsecondary academic, occupational, and technical skills that enable students to attain required competencies and credentials. The IET model requires employer engagement and partnerships between public and private education and training providers. IET programming works toward integrating literacy and academic skills, technical workplace skills, digital literacies, soft skills, and emotional and interpersonal skills that are sought by employers. The programs also offer wraparound services such as case management, financial aid assistance, academic advising, individualized training plans, and job placement services that help learners complete their studies and transition into employment.

Digital Capabilities. The 2020 global pandemic forced education providers to change how they work with learners, integrating new technologies and tools they had not previously used. What became clearer during the pandemic was that the US suffers from internet and digital infrastructure problems that magnify the growing gaps between various demographic groups in their digital skills levels and ability to integrate into the current technology-rich economy. In response, the Digital Equity Act of 2021 was drafted and, "Expresses the sense of Congress that a broadband connection and digital literacy are increasingly critical to how individuals participate in the society, economy, and civic institutions of the United States and finds that the Federal Government has an interest in and an obligation to pursue digital equity" (Section 3). The proposed legislation highlighted the need for national infrastructure capacity building, as well as the importance of establishing equity in access so all people can develop the digital capabilities required to participate in today's society and economy.

Interoperability. A 2018 federally funded initiative through the Office of Career, Technical, and Adult Education (OCTAE), called *Teaching Skills That Matter* (TSTM), introduced a framework which emphasized nine skills, five topic areas, and three teaching approaches intended to cultivate essential capabilities with real-world relevance to learners' lives that can be used in multiple contexts. From a policy standpoint, what is of note here is that this framework is aligned with education frameworks implemented in other areas (e.g., secondary education and community colleges) with the aim of aligning systems and curriculum. Efforts at aligning various levels of education systems in the US could potentially extend the national public education framework past compulsory education toward a more comprehensive system approaching the idea of supporting LLL. Such policies and initiatives may gradually leverage the current systems by moving them into alignment with an increasing scope of influence beyond compulsory education.

Discussion

Both Canada and the US have embraced a variety of policy reforms in support of lifelong learning, but these have been inadequate, piece-meal, and heavily focused on education and programs to support working-age adults. Over the decades, the two countries have developed some notably similar systems, and have tested initiatives related to individual learning accounts and savings plans to support continued learning and training throughout adulthood. It also appears that both countries have elected to introduce mandates over the past two decades that have increased the demands and requirements of states/territories and local-level educational providers. Both countries have also recently introduced new programs and funding avenues to support LLL-related services, especially in response to the hardships brought on by and exacerbated since the 2020 global pandemic.

Note: Please see the following chapter for a more comprehensive overview of North American LLL policy: Roumell, E. A., Walker, J., & Salajan, F. D. (2022). Lifelong learning: policy issues in USA/Canada. In K. Evans, W. Lee, J. Markowitsch & M. Zukas (Eds.) *Third International Handbook of Lifelong Learning*. Springer Press International.

References

Canada Revenue Agency. (2021). *Lifelong Learning Plan.* https://www.canada.ca/en/revenue-agency/services/tax/individuals/topics/rrsps-related-plans/lifelong-learning-plan.html

Delacourt, S. (2006, September 29). Harper, wife reading from different page. *Toronto Star.*

Elfert, M., & Walker, J. (2020). The rise and fall of adult literacy: Policy lessons from Canada. *European Journal for Research on the Education and Learning of Adults*, *11*(1), 101–125.

Employment & Social Development Canada (ESDC). (2018). *Backgrounder: Skills Boost*. https://www.canada.ca/en/employment-social-development/news/2018/06/backgrounder-skills-boost.html

European Commission (EC). (2001). *Making a European area of lifelong learning a reality*. Brussels: European Commission.

European Union (2000). *Memorandum on Lifelong Learning.* Brussels, Commission of the European Communities. https://uil.unesco.org/i/doc/lifelong-learning/policies/european-communities-a-memorandum-on-lifelong-learning.pdf

Futureworx, (2018). Building a pan-Canadian soft-skills framework. *Futureworx.* https://futureworx.ca/wp-content/uploads/2019/01/Soft-Skills-Framework-Report.pdf

Government of Canada. (2019). Investing in the middle-class: Budget 2019. *Department of Finance, Canada.* https://www.budget.gc.ca/2019/docs/plan/budget-2019-en.pdf

Government of Canada. (2020a). Supporting lifelong learning. *Employment and Social Development Canada.* https://www.canada.ca/en/employment-social-development/corporate/reports/briefing-binder-2019/book-1/supporting-learning.html

Government of Canada. (2020b). Speech from the Throne to open the Second Session of the Forty-Third Parliament of Canada. Privy Council Office. https://www.canada.ca/content/dam/pco-bcp/documents/pm/SFT_2020_EN_WEB.pdf

Government of Canada. (2021). A recovery plan for jobs, growth, and resilience Budget 2021. *Department of Finance, Canada.* https://www.budget.gc.ca/2021/home-accueil-en.html

Hayes, B. (2018, April 24). Federal government holds steady with literacy funding. *As I was saying… (Brigid Hayes' blog).* https://brigidhayes.wordpress.com/2018/04/24/federal-government-holds-steady-with-literacyfunding/

Hayes, B. (2021a, April 19). Federal budget 2021. *As I was saying…(Brigid Hayes' blog).* https://brigidhayes.wordpress.com/2021/04/19/federal-budget-2021/

Hayes, B. (2021b, June). Various reflections: "Some thoughts and comments about ESDC's Skills for Success, Parts 1 and 2," "Comparing skills frameworks" and "Wiping out the history of Essential Skills" *As I was saying… [Brigid Hayes' blog*]. https://brigidhayes.wordpress.com/2021/06/

Jerema, C. (2010, January 08). CCL loses funding: Tories axe grant for education research. *Maclean's.* https://www.macleans.ca/education/uniandcollege/ccl-loses-funding/

Knighton, T., Hujaleh, F., Iacampo, J., & Werkneh, G. (2009). *Lifelong learning among Canadians aged 18 to 64 Years: First results from the 2008 Access and Support to Education and Training Survey* (Statistics Canada Catalogue no. 81-595-M — No. 079). Ottawa, ON: Statistics Canada, Human Resources and Skills Development Canada. http://www.statcan.gc.ca/pub/81-595-m/81-595-m2009079-eng.pdf

Mojab, S. (2006). Adult education without borders. In T. Fenwick, T. Nesbit, & B. Spencer (Eds.). *Contexts of adult education: Canadian perspectives*. Toronto: Thompson Educational Publishing.

Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD). (1996). *Lifelong learning for all: Taking stock*. https://www.oecd.org/officialdocuments/publicdisplay documentpdf/?cote=DEELSA/ED/CERI/CD(2000)12/PART2/REV2&docLanguage=En

Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD). (2001). *Economics and finance of lifelong learning*. https://doi.org/10.1787/9789264195868-en

Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD). (2015). *Adult Literacy and Lifeskills Survey*. National Center for Education Statistics (NCES). https://www.oecd.org/education/innovation-education/adultliteracy.htm https://nces.ed.gov/surveys/all/ib_overall.asp

Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD). (2019). *OECD Skills Surveys*. https://www.oecd.org/skills/piaac/publications/countryspecificmaterial/

Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD). (2021). *Education at a glance 2021: OECD Indicators, Canada*. https://www.oecd-ilibrary.org/sites/cac929c1-en/index.html?itemId=/content/component/cac929c1-en

Peters, G. B. (2017). What is so wicked about wicked problems? A conceptual analysis and a research program. *Policy and Society*, *36*(3), 385–396.

Shohet, L. (2001). Adult learning and literacy in Canada: A review of adult learning and literacy. *Annual Review*, Vol 2. Montreal: National Centre for the Study of Adult Learning and Literacy.

Smythe, S. (2015). Ten years of adult literacy policy and practice in Canada: Literacy policy tensions and workarounds. *Language and Literacy*, 17(2), 4–21.

Wikipedia. (updated 29 October, 2019). Canadian Council on Learning. https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Canadian_Council_on_Learning

TALES FROM THE FIELD: SO, WHO GETS TO BE DIGITALLY LITERATE?

Sarah Haroon Sualehi[1]

ABSTRACT: Digital literacy is globally recognized as being a key determinant of economic, social, and political mobility. However, access to digital tools and opportunities for upskilling are infrequently provided to vulnerable adults from the Global South. Through a social justice lens, this paper uses a critical personal narrative approach to explore how a legacy of colonization, neoliberalism, and globalization shapes inequitable access to digital literacy for adult learners within the Global South, specifically Pakistan. This reflective memo frames the author's experiences as an international adult education scholar-practitioner within and from the Global South and explores the ways that histories of power manifest at the periphery. In doing so, the author explores how southern individuals, scholars, and practitioners are often kept at the periphery of decision-making, sense-making, or sense-giving within the adult education and lifelong learning field. The paper considers the inequity hidden within the provision of many adult education and vocational training programs, particularly as it relates to digital literacy development, through three stages of reflection on themes related to 1) decision-making: colonial occupation versus colonial narratives; 2) sense-making: the economic habitus of service and servitude; and 3) sense-giving: Pakistan's pathway to digital literacy. While most adult education providers focus on reinforcing opportunities offered to learners, equally important to consider is what opportunities are tacitly withheld from learners and the assumptions that undergird those decisions. Finally, the author suggests how adult educators can support the digital liberation of adult learners from historically oppressed communities through a series of interlocking reflection questions.

Keywords: digital literacy, Global South, adult education

ساقی ہے ذرخیز بڑی مٹی یہ تو ہو ذم ذرا

"With just a little moisture, this too is fertile land, my love."

- Pakistani poet, Allama Iqbal, on the extraordinary potential within us all

At the nexus of power and opportunity, digital literacy can determine an individual's access to social connectivity, economic mobility, and political participation in the 21st century. Policymakers, program leaders, and adult educators recognize the irrefutable importance of digital skills as universal mobilizers. For instance, the United Nations included digital literacy as a critical component within the 2015 Sustainable Development Goals, catalyzing governments around the world to pour funding into internal digital skills trainings and improving national telecommunications infrastructures.

At its core, the inequitable provision of digital literacy is also a lever of social injustice, oppression, and division: those with it can extract its benefit, but those without it are left further behind. When access to digital skills training or technology infrastructure is not equitably provided to adults from historically marginalized communities, this gap is felt even more acutely. With automation integrated into key aspects of our political, economic, and social beings, analog communities without basic or sustainable digital

---

[1] Texas A&M University, sarah.sualehi@tamu.edu

literacy face a bleak future. Using a practitioner-driven social justice lens, this paper leverages a critical personal narrative approach to explore how a legacy of colonization, neoliberalism, and globalization can shape inequitable access to digital literacy programs for adult learners within the Global South. Additionally, it suggests how adult educators can support the digital liberation of adult learners from historically oppressed communities.

Literature Review

Digital literacy is a foundational skillset for countries seeking to develop a modern knowledge economy. Literature outlines central concepts and outcomes of digital literacy, clarification of the digital literacy divide, and barriers to its adoption. Though a relatively new field emerging in the 1990s, the link between digital literacy, social justice, and globalization has already been conceptualized as critical digital literacy. It is vital to recognize that most digital literacy scholarship is voiced from the seat of the Global North.

Digital literacy refers to a set of skills that allows users to connect with social, economic, and political power in more fluid ways. Socially, digital literacy allows members of a community to connect despite physical barriers (Jimoyiannis & Gravani, 2011). Economically, digital literacy allows users to transition to high-growth industries, such as tech and healthcare, to gain financial independence (Mohammadyari & Singh, 2015). Politically, digital literacy allows users to connect with key public services and apply for benefits without cost-related barriers such as transport, income-loss, or childcare (Vanek, 2017). Digital literacy is also conceptualized as two distinct phases. The first digital divide refers to access, recognizing that an individual's digital literacy is based on their ability to first have access to digital tools such as hardware, software, or internet (Barrie et al, 2021). This gap is usually closed through resource enrichment and infrastructure interventions. The second digital divide refers to usage and application (Tsai et al, 2015). Even if access is provided, vulnerable adults need equitable capacity-building opportunities to develop the skills necessary to properly leverage the digital tools and services now available to them.

Critical digital literacy posits that digital literacy can become a gatekeeping tool to keep certain communities away from political, economic, and social mobility (Pangrazio, 2016; Hinrichsen & Coombs, 2014). Scholars have studied this phenomenon through analyses on internet diffusion (Crenshaw, 2006); income inequality (Ndoya & Asongu, 2022); access to digital capital (Calderon, 2021); and key drivers of the global digital divide (Cruz-Jesus et al, 2018). Within a country, historically marginalized communities usually experience this gap. For instance, a recent Tribal Tech Assessment revealed that Native Americans are one of the most under-served and under-connected communities in the US (Howard & Morris, 2019). At a global level, digital literacy widens the gap between the Global North and the Global South, further reinforced through histories of power. In its most recent report, the UN agency International Telecommunication Union found that an estimated 37% of the world has never used the internet before, and of this, 96% of disconnected communities are in developing countries within the Global South (Bogdan-Martin, 2021, pg. iii). While many note that digital divides are felt more

strongly by countries forced into economic roles reinforced by colonization, globalization, or neoliberal policies, little is said about the role of adult educators in helping this digital divide either close, persist, or widen.

Method

Within the larger body of qualitative methodologies, personal narratives fall within the purview of autoethnography. Merging aesthetic, analytic, and evaluative skills, autoethnographies seek to explore personal experiences within and through a cultural experience (Ellis, 2004; Ellis & Bochner, 2000). As the methodology has developed, it has created parallel streams of evocative and analytic approaches based on the researcher's stance (Anderson, 2006; Ellis, 2004). At its core, autoethnographies leverage a storytelling technique which rejects a narrator's neutrality or objectivity and instead reorients them as subjective, emotional, and reflexive participants in the research process and product (Ellis, 2011). These writings are often grounded in a series of confessions or epiphanies that occur from the narrator's experience.

Personal narratives are considered the "most controversial form of autoethnography for traditional social scientists" as they represent a significant departure from entrenched forms of analysis found most often in Western academia (Ellis, 2011, p. 279). However, the personal narrative is not just a form of evocative academic rebellion: it allows authors to reflect on their lives by inviting the reader into their cultural praxis. For most Indigenous, eastern, and southern epistemologies, storytelling is a critical method of information sharing, reflection, analysis, and preservation. Stories can traverse the borders of epistemic, ontological, and axiomatic constructions to assist in the holistic sense-making of the world around us (Chapman, 2004). Critical narratives seek to challenge power and the oppression of marginalized bodies, while a personal narrative represents personal findings on issues of inquiry (Chapman, 2004; Sun & Roumell, 2017).

As a brown, Muslim woman from Pakistan, I develop this reflective memo using the critical personal narrative approach to contemplate my experiences as an international adult education scholar-practitioner within and from the Global South and explore the ways that histories of power manifest at the periphery. I make this initial attempt to create a moment of shared understanding between myself and the reader to trigger a series of deeper reflections on our practice as members of the international adult education community.

Personal Reflections from the Periphery

Throughout my years as an educator from 2011 to 2023, whether working in the adult education, K-12, government, or nonprofit space, I was consistently exposed to a series of repetitive tropes which cut across my roles as a curriculum developer, teacher trainer, program manager, researcher, or student. Many of these narratives echoed Global North histories of power stemming from colonial, neoliberal, or globalized perspectives. However, my Global South origins in a space often dominated by pedagogies, andragogies, and epistemologies of the Global North often kept me - and bodies like

mine - at the periphery of decision-making, sense-making, or sense-giving. By reflecting on my practice, I endeavor to explore the inequity hidden within the provision of many adult education and vocational training programs, particularly as it relates to digital literacy development. While most adult education providers focus on reinforcing opportunities offered to learners, equally important to consider is what opportunities are tacitly withheld from learners and the assumptions that undergird those decisions.

Decision-Making: Colonial Occupation vs Colonial Narratives

During a networking breakfast at a post-pandemic global conference, I met an attendee from the US working in Latin America. After an initial exchange, we broached the "So what do you do?" question, wherein I explained my work within workforce development, adult education, and the impact of digital literacy on occupational and social mobility for vulnerable learners. Though engaged, this woman paused and said, "That sounds great, but it would *never* work in the country I'm in right now. The women just wouldn't go for complex digital skills." Puzzled, I shared that one of the organizations I used to work for does this exact type of high-skills digital literacy training in the very country she was speaking of, pulling up their website and annual report metrics. Unconvinced, she shrugged me off with a bland "it's just not for them."

I have thought about this networking breakfast for entirely too much time. As I struggled to unpack my frustration with this conversation and attendee, I realized that most of my annoyance was rooted in two strands. First was this woman's conviction that a *whole country* of female adult learners would somehow be incapable or disinterested in learning complex digital skills. Second was her implied belief that her opinion of an entire nation somehow superseded evidence of grassroots trainings or metrics from the field. I was disappointed because I recognized that her attitude echoed the tired tropes embodied in colonial deficit narratives of Indigenous ability, made more poignant by the fact that she was from the Global North, while this Latin American country and I are firmly rooted in post-colonial countries of the Global South. More than just a physical process of economic oppression and slave-labor practices, colonization was also a social and cognitive takeover of a community's consciousness. To control local bodies while ensuring basic skillsets were available to ensure economic production, colonial education structures were constructed to be strategic and brutal interventions to unlearn Indigenous communal knowledge and histories of power. Education was limited to basic literacy and numeracy to ensure that Indigenous individuals could support the continuous running of the colonial machine, while touting the inherently bigoted belief that these communities could never amount to anything more than just the basics. This in turn created a colonial deficit narrative regarding the perceived limitations of Indigenous communities as being primitive.

While most colonial occupations may have ended, colonial narratives describing southern communities have not. I have often wondered how many adult education opportunities are withheld from vulnerable southern communities in part due to the language of deficit used at the center of decision-making to describe us at the periphery. It is all too common to hear adult educators in seats of power withhold training opportunities from learners due to a "lack of market fit", misalignment with "employer expectations", or learning

being "out of scope", suggesting that the economic machine that adult learners are being fed into takes precedence to their humanistic needs, goals, or interests. As Julia Preece famously shared, adult education, when voiced solely from the seat of the Global North, can reinforce colonial narratives of "basic education only" interventions within the Global South (2009). Unless members of the Global South are invited into the decision-making and design of adult education for their communities, we will continue to see a misalignment in the Global North's beliefs about the ability of southern bodies and the Global South's need to articulate a vision of success based on internal epistemologies of education and lifelong learning that embrace the indigenous values, histories, and counter-stories of their people without the neocolonial insertion of Global North values, needs, and agendas.

Sense-Making: The Economic Habitus of Service and Servitude

When I look back on twelve years of my work across the world through a social justice lens, I am faced with the unique difference in the distribution of digital versus analog curricula. At its core, adult education seeks to provide economic and social mobility to vulnerable adults. When I would collaborate with partners in the Global North, adult education programs centered on high-growth industries including technology, healthcare, and disability services. Often, these programs were withheld from southern communities as learning contrasted with a country's expected modes of production upheld through inequitable policies and relationships. These systems frequently came together to reinforce an economic habitus focused on service and servitude within the Global South, limiting individuals to certain systems of being (Bourdieu, 1989). Echoing Manuel Castells, "exclusion from these [technology/internet] networks are one of the most damaging forms of exclusion in our economy and in our culture" (2002, p. 3). When the "global" push for digital literacy is tempered with the fact that most disconnected individuals are in the Global South, we must ask ourselves: if digital literacy, from access to upskilling, is withheld from a disproportionate percentage of southern communities, is adult education reinforcing an analog habitus? How are adult learners from these communities meant to make sense of their identities as learners, workers, and individuals in the 21st century when subjected to systems which disconnect and dispossess them?

My experiences with adult education programs in Global North countries such as Australia and Singapore have run opposite to my experiences with adult education in the Global South. For instance, since 2015 the Australian Digital Inclusion Index has published reports and dashboards to track metrics related to performance, accessibility, and the closure of the digital divide for vulnerable groups, especially Indigenous, disabled, or elder Australians. Similarly, Singapore created its Digital Readiness Programme Office in 2017 leading to the establishment of the "Skills Future Initiative" and "Seniors Go Digital" government-backed programs to improve digital literacy for all. Across years of working with these countries, most programs I supported were consciously aligned with government policies and social expectations of success for all. Whether adult education partners were international, domestic, public, or private, there was a firm commitment to the creation of a knowledge economy where everyone must be able to join, including Indigenous adults, elders, refugees, new arrivals, single parents, and more. Even with saturated markets, most local partners felt that job availability

should not be the only driving force for adult education: some skills, such as digital literacy, were simply necessary in the 21st century.

However, the same is not the case for adult education within many developing countries. In my experience within the Global South, most adult education providers were much more likely to offer programs for labor-intensive or service-driven roles. Adult education often reinforced analog industries limiting the creation of or participation in a knowledge economy. This was the case even if southern countries had internal policies and external funders supporting digital literacy. For instance, around the same time as Australia and Singapore, Pakistan launched the Digital Pakistan Initiative in 2019 to increase digital inclusion via improved internet accessibility and workforce upskilling. However, most adult education partners such as USAID, the World Bank, or private providers, mostly offered programs for positions as factory workers, agricultural labor, or call center assistants. Unlike commitments in Australia or Singapore, there was no reinforced belief in digital literacy, the creation of the knowledge economy, or an equitable distribution of digital skills. There was no desire to deliver programs in line with government policy to support socioeconomic mobility. Adult education largely focused on service and servitude driven occupational pathways irrespective of digital policies.

Sense-Giving: Pakistan's Pathway to Digital Literacy

While testing a digital literacy platform, some older, Hispanic adult learners my team worked with were concerned about next steps. Our guided program modules focused on basic digital skills, while participants were interested in more complex skills related to document creation and data analysis. Due to limitations in capacity and funding, we could not join them for the entire learning journey but shared that advanced modules were available if they independently continued the program. Many learners committed to completing the modules themselves, with one older participant progressing to advanced modules within a month. While there was no compulsion for these older learners to seek out advanced digital skills, there is power in a community's ability to re-narrativize their pathway to digital literacy through an emancipatory sense-giving process which allows them to influence their futures. Similarly, a closer look at the systems of power impacting a country such as Pakistan can illustrate how communities in the Global South can reclaim their decision-making, sense-making, and sense-giving processes in the face of exclusionary deficit narratives.

Pakistan was part of the British Crown's colonizing campaign of South Asia from 1760 to 1947, used for its fertile grounds, mineral wealth, and manual labor. Even after gaining its independence in 1947, Pakistan's main economic industries still mirror these colonial sectors reinforced by patterns of globalization and neoliberalism. In many ways, globalization supports neo-colonial structures necessary for knowledge-based economies to preserve power along production and consumption lines. The Global South's attempted transition from exploitative manual labor to knowledge-based economies could potentially upset production and supply chains that the Global North depends on to maintain the hegemony of their lived experiences. For instance, as a country currently facing a food and hunger crisis, Pakistan ironically still exports food to countries such as the US, China, Saudi Arabia, and the Netherlands (Global Hunger Index, 2022; Mercy

Corps, 2022; WITS, 2022). Transitioning to a digitally literate knowledge economy would disrupt food supplies to powerful nations. Furthermore, neoliberalism has resulted in decreased spending on public goods such as adult education and vocational training leaving behind a vacuum for third-party providers to fill. However, many externally funded interventions align first with the interests of donors, then to the organization's mission, and finally to beneficiary need. For example, most World Bank and USAID interventions historically run in Pakistan have focused on basic education, rural development, agricultural innovation, or manufacturing skills (USAID, 2022; World Bank, 2022). In many ways, these programs mirror the scope of colonial education interventions: externally funded programs primarily improve the quality of exports from Pakistan to its donors. As these programs increase outputs for trade while leaving behind a starving citizenry, many adult education programs seem to reshape Pakistan's economy to first benefit Global North interests embedded in trade agreements over its learners.

Similar to the learners testing the digital literacy platform, these narratives shift when Pakistan controls its own digital literacy development. After establishing a sustainable telecommunications industry, Pakistan slowly began transitioning to a knowledge economy. First, it increased its internet and fiber optics infrastructure. From 2001 to 2021, national internet usage grew from 1.3% to 54% due to aggressive expansion policies (The Express Tribune, 2021). In addition to expanded access, the government increased usage through skills training. In 2018, DigiSkills Pakistan was created to provide adults with digital skills training to be better prepared for a digital future of work with courses in freelancing, graphic design, digital marketing, basic digital literacy and more. Since 2018, it has delivered more than three million trainings and counting (DigiSkills, 2022). Additionally, in 2019, the government launched the Digital Pakistan Initiative after years of effort and ad hoc external support. Eventually, international institutions became key partners, with the World Bank joining DPI in 2019; the Asian Development Bank in 2020; USAID in 2021; and DFiD in 2022. By recentering their control of decision-making, sense-making, and sense-giving processes, Pakistan – like other countries in the Global South – is taking demonstrable steps to influence narratives of adult education, learner perception, and pathways to digital literacy.

Looking Forward

Some adult educators will never stop using deficit-embedded language steeped in colonial narratives to describe learners in and from the Global South, particularly regarding digital literacy development. To change this, adult educators must reflect on their voice and expertise to recognize the crucial opportunity we have in providing socially just curricula and programs through our interventions. As I continue this work, I invite like-minded adult educators to join me by first reflecting on three interlocking questions.

> *1. What language do you use to describe your stakeholders and programs?* Some adult education providers describe stakeholders and skills-building programs for vulnerable communities using deficit-driven language regarding a learner's interest, ability, or scope. We must reflect on the language we use to describe the

individuals we support and consider how colonial narratives shape our vocabulary.

2. How basic are your programs? If we consistently limit our offerings to "basic level only", we risk reducing learners to colonial tropes used for control. We must advocate for equitable opportunity and access to a variety of multilevel learning content instead of reinforcing stereotypes that compartmentalize our learners. We must consider whether we are truly responding to learner needs or unconsciously upholding inequity through our work.

3. Who do your adult education programs truly serve? Many adult education programs serve donor or funder needs before learners. Programs that first serve donors dehumanize adult learners as the scope of their potential is not fully recognized or realized. For a socially just approach to adult education, our programs should answer to the needs and potential of adult learners first.

In the 21st century, digital literacy is a critical driver for countries to transition towards a knowledge-based economy. While this is universally recognized through the UN Sustainable Development Goals, access and capacity building is not being equitably provided. Through conscious change, adult education can alter unjust historical structures resulting from globalization, neoliberalism, and colonization. By questioning the assumptions and biases driving our work, we can leverage our expertise to advocate for learning opportunities that support vulnerable adults from the Global South in realizing their true potential by shifting the decision-making, sense-making, and sense-giving processes from the center to historically marginalized communities at the peripheries of our work.

References

Anderson, L. (2006). Analytic autoethnography. *Journal of contemporary ethnography*, *35*(4), 373-395. https://doi.org/10.1177/0891241605280449

Barrie, H., La Rose, T., Detlor, B., Julien, H., & Serenko, A. (2021) "Because I'm old": The role of ageism in older adults' experiences of digital literacy training in public libraries. *Journal of Technology in Human Services, 3*9:4, 379-404. https://doi.org/10.1080/15228835.2021.1962477

Bogdan-Martin, D. (2019). Measuring digital development: Facts and figures 2019. In *Technical report*. International Telecommunications Union (ITU).

Bourdieu, P. (1989). Social space and symbolic power. *Sociological theory*, *7*(1), 14-25. https://doi.org/10.2307/202060

Calderon Gomez, D. (2021). The third digital divide and Bourdieu: Bidirectional conversion of economic, cultural, and social capital to (and from) digital capital among young people in Madrid. *New Media & Society, 23*(9), 2534-2553. https://doi.org/10.1177/1461444820933252

Castells, M. (2002). The Internet galaxy: Reflections on the Internet, business, and society. *Oxford University Press on Demand*. https://doi.org/10.1093/acprof:oso/9780199255771.001.0001

Chapman, V. (2004). *"What was that all about?" Using critical personal narrative for inquiry and critical reflective practice*. Adult Education Research Conference. https://doi.org/10.1002/ace.142

Crenshaw, E. M., & Robison, K. K. (2006). Globalization and the digital divide: The roles of structural conduciveness and global connection in Internet diffusion. *Social Science Quarterly, 87*(1), 190-207. https://doi.org/10.1111/j.0038-4941.2006.00376.x

Cruz-Jesus, F., Oliveira, T., & Bacao, F. (2018). The global digital divide: Evidence and drivers. *Journal of Global Information Management (JGIM), 26*(2), 1-26. https://doi.org/10.4018/JGIM.2018040101

DigiSkills. (2022). DigiSkills.pk Overview. https://digiskills.pk/

Ellis, C. (2004). *The ethnographic I: A methodological novel about autoethnography*. AltaMira. https://doi.org/10.1080/10408340308518298

Ellis, C., & Bochner, A. (2000). Autoethnography, personal narrative, reflexivity: Researcher as subject. In N. K. Denzin & Y. S. Lincoln (Eds.), *Handbook of Qualitative Research (2nd Ed.),* (pp. 733-768). Sage Publications.

Ellis, C., Adams, T. E., & Bochner, A. P. (2011). Autoethnography: An overview. Historical social research. *Historische sozialforschung*, *36*(4), 273-290. https://doi.org/10.12759/hsr.36.2011.4.273-290

Global Hunger Index. (2022). 2022 Global Hunger Index by Severity: Pakistan. Global Hunger Index.

Hinrichsen, J., & Coombs, A. (2014). The five resources of critical digital literacy: A framework for curriculum integration. *Research in Learning Technology, 21*. https://doi.org/10.3402/rlt.v21.21334

Howard, B., & Morris, T. (2019). Tribal Technology Assessment: The State of Internet Service on Tribal Lands. Arizona State University American Indian Initiative.

Jimoyiannis, A., & Gravani, M. (2011). Exploring adult digital literacy using learners' and educators' perceptions and experiences: The case of the second chance schools in Greece. *Educational Technology & Society, 14* (1), 217–227.

Mercy Corps. (2022). News alert: Pakistan at high risk of starvation and disease outbreak as harsh winter approaches. Mercy Corps News.

Mohammadyari, S., & Singh, H. (2015). Understanding the effect of e-learning on individual performance: The role of digital literacy. *Computers & Education, 82,* 11-25. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.compedu.2014.10.025

Ndoya, H., & Asongu, S. A. (2022). Digital divide, globalization, and income inequality in sub-Saharan African countries: Analysing cross-country heterogeneity. *Social Responsibility Journal,* (ahead-of-print). https://doi.org/10.1016/j.compedu.2014.10.025

Pangrazio, L. (2016). Reconceptualising critical digital literacy. *Discourse: Studies in the Cultural Politics of Education, 37*(2), 163-174, https://doi.org/10.1080/01596306.2014.942836

PIAIC. (2022). Presidential Initiative for Artificial Intelligence & Computing: Overview. https://www.piaic.org/

Preece, J. (2009). *Lifelong learning and development: A southern perspective*. Bloomsbury Publishing. https://doi.org/10.1080/03057920903125602

Sun, Q., & Roumell, E. A. (2017). Interrupting the mindset of educational neocolonialism: Critical deliberations from East and West international adult educators. *Asia Pacific Education Review*, *18*, 177-187. https://doi.org/10.1007/s12564-017-9482-9

The Express Tribune. (2021). Country's internet penetration stands at 54%. News article.

Tsai, H. Y. S., Shillair, R., Cotten, S. R., Winstead, V., & Yost, E. (2015). Getting grandma online: Are tablets the answer for increasing digital inclusion for older adults in the US? *Educational Gerontology, 41*(10), 695-709. https://doi.org/10.1080/03601277.2015.1048165

USAID. (2022). Country Profile: Pakistan. 29 June 2022.

Vanek, J. B. (2017). Migrant adult learners and digital literacy: Using DBR to support teaching and learning (Doctoral dissertation, University of Minnesota).

WITS. (2022). Pakistan Food Products Exports by country in US$ Thousand 2020. World Integrated Trade Solutions.

World Bank. (2022). World Bank in Pakistan.

EMBRACING TRANSLANGUAGING IN ADULT ESL: THE ROLE OF BILINGUAL FACULTY

Jennifer Talley[1]

ABSTRACT: While pedagogical translanguaging has been shown to have substantive positive impact on student learning outcomes internationally, adult education has not yet widely embraced the concept. This paper introduces the idea of translanguaging, the concept of encouraging students to rely on their existing linguistic knowledge when learning a new language, and the many benefits it affords adult students who are learning English as a second or other language. The results of a mixed-methods study highlight the important correlations that exist between bilingualism and ESL faculty's pedagogical philosophies of instruction, understanding of the concept of translanguaging, participation in professional development, and receptiveness to new teaching methodologies. The study further describes common misconceptions about translanguaging and suggests some easy-to-implement translanguaging activities. While the United States adult ESL system remains entrenched in centuries-old teaching methodologies, this paper demonstrates how ESL programs can eschew antiquated English-only instruction in favor of culturally sustaining, additive ESL education that is contemporary and supported by research.

The United States is rooted in culturally rich immigrant communities that historically embraced bilingual education. Centuries later, following fierce debate regarding the merits of English-only versus bilingual education models, bilingual education has once again been reinstated as a necessary component of an inclusive and effective K-12 curriculum. With many studies pointing to benefits afforded by bilingual instruction (Collier & Thomas, 2002; Cummins, 1981; Ramirez et al., 1991; Umanski & Reardon, 2014), the movement is slowly beginning to expand into the postsecondary environment, specifically in English a Second Language (ESL). One popular pedagogical approach has been translanguaging, a model in which instructors encourage the use of more than one language in the classroom and carefully design classroom activities with this goal in mind (García & Wei, 2014) to facilitate the acquisition of English as a second or other language. Content experts maintain that the lessons learned through decades of large-scale, longitudinal studies conducted in the K-12 context have not been adopted by postsecondary ESL programs as a matter of best practice (American Institute for Research, 2018; Auerbach, 1993; Community College Research Center, 2019; Hodara, 2015). Additionally, research exploring faculty perceptions of translanguaging has trended primarily in the English as a Foreign Language (EFL) context, only recently expanding to US-based ESL instruction (Brooks & Donato, 1994; Dirkwen Wei, 2013; Lantolf, 2000). In recognizing that political and linguistic conditions in the United States do not mirror conditions in other countries, this study aims to address the substantial literature gap regarding faculty attitudes toward translanguaging in postsecondary ESL in the United States, specifically within the state of Illinois. The research questions guiding this study are a.) what is the relationship between faculty demographics, attitudes, and understandings about translanguaging, willingness to incorporate pedagogical

---

[1] Director of Educational Development and Assessment, Marquette University School of Dentistry, Milwaukee, WI 53202; jennifer.talley@marquette.edu

translanguaging, and actual incorporation of pedagogical translanguaging in the ESL classroom? b.) where did faculty understandings and attitudes originate? c.) what, if any, are the common misconceptions about pedagogical translanguaging? and d.) if faculty encourage translanguaging in class, which specific methods do they use?

Translanguaging

Cen Williams was the first to use the term translanguaging in the context of Welsh instruction in the 1980s. The term referred to a pedagogical practice in which students alternate languages for the purposes of reading and writing or for receptive or productive use. In this pedagogical methodology, translanguaging is the systematic and planned use of the students' two languages emphasizing input in one language with a response/output in another (Baker, 2011). Subsequent researchers have expanded upon this explanation and define translanguaging as more than a classroom-based pedagogical practice, but rather as a broader theoretical perspective about language learning (Creese & Blackbridge, 2015; García & Wei, 2014; Lewis et al., 2012). García and Wei (2014) describe the "translanguaging stance" as the understanding that students use their entire linguistic repertoires to make meaning, superseding elements of named languages. Hornberger and Vaish (2009) define it as "the possibility of teachers and learners to access academic content through the linguistic resources they bring to the classroom while simultaneously acquiring new ones" (p. 316). Canagarajah (2011) notes that emerging bilinguals naturally engage in translanguaging as a normal process during second language acquisition whenever they attempt to make meaning. Translanguaging also recognizes that students' use of two languages transcends simple code-switching, the notion that bilingual individuals simply switch back and forth between languages in the appropriate contexts, turning linguistic abilities off and on depending on the situation. While translanguaging exists as both a pedagogical stance and an orientation, a lens through which to view bilingual education, this study investigated translanguaging as a pedagogical strategy. When faculty employ translanguaging methodologies, students negotiate meaning and acquire new linguistic resources through the use of two languages, allowing students the opportunity to engage their entire linguistic repertoires in learning (Garcia et al., 2017; Hornberger & Vaish, 2009; Lewis et al., 2012). Contrary to other bilingual models, translanguaging in ESL requires instructors to create a safe, constructivist classroom environment that allows students the freedom to explore the many ways in which the first language can scaffold their understanding of English.

Proponents of bilingual education in higher education often cite translanguaging as a methodology that utilizes first language transfer to help adults learn a second language. Pedagogical translanguaging is characterized by strategic language planning that is necessary to ensure the languages used during educational activities are equally developed and have equal status (Baker & Wright, 2017). In practice, this might include input in one language (e.g., reading a text) with the output in another language (e.g. the discussion of the text) during the same teaching/learning activity. Baker (2011) goes on to identify potential educational advantages to the use of translanguaging and its importance as a pedagogical practice in higher education, which include deeper understanding of the subject matter, strengthening the weaker language, and helping the

integration of fluent speakers with those who are less proficient (p. 281-282). Additional benefits of pedagogical translanguaging in the postsecondary environment include: higher-level discussions, improved reading comprehension, improved participation, increased metalinguistic knowledge, persistence in language programs, and enhanced vocabulary acquisition (Brooks & Donato, 1994; Caroll & Sambolin Morales, 2016; Dirkwen Wei, 2013; Lantolf, 2000; Parmegiani, 2014; Tatar, 2005).

Methodology

The mixed methods approach to the study's research questions utilized both quantitative and qualitative analyses in a study design that a) involved the collection and rigorous analysis of both open-ended and closed-ended data, b) required the integration of the two forms of data in analysis, c) considered the timing of the data collection, and d) was informed by the theoretical frameworks that guide the study's design (Cresswell, 2014). The study employed a convergent parallel mixed-methods design marked by the simultaneous collection of quantitative and qualitative data with separate analysis and subsequent integration of information in the post-analysis interpretation of results. The survey instrument followed the two-phase design outlined by Creswell (2014). First, a broad survey found in sections I and II generalized results to a particular population (in this case academic ESL faculty at Illinois community colleges), and phase two focused on open-ended questions. Further guiding the adoption of the mixed methods design was Grotjahn's 1987 explanation of hypothesis-testing vs. hypothesis-generating approaches to data collection and analysis. Whereas deductive quantitative approaches are generally employed in correlational and experimental designs, inductive qualitative methods are typically adopted for ethnographic exploration of a phenomenon among a sample population. As this study seeks to explore correlation as well as to identify attitudes toward a specific phenomenon occurring in ESL instruction, a mixed methods research model provides the optimal approach. Quantitative analyses were conducted in JASP used to generate descriptive statistics outlining trends via frequency distributions and to identify the directionality and strength of correlation between variables. Multiple regression provided a model for the outcome and predictor variables, which included demographics (age, gender, highest degree earned, years since degree was earned, employment status, years of experience, status as mono/bi/multi lingual, and frequency of participation in professional development), knowledge of translanguaging (measured by one quantitative and one qualitative survey item), and attitudes toward translanguaging (also measured by one qualitative and one qualitative survey item). Reliability was calculated through Cronbach's alpha, which was .71, falling within acceptable range (Carlson & Winquist, 2021).

The online survey administered through Survey Monkey was used to collect data from participants over a three-week survey period in the summer of 2022. The survey consisted of 17 total items including 13 closed-answer and four open-answer questions. The survey was conducted at eight community colleges in Illinois using snowball sampling (Parker, Scott, & Geddes, 2019). In this model, the survey was sent to program administrators with a request for them to forward the survey to the appropriate faculty within their departments. The total sample size after elimination of incomplete surveys

was 49. First, raw quantitative data was exported from the survey platform into Excel. The matrix Likert scale items contained within survey item number 13 were assigned values of 1 to 4, with 1 representing strongly disagree, 2 representing disagree, 3 representing agree, and 4 representing strongly agree. Next, correlational analysis was conducted to determine the strength and directionality of correlated variables. Correlation matrix plots provided visual representations of pairs demonstrating positive or negative correlations. In those cases in which a significant correlation was identified, multiple regression provided a model for the outcome and predictor variable(s). Open-answer responses to prompts were analyzed to determine themes in participant responses. While quantitative data relied on descriptive statistics to determine trends as well as regression to determine relationships between variables, written narrative responses provided insight into attitudes toward translanguaging (either positive or negative), an approach used in McMilan and Rivers (2011).

Results

Quantitative data indicated three statistically significant positive correlations were observed when using the significance threshold $p=<.05$ (Carlson & Winquist, 2021). Data indicated that status as a bilingual or multilingual speaker was significantly positively correlated to professional development activity $[r(5)=.32, p=.027]$, suggesting that bilingual and multilingual faculty are more involved in professional development than their monolingual colleagues. Status as a bilingual or monolingual speakers was also positively statistically significantly correlated to pre-existing knowledge of translanguaging $[r(5)=.288, p=.047]$, which indicates that those who have a greater understanding of a language other than English were more likely to have been familiar with the concept of translanguaging at the time of the survey. A positive, statistically significant relationship was also seen between degree of pre-existing knowledge of translanguaging and involvement in professional development activities $[r=.353, p=.014]$, suggesting that those who often participate in professional development were more likely to be familiar with translanguaging than their colleagues who were less active in professional development. Descriptive statistics paint a picture of the average survey participant:

- Female (79%)
- Adjunct faculty status (46.94%)
- MA TESOL holders (65.31%)
- 49.5 years old
- 13.7 years of full-time teaching experience
- 79.6% report knowing nothing or little about translanguaging
- 59.19% report their programs do not encourage first language (L1) use
- 63.27% believe the L1 is beneficial in learning a second language (L2)
- 63% report that their attitudes about L1 use have become more positive over time
- 33.33% learned about the concept of pedagogical translanguaging from coursework
- 36.73% are monolinguals or have only beginner proficiency in L2
- 81.63% incorporate L1 in class "sometimes" or "never"

- 53.06% are not interested in learning more or feel they know enough about translanguaging

Regression determined that years of experience, bilingual status, PD participation, and prior knowledge cannot be used to predict actual use of translanguaging. However, existing attitudes toward translanguaging positively predicted actual use of translanguaging, such that more positive attitudes toward translanguaging as a natural part of second language learning increased the actual use of translanguaging in the classroom. Existing attitude was the strongest predictor of actual use of translanguaging in the classroom, with a positive, one-unit increase in attitude resulting in .411 increase in actual use in the classroom. ANOVA analysis indicates that the r^2 value of .006 yields a statistically significant model. Likewise, two independent variables can be used to predict effect on a faculty's willingness to adopt translanguaging: participation in professional development and years of full-time teaching experience. While a one-unit increase in professional development involvement results in .393 increase in willingness to adopt translanguaging, a one-year increase in teaching experience results in a decrease in willingness to adopt translanguaging of .023. ANOVA analysis indicated that the r^2 value of .0026 yields a statistically significant model.

In qualitative, open-ended responses, it became evident that faculty's own experiences learning a second language provided a lens from which they viewed language acquisition. These responses demonstrated that while coursework, professional development, and independent research on the topic were important when learning about pedagogical translanguaging, those who were themselves language learners expressed familiarity with the concept by having experienced it firsthand. Instructors commented:
- "As a second language learner myself, I've always found it helpful to have some sort of explanation in English, my first language."
- "When I was learning Spanish in high school and college, I had a Spanish-English dictionary with me at all times and I was constantly comparing my English language knowledge to what I was learning in Spanish."
- "It (translanguaging) was beneficial for [my mother's] communication, and I see it currently with my students." (in reference to the instructor's mother learning English as a second language)

Other findings indicate that there is a pervasive lack of understanding about pedagogical translanguaging. As indicated in open-ended responses, the most widely held misconception was that translanguaging requires the instructor to share the students' L1(s) and to engage in some degree of instruction in each of the L1s represented in the classroom. While this sentiment was shared by many faculty members, bilingual instruction is not a necessary component of pedagogical translanguaging. On the contrary, it can be implemented by monolingual faculty utilizing a variety of strategies that do not assume proficiency in a second language. Other comments that illustrated this misconception include:
- Translanguaging is only beneficial "when the instructor speaks the students' language well enough to effectively communicate the concepts being taught."
- "With students from over 50 countries in our program, several languages are

spoken. I only know two languages, so I would not be able to incorporate most home languages in class."

In the qualitative responses, faculty also indicated a very strong preference for using translanguaging only in the lower levels, indicating the misconception that translanguaging at the advanced stages is less appropriate. On the contrary, Carroll and Sambolín Morales (2016) indicated that encouraging translanguaging at the advanced levels assisted students in engaging in more robust academic discussions and can encourage a more active role in class participation. Faculty tended to agree that use with beginners was warranted, but that when used in the advanced levels, use of L1 became a "crutch" and that "prolonged reliance on L1 would be "counterproductive." Another common misconception was that translanguaging can only be effective when more than one student in the classroom shares a common language. While pedagogical translanguaging may take the form of fluid transitions between languages amongst a group of students and faculty who share a common language, pedagogical translanguaging can also take place in linguistically diverse classrooms in which some or none of the students share a common language. Common faculty responses included the theme that translanguaging would not be appropriate in their ESL classrooms given the wide variety of languages represented by students. Faculty often voiced concerns about students feeling isolated or unable to participate during translanguaging activities if they did not speak the language spoken by the majority of students.

The most commonly stated strategy for incorporating translanguaging in the ESL classroom was translation. Translation was also commonly noted as a strategy to teach syntax and grammar, specifically at the advanced levels. To accomplish this, faculty encouraged students to compare and contrast structures and identify similarities and differences in expression and structure. Faculty noted the importance of translating grammar and syntax from the L1 to L2 to gain a deeper understanding of the similarities and differences between structure, grammar, and expression. Faculty often cited using translation in class to accomplish administrative tasks such as ensuring all students understand directions or instructions of an activity or assignment. Less frequently, faculty cited the strategy of having students share language and culture with the whole class. Many faculty members recognized the rich cultural and linguistic composition of their classes as an opportunity to introduce translanguaging through language and culture sharing. For example, faculty may ask students to "share L1 vocabulary with the class to learn/clarify vocabulary," or have students "share phrases in their native language…as a way of opening up a discussion on different cultures represented in the classroom." Faculty also reported asking students "to share features, idioms, saying from their language" to raise intercultural and interlinguistic awareness and to foster an inclusive classroom environment. Perhaps one of the most controversial but frequently mentioned strategies employed by faculty in the classroom was the instructor using an L1 during instruction, a strategy commonly used in bilingual environments but less so in more diverse ESL environments. Most importantly, this study paralleled others that demonstrated that despite ideological support of the concept of linguistic interdependence (applying L1 to aid in the acquisition of English), faculty still demonstrated resistance to implementing translanguaging strategies in the classroom, a finding first reported by

Fallas Escobar & Dillard-Paltrineri (2015). This common phenomenon presents a conundrum. Faculty may feel that their academic freedom to encourage L1 use is stifled by strict English-only policies (Burton & Rajendram, 2021). over 58 percent of faculty noted that their programs did not encourage students to reflect or use their L1 in the classroom.

Discussion

An understanding of the relationships between the study's variables provides a roadmap for administrators and faculty who wish to incorporate pedagogical translanguaging into their courses and/or programs. The findings of this study also signal that community college ESL faculty, on average, are not familiar with the concept of translanguaging. They believe L1 in language acquisition is important in learning a L2, yet there is a misalignment between ideology and practice as many do not actively incorporate opportunities for L1 transfer in their teaching methodologies. It also demonstrated that faculty have some degree of resistance to the term "translanguaging," perhaps because they perceive it to be synonymous with bilingual instruction. Dispelling the misconception that translanguaging requires bilingual instruction or that translanguaging can only occur in linguistically homogeneous classrooms is critical to gaining faculty support of the concept. As English-only philosophy is steeped in hundreds of years of US history, changing these antiquated attitudes will also be a gradual learning process. It remains clear from this study's findings that the most impactful steps programs can take to bolster faculty support for translanguaging are a) to instill in faculty the reality that L1 use is a natural part of language learning and b) to provide regular professional development. There are multiple ways to achieve these goals. One way in which ESL leaders can begin to shift the narrative to an additive approach to ESL instruction via translanguaging is by introducing the concept earlier, during MA TESOL training. The majority of the faculty participants in this study held MA TESOL degrees and had no knowledge of the concept, evidencing that it is not yet part of mainstream preparation for future ESL instructors. Secondly, professional development as sustained practice will keep faculty current and invested in the latest research and its implications for instruction. Combined, these two recommendations will produce well-informed ESL leadership who can disseminate the many benefits of translanguaging and advocate for an end to poor student achievement and progression in community college ESL. The overwhelming absence of courses addressing alternatives to English-only instruction is entrenched in MA TESOL curricula. In a review of curriculum at each of the five MA TESOL granting institutions in Illinois, none of the five programs required courses in bilingualism. Only two institutions offered elective courses in bilingualism, bilingual education methods and materials, and/or law and policies in language instruction. Without this introduction to bilingual education, graduate students are stripped of the opportunity to understand additive versus subtractive models of language instruction and are not encouraged to reflect regularly on how they can encourage a culturally reaffirming classroom environment. They are also oblivious to the groundbreaking work in bilingual K-12 that underpins pedagogical translanguaging. While students who are committed to learning about bilingualism relative to teaching ESL have the option to pursue cross-listed elective courses in other departments, such classes are not part of the core curriculum.

Resultantly, future ESL instructors find themselves unaware of new developments and the efficacy of alternative pedagogies to English-only at the end of their graduate programs. The preference for English-only is also present in admission requirements for Illinois MA TESOL programs. Two of the programs had no second language requirements for native English speakers. One program required just one semester of study of a language other than English, one required three semesters of a second language, and one required the equivalent of two years of foreign language study. All programs had clearly articulated guidelines for admission of non-native English speakers, however. Qualitative data collected in this study indicated that faculty often recognized the natural role L1 transfer plays in learning a second language through their firsthand experiences in studying a second or other language. Previous studies also point to the fact that bi/multilingual faculty have heightened awareness of the interplay of L1 and L2s (Ellis & Shintani, 2013). This study demonstrated that positive existing attitudes toward translanguaging was this single most significant variable impacting use of translanguaging in the classroom. Therefore, early exposure to the many benefits of translanguaging during the MA TESOL curriculum or in program-led professional development available to early career faculty may help faculty to develop positive attitudes toward translanguaging.

Of those respondents who reported having some familiarity with translanguaging, many reported learning about the concept in professional development activities such as conferences (29 percent). Additionally, previous studies have proven that formal, structured professional development in translanguaging does positively impact teachers' perceptions and understanding of the concept (Fernández Álvarez & Montes, n.d.; Gorter & Arocena, 2013; Menken & Sánchez, 2019). As such, programs that seek to incorporate a translanguaging approach to instruction are advised to prioritize robust professional development for all faculty. Bilingual faculty can promote the use of translanguaging by introducing the concept to their monolingual peers, leading internal professional development sessions, and/or by urging administration to reevaluate English-only policy. Institutional philosophies to professional development vary widely; some community colleges may impose mandatory professional development requirements for faculty with financial support for completing these requirements, whereas others may have no expectations and offer no support for attendance. In this study, overall, senior faculty expressed less interest in adopting pedagogical translanguaging than their less experienced colleagues. This finding suggests that those early career ESL educators with limited experience are most likely to be impacted by their professional development experiences. As such, programs should make a concerted effort to invest in and develop early career professionals who collectively tend to demonstrate more receptiveness to new pedagogical strategies that challenge the status quo.

To this end, programs should develop strategic plans that prioritize development by investing in professional memberships, sponsoring conference attendance and travel, hosting in- house development workshops, and fostering a culture of pedagogical inquiry amongst colleagues. Unfortunately, in periods of low enrollment and pandemic-related budget slashing, professional development is often one of the first "discretionary" expenses to be eliminated (Gappa, 1993). Rather than admit defeat in the face of

shrinking budgets, programs can implement cost-effective, creative solutions for providing valuable professional development. Those faculty with experience in translanguaging or incorporation of bilingual pedagogy in ESL may offer opportunities to have colleagues observe pedagogical translanguaging in action in the classroom or offer to mentor novice faculty (Borg, 2018). Improving faculty confidence through observation has been shown to increase faculty adoption of new classroom strategies and philosophies, and peer-led development is often well received (Borg, 2018). Simple departmental brown-bag sessions in which a common translanguaging article is discussed is recommended, and sessions in which faculty read an article about translanguaging and provide an informal presentation to their colleagues are free and foster a culture of inquiry (Borg, 2018). Faculty can also engage in directed reflection about how they might integrate translanguaging into their courses at the level at which they feel most comfortable (Borg, 2018). This may mean incorporating simple word walls for those who are less receptive to leading bilingual group projects presented in English for those who are more comfortable.

While bilingualism/multilingualism was not found to be a predictor of willingness to adopt translanguaging in this study, there was a statistically significant correlation noted between the variables. Faculty who supported translanguaging also shared that their rationale for their beliefs stemmed from their own language learning experiences. Similarly, other studies have established that bilingualism positively impacts faculty perceptions of translanguaging (Ellis, 2013; Prilutskaya, 2021). In considering professional development activities, it follows that faculty may benefit from periodic reminders of what it feels like to be a language learner, keeping in mind that 36.73% of survey participants reported being monolingual or having only a rudimentary understanding of a second language. Providing additional opportunities for ESL faculty to assume the role of students who are learning an unfamiliar language can in itself be a powerful professional development activity.

Hamman, Beck, and Donaldson (2018) provide faculty with a framework from which to approach the design of translanguaging activities. The acronym PIE provides the three principles of the framework: P (purposeful), I (inclusive), and E (enriching). Practical, easy-to-implement translanguaging strategies can be introduced by both bilingual and monolingual faculty. Some examples include:

- Reflection of vocabulary terms between languages and identifying common root origins, prefixes, suffixes, cognates, and false cognates.
- Taking notes in multiple languages.
- Planning activities that include input in one language and output in another.
- Using home language texts and videos to process content.
- Allowing use of bilingual dictionaries or translation websites and apps.
- Encouraging students teach words, phrases, and ideas in their home language
- Comparing/contrasting phonetics and syntax of languages.
- Grouping students according to home language for small group activities.
- Creating a word walls or vocabulary lists in English and the home language.
- Conducting research for class projects in the home language.
- Previewing content in the home language.

- Encouraging more proficient students to explain vocabulary and concepts to others in the home language (Celic & Seltzer, 2013; Mazak & Carroll, 2017).

Conclusion

The literature is replete with examples of ways in which an additive, translingual approach to ESL instruction can improve student outcomes in many contexts including K-12, EFL, and postsecondary. Additionally, findings from this study indicate that understanding of translanguaging and its incorporation into postsecondary ESL classes can be enhanced through early exposure to the concept and sustained professional development. This study confirmed that two independent variables can be used to predict a faculty's willingness to adopt translanguaging: participation in professional development and years of full- time teaching experience.

This study found a statistically significant correlation between bi/multilingualism and knowledge of translanguaging, though knowledge of a second language did not prove to be an effective predictor of either willingness to adopt translanguaging or of actual use of translanguaging in the classroom. This study did confirm, however, that faculty often rely on their own language learning experiences when considering how receptive they are to the concept of translanguaging. In this way, it can be determined that bi/multilingualism or, minimally, experience learning a second language, may assist faculty in understanding the value of L1 in language acquisition.

References

American Institutes for Research. (2018). *Serving English language learners in higher education: Unlocking the potential*. https://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/ED585543.pdf.

Auerbach, E. R. (1993). Reexamining English only in the ESL classroom. *TESOL Quarterly, 27*(1), 9-32.

Baker, C. (2011). *Foundations of Bilingual Education and Bilingualism*, 3rd ed. Multilingual Matters.

Borg, S. (2018). Evaluating the impact of professional development. *RELC Journal*, *49*(2), 195–216. https://doi.org/10.1177/0033688218784371

Brooks, F. & Donato, R. 1994. Vygotskyan approaches to understanding foreign language learner discourse during communicative tasks. *Hispania, 77*, 262-7.

Burton, J., & Rajendram, S. (2019). Translanguaging-as-resource: University ESL instructors' language orientations and attitudes toward translanguaging. *TESL Canada Journal*, *36*(1), 21–47. https://doi.org/10.18806/tesl.v36i1.1301

Canagarajah, S. (2011). Codemeshing in academic writing: Identifying teachable strategies of translanguaging. *The Modern Language Journal,* 95(3), 401–417. https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1540-4781.2011.01207.x

Carlson, K., & Winquist, J. (2021). *An introduction to statistics: An active approach to learning (3rd ed.). SAGE* Publications.

Carroll, K.S., & Sambolín Morales, A.S. (2016). Using university students' L1 as a resource: Translanguaging in a Puerto Rican ESL classroom. *Bilingual Research Journal, 39*(3-4), 248-262. https:/doi.org/10.1080/15235882.2016.1240114

Celic, C., & Seltzer, K. (2013). *Translanguaging: A CUNY-NYSIEB guide for educators.* https://www.cuny-nysieb.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/04/Translanguaging-Guide-March-2013.pdf.

Cenoz, J., & Gorter, D. (2021). *Pedagogical translanguaging.* Oxford University Press.

Collier, V., & Thomas, W. (2002). *A national study of school effectiveness for language minority students' long-term academic achievement.* Center for Research on Education, Diversity & Excellence Final Reports (University of California, Santa Cruz). University George Mason University.

Community College Research Center. (2019). *English learners and ESL programs in the community college: A review of the literature.* https://ccrc.tc.columbia.edu/media/k2/attachments/english-learners-esl-programs-community-college.pdf

Creese, A. & Blackledge, A. (2015). Translanguaging and identity in educational settings. *Annual Review of Applied Linguistics, 35*, 20-35.

Creswell, J. W. (2014). *Research design: Qualitative, quantitative and mixed methods approaches (4th ed.).* SAGE Publishing.

Cummins J. (2008). Teaching for transfer: Challenging the two solitudes assumption in bilingual education. In Hornberger, N.H. (Ed.), *Encyclopedia of Language and Education*. Springer. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-0-387-30424-3_116

Dirkwen Wei, D. (2013). The implementation of English-only policy in the tertiary EFL context in Taiwan. *Indonesian Journal of Applied Linguistics, 2*(2), 191- 203.

Ellis, R., & Shintani, N. (2013). *Exploring language pedagogy through second language acquisition research.* Routledge.

Fallas Escobar, C.F., & Dillard-Paltrineri, E. (2015). Professors' and students' conflicting beliefs about translanguaging in the EFL classroom: Dismantling the monolingual bias. *Revista de Lenguas Modernas,* 23, 301-328. https://doi.org/10.15517/RLM.V0I23.22355

Fernández Álvarez, M., & Montes, A. (n.d.). *Pre-service bilingual teachers' perceptions of translanguaging. A comparative study.* https://www.academia.edu/39727248/Pre_service_bilingual_teachers_perceptions_of_translanguaging_A_comparative_study

Gappa, J. (1994). *The invisible faculty: Improving the status of part-timers in higher education*. Jossey-Bass.

García, O., & Wei, L. (2014). *Translanguaging: Language, bilingualism and education.* Palgrave Macmillan. https://doi.org/10.1057/9781137385765

García, O., Johnson, S. I., & Seltzer, K. (2017). *The translanguaging classroom: Leveraging student bilingualism for learning.* Caslon.

Gorter, C. & Arocena, E. (2020). Teachers' beliefs about multilingualism in a course on translanguaging. *System*, 92. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.system.2020.102272

Grotjahn, R. (1987). On the methodological basis of introspective methods. In Faerch, C. & Kasper, G. (Eds.), *Introspection in second language research* (pp. 54–81). Multilingual Matters.

Hamman, L., Beck, E., & Donaldson, A. (2018) A pedagogy of translanguaging. *Language Magazine*, 36–39.

Hodara, M. (2015). The effects of English as a second language courses on language minority community college students. *Educational Evaluation and Policy Analysis, 37*(2), 243–270.

Hornberger, N., & Vaish, V. (2009). Multilingual language policy ad school linguistic practice: Globalization and English-language teaching in India, Singapore, and South Africa. *Compare: A Journal of Comparative and International Education, 39*(3), 305-320.

Lantolf, J. (2000). *Sociocultural theory and second language learning.* OUP Oxford.

Lewis, G., Jones, B., & Baker, C. (2012). Translanguaging: Developing its conceptualization and contextualization. *Educational Research and Evaluation, 31(*7), 655–670.

Menken, K., & Sanchez, M. (2019). Translanguaging in English-only schools: From pedagogy to stance in the disruption of monolingual policies and practices. *TESOL Quarterly, 53*(1). https://doi.org/10.1022/tesq.513

Mazak, C. M. (2017). Introduction: Theorizing translanguaging practices in higher education. In C. Mazak, & K. S. Carroll (Eds.), *Translanguaging in higher education: Beyond monolingual ideologies* (pp. 1–10). Multilingual Matters.

McMillan, B. A., & Rivers, D. J. (2011). The practice of policy: Teacher attitudes toward "English only." *System*, 39, 251–263. https://doi/org/10.1016/j.system.2011.04.011

Parker, C., Scott, S., & Geddes, A. (2019). Snowball sampling. In P. Atkinson, S. Delamont, A. Cernat, J.W. Sakshaug, & R.A. Williams (Eds.), *SAGE Research Methods Foundations.* https://doi.org/10.4135/9781526421036831710

Parmegiani, A. (2014). Bridging literacy practices through storytelling, translanguaging, and an ethnographic partnership: A case study of Dominican students at Bronx Community College. *Journal of Basic Writing, 33*(1), 23-51. https://www.jstor.org/stable/43858446

Prilutskaya, M. (2021). Examining pedagogical translanguaging: A systematic review of the literature. *Languages*, *6*(4), 180. https://doi.org/10.3390/languages6040180

Ramírez, J., Yuen, S.M., Ramey, D., & Pasta, D. (1991). *Longitudinal study of structured English immersion strategy, early-exit and late-exit transitional bilingual education programs for Language-Minority Children. Final Report. Volumes 1 and 2.* https://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/ED330216.pdf

Tatar, S. (2005). Classroom participation by international students: The case of Turkish graduate students. *Journal of Studies in International Education, 9*(4), 337–355.

Umansky, I.M., & Reardon, S.F. (2014). *Reclassification patterns among Latino English learner students in bilingual, dual immersion, and English immersion classrooms.* https://doi.org/10.3102/0002831214545110

INTERNATIONAL ESL ADULT LEARNERS' PERCEPTIONS OF PRIOR-EXPERIENCE-BASED INSTRUCTION

Fujuan Tan[1]

ABSTRACT: International higher education is growing in response to diversity, globalization, and internationalization. The US is a prime destination for international students, the majority of whom speak English as Second Language. Although research in adult education holds the use of prior experience in learning as foundational, little research has been done concerning its use for international higher education second language students. To fill this void, a qualitative study was conducted, in which six international English as a Second Language (ESL) higher education students studying at universities in a Southern state were interviewed to gather perceptions concerning the use of prior experience in their learning. Responses revealed that such use enhances learning in various ways, including personal growth, ESL improvement, and critical thinking. Moreover, students reported preferring its use as it makes learning richer and more enjoyable. This research suggests that those involved in instruction of international ESL higher education students should incorporate prior experience into learning to enhance the success of their education programs.

Keywords: International higher education; international adult learners, English as a Second Language (ESL), prior experience

International students have consistently comprised a substantial portion of the higher education student body in the US. For most of this population, English is not the primary language. Fostering a robust international higher education student population in this country is important and beneficial for a variety of interests in myriad ways. To accommodate and support this beneficial group, effective instructional techniques must be used to promote inclusion, academic learning and personal development, thus maximizing educational success. Benchmark theories in adult learning, socio-cultural learning and second language learning (Dewey, 1938; Diaz-Rico, 2012; Gay, 2018; Lindeman, 1961; Lohr & Haley, 2018; Mezirow, 1978) support the use of prior-experience-based instruction in optimizing the learning experience of international English as a Second Language (ESL) higher education students; However, current research lacks informative examination of these students' perceptions of the function and effects of such instruction. In an effort to help fill this gap, the researcher conducted a qualitative study, which was informed by and founded in adult learning theory, socio-cultural theory and second language theory to answer the following question: How do international adult ESL higher education students perceive the role of prior experience in their learning and instruction? Results inform best practices to maximize effective learning and positive learning experiences for international higher education students studying in the US and perhaps other countries, which ultimately fosters diversity, inclusion, and beneficial international relationships at various levels.

Literature Review

A review of the literature illuminates the importance of international higher education and the deficit in understanding the role such experiences play in ultimate outcomes.

---

[1] Morehead State University; f.tan@moreheadstate.edu

Diversity, globalization, and internationalization are interrelated concepts; all are affected by, and have an interest in, international higher education. Moreover, foundational concepts in learning, sociocultural, and second language theory point to the importance of prior-experience-based instruction in maximizing positive effects of the international higher education.

Diversity, Globalization, and Internationalization

Diversity is a concept that has been evolving for decades. It concerns the idea that people identify, and differ from each other, in myriad ways, including, but not limited to, ethnicity, age, ability, education, skills, social identity, gender identity and expression, sex, sexuality, political affiliation, religion and socio-economic status (Queensborough Community College, 2020; Smith, 2016), not to mention the value and effect on identity each factor is given by a given individual. Research shows that embracing diversity fosters – while resisting diversity impedes – social well-being (Tienda, 2013; Vos et al., 2016).

Globalization describes "the opening up and coming together of business, trade and economic activities between nations, necessitating the need for homogenization of fundamental political, ideological, cultural and societal aspects of life across different countries of the world" (Maringe & Foskett, 2010, p. 1). Such homogenization takes various subtle and unsubtle forms; English being adopted as the international language of business and science, and the integration of accepted international knowledge are more obvious examples (Altbach et al., 2016; Rumbly et al., 2012). Although criticized for pressuring the cooption of less economically powerful cultures (Altbach, 2016), globalization has been largely accepted as a permanent reality (Altbach & Knight, 2016).

Among its many interpretations, *internationalization* is an attempt to balance diversity and the homogeneity pushed in globalization; it mainly consists of various methods used in higher education and government to comprehend and manage globalization and its affects for maximum positive outcomes (Altbach et al., 2016). Within higher education, measures introducing and promoting international and intercultural concepts are infused into traditional areas of teaching, scholarship and service; they include, but are not limited to, internationalizing curriculum, cultivating international partnerships and relationships, developing programs and opportunities for study abroad, transnational research projects, and increasing the number of international students and faculty (Altbach et al., 2016; Foskett & Maringe, 2010; Rumbly et al., 2012). Spurred by globalization, internationalization has become a crucial practice for higher education institutions worldwide in order to remain competitive (Altbach et al., 2016; Maringe & Foskett, 2010).

International Higher Education in the US

As globalization expands, so does internationalization. The internationalization of higher education is a key feature of the twenty-first century, as more students seek education and other opportunities outside their home countries (Bound, et al., 2021; Egron-Polak &

Marinoni, 2022; Foskett & Maringe, 2010; Larnyo et al., 2021; Weber et al., 2008). As competition increases among institutions to accommodate such students and provide the desired learning and cultural experiences, the increasing number of international students, along with the resulting increases in the internationalization of curricula, exchange and cross-border programs, and transnational research projects, has become a prominent indicator of effective international higher education institutions (Deardorff et al., 2022; Foskett & Maringe, 2010).

The US enjoys a reputation for being one of the world's most advanced countries conducting cutting-edge research in multiple fields. Its higher education institutions benefit from, and strive to maintain, this repute, as it attracts relatively among the highest numbers of international students from a broadening pool of applicants (Adams et al., 2012; Cantwell, 2015; Chow, 2015; Rumbly et al., 2012). U.S. higher education institutions are making internationalization more prominent in their missions, which essentially involves graduating people ready to function in diverse and global environments. The resulting increase in international students boosts revenue and bolsters reputation, ultimately enhancing the viability of the organization and its affiliates (Adams et al., 2012; Cantwell, 2015).

The abovementioned trends persist. In the US, the international higher education student population exceeded one million for the first time in 2016 and continued to grow, setting an all-time high in 2019, with Chinese students routinely representing the largest segment (Ge et al., 2019; Institute for International Education, 2019). Although the coronavirus pandemic understandably disrupted growth, steady economic recovery and resumption of pre-pandemic travel and border policies arguably signify further expansion of international higher education and its student body.

Theoretical Framework

The use of prior experience is an established concept in adult education (Dewey, 1938; Lindeman, 1961; Mezirow, 1991; Wlodowski, 1999). Using students' prior experiences is an important and effective practice in culturally responsive education and aides in facilitating ESL instruction (Banks, 2001; Diaz-Rico, 2012; Miettinem, 2000), both of which are relevant and pertinent to the effective learning of international higher education students. This study grounds its theoretical framework in three groups of theories: Adult learning theory, socio-cultural theory, and second language theory.

Adult Learning Theory

John Dewey's (1938) concept of *the continuity of experience* postulates a person's past experiences shape how they develop moving into the future; thus "appropriate educational methods and materials" should be devised and used to provide positive direction to new learning (p. 21). This idea was embraced by numerous early theorists of adult education, such as Eduard Lindeman (1961), who identified "the learner's experiences" as " a living textbook" and "the resource of highest value in adult education" (pp. 9-10), Myles Horton, who founded the renowned Highlander Folk School

understanding that past experience is integral to the process of understanding new ideas (Peters & Bell, 2001), and Jack Mezirow, whose Transformative Learning Theory is based on adults' thinking critically about past experiences (Merriam et al., 2007; Mezirow; 1991). Prior experience is considered a critical tenet of adult education (Merriam et al., 2007), and experience-based learning is an established approach and a core concept of the field in the US. (Miettinem, 2000).

Socio-Cultural Learning Theory

Until the late twentieth century, adult learning theory focused on cognitive processes internal to the individual learner (Caffarella & Merriam, 2000). In the 1990s, this concept expanded to recognize and include the learners' social and cultural contexts. These newer theories emphasize that learning occurs within a social world (Gogoff, 1995), and that development of learning theory and practice should consider personal, interpersonal and community areas and processes, which are interrelated inseparably. Moreover, socio-cultural theory expands beyond the mere influences of physical location to include individual, institutional, social, cultural, and historical dynamics (Lave & Wenger, 1991; Alfred, 2003). Thus, "when a person learns, they construct their own knowledge and, learning according to what the already know, within the social, historical, and linguistic contexts of their learning" (Alfred, 2003, p. 245). In short, a socio-cultural perspective broadens the focus of learning from an individual action to one that inextricably occurs within a larger context (Caffarella & Merriam, 2000).

Second Language Learning Theory

Krashen's (2003) Input Hypothesis argues that language is acquired when learners understand a message containing "comprehensible input" (Diaz-Rico & Weed, 2006, p. 58). The major hypotheses of second language acquisition have supported the idea that learners acquire language when they receive comprehensible input in a low-anxiety situation and setting where knowledge is consciously learned (Krashen, 2003; Kweon & Kim, 2008; Mason and Krashen, 1997). Comprehensible input is most effectively reached as a goal by employing activity connected to learners' cultural backgrounds; so, prior experience plays a major role in obtaining comprehensible input, or language acquisition, and language learning topics and teaching strategies should incorporate it generously. Moreover, incorporating prior experience – particularly in terms of culture – into second language learning reduces stress, while increasing the learner's motivation and confidence. (Diaz-Rico & Weed 2006; Krashen, 1982).

Methodology

Including gaining expertise in a particular discipline, the general purposes of educating adult ESL international students can be reduced to personal growth, socio-cultural competence, and improvement of English language competency (Caffarella & Merriam, 2000; Daiz-Rico & Weed, 2006; Ferguson, 1998; Neito, 2002; Smoke, 1998). To answer the question "how do international adult ESL higher education students perceive the role of prior experience in their learning and instruction," this study employed qualitative

research methodology to collect the type of data desired (Creswell & Creswell, 2018; Saldaña, 2011). Specifically, after collecting demographic information, the researcher used a semi-structured interview process, asking six open-ended questions and additional clarifying or depth-adding follow-up questions to six adult ESL international higher education students to gather their perceptions on the role of prior experience in their learning and instruction.

The researcher used a convenience snowball technique (Noy, 2007) to obtain participants. The researcher approached one international ESL higher education student to which she had access. Once agreeing to participate, that student recruited another three participants, two of whom, in turn, each recruited one more. The six participants were graduate students at one of two different universities in a Southern U.S. state. Two of the participants were male; four were female. Five participants were Chinese, one (a female) was Japanese. Programs of study among the participants included education (two participants), business and economics (two participants) engineering, and computer science (one participant each). Interviews were conducted in-person (three) or using the WebEx video conferencing platform (three). Each interview lasted one to one and a half hours. Participants voluntarily consented to be interviewed, with their identities remaining confidential. Interviews were video-recorded and transcribed.

Prior to the interview process, the initial six interview questions were reviewed by two research colleagues and then revised based on feedback to ensure validity. Also, to ensure clarity and validity of responses, member-checking was employed (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). The researcher restated response during the interview to ensure accuracy of communication, and then sent transcriptions to each participant for verification prior to coding. Data were analyzed using constant comparison (Glaser & Straus, 1967), and coded using a three-step (open coding, axial coding and selective coding) process to identify themes (Neuman, 2006).

Findings

Interview responses identified six themes with respect to personal growth, socio-cultural competence, and improvement of English language competency to answer the research question, "how do international adult ESL higher education students perceive the role of prior experience in their learning and instruction?" According to the six themes, prior experience in learning does the following: (1) it fosters a sense of safety, confidence, and belonging; (2) it helps improve English communication skills; (3) it helps improve critical thinking, self-awareness, and personal growth; (4) it helps improve social skills; (5) it improves understanding of diversity and cross-cultural competence; and (6) it promotes student-centered learning. Each theme is examined further below.

Fostering a Sense of Safety, Confidence and Belonging

All six participants expressed that incorporating their prior life and learning experiences into current learning allowed them to feel safer and more comfortable in their learning environments as well as enhancing a sense of belonging within their learning

communities. They also felt more confident engaging in discussions and general communication. One participant, in her first year, reported feeling like an outsider in class and was "very silent" during her first month of studies. Then one of her instructors had students complete, reflect on, and later discuss, a learning styles inventory. In the discussion, she was able to talk about her reflections on the teacher-centered education she experienced in China in comparison to what she was experiencing in the US According to her, all were interested in the topic, and several of her peers asked questions, which generated a lively discussion. After that occasion, the participant felt a sense of belonging in class and was more confident speaking.

Another participant reported an early sense of fear in studying in a completely new environment which the use of prior experience helped alleviate. Her own words describe the situation.

> I felt . . . a little shamed when American students discussed topics based on American culture that I know very little about. They used some buzz words . . . that I did not know. When my own culture and background could be involved in the class discussions, I felt safer and much less stressed and more confident… because my limited English and different cultural background make it hard for me to be part of a conversation.

Another participant summed up generally, "to be able to use my prior experience in new learning in a different educational and cultural background seems to be a bridge, connection, and transition between old and new learning."

Still another expressed a specific example best described in his own words:

> In [an online] discussion on educational policy, I felt much better when a classmate replied to me and asked "what about China? What would you do with this situation in China?" I replied to her with a long post describing one of my experiences in China. Other classmates also did a heated discussion, including a discussion about the differences, the pros and cons. This experience help[ed] me gain my confidence in learning back. I began to love class because of this!

Helping Improve English Communication Skills

All participants expressed a general sense of communication skills improvement resulting from the use of prior experience in learning. Four specifically conveyed being able to express themselves better in speaking and writing English. One remembered particular writing assignments encouraging the use of individual "interesting life stories," which he credited with improving his English writing skills. Another participant reported getting better grades when able to incorporate prior experience into assignments and perceived his command of the English language to be improved. Relating to this theme, another had this to say:

I felt my writing skills were not bad at all when I elaborated [on] some marketing theories by using my past experience when I was a college student in Chinese college campus as examples. I felt like I had a lot to write, and I did get a good grade that gave me a lot of encouragement and confidence.

Still another relayed the following:

My speaking English . . . improved when everyone had to do a presentation of [their] own topic choice. I chose the topic of Chinese college student life and did a well-received presentation. I felt like vocabulary that I thought I did not know; I actually know . . . [it came] to my mind, I could express fluently. Besides, I had the most motivation to learn new vocabulary to prepare this presentation. It . . . felt good when I could present fluently in class.

Helping Improve Critical Thinking, Self-Awareness, and Personal Growth

All participants generally conveyed that the promotion of personal growth and development as a human being by prior experience in learning was substantial. As one participant recalled, "I feel like I significantly grew as an individual when there were opportunities allowing me to reflect on my past experiences and compare them with new experiences." As already seen in some responses described above, comparing past experiences with new ones in another country and culture prompts critical thinking on, and analysis of, past and present perspectives, actions, and practices at all levels. It also facilitates, if not elicits, critical comparison and examination of cultures. Regarding self-awareness one participant explained that "without those opportunities of looking back and reflecting on my past experience, I might not be able to come to the realization and understanding of myself as I am now." Another further explained, "I feel like the part I learned most is how I could reflect on my prior experience and know what I really want to be."

Helping Improve Social Skills

All participants also generally suggested that the use of prior experience in learning was important in improving social skills, as can perhaps also be seen in some of the abovementioned responses. One participant provided relatively rich detail on this point.

I am an introverted person, and I am from a different culture. I am always the silent one in class. The second semester I had this professor who seemed to be very interested in my culture and asked me questions like "what would you do in China?" I became very motivated in answering the questions by associating with my prior experience in China. In Chinese New Year, I volunteered to present about the customs of Chinese New Year in class. After that, it opened the door for me to enjoy talking with them and even become friends with a few of them.

Improving Understanding of Diversity and Cross-Cultural Competence

This theme overlaps with the third theme discussed above. It bears its own discussion for being broader in scope, reaching the benefit of others beyond the participants and international ESL higher education students. More precisely, participants indicated that using their prior experience in their learning benefited not only them, but their American counterparts and other classmates as well. These peers were able to gather information from another culture in a way otherwise inaccessible to them. They learned of another culture through first-hand experience form a representative of that culture. This would prompt, among those peers, comparisons between cultures and inform these comparisons with richer, more personal, information, as well as foster a more complete understanding of their own international counterparts. Moreover, regarding diversity, the exchanges described so far provide an understanding and appreciation for aspect of diversity that go beyond appearances. One participant summed up simply that the use of prior experience in the ways described and others, "improves all our cross-cultural competence."

Promoting Student-Centered Learning

This theme can also be seen in the interview responses discussed above. Directly addressing student-centered learning, one participant explained, the following:

> Utilizing my prior experience makes me think I am important in the learning process and having more voice in the learning process. I respect the instructors . . . interested in my culture, and always put me in the center of learning. This is different than my previous learning experience of teacher-centered education.

Another commented, "this is what I observed, that I feel like prior experience is more valued here than in China." Responses from all six participants indicate that they all value the use of prior experience and perceive that it is at least in agreement with student-centered learning, which they all prefer.

Discussion and Conclusion

Six international ESL higher education students studying at universities in a Southern state were interviewed to investigate the perceptions of international adult ESL higher education students on the role of prior experience in their learning and instruction. Responses revealed perceptions that the use of prior experience in these students' learning enhances learning in various important ways, including personal growth, as well as improved ESL, social, and cross-cultural competence, which is consistent with research in the literature (Alfred, 2003; Diaz-Rico, 2012; Gay, 2018; Krashen, 2003; Lindeman, 1961; Merriam et al., 2007; Mezirow, 1991; Wlodowski, 1999). Moreover, students value and prefer the use of prior experience in learning, perceiving the learning experience to be much richer, more comfortable, and more enjoyable. They also believe using prior experience improved their critical thinking skills. This research suggests that those involved in instruction of these students would do well to better accommodate their learning by incorporating prior experience into their education programs. Such

incorporation is easily done by simply adjusting or creating assignments (like the examples in responses described earlier) that prompt or allow students to think about, apply and express their prior experiences in classroom settings and other learning situations. Results are better learning (perceived and measured) on various levels, which should translate later into more engaged, effective, and productive international citizens of the world. The study is limited to students from two different nationalities studying at institutions in a U.S. southern state. Future research should expand to international students from more countries and cultural backgrounds.

References

Adams, T., Leventhal, M., & Connelly, S. (2012). International student recruitment in Australia and the United States. In C. E. Kasworm, A. D. Rose, & J. M. Ross-Gordon (Eds.), *Handbook of adult and continuing education* (pp. 399-416). SAGE.

Alfred, M. V. (2003). Sociocultural contexts and learning: Anglophone Caribbean immigrant women in U.S. postsecondary education. *Adult Education Quarterly*, *53*(4), 242. https://doi-org.msu.idm.oclc.org/10.1177/0741713603254028

Altbach, P. (2016). Patterns of higher education development. In M. Bastedo, P. Altbach, & P. Gumport (Eds.), *American higher education in the twenty-first century* (pp. 191-211). John Hopkins University Press.

Altbach, P., Beisberg, L., & Rumbley, L. (2016). Tracking a global academic revolution. In P. Altbach (Ed.), *Globalization and internationalization in higher education* (pp. 15-28). Johns Hopkins University Press.

Altbach, P., & Knight, J. (2016). The internationalization of higher education. In P. Altbach (Ed.), *Globalization and internationalization in higher education* (pp. 105-120). Johns Hopkins University Press.

Banks, J. A. (2001). Multicultural education: Characteristics and goals. In J. Banks & C. Banks (Eds.), *Multicultural education: Issues and perspectives* (pp. 3-30). John Wiley & Sons, Inc.

Bound, J., Braga, B., Khanna, G., & Turner, S. (2021). The globalization of postsecondary education: The role of international students in the US higher education system. *Journal of Economic Perspectives*, *35*(1), 163–184. https://doi-org.msu.idm.oclc.org/10.1257/jep.35.1.163

Caffarella, R., & Merriam, S. B. (2000). Linking the individual learner to the context of adult learning. In A. L. Wilson, & E. R. Hayes (Eds.), *Handbook of adult and continuing education* (pp. 55-70). Jossey-Bass.

Cantwell, B. (2015). Are international students cash cows? Examining the relationship between new international undergraduate enrollments and institutional revenue at public colleges and universities in the US. *Journal of International Students*, *5*(4), 512-525. https://doi.org/10.32674/jis.v5i4.412

Chow, P. (2015). What international students think about US higher education. *International Higher Education*, *65*, 10–12. https://doi.org/10.6017/ihe.2011.65.8568

Creswell, J., & Creswell, J. D. (2018). *Research design: Qualitative, quantitative, and mixed methods approaches* (5th ed.). Sage.

Deardorff, D. K., Wit, H. D., Leask, B., & Charles, H. (2022). *Handbook of International Higher Education* (2nd ed.). STYLUS.

Dewey. J. (1938). *Experience and education*. The Macmillan Company.

Diaz-Rico, L. (2012). *A course for teaching English language learners* (2nd ed.). Pearson.

Diaz-Rico, L. T. & Weed, K. Z. (2006). *The crosscultural, language, and academic development handbook*. Pearson Education, Inc.

Egron-Polak, E., & Marinoni, G. (2022). Internationalization of higher education. In D. K. Deardorff, H. de Wit., B. Leask, & H. Charles (Eds.), *The handbook of international higher education* (2nd ed.) (pp. 75-94). Stylus Publishing.

Ferguson, P. (1998). The politics of adult ESL literacy: Becoming politically visible. In T. Smoke (Ed.), *Adult ESL: Politics, pedagogy, and participation in classroom and community programs* (pp. 3-15). Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, Inc.

Foskett, N., & Maringe, F. (2010). The internationalization of higher education: A perspective view. In F. Maringe & N. Foskett (Eds.), *Globalization and internationalization in higher education* (pp. 305-318*)*. Continuum.

Gay, G. (2018). *Culturally responsive teaching* (3rd ed.). Teacher's College Press.

Ge, L., Brown, D., & Durst, D. (2019). Chinese international students' experiences in a Canadian university: Ethnographic inquiry with gender comparison. *Journal of International Students, 9*(2), 582–612. https://doi.org/10.32674/jis.v0i0.272

Glaser, B., & Strauss, A. (1967). *The discovery of grounded theory*. Aldine Publishing.

Institute for International Education. (2019). *Open Door fast facts.* Retrieved April 11, 2021, from http://www.iie.org/opendoors

Krashen, S. (1982). *Principles and practice in second language acquisition.* Pergamon.

Krashen, S. (2003). *Explorations in language acquisition and use.* Heinemann.

Kweon, S., & Kim, H. (2008). Beyond raw frequency: Incidental vocabulary acquisition in extensive reading. *Reading in a Foreign Language*, *20*(2), 191-215. Retrieved from http://nflrc.hawaii.edu/rfl/

Larnyo, E., Dai, B., Nutakor, J. A., Ampon-Wireko, S., Appiah, R., Larnyo, A., Akey-Torku, B., & Nkrumah, E. N. K. (2021). Assessing the impact of social media use on everyday emotion in health crises: A study of international students in China during COVID-19. *Healthcare (Basel)*, *9*(8), 1011. https://doi.org/10.3390/healthcare9081011

Lave, J., & Wenger, E. (1991). *Situated learning: Legitimate peripheral participation*. Cambridge University Press.

Lindeman, E. (1961). *The meaning of adult education.* Harvest House Ltd. (Original work published in 1926).

Lohr, K. D., & Haley, K. J. (2018). Using biographical prompts to build community in an online graduate course: An adult learning perspective. *Adult Learning*, *29*(1), 11-19. http://doi.org/10.1177/1045159517735597

Maringe, F. & Foskett, N. (2010). Introduction: Globalization and universities. In F. Maringe & N. Foskett (Eds.), *Globalization and internationalization in higher education* (pp. 1-16). Continuum.

Mason, B. and Krashen, S. (1997). Extensive reading in English as a Foreign Language. *System, 25*(1), 91-102. https://doi.org/10.1016/S0346-251X(96)00063-2

Merriam, S. B., Caffarella, R. S., & Baumgartner, L. M. (2007). *Learning in adulthood: A comprehensive guide* (3rd ed.). Jossey-Bass.

Mezirow, J. (1978). *Education for perspective transformation: Women's re-entry programs in community college*. Teachers College Press.

Mezirow, J. (1991). *Transformative dimensions of adult learning*. Jossey-Bass.

Neuman, W. L., (2006). *Social research methods: Qualitative and quantitative approaches* (6th ed.) Allyn and Bacon.

Noy, C. (2007). Sampling knowledge: The hermeneutics of snowball sampling in qualitative research. *I. J. Social Research Methodology*, *11*(4). 327-344. http://doi.org/10.1080/13645570701401305

Peters, J., & Bell, B. (2001). Horton of Highlander. In P. Jarvis (Ed.), *Twentieth century thinkers in adult and continuing education* (2nd ed.) (pp. 243-264). Stylus Publishing.

Queensborough Community College. (2020). *Definition for diversity*. Retrieved June 26, 2020, from https://www.qcc.cuny.edu/diversity/definition.html

Rumbley, L., Altbach, P., & Reisberg, L. (2012). Internationalization within the higher education context. In D. K. Deardorff, H. de Wit, J. D. Heyl, & T. Adams (Eds.), *The Sage handbook of international higher education* (pp. 3-26). Sage.

Saldaña, J. (2011). *Fundamentals of qualitative research.* Oxford University Press.

Smith, D. (2016). The diversity imperative: Moving to the next generation. In M. Bastedo, P. Altbach & P. Gumport (Eds.), *American higher education in the twenty-first century* (pp. 375-400). John Hopkins University Press.

Smoke, T. (Ed.). (1998). *Adult ESL: Politics, pedagogy, and participation in classroom and community programs*. Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, Inc.

Tienda, M. (2013). Diversity ≠ inclusion: Promoting integration in higher education. *Educational Researcher, 42*(9), 467-475. http://doi.org/10.3102/0013189x13516164

Vos, M., Çelik, G., & Vries, S. D. (2016). Making cultural differences matter? Diversity perspectives in higher education. *Equality, Diversity and Inclusion: An International Journal, 35*(4), 254-266. doi:10.1108/edi-11-2015-0092

Weber, L.E., & Duderstadt. J. (2008). *The Globalization of Higher Education.* Economica.

PERSPECTIVES ON THE TRANSITION OF LEARNERS FROM ADULT GENERAL EDUCATION TO COLLEGE

Marie (Aurélie) Thériault, Ph.D.[1]

ABSTRACT: This article examines the transition of adult learners from adult general education to a college program. The ethnographic inquiry methodology used for this research relies on Long's theoretical model which postulates three different levels of dimensions in adult education (1989) and on Bélanger's lifelong learning model (2011). On this rarely-addressed subject, it engages the expertise of the field in a co-construction process and from an adult education perspective. The psychological, pedagogical, sociological issues (Long, 1989) that are at play show the significant commitment adult learners have to make to further their education, and the reconstructive path they have chosen to facilitate their social insertion. The need to create a bridge between Adult General Education and the college environment is posed as a way to support the educational emancipation of adults in Québec society.

Keywords: learners, adult general education, college transition, educational issues, cross perspectives

In 2016-2017, out of the 65,565 individuals who obtained their High School Diploma (HSD) in Québec, 8,993 came from Adult General Education (AGE). In contrast, out of the 67,602 individuals who obtained their HSD[2] in 2020-2021, only 4,995 came from AGE (Institut de la statistique du Québec [ISQ], 2022). This decrease in absolute numbers follows the downward trend in overall AGE attendance observed in recent years: in 2016-2017, 181,819 individuals attended AGE, compared to 159,044 in 2021 (ISQ, 2022). In addition, we see an aging of the learning population during this period, with the attendance rate of those aged 25 and over increasing compared to that of those aged 24 and under. The curve for 25 and over has indeed been on a steady rise since 2015, with 24 and under declining: from 50%-50% in 2015, numbers reached 57%-43%, respectively, in 2020 (Institut de coopération pour l'éducation des adultes, 2022). Interestingly, the majority of adults enrolled in AGE are in basic training (Thériault, 2019). We therefore see two trends: first, the aging of the adult learning population; and secondly, the lower rate of HSD attainment in AGE. (Note that these figures would require targeted interpretation.)

Few adults from AGE decide to pursue a college education in the regular sector. In 2020-2021, only 1,876 AGE graduates, out of a total of 71,566, applied for admission through the Service régional des admissions du Montréal métropolitain (SRAM) (SRAM, 2021). Their admission rate was 74.7%, compared to 91.3% amongst students coming from the youth sector.

Ever since its inception in 1967, the mission of Québec's CEGEP[3] has been at once social and pedagogical. Besides bridging the gap between high school and university (two-years programs), it provides also professional training (three-years programs) to those wishing

---

[1] Associate Professor, Département de psychopédagogie et d'andragogie, Faculté des sciences de l'éducation, Université de Montréal. Email: marie.theriault@umontreal.ca

to enter the workforce earlier. In Québec, this college system is public, and access is free. The modern-day CEGEP has replaced the classical colleges of yore, which were essentially elitist. The fact that CEGEPs are disseminated all over Québec has enabled young students from the farthest reaches of the province to access college-level education. The CEGEP model also plays a crucial transitional role in the educational and social insertion of adults and young adults, including through continuing education. In the present article, the term "CEGEP" thus refers the notion of college from a post-secondary and pre-university standpoint.

General Purpose of the Research

This study's aim was to understand the psychological, pedagogical, and sociological components (Long, 1989) resulting from the transition of learners from AGE to CEGEP. Stemming from a cross-sectional and systemic perspective, the study elicited the participation of AGE stakeholders (a Principal, a Vice-Principal, a teacher, and a Guidance Counselor), as well as that of seven learners (five women, two men). In the course of this study, we have gathered statistical data on the HSD attainment rate in AGE, on the nature of school attendance in this order of education, and on the number of AGE graduates who have enrolled in CEGEP in the Montréal area (research location) over the past six years (research period). These figures reveal that such a transition remains marginal. Of interest were the reasons for enrolling (the "why"), the characteristics of the transition itself (the "how") and the programs students have chosen (the "where"), taking into account the educational background and life experiences of the adult learners (their intrinsic ethno-pedagogical path), as well as the psychological, pedagogical, and social needs associated with their transition to collegial studies (Long, 1989; Thériault, 2019). The emphasis is placed here on the importance of understanding the links between the learners' educational and life paths, their pedagogical paths in AGE, academic perseverance, the transition to college, and social insertion – the notion of "path" being defined here as a way of experiencing the transition into and educational specificities of the college environment, as it logically follows the pattern of previous paths. This article discusses the dimensions.

Research Questions

The research questions were as follows:
1.   What are the academic paths, life paths, and characteristics of AGE learners who have persevered, gotten their HSD, and pursued their studies at the college level?
2.   What made them decide to go to college, and how is their transition going?
3.   What difficulties have they experienced in this academic context, and what have they done to overcome them?

Research Objectives

The general research objective was to analyze, on a psychological, pedagogical, and sociological levels, the academic paths, life paths and characteristics of AGE learners who enrolled in CEGEP just before obtaining their HSD (or DES). Four sub-objectives

were derived from this general objective (Thériault, 2019): 1) identify the elements explaining the success of adults in AGE, as well as the difficulties they experienced and the means that were implemented to overcome these difficulties; 2) identify existing links between AGE pedagogy, obtaining the HSD (or DES), and the reasons why AGE students go on to college; 3) articulate the potential obstacles adult learners might face in their transition to college; 4) describe this transition. Research followed a two-pronged approach that: 1) considered a perspective based on the knowledge of learners; and 2) considered a cross-sectional perspective based on the knowledge of educational and pedagogical interveners.

Conceptual Framework

This study used an ethnographic method, adapted to the context of adult education, based on Long's theory, related in Carré and Moisan's to self-training theory (2002) and on Bélanger's andragogical model (2011). These analyze adult learning from three specific angles, taken from their understanding of Long's theoretical model (1989). The psychological angle takes into account academic and life goals, expressed here as the adult learners' wish to control their path and transition from AGE to CEGEP, with respect to their aspirations. The pedagogical angle takes into account the educational perspective, expressed here as the learners' desire to control the components of their learning project (place of learning, duration of studies, academic and support resources, negotiating the various aspects of adult life). The sociological angle takes into account education as a social fact, namely here the ability to control education as an element of society which adults depend on, and which they may or may not master in view of their choices and capacity to "self-direct."

The nature of the ethno-pedagogical paths study participants have explained or analyzed is based on factors linked to these three aforementioned aspects: the psychological dimension (motivation, desire to succeed, self-esteem, the need for normalcy); the pedagogical dimension (the teacher/student relationship, achieving academic goals, the availability of resources); and the sociological dimension (programs, inner workings of the institution, transition to college, support measures, social insertion). Each of these dimensions is of scientific interest: the psychological angle allows us to draw precise ethno-pedagogical portraits; the pedagogical angle informs us on the experiential differences between Adult Education Center and CEGEP; and the sociological angle enables us to follow student progress, and informs us on their academic perseverance and social and educational insertion (Thériault, 2017).

Method

Research was conducted between 2016 and 2019, in an Adult Education Center located in the Greater Montréal Metropolitan area. It was deployed epistemologically through written and/or oral ethnographic surveys which, in our context, rested on the relationships between informants and on the investigator and her team. Our goal was to obtain a contrast of the perspectives of both adult education stakeholders and adult learners, through the chosen ethnographic process (Izard and Lenclud, 2000; Roberge, 1991). Life

story interviews were also used as a technique to better understand the intrinsic characteristics of adults, and it has proven useful in its capacity to produce ethno-pedagogical narratives (educational and life paths; Thériault, 2015). In all, ten key informants participated in the co-construction process: seven adult learners (four women, two men) who were completing their Secondary V (Grade 12) and transitioning to college; and four AGE pedagogical interveners (Principal, Vice-Principal, first-language French teacher, Guidance Counselor). Five questionnaires, designed by the researcher, were used for the survey, four of them being aimed at adult learners and one at the pedagogical experts. The research team did observations (the author has more that 20 years of experience teaching adults in public school), gathered statements from the participants, they shared their field notes. The synthesis of the process has been conducted by the researcher's team, the informants themselves and me the researcher. The ethnographic approach was addressed in contrasting ways, using the same kind of protocol, to both adults and experts.

Participating adult learners were followed during two periods: "Year 1" goes up to the end of their studies in AGE; "Year 2" spans the time of their insertion into a college program, including transition time. Long's model (1989) was applied in context to construct the questionnaires.

Questionnaires Aimed at Adult Learners

These four questionnaires were designed (Thériault, 2017) to draw out narratives on the academic background and personal life (ethno-pedagogical paths) of the learners we interviewed. The questions were also designed to gain information on academic perseverance and the transition to post-secondary education. Emphasis was placed on the nature and quality of the pedagogical relationship in these education settings, on the transition to college, and on the perceptions of learners regarding their social insertion or their psychological, pedagogical and social needs. The results of these questionnaires are not included in the present article.

Questionnaire Aimed at AGE Interveners

The fifth questionnaire, *Questionnaire destiné aux expertes et experts pédagogiques*, consists of 20 questions divided into three blocks that cover the three dimensions of Long's model (1989). Block 1 focuses on the AGE environment: student paths, social insertion, academic perseverance. Block 2 deals with the pedagogical relationship at the AGE, student perseverance, and academic success. Block 3 focuses entirely on the transition from AGE to college. The goal of this questionnaire is to document the perspectives of adult education stakeholders as to the differences between AGE and CEGEP. The key results found in this article were drawn from this questionnaire.

Results

This article focuses on the perspective of pedagogical experts: how do they apprehend the learners' transition to college. The ethnography collected with the learners has been

indeed published previously (Thériault, 2017 and 2019). What follows is consequently the synthesis of oral ethnographic interviews conducted with educational experts on the subject of the transition from adult education to college, which is a crucial one in the lives of many adult learners. Results are articulated in three parts: 1) the role of AGE; 2) Learner paths and profiles; and 3) the transition to CEGEP. This synthesis has been realised by the team and is the result of an in-depth comprehension of the issues regarding the learners' transition to college, also a path of reconstruction for them.

The Role of AGE

The Principal we interviewed sees AGE as a bridge that students can cross to achieve realistic goals. "Realistic", because sometimes it requires of them to reassess their initial aspirations and objectives. It is indeed a journey of learning, but also of acceptance. She sees support and social insertion as the cornerstones of AGE, as these are the elements that will enable learners to play a role in society, and to feel that their contribution is valued. The Guidance Counselor reports that, upon arriving in AGE, learners fill out a questionnaire where they identify obstacles to academic success. Monetary concerns, the need to balance out school and work are common negative factors. Other obstacles are despondency, disconnection, stress, health issues, and an unfavorable home environment. The questionnaire also asks students what motivates them to further their education, beyond simply getting their HSD.

The Vice-Principal (VP) believes for his part that individualizing support and humanizing approaches are two essential components of AGE's mission of investing in the future and in social development. He maintains that the contribution of everyone at the Adult Education Center is necessary to achieve this mission. The VP also believes that, in the current context of labor shortages and of an aging population, actions must be taken to invest even more in adult learners, as AGE does not pertain only to their professional insertion, but also to their social integration. When AGE administrators, professional personnel and teaching staff put forth these values, they contribute to the creation of a fairer, more modern and equitable society. The VP notes that adult education attracts many young students who have good motivation and no learning difficulties or disabilities, as well as others who, in spite of such difficulties, manage to overcome these obstacles and to succeed.

The Principal points out that AGE is the target of many negative misconceptions, namely that it is purely an environment for students who have failed at school. She says that some parents are ashamed to send their child to adult education, and that they may even convince them not to enroll. The Guidance Counselor we interviewed maintains that colleges also adhere to these preconceived notions, thinking that AGE is for weak students and that classes there are easier than in the regular sector. College teachers are not necessarily conscious of the issues AGE learners have to deal with, says the Counselor, and because they can have up to 40 students per class, they can't personalize their teaching or take into account each student's strengths and weaknesses, as is the case in AGE.

Learner Paths and Profiles

According to the Guidance Counselor, only about 30% of all AGE students earn their HSD within the year, and over 50% of them don't finish secondary school (high school) or won't have access to some other type of training. As for the Principal, while she recognizes that cases and experiences vary greatly, she maintains that adult learners share academic characteristics that can be associated with an intermittent path through the regular sector, one that's punctuated by significant learning difficulties. The VP specifies that while some learners are sent to AGE via the Québec Labor Ministry or Ministry of Immigration, there are others who have to work for a living, and a few who are already in CEGEP but need additional high school credits to get their college degree.

The Principal says that many young students have a challenging start at the Adult Education Center. They arrive there on October 1st straight out of regular high school, often at the insistence of their parents. This sudden transition is a shock for them, as it does not give them time to reflect on what field they could get into, assuming they don't go into higher education. Some drop out and come back numerous times, sometimes up to 15 to 20 times. They do this for various reasons: a difficult, unsupportive family environment; financial hardships; having to hold down a job; the many responsibilities of motherhood; learning disabilities; lack of organizational skills; drug problems, mental health issues; cultural pressures; and so on. The youngest in the AGE cohorts may have serious problems linked to the law, criminality, psychological and family issues, and an overall lack of support. But what are the deepest pedagogical causes of these dropouts? What can be done to convince pedagogic stakeholders to become more interested in their adult learners' previous academic paths, in the circumstances of their lives, to convince them to follow more closely the state and progress of these students? If at the institutional or social levels there are limits that inhibit such an endeavor, then we must use our ingenuity (perhaps through what one might call "creative misconduct") to go beyond the framework of individualized teaching in order to foster a new kind of learning, one anchored in a more dynamic pedagogy, in information and communication technologies, and in social media. (In regards to this, the VP notes that AGE lags far behind, as it's not given the means to appropriate and use such tools.) The Principal, on her part, maintains that individualized pedagogy is a must in teaching AGE students because of the frequency at which they drop out and return. More specifically, she speaks of a "diversified teaching", one that would require teachers to adapt to the situation and specificities of each student. But individualized teaching is both a facilitator and a barrier to success: a facilitator for the adult learner who is self-reliant; a barrier for those who are not and who hide their difficulties because they are ashamed of them. Thankfully, as the Guidance Counselor points out, the AGE environment facilitates both socio-professional insertion (integration into the job market) and social insertion (integration into society).

The Principal asserts that the quality of the pedagogical relationship plays a role in the learners' progress as, "for students, this is an emotional link, often the only social link they will share with another person during the course of the day" ([p. 17, Field Notes, 2017]). Some teachers are more skilled than others at building this kind of rapport with their students. The VP wonders if a relationship of trust and support can truly develop

between an adult learner and his or her teacher. Certain factors, such as the age gap and the difference in academic experience, can create an insurmountable distance between them. The Teacher, on the other hand, sees the teacher/student relationship as a key ingredient in academic perseverance. Mutual trust can be achieved through open communication, and through understanding the learner's life experiences and academic background. She believes that beyond the support of family and friends, the pedagogical, psychosocial, and counseling resources that are offered to learners have a positive impact on their ability to persevere and succeed. Interdisciplinary interventions are essential to this end: teachers, counselors, doctors and social workers must collaborate, and institutions must have the necessary human and financial resources at their disposal so they can maintain these services.

Learner profiles have changed over time in Québec. In the 1990s, new government programs brought a younger clientele to AGE, one marked by precarious academic backgrounds, learning disabilities, and a slew of seldom-before-seen psychosocial issues including drug addiction, involvement in bad social circles, and the inability to move on from the old educational system. Today, financial instability is an issue, especially among young people and single mothers. Those who have a job and work long hours often have to miss classes. Mental health problems are on the rise, and as the Principal points out, resources in physical and mental health and social services are much scarcer in AGE than in the regular youth sector, with a glaring lack of nurses, psychologists, and remedial teachers. The VP says his center doesn't have the means to hire mental health specialists, and that they only have one social worker on-site. Still, according to him AGE must adapt in the face of a younger population with changing profiles. Thankfully, community-based organizations can support AGE adults who want to pursue vocational training and/or post-secondary education, and AGE itself remains open to learners with complex educational paths.

Mastery of the official language is another significant element. For a young person or adult of immigrant background, linguistic issues can hinder academic success – and as the Counselor points out, eventually compromise their transition from AGE to CEGEP. The VP notes that learners from immigrant families can face challenges even if they do not experience difficulties at home, as they must adapt to the way education is carried out in Québec as well as to local culture. Having said that, most AGE students come from underprivileged backgrounds, with very few coming from private schools.

The Principal considers that perseverance and success in AGE, as well as failure for that matter, rest essentially on the individual himself. Setting financial goals and aspiring to a worthwhile profession are essential ingredients of learner perseverance and motivation. The Counselor also deems it important for students to set goals and timelines for themselves, adding that individuals who are more stable psychologically tend to be more organized, have better relationships with teachers, and find it easier to stay motivated. For women, being the head of a single-parent family contributes to motivation. Conversely, lack of self-esteem or confidence in one's abilities thwarts success.

Transition to CEGEP

The Guidance Counselor notes that very few adult learners from AGE move on to CEGEP. According to the Principal and Vice-Principal, out of 100 students, only 35 to 40 graduates at the end of the year, and out of those between 10% and 15% will go to CEGEP, 25 to 30% will enroll in vocational training, and 10% will opt for semi-skilled trades. Only one or two of these 100 AGE alumni will make it all the way to university.

Most students have confirmed literacy skills [completed Secondary III or IV (Grade 10 or 11)] when they enter AGE. Adults enrolling with lower levels [Secondary I or II, or pre-secondary (Grade 8 or 9 or pre-high school education)] see their chances of accessing CEGEP compromised since they will have to invest years of effort before they can hope to make the transition. So, the lower the starting level, the more difficult it is to obtain the HSD, as students tend to get discouraged, seek a shorter academic path, or straight out abandon their studies to work full time. The Teacher notes that getting their HSD encourages students to go to CEGEP, but that it is essential that the support and resources that were available to them in AGE be maintained in college, and remain easily accessible. In her estimation, financial considerations weigh heavy in a person's decision to go or not to go to CEGEP. After getting their HSD, many lose government student aid, which negatively impacts on their capacity or desire to further their education. Those who need a job with a regular paycheck to survive are also less likely to continue. The Teacher also names drug consumption, along with social and family pressures, as having a negative impact on the transition from AGE to CEGEP – or likelihood thereof.

The Vice-Principal notes that some adult learners transition to vocational training right after finishing their Secondary III or IV (Grade 10 or 11), while others do so after getting their HSD. In both cases, the goal is to get ahead, to build a life for themselves. Adults who struggle in education often seek to acquire a semi-skilled trade, though the Guidance Counselor says he tends to direct AGE learners towards technical college programs such as nursing or X-Ray technology. The Counselor follows the students' admission files and gives colleges "additional information" on AGE applicants, but maintains he's no longer able to follow up on AGE graduates once they enter college.

The VP says the length of time students have to adjust and adapt to the collegial environment is key to a successful transition – AGE learners can indeed feel a little disoriented when first entering CEGEP. In addition, the obstacles encountered in AGE don't just disappear the minute they enter college: learners often face administrative problems and issues with student loans, all while they have to acclimatize to their new teachers, classes and surroundings. Adult learners have told the VP they find the academic structures of CEGEP much different than those of AGE, with college imposing tighter deadlines and heavier workloads – the Counselor finds the latter to be a common stressor in the questionnaire he gives students to fill out. And while in AGE students are supported and supervised, colleges don't monitor attendance or assiduousness. Teacher and Counselor both speak to the differences in schedules, teaching, and workload that await AGE students once (or if) they get to college. They also deem it important for them to learn organizational skills and master new learning tools.

The Principal nevertheless believes that AGE adults negotiate the transition to CEGEP more skillfully than young people straight out of secondary school because they have had to overcome more difficulties to get there. Here, maturity enhances the adult learners' resilience, helping them cope with financial troubles, work-related issues, and in the reconstruction of their self. The VP also cites maturity as a key factor in the success of adult learners in college, as their years in AGE have helped them develop strong work ethics and a will to give their best effort – something he's observed for instance in single mothers, who are often determined to get their college diploma in spite of the many hurdles they face in doing so. As for the Teacher, she finds college enables students to project themselves into the future. The desire to eventually have a good job or career, she says, is a major factor of perseverance for AGE graduates entering college. But if the resilience adult learners have acquired throughout their life may help them negotiate some of the negative impact college could have on them (facing prejudice, the judgement of others, social labeling), the adversity they have experienced in the past may inhibit their capacity to persevere and succeed in post-secondary studies.

On this subject, the Principal reports that a new program linked to a reform of the youth sector has been making it more complicated for adult learners to progress, especially for those in great difficulty. Besides obtaining the HSD, several new requirements have been added, and they are so exacting that they stand as a major obstacle to the transition from AGE to higher education, whether it be CEGEP or university. In her opinion, everything is geared to steer a certain AGE clientele towards short, semi-specialized trade programs, this at the expense of a more universal or diversified basic education. As for the VP, he explains that about twenty years ago some CEGEPs and Adult Education Centers had reached agreements to help students transition to higher education, and to demystify college-level requirements. Universities that were recruiting AGE graduates had done the same. But today, there are no more agreements of this sort between CEGEPs and Adult Education Centers. To this end, the VP suggests five possible initiatives that could facilitate the transition of learners from AGE to college: 1) invite CEGEP teachers to meet AGE students who are about to get their HSD; 2) assign CEGEP staff whose job would be to facilitate collaboration in the carrying out of insertion activities; 3) organize exchanges where CEGEP people visit AGE learners in their schools, and conversely, where learners from AGE visit a CEGEP; 4) provide more comprehensive information, so that AGE graduates have points of reference once they get to CEGEP; and 5) have colleges provide support for AGE students by showing them around, and by helping them develop studying, organizational, and work strategies. The AGE Teacher we interviewed agrees that measures should be put in place to ease the transition to CEGEP. Like the VP, she thinks there should be better communication between Adult Education and colleges, and that guidance counselors should be tasked with providing more information to AGE students in order to better prepare them for the academic and social realities of college. The Guidance Counselor interviewed in this study agrees, adding that mentoring with AGE alumni or CEGEP personnel could facilitate transition and help students choose a program that will motivate them and elevate their potential.

As a key accommodation measure for students living with a handicap or for those who have adaptation or learning disabilities, the VP would like colleges to show more

flexibility regarding deadlines and in their evaluation methods, thus recognizing the alterity and plurality of the students' academic backgrounds and experiences. By overcoming enormous obstacles both in school and in life, these individuals have shown great psychological, pedagogical, and societal resilience. The Counselor, for his part, advises AGE learners to strive to adapt to their CEGEP's evaluation measures, and points out that in college, students with special needs must submit a medical diagnosis in order to benefit from attendant accommodations, which is not the case in AGE.

When concluding her interview, the Principal said she would like to use her influence to prompt decision-makers to act so as to change the lives of adult learners for the better. She believes that structural obstacles should not undermine the motivation of institutional administrators who, as part of their mandate, should support those team members who strive to see AGE students succeed.

Discussion

Several elements of this ethnographic study converge as pertains to their psychological, pedagogical, and social dimensions (Long, 1989).

Psychological Dimensions

One psychological aspect of note refers to the impact a person's academic and personal background has had on them, and more particularly as regards to their academic path in secondary school, where a fragmented, discontinuous attendance may have delayed their journey to the HSD. While family issues may be one of the main root causes of such a fragmentation (traumatic home environment, socio-economic difficulties, etc.), other factors come into play, such as learning difficulties and disorders that have never been diagnosed or treated for lack of financial resources, or lack of services in high school. In that respect, the AGE environment acts as a resilience booster for adult learners. Their motivation must be rebuilt, their learning difficulties resolved, and in this they must feel the full support of their institution. Our informants agree that there are gaps in the services that Adult Education Centers provide: little psychological support with outside specialists is offered to teaching staff, and among students there is a clear socio-economic imbalance resulting in a form of discrimination against those who are financially disenfranchised. The capacity and right for individuals to access lifelong adult education are thus called into question (Bélanger's model).

As far as adult learners are concerned, we definitely observed a difference between men and women, the latter showing stronger self-motivation than the former, especially when they are mothers and heads of households. The psychological reconstruction efforts of AGE adults who transition to CEGEP is to be commended here, as well as the AGE's mission in this regard. It should also be noted that in Montréal, the city where this study was undertaken and where our informants work, many adult learners come from an immigrant background or have recently migrated; the fact that their academic history (degrees and diplomas from the country of origin) is not recognized in Québec, along

with their limited knowledge of the French language, greatly affect their capacity and motivation to start over, get their HSD and then move on to a college program.

Pedagogical Dimensions

The student/teacher relationship built through AGE programs plays a fundamental role in the resilience and perseverance of learners transiting to CEGEP. As the college environment is less structured than that of AGE, adult learners must learn to better self-regulate, and to make sure their level of motivation is in step with these new requirements. And all the more so considering that CEGEP were not necessarily structured so as to accommodate adult students shouldering adult responsibilities, be they linked to family, housing or work. Pedagogical support could also be lacking in the collegial realm, and so learning difficulties of the past may persist and stymie the student's progress.

Sociological Dimensions

For AGE students, the passage to higher education is motivated by their desire to integrate into society with greater knowledge, literacy and skills. Financial issues pose serious problems for these learners, so the prospect of eventually having a good, sustaining job or career is highly emancipating for them. Balancing studies and work also prove to be a challenge, especially for students who are parents or heads of households; for these, having financial support is critical. In Québec, student aid policies, as well as grants and loans programs, have proven to be insufficient, and the concept of lifelong education does not give way to formal socio-pedagogical actions – part-time attendance, for example, is not permitted in technical programs, and not funded by the system of grants and loans (Thériault, 2019). It's a fact that Adult Education Centers are more flexible, but their programs are not well-known to adults transitioning to CEGEP. All this gives one the impression that the bridges between AGE and the collegial sector have been severed, leaving researchers to wonder whether this state of affairs is a calculated societal hurdle contrived to impede on an adult's right to lifelong education, particularly when he or she has experienced socio-economic, psychological or pedagogical disenfranchisement and discrimination. This leads us to the notion of emancipation, something AGE wishes for all its students. Just like students from the regular sector, AGE graduates who transition to college, in a program that will eventually lead them to the career of their choice (and not one imposed by the State), exercise in so doing rights that are internationally recognized as theirs to enjoy. The education system, in turn, must make sure, as is its duty, that adult learners who have experienced difficulties and obstacles in their academic and personal life are treated with respect and are free to pursue their post-secondary education. Because in the end, what these adults want, for themselves and for their children, is to live in better conditions and integrate society in a fulfilling way.

Bridging AGE and College

All the academic stakeholders interviewed for this study want bridges to be created between AGE and the various collegial sectors. With simple means, targeted activities

could be implemented to promote the building (or rebuilding, since some of the desired practices have existed in the past) of such bridges, the aim being to get college institutions to better understand the challenges associated with the integration of AGE learners into the world of higher education. CEGEPs could put in place resources specially designed for these learners, including psychological, pedagogical, and social support and accommodations. And financial considerations should not be obstacles in the transition to higher education. Solutions regarding this should be prioritized, particularly for parents and for single mothers who are the head of their household. This debate urgently needs to be initiated.

Research Limitations and Future Explorations

Through its tightly focused method, this research has made it possible to study a subject current literature does not cover, namely the transition of AGE learners to CEGEP. The pedagogical experts' perspectives were explicitly presented in ethnographic form, with their view being supplemented with that of adult learners throughout the course of our research. Since reporting on this issue from a more longitudinal or broader standpoint was not our goal, there is no doubt that researching the subject using a larger sample of adult learners would make Québec's educational system more aware and cognizant of their academic journey through higher education, and of their concomitant social insertion. But in order to do so, we need to be able to locate the AGE alumni who have made it to college, and have precise profile indicators to avoid invisibilization in a stigmatizing way these adults who have experienced and overcome difficulties on their way to getting their HSD and then furthering their education even more. We are convinced that CEGEPs, true to their mission of emancipation and to their model, which is unique in the world, would deem it important to document this issue. The present ethnographic investigation argues in favor of such an initiative.

References

Bélanger, P. (2011). Theories in adult learning and education**.** Barbara Budrich Opladen & Farmington Hills.

Carré, P. & Moisan, A. (2002). *La formation autodirigée: Aspects psychologiques et pédagogiques* [Autodirected training: Psychological and pédagogical aspects]. L'Harmattan.

Commission d'étude sur la formation des adultes. (1982). *Apprendre. Un acte volontaire et* responsable [Learning. A voluntary and responsable act]. Gouvernement du Québec.

Commission des États généraux sur l'éducation. (1996). *Les États généraux sur l'éducation, 1995-1996. Rénover notre système d'éducation: Dix chantiers prioritaires* [General assembly in education, 1995-1996. Renovate our education system]. Retrieved from http://collections.banq.qc.ca/ark:/52327/bs40261

Gouvernement du Québec. (2002). *Politique gouvernementale d'éducation des adultes et de formation continue tout au long de la vie* [Governement politic on adult education and continuing education throughout life]. Retrieved from : https://rb.gy/62mv1

Gouvernement du Québec. (2015). *Loi sur l'instruction publique* [Law on public education]. Régime pédagogique de la formation générale des adultes. Retrieved from : https://rb.gy/nmkg9

Inschauspé, P. (1987). *Bilan et prospectives du cégep comme institution d'enseignement supérieur* [Summary and potential of CÉGEP as a higher education establishment]. Centre de documentation collégiale. Retrieved from http ://www.cdc.qc.ca/actes_aqpc/1987/inchauspe_actes_aqpc_1987.pdf

Institut de coopération pour l'éducation des adultes. (2022, december). *Les indicateurs du contexte de l'éducation des adultes* [Indicators of adult education]. Retrieved from https://rb.gy/adgt4

Institut de la statistique du Québec. (2022). *Effectif scolaire de la formation générale des adultes, selon diverses variables, année scolaire 2005-2006 à 2020-2021* [School population in adult general education, depending on diverse variables]. Gouvernement du Québec. Retrieved from : https://shorturl.at/fgLT7

Izard, B. (2000). Méthode ethnographique [Ethnographic methods]. In M. Izard & P. Bonte (Eds.), *Dictionnaire de l'ethnologie et de l'anthropologie* (pp. 470-475). Presses Universitaires de France.

Long, H. B. (1989). Self-directed learning: Emerging theory & practice. In H. B. Long (Eds.), *Self-directed learning: Emerging theory & practice* (pp. 1-9). Oklahoma Research Center for Continuing Professional and Higher Education of the University of Oklahoma.

Marchand, I. (2019). L'expérience du décrochage scolaire chez les filles: Conséquences et perspectives vers la formation générale des adultes [Girls' early school leave: consequences and perspectives towards adult general education]. In M. Doucet & M. A. Thériault (Eds), *L'adulte en formation… pour devenir soi : espaces, passages, débats et défis* (pp. 59-86). Presses de l'Université du Québec.

Ministère de l'Éducation des Loisirs et du Sport (MÉLS). (2005). *Statistiques de l'éducation* [Education's statistics]. Gouvernement du Québec. Retrieved from http://collections.banq.qc.ca/ark:/52327/bs15223

Ministère de l'Éducation des Loisirs et du Sport (MÉLS). (2013). *Statistiques de l'éducation* [Education's statistics]. Gouvernement du Québec. Retrieved from : https://shorturl.at/jklAW

Organisation des Nations unies pour l'éducation, la science et la culture. (2009). *Rapport mondial sur l'apprentissage et l'éducation des adultes* [International report on adult learning and education]. Retrieved from: https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000187521

Roberge, M. (1991). *Guide d'enquête orale* [Guide to oral inquiry]. Les Publications du Québec.

Solar, C., & Thériault, M. A. (2013). De la recherche en éducation des adultes dans la francophonie canadienne [Research on adult education in french-speaking canadian populations]. *Savoirs*, 33, 105-116. https ://doi.org/10.3917/savo.033.0105.

Thériault, M. A. (2015). Québec's young adults and educational pathways: A collaboration in research and ethnography. *International Journal of Arts and Humanities,* 4(1). Retrieved from : http://ijah.cgrd.org/images/vol.1no.4/1.pdf

Thériault, M. A. (2017). Apprendre et enseigner à la formation générale des adultes: une recherche ethnopédagogique auprès de finissants et finissantes ainsi que d'enseignantes [*Learning and teaching at Adult Education : ethnopedagogical research with close graduate and teachers]. Formation et profession*, *24*(3). 32-45. http ://dx.doi.org/10.18162/fp.2016.381

Thériault, M. A., Marchand, I., Marzarte-Fricot, N., Kamalzare, S. & Bartosova, L. (2019, octobre 8-11th). *Adult Learners Transitioning from Adult Secondary Education to General and Professional College: A Québec Study* [Conference oral presentation]. Proceedings of the 68th Commission for International Adult Education (CIAE) International Pre-Conference, St Louis, MO, United States.

Thériault, M. A. (2019). Ethnographie en sciences de l'éducation: filiation et voix des apprenantes et apprenants de la formation générale des adultes en passage vers le collégial [Ethnography in educational sciences : filiation and voices of learners of adult general education moving forwards college]. In M. Doucet & M. A. Thériault (Eds.), *L'adulte en formation ... pour devenir soi : Espaces, passages, débats et défis* (pp. 35-58). Presses de l'Université du Québec.

MULTICULTURAL AND GLOBAL PERSPECTIVES IN ADULT LEARNING: TRANSFORMING GENDER BARRIERS TO ACCESS IN CHALLENGING TIMES

Nancy Teresi Truett[1]
Frances A. Alimigbe[2]
Victoria Suarez[3]

ABSTRACT: Adult learners globally face a multitude of challenges in learning and obtaining educational degrees. This can be due to a variety of reasons including academic stress, as well as additional responsibilities with managing families, childcare, household duties, careers, and jobs. Different cultures may face unique barriers in education; however, across cultures and socioeconomic divides, education has historically been valued as a way to improve one's circumstances in life. The purpose of this inquiry is to share from a narrative research methodology perspective the experiences and stories of different men and women in the United States, Africa, the United Kingdom, Australia, New Zealand, Ukraine, Canada, Saudi Arabia, Spain, Italy, and Japan. Through their challenges they also recognize strengths as adult learners, students, and educators and transform gender barriers in their own lives. To gain a deeper understanding of how learning is impacted by physical, environmental, cultural, and psychological barriers and limitations, the practitioner researchers examined their individual pedagogical practice through a critically reflective lens and shared stories of the adult learners and teachers with whom they encountered through their efforts. Accounts were collected through verbal and written responses. In this way, considerations included how teachers in Nigeria, adult general education students in Virginia, and adults in ten countries, using a virtual mental health counseling platform, are not only unique, but also how they share similar challenges and barriers to educational matriculation and success. In considering gender differences, access to programming, time and childcare constraints, cultural expectations, the impact of mental health and domestic violence, and the commitment level required to complete an educational degree, it is easy to see how discouraging a process the capitalist educational system can be for adult learners and educators. In capturing the stories of adult learners as varied as the world is large, can bind one another from across great divides through our individual and collective fragility and vulnerability, while demonstrating persistence and resilience, we can better learn how to bridge the deep chasms that keep adult learners from achieving their educational goals. Practitioners will attempt to show, globally, that female adult learners have unique challenges to education and professional development compared to their male colleagues.

Keywords: adult learners, narrative inquiry, multicultural, gender barriers, nontraditional adult students, adult and continuing education, barriers to education, informal dialogue

Adult learners globally face a multitude of challenges in learning and obtaining educational degrees due to a variety of reasons. Demands include academic and financial stress, responsibilities managing families, childcare, household duties, careers, and jobs, as well as physical and mental health concerns. Across cultures and socioeconomic divides, education has historically been valued to improve one's circumstances in life.

---

[1] University of Tennessee, Knoxville, Department of Educational Psychology and Counseling, Educational Psychology & Research Program, Adult Learning Ph.D. Concentration. ntruett@vols.utk.edu
[2] Planning, Research & Statistics, Teachers Registration Council of Nigeria, Abuja. rashimama@yahoo.com
[3] Fairfax County Public Schools, Adult Basic and Continuing Education, Community Health Worker (CHW), English as a Second Language Adult Instructor (ESOL), and General Educational Development (GED) Adult Instructor. v-suarez@onu.edu

Methodology

Using narrative inquiry and stories from personal work experiences of three separate researcher practitioners in different settings, it was found that adult learners face challenges across cultures that continue to reinforce gender inequalities and educational disparities. Narrative inquiry as a research method crosses disciplines and explores and validates multiple perspectives and complex issues in a humanistic manner (Mertova & Webster, 2020). It records the experiences of an individual or small group, revealing each person's worldview to be respected within the cultural context in which the person resides, allowing counter narratives as meaningful contributions to the research and a way of communicating (Johnson-Bailey & Alfred, 2006).

Researcher/Practitioner 1

Clients Using an Online Counseling Platform: Ten Counseling Narratives

Nancy is a licensed mental health clinician with over thirty years' experience who worked with adults during the pandemic through a virtual counseling platform to comprehend their lived experiences related to barriers in education and career. The brief vignettes below have been changed for privacy and de-identification.

Ukraine. Male. 50s. Teaching English as a second language. Spoke about living in Odessa with everything shut down due to COVID-19 and quarantine rules. Expressed a high level of paranoia and unrest, gave examples of his distrust for the banking system, and feared lack of privacy. Cautious regarding everything and spoke about the Russian soldiers at the border. Barriers included fear, anxiety, mental health issues, and uncertainty regarding impending war while trying to teach among the impoverished.

United Kingdom. Female. 30s. University college student working full time. Sister had died a few years ago. Barriers included disability, stress, anxiety, depression, grief and loss, relationship issues, and challenges with meeting academic deadlines.

New Zealand. Male. 30s. Teacher. Just separated from live-in girlfriend who had issues with his work and friends yet confused because of mixed messages. Liked his life as a teacher, his career, and leisure activities. Conflicted because he loved her, although she placed unfair demands on him, especially since she wanted to separate. Barriers to career success included relationship issues.

Spain. Female. 30s. Teacher. From Australia living in Spain with her partner of eight years who left her suddenly. The relationship break-up was very hard followed by the death of her father. Barriers included physical disability, grief and loss, anger, depression, uncertainty, low self-esteem, and a sense of hopelessness, despair, and what seemed unimaginable.

Italy. Male. 30s. Student. Married. Father of two young children. Unemployed. Barriers included a high level of stress, frustration, and anger due to apartment living and financial

constraints. During one session the children were in the background screaming, fighting, and crying. He became angry, frazzled, and seemed unable to cope. Aggressive with therapist after recommendation for local resources.

Canada. Female. 20s. Student. Unable to continue education because of child and husband's work. Living in a remote area of Canada. Husband changed jobs making less money, but home at night. Barriers included her mental health, financial stress, and complex childhood trauma. Expressed frustration about wanting a college education to contribute to the family income.

Japan. Female. 20s. College student living with mother and sister in a two-bedroom apartment. Lack of privacy. Used local coffee shop during sessions. Barriers included conflict with mother, unhappiness about her major, and academic struggles.

Australia. Female. 20s. College student with medical issues living in a remote village. Barriers included extreme fatigue, depression, and feeling unsupported by family. Wanted to feel better physically and have the energy to live independently. Stated it was challenging to study and focus due to her debilitating condition.

Africa. Female. 20s. College student living with family. Lack of privacy during counseling sessions. Only used live chat feature versus talking. Due to scholarship initiative, a free month of counseling was provided. Barriers included access to counseling, financial limitations, and academic and career uncertainty.

Saudi Arabia. Female. 30s. Aspiring student. Flight attendant cohabitating with male partner uncommitted to marriage and child. Sent money to family in Asia. Barriers included economic responsibilities and a non-supportive, emotionally abusive boyfriend. Felt emotional distress and turmoil pleasing boyfriend while figuring out how to get her daughter back and returning to school.

Researcher/Practitioner 2

Women Teachers in Nigeria

Frances works with the Teachers Registration Council of Nigeria (TRCN), an Agency of the Nigeria Federal Ministry of Education established by CAP T3 of 2004. This organization is saddled with the responsibilities of approving teachers in Nigeria, setting standards that must be attained by teachers, and continually raising those standards. TRCN oversees the quality of teachers and teaching as a profession at all levels of education. TRCN determines the standards for education in Nigeria for persons seeking to become registered teachers. TRCN conducts Professional Qualifying Examinations for certifying and licensing teachers through Mandatory Continuous Professional Development.

Nigeria is a patrilineal society, which practices patriarchy thus giving the strong base for male dominance. Egodi describes patriarchy as promoting the differences in privilege between men and women (2022). Nigeria is also a multicultural society where strong

attachment to cultural inclinations is clearly visible. Culture is a strong factor and plays out throughout the lifespan where men dictate the rhythm of everything. Women in the African/Nigerian context are natural home keepers encumbered with the responsibilities of home care and maintenance of the family. This role, which is labor intensive, plays out in other aspects of women's lives including through educational and career pursuits. According to Onoriode (2011), African women blamed their academic performance on several factors including cultural practices, marital status, and financial constraints. The hindrances cultural practices imposed on their academic performance stemmed from the lack of focused study and attention span. Furthermore, the African Union Commission (2021) observed that even though women make up approximately 50 per cent of the population in Africa, women remain underrepresented in leadership roles across educational and entrepreneurial sectors.

Nigerian National Policy on education stipulates that access to education is a right for all Nigerian children regardless of gender, religion, and disability, and assures equal access, yet the reality is that a woman's place is in the home first and foremost (Alonge, 2016; BBC News, 2016; Denga,1993). The United Nations Human Development Report (2005) underscores the lack of development and the inequality among children in Nigeria around educational access. Nigerian culture and socioeconomic concerns keep gender disparity in education a reality. Nwudego (2022) found that women feel discriminated against. Nwudego (2022) also found that women feel isolated and exhibit physiological symptoms that affect educational and career success. Women then are in fixed roles as primary caregivers despite what Nigerian National Policy portrays. Women remain limited and in ways, voiceless regarding their concerns and aspirations to obtain leadership roles in educational and career pursuits. There are no financial compensations for a woman's role in her family. Women experience lack of support from their male counterparts, which disadvantages them for appointment and ascension to leadership positions, a support network, career mentoring, and government positions. This disparity continues to degrade the status of the Nigerian woman and contributes to what is perceived as their low educational and workplace performance.

Nigerian women's roles include traditional and cultural expectations comprised of household duties, caring for family, cooking, washing, and many other domestic responsibilities. Women's lives are found to be inundated and overwhelmed, which impacts a woman's ability to attain career or educational excellence, which limits a woman's ability to reach her full potential. This is demonstrated in all aspects of Nigerian socio-economic life. In the Nigerian 2023 general election, women made up approximately 2% of the number of applicants for positions at local, state, and federal levels. This illustrates the expected, traditional, and societal roles of Nigerian women, which affects their ability to make significant financial gains, or have a voice in decision making and public policy.

A series of professional development measures for Nigerian teachers were implemented post COVID to equip teachers with requisite digital skills. The trainings exposed gender discrimination regarding educational attainment and teacher development in Nigeria. Women teachers raised concerns and awareness of the challenges associated with the

socio-cultural roles of women as home keepers. Discussions with women at trainings revealed that scheduled professional development did not accommodate women's domestic schedules, leaving professionals uneasy and disengaged due to unequal gender expectations, disadvantaging women in the workplace. Onoriode's (2011) research revealed that cultural practices and homecare commitments imposed a serious consequence on the academic performance of women. This study uniquely revealed that the academic performance of women students in higher education in Nigeria differed between married and single women. The study showed a significant relationship between the cultural practices in Nigeria and the married women's academic performance and is a true reflection of what most Nigerian women experience. Jamil (2003) summarized that women's commitments at home, and their community expectations created serious limitations to their education. To address challenges women face with disparities in education and professional development, Bolarin (2005) affirmed the need to institute a measure in which women would gain reasonable access to educational and professional development opportunities. The popular narrative in Nigeria that keeps a woman in the kitchen with her education ending there is archaic, limiting, discriminatory, and oppressive (BBC, 2016).

Researcher/Practitioner 3

Students in High School Equivalency/General Educational Development (HSE/GED) Programs

As an educational specialist with more than three years' experience in teaching adults, Victoria is a credentialed CHW and ESOL & GED Adult Instructor. Areas of expertise include curriculum development, public speaking, project management, writing and editing, and adult instruction and training. Her work focuses on adult literacy and the development of educational training, along with hands-on training for adult learners. Non-traditional students (working adults) aged 25 and older have faced many challenges to continue higher education and earn postsecondary credentials. Many need additional skills and knowledge to keep pace with the evolving high-demand careers of today. Unfortunately, many Virginians are still struggling to finish higher education. At the 2018 Hire Ed Conference, it was mentioned that there are over 1.2 million people in the United States between 25 and 44 that lack postsecondary degree (Dubois, 2018). Adult students trying to complete their education can be a daunting task.

A few reasons included that students work multiple jobs, with some students represented in Virginia's poverty statistics (ALICE, 2018) with violent crimes, drug culture and use, and incarceration affecting school graduation rates (Laari, 2023). Unengaged citizens and improper planning contribute to the criminal system preventing academic success – all of which remain barriers for students to reach their full potential.

Victoria's inquiry related how significant inequalities and adult learners' environments for non-traditional, adult students affected their ability to pursue their education and or gain needed credentials. Many educational programs depend on a capitalistic structure

223

which shaped the success of some students while other students resorted to desperate, short-sighted, and poor choices.

COVID reduced the number of students being admitted into the High School Equivalency Program (HSE) programs in Fairfax County Public and Alternative Schools. Online classes may have been offered, but this posed an increased challenge for parents who could not afford childcare. Many adult learners contended with online classes while keeping their children entertained. Students mentioned that they were more overwhelmed and less focused on their studies. Additionally, less students meant less learners getting into the program, passing, and obtaining their GED. Some in person classes only had one or two students enrolled, and this prevented more adult learners from reaching their goals.

Narratives of Nontraditional Adult Learners: GED Programs

Student # 1 - Male
A young Moroccan lost his father and became the main supporter of his household. Quit school to find a job to support his family. He worked to send his siblings to school and waited until he had a family of his own before going back to pursue his GED. He struggled with time constraints and work demands. After 4-5 semesters, this student finally graduated in June 2023.

Student # 2 - Female
Student desired to complete her GED to finish credits at a cosmetology school. She started the program but got incarcerated which is the main barrier to her education. Other barriers included laziness and lack of motivation. After her release, she hoped to finish her program and find work.

Student # 3 - Female
Uncomfortable with sharing her barriers to her education. Lived with her mother-in-law, who helped in some way continue her education. Did not share further. Unfortunately, she dropped the program a week later, the reason unknown.

Student # 4 - Male
Student shared that he supports his family financially as well as completes household duties. A two-person household, his role is to work then take care of the children and cook for the family. This was a main barrier to his limited attendance in class. His partner did not support him obtaining his GED; instead of class, he should be cooking or taking care of the children. Dropped the class after only three weeks. Main barrier was an unsupportive partner and tasks that the partner was unwilling to take on while he attended classes.

Student # 5 - Male
Student shared that he got into trouble while in high school. Kicked out of the school and removed from the area. His schooling included other disengaged students who were unhelpful with progressing. Mentioned friends were always involved in something, so he

just followed along which got him incarcerated. Attempted to complete classes before incarceration, but cost, transportation, and living situation were barriers to success. He realized that staying in trouble would not get him any further and needed his education. Encouraged by another friend who was released and finished his GED program to get his diploma, becoming a business owner. Student was interested in following the same steps after serving his time. After asking if he would get his GED if released before finishing the program, he stated that he would get in trouble again since he felt the only place he could finish his GED would be in jail.

Student # 6 - Female
Shared that she faced "mom guilt" when leaving children in the care of others while attending school. Found it very difficult to find caregivers during class time and needed to leave work early to finish the GED program. Admitted she had to overcome "laziness" to make it to class when tired or overwhelmed. Overcame these barriers by finding a good support system with both sisters who alternated days with babysitting. Discussed with boss to accommodate class schedule to leave early. Continued using the word "laziness" and mentioned that she overcame this challenge by envisioning her end goal: to pass her GED exams. Had immense feelings of accomplishment when she passed GED tests and felt it was so rewarding. Was proud to not have given up. Successfully passed all four tests and participated in graduation.

Researcher/Practitioner 3: Outcomes

Many students expressed that the main barriers in their lives were pivotal moments during their high school education. Many of the choices, mistakes, and challenges all traced back to when they attended, dropped out, or were incarcerated during high school. It was also noticed that during the narratives, only the women used the term "laziness" and or "mom guilt" when they were tired in moments of pursuing their education. These students would have full time work, take care of their families, and then attend class, even find time to study on their own for their exams. Anytime they would be inundated with responsibilities, adult learners would use the words like lazy or laziness to describe their barriers to education. Researcher reminded students they do a lot of work. It is okay to feel tired or overwhelmed from time to time and they just need to find ways to handle that stress in healthy or productive ways. It does not mean they are lazy. Unfortunately, this result could be due to many factors and needs further scrutiny. Why do the female students use the word "laziness" to describe their challenges? Is it something they truly believe? Is this phrase used by others in society to describe them? Where did this conclusion come from?

Collaborative Findings

In collaboration with one another, three researcher practitioners in the United States and Nigeria looked at gender barriers students face – women teachers in Nigeria, students in High School Equivalency Programs (HSE), and clients using an online counseling platform during the pandemic. The compilation of these narratives and experiences illustrated the power of how sharing one's story can serve as a catalyst for change.

During the pandemic, many themes of privilege, power, poverty, inequality, race, gender, ageism, discrepancies with access, and marginalized populations existed. The number of students enrolled in High School Equivalency/General Educational Development (HSE/GED) programs was reduced, affecting enrollment and graduation rates. Women continued to merge professional, educational, and family roles. Historically, across cultures women are primarily expected to provide nurturance and care to the young, the unwell, and the elderly, creating significant consequences regarding educational and career pursuits. Ideally, it is said that education is the greatest weapon against poverty and that it is never too late to get an education. Yet, for many adults, the reality is that support and access can be very limited and, in some circumstances, and cultures, this is near impossible.

Researchers found common themes linking their individual interests and work to present a representative sample of barriers adults faced pursuing educational degrees or career advancement. Difficulties adult learners faced captured the unique life experiences of each student. These included non-traditional and students in HSE programs. Limitations showed how the experience of learning and professional development was discriminatory for Nigerian women teachers struggling to improve themselves via Mandatory Continuous Professional Development. Each of the findings represented difficulties adults faced pursuing educational degrees and career advancement while balancing personal and family responsibilities with educational pursuits and work-life balance.

Future Implications

Using narrative research methodology, themes emerged through the client stories that further supported that whether one is a teacher or administrator in Nigeria, or globally, or a student pursuing a GED, or other level of education that life challenges and circumstances exist. Especially with the pandemic, over the past several years heightened levels of stress, feelings of isolation, depression, anxiety, uncertainty, financial worries, and mental and physical health concerns have been found to exist. Among these and a host of other disparities that continue to be felt by the researchers and each of the study participants, barriers remain a challenge in completing educational degrees.

Specifically, to further this study for nontraditional students more must be found in high schools across Virginia to recognize and remove the inequities that have changed the lives of many adult learners. If interventions were present in the high schools where participants attended, leaders in higher education could redirect upcoming adult or non-traditional students, preventing negative records. Currently, the focus was adults in Virginia pursuing their GED and High School Diplomas in an Adult Detention Center and Adult High School Center. After these findings, observation is needed at local high schools to observe where these gaps occur and if leaders in Adult Education can circumvent these determining factors in preventing non-traditional, at-risk learners from entering the criminal system. It seems some high schoolers are entering the role of adulthood much quicker with less guidance and assistance to reach their educational goals. Practitioners can better define when and how adult education is structured with any learner. More conversations are needed for adult learners sharing that their feelings of

burnout, high stress, or juggling multiple responsibilities is considered laziness. Adult students complete enormous amounts of work; laziness is a confusing term used for how much adult students actually accomplish. Why do certain students have to succumb to postponing their education due to determining locations? Why do adult learners use the term "lazy" to define their struggles with delay to reaching their goals? Where are opportunities to provide every student with options to succeed, regardless of their residence in differing communities? These are questions practitioners can proactively address in the future.

Similarly, for Frances in Nigeria, future implications would include recognizing the uniqueness of the African married woman – understanding their needs, peculiar challenges, and planning educational advancement activities for them at times conducive to both professional and family life. This means scheduling realistic times for professional development trainings and giving female teachers options, so they do not have to choose between career advancement and family.

Conclusion

In conclusion, the researchers found that through their daily practice with students, teachers, and clients that gender barriers continue to exist across cultures despite public policy and aspirational national initiatives. Globally, women face challenges with child bearing, childcare, child rearing, and household responsibilities. This does not exclude men as responsible care-givers and in engaged parenting roles; however, gender bias as a barrier, allows men to pursue educational and career opportunities that otherwise would not be options for women, especially in certain cultures. Women who do achieve educational and career success in certain cultures, risk choosing education and career over family and marriage. Also, student narratives used terms like "mom guilt" and "laziness" when explaining their barriers to reaching their educational or professional goals. Inequities and socio-economic limitations exist globally for adult learners. Practitioners and educators are in a unique position to provide support and to ensure that these barriers can be overcome. Through a global narrative approach, regardless of background, adult learners continue to face a multitude of barriers that include gender and cultural biases, inequities, and socio-economic limitations.

References

Abe, I. I. (1987). Women's education in Nigeria: Old views and trends. *African Journal of Research in Education,1*, 1–3.

Alonge, S. (17 October 2016). *"My wife belongs in the kitchen'? President Buhari isn't helping Nigeria"*. The Guardian. *ISSN 0261-3077. Retrieved 24 May 2020.*

African Union Commission (2021). *African ministers adopt common African position for more women in leadership positions*. Press Release, March 1. Addis Ababa: AUC.

Asson, S., Frankenberg, E., Fowler, C. S., & Buck, R. K. (2023). Attendance zones in the suburbs. *Phi Delta Kappan*, *104*(5), 11–17. https://doi.org/10.1177/00317217231156224.

BBC News. *Nigerian first lady 'belongs in the kitchen*.' 14 October 2016. Retrieved June 2023.

Bolarin, T. A. (2005). *Women's participation in higher education in Nigeria: Values, education; choices, and counter cultural traits*. Nigerian Academy of Education, 144–161.

Denga, D. I. (1993). Education at a glance: From cradle to tomb. Calabar: Rapid Educational Publishers Ltd.

DuBois, G. (2022, December 14). *Digital Commons @ VCCS | Virginia Community College System Research*. Inquiry: The Journal of the Virginia Community Colleges. https://commons.vccs.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1223&context=inquiry.

Evans, M., Hemmings, C., Henry, M., Johnstone, H., Madhok, S., Plomien, A., & Wearing, S. (2014). The SAGE Handbook of Feminist Theory. In *The Sage Handbook of Feminist Theory*. SAGE Publications.

Frankenberg, E., Fowler, C. S., Asson, S., & Buck, R. K. (2023). Demographic change and school attendance zone boundary changes: Montgomery County, Maryland, and Fairfax County, Virginia, between 1990 and 2010. *RSF: The Russell Sage Foundation Journal of the Social Sciences*, *9*(2), 75–103. https://doi.org/10.7758/rsf.2023.9.2.04.

Jamil, S. (2003). Looking ahead: Higher education and knowledge societies. *HigherEducation in Europe,* XXVIII (1).

Johnson-Bailey, J., & Alfred, M. V. (2006). Transformational teaching and the practices of black women adult educators. *New Directions for Adult and Continuing Education, 2006*(109), 49-58.

Laari, F. S. (2023, February). Gang diversion programs in the success of reducing youth gang membership. Minnesota. Retrieved June 21, 2023.

Mertova, P., & Webster, L. (2020). Using narrative inquiry as a research method: An introduction to critical event narrative analysis in research, teaching and professional practice (2nd ed.). Routledge.

Miller, H. S. (1973). The citizen's role in changing the Criminal Justice System. *Crime & Delinquency*, *19*(3), 343–352. https://doi.org/10.1177/001112877301900305.

Nwudego, N. C. (2022). Woman and her role in modern Nigeria. https://guardian.ng/opinion/woman-and-her-role-in-modern-nigeria/.

Okeke, E. A. E. (2001). *Women's education in Nigeria*. Lagos: NERDC, 9–125.

Oniorode, C. P., (2011). The academic performance of married women students in Nigerian higher education. https://www.researchgate.net/publication/317304529.

Shrewsbury, C. M. (1987). What is feminist pedagogy? *Women's Studies Quarterly, 15*(3/4), 6-14.

Swinson, J. D. (1977, November). *A basic outline and guide.* Fairfax; National Criminal Justice Reference Service (NCJRS).

Uchendu, E. (2022). *Patriarchy persists in Nigeria-and men aren't the only ones who keep it that way.* https://theconversation.com/patriarchy-persists-in-nigeria-and-men-arent-the-only-ones-who-keep-it-that-way-183462.

UNDP. (2005). *Human development report*. University Press.

Vanstone, M., Priestley, P., Rudes, D. S., Mackey, B. J., & McPherson, M. (2023). Reentry and reintegration in Virginia, U.S. In *The Palgrave Handbook of Global Rehabilitation in criminal justice* (pp. 667–686). Palgrave Macmillan.

QUALITY ASSURANCE AND THE AFFILIATION PROCESS OF PRIVATE HIGHER EDUCATION INSTITUTIONS INVOLVED IN CONTINUING AND PROFESSIONAL EDUCATION IN GHANA

Linda Tsevi[1]

ABSTRACT: Private higher education institutions in Ghana involved in continuing and professional education have multiple affiliations with diverse public and foreign universities as a result of the varied programs offered. Using the three main isomorphic classifications of DiMaggio and Powell's (1983) institutional theory namely coercive, mimetic and normative, this paper explored the strategies, modalities and challenges bearing on participants in 10 purposively selected mentee private higher education institutions involved in continuing and professional education as well as two quality assurance officials. This paper further examined stakeholder participation in the affiliation process. Data collection procedures consisted of a semi-structured open-ended interview protocol for twelve participants. In addition, institutional documents from the websites of mentee institutions were analyzed. The outcome indicates the state of affiliation processes in private institutions providing continuing and professional education in Ghana. Participants noted among others that affiliating institutional selection is indicative of the types of programs offered by the mentee institution. Some of the challenges enumerated included the time-consuming nature of the affiliation process and conflict over mentee/mentor expectations. Mentee institutions advocate that there should be a standardization of affiliation fees paid by private higher education institutions offering continuing and professional education.

Keywords: affiliation, continuing and professional education, Ghana, mentee, mentoring institutions, quality assurance.

Ghana, as a country, established quality assurance guidelines more than two decades ago with the setting up of the National Accreditation Board (NAB) of Ghana in 1993 under policy guidelines to address quality issues in higher education institutions. The NAB has become the regulating unit of the Ghana Tertiary Education Commission (GTEC) which was established under the Education Regulatory Bodies (ERB) Act 1023, 2020 to provide oversight responsibility for both private and public higher education institutions. It formally began functioning on 25th November 2020 (Ganiere, 2021). This study explored private higher education and the affiliation procedures in the provision of continuing and professional education in Ghana. Yalley and Dodoo (2022) defines institutional affiliation as

> An arrangement between a lesser-known and well-known HEI, whereby, the former adopts the academic and institutional policies and framework of the latter in return for a fee whilst the latter fulfil its agreed obligations and expectations including awarding of certificates and degrees. (p. 115)

From the definition of both Yalley and Dodoo (2022), there are rights and obligations that each party must fulfill to ensure that the affiliation process is progressing with the required expectations.

---

[1] Linda Tsevi graduated with a PhD from the Department of Educational Administration and Policy Studies, State University of New York at Albany in 2015. Currently, she is a Senior Lecturer and Coordinator of the Accra Learning Centre, School of Continuing and Distance Education, College of Education, University of Ghana. Email:ltsevi@ug.edu.gh. This paper was made possible through funding from University of Ghana.

Quality assurance in private higher education is an important component in both policy and scholarship throughout Africa and on the global level. Regulating private higher education institutions requires the involvement of all stakeholders to enable the protection of the consumer among others (Kinser, 2007, Levy, 2006; Varghese, 2004). It has been noted that ties to institutional core enables an institution's sustainability (Fleming, 2012). As a result of the quality assurance procedures, private higher education institutions in Ghana involved in the provision of continuing and professional education have multiple affiliations with diverse chartered public and foreign universities due to the varied programs offered. Research also indicates the quality assurance process in Ghana has enabled conformity among private providers in Ghana (Tsevi, 2019). Despite the adduced evidence, there is the perception among a section of private providers of higher education in Ghana that the affiliation process as required by law is time consuming and very expensive thus hampering innovation (http:/regent/news/publication). The reason adduced to support the cost element is that one finds an institution affiliated to multiple mentors because of the varied programs offered. This seems to suggest a pro-forma relationship between the institution seeking affiliation and the mentor.

Affiliation is one of Ghana's key higher education policies that ensures that institutional and program quality in the private higher education sector are maintained. The affiliation concept in Ghana's accreditation procedures involves a mentoring relationship where one institution submits to the authority of a mentoring institution for at least 10 years. During that period, a mentee institution that affiliates with a mentor for instance, undergoes academic supervision and mentorship. The mentoring higher educational institution awards its diplomas and degrees. After 10 years, the mentee institution must demonstrate its capacity in academic matters, finance matters, infrastructural development and governance, before it can apply to the Ghana Tertiary Education Commission (GTEC) for a presidential charter. The award of a charter will enable the institution to award its diplomas and degrees. Once a charter is granted, the affiliation process ceases to exist. There are instances where higher education institutions are involved in multiple affiliations, thus they are associated with more than one higher education institution. Research further indicates that multiple affiliations in higher education institutions may be a result of a change in policy and also provide prospects for the exchange of knowledge (Hottenrott & Lawson, 2022).

It must be noted that the affiliation process comes with certain rights and responsibilities for both the mentor and the mentee institution. However, these obligations come at a cost to mentee institution which could be termed as a pro-forma relationship. Oftentimes, the programs being offered by the mentee institution will determine the number of mentoring institutions that it has to be affiliated to.

However, the procedures used by mentee institutions to identify their multiple affiliating mentors and the associated effects are unclear. Thus, the affiliation relationship between a mentor institution and a mentee institution requires a systematic assessment to determine what is really working or otherwise with specific reference to Ghana. Subsequently, this study will explore the implementation of the quality assurance processes by private higher education institutions involved in providing continuing and professional education

by specifically examining the affiliation procedures. The study will emphasize the three main isomorphic classifications of DiMaggio and Powell's (1983) institutional theory namely coercive, mimetic and normative. It will also explore the strategies, modalities and challenges impacting the mentee private higher education institutions involved in continuing and professional education, as well as evaluate stakeholder involvement in the affiliation process. Thus, information adduced will provide useful input in the quality assurance processes that private higher education institutions undergo in their quest to seek multiple affiliation partners as well impact policy decisions of stakeholders.

In-depth study on issues such as affiliating costs associated with local and foreign institutions and the management of those costs were explored using a sample of Ghana's private higher education institutions involved in continuing and professional education. Among others, it will also examine the factors driving such dispositions towards both local and foreign mentors. Information on the affiliation procedures, strategies, modalities and challenges impacting the mentee private higher education institutions involved in continuing and professional education as well as issues such as costs and stakeholder involvement will be of immense relevance to policy makers, the quality assurance process in Ghana, University of Ghana's scholarly environment and the African higher education landscape. Following the preceding, this study seeks to examine the affiliation processes of private higher education institutions involved in the provision of continuing and professional education in Ghana. The overarching research question guiding this study is: 1. What are the benefits as well as the challenges that mentee institutions face in the affiliation process?

Literature Review

Public higher education institutions in post-independence Anglophone Africa were regarded as elite institutions following the British model with internal quality assurance measures and an external examiner system. As self-regulatory entities, public higher education institutions had no need for regulation from an external body (Adjayi et al., 1996). Governments in the Sub-Saharan African region could not bear the fiscal burden of providing higher education to qualified applicants as a result of population growth (Atteh, 1996) leading to reforms in the education sector. The reforms paved the way for private providers to be involved in the provision of higher education. Included among these providers were religious private higher education institutions, demand-absorbing institutions, commercial and elite institutions (Altbach 1999; Levy 2007; Materu 2007). The increase in providers alleviated the burden on nation states as sole providers of higher education (Mkude, 2011).

Factors that precipitated the establishment of accrediting agencies in Sub-Saharan Africa included the rapid emergence of private providers of higher education requiring regulation, and an increase in student and staff mobility across borders that necessitated the recognition of academic qualifications. Additionally, the market demand for education's relevance and quality in higher education led to new accreditation policies (AAU 2007; Shabani, 2013).

Institutional Affiliations

The affiliation process in Ghana consists of a mentoring (supervising) institution and a mentee institution. Each party to the affiliation agreement has a specific role to play. However, the mentee pays the mentor (supervisor) for this relationship, and this has become an income generating venture for the chartered institution. The fee paid by the mentee is determined by the mentor (supervisor). According to the NAB L.I. 1984, in order for institutions to be accredited, one of the requirements is that there must be "proof of affiliation to a recognized mentoring (supervising) institution within or outside the country". In Ghana, institutions have multiple affiliations with various chartered universities since one university may be unable to mentor (supervise) them in all their programs.

In a Ghanaian study on affiliation between mentors and mentees by Ansah and Swantzy (2019), it revealed that though the affiliation policy had enabled the capacity of the mentee institutions, there were challenges such as an overstretched capacity of mentoring institutions, the fact that the mentees had to diligently emulate the actions of their mentors and the financial burden on mentored institutions.

A study by Hottenrott and Lawson (2022) examined factors impacting affiliations emanating from an international survey of higher education institutions in Germany, Japan and UK by developing an affiliation typology. The authors indicate that exchanging knowledge, networking, reputation and prestige were singled out as some of the key motivations for entering into affiliation procedures with prestigious external higher education institutions.

Giesecke (2006) explored the benefits of accreditation by a quality assurance agency of new private higher education institutions in Central and Eastern Europe (Poland and Hungary). In Poland the number of students enrolled in a higher education institution indicates legitimacy. Thus, high student enrollment indicates that it is a recognized place for students to pursue an academic education. On the other hand, in Hungary, a private higher education institution is accepted and recognized in the environment if a government quality assurance agency accredits it. This study asserted only the concept of legitimacy as conferred by a quality assurance agency and did not explore other constructs. By application, this suggests that private higher education institutions of any kind have to comply with quality assurance regulations of Ghana Tertiary Education Commission to be considered legitimate by the state and the society. Santana et al., (2010) examined the quality assessment systems in Brazilian higher education by focusing specifically on public universities modeled after North American universities. In order for Brazilian private higher education institutions to be classified as legitimate by their environment they had to respond to the demands of the external environment and be subject to coercive isomorphism. This indicates that a private higher education institution in Ghana may have to respond to the external environment to be qualified as legitimate. Similarly, Suspitsin and Suspitsyna (2007) studied the strategies employed by Russian private higher education institutions to maintain their legality with state actors. These higher education institutions in Russia employed the themes of conformity and

manipulation among others to maintain their legitimacy. In addition, the accredited institutions easily attracted and retained more students than the non-accredited ones, suggesting the value of accreditation.

However, it is worthy of note from the literature reviewed that there is limited research done that focuses directly on the affiliation or mentoring process of private higher education institutions involved in continuing and professional education in Ghana. Thus, this study aims to explore some of these knowledge gaps in the affiliation process. This study on Ghana will examine this limitation by addressing the following research question: 1. What are the benefits as well as the challenges that mentee institutions face in the affiliation process? It is anticipated that the outcome of this study could also generate knowledge for government, policy makers and private higher education institutions.

Theoretical Framework

DiMaggio and Powell's (1983) institutional theory that engages isomorphism directed this study. Isomorphism is described as both competitive and institutional. Competitive isomorphism indicates market competition and is applicable to environments where there is free and open competition (Fennell, 1980). Institutional isomorphism indicates how organizations are compelled to adjust to the external world. Three channels through which institutional isomorphism occur are coercive, mimetic and normative. Coercive isomorphism happens when there is pressure from the external environment on an organization to conform to society's cultural expectation, especially from the state. In Ghana's tertiary education system, there is coercive pressure from the regulator to let private higher education institutions know the need to be affiliated to a mentoring institution in order to be accorded the recognition. Mimetic isomorphic pressures indicate that organizations tend to model similar organizations in their fields that they believe are successful and legitimate. Thus, private higher education institutions will offer programs that their mentoring institutions are running successfully. Normative isomorphic pressures are linked to professionalization when cultural support is obtained from local and international professional associations (DiMaggio & Powell, 1983; Meyer & Scott, 1983). Thus, the mentee private higher education institutions may join similar associations, if not the same organizations that their mentors are linked to in order to attain recognition. Invariably, this study analyzed interviews of faculty and administrators of 10 purposively selected private higher education institutions as well as reviewed relevant documents uploaded on the purposively selected institutions to address the research question earlier indicated.

Method

The scope of the study focused on two selected regions namely Greater Accra and the Eastern from which 10 private higher education institutions were purposefully selected. The administrators at these selected mentee institutions constituted the sample for the study. Greater Accra was chosen to represent the coastal zone and the Eastern region representing the mid-zone. Some of the professional and continuing education programs

being offered by the 10 institutions include Business Administration, Communication Studies, Computer Science, Law, Information System Sciences, Nursing and Theology. Two officials from the regulating body were interviewed to obtain their perspectives about the affiliation process. Patton (2002) indicates that purposive sampling suggests attributes of particular sub-groups and encourages comparisons. The higher education institutions were selected based on certain criteria. First, they must have been accredited within a certain time frame and should have been reaccredited subsequently or were in the process of being reaccredited. The study used an in-depth interview outline to address the research questions. The data collection procedures employed were semi-structured interviews held in person or by phone. A total of 12 participants constituted the purposive sample for the study. They constituted 10 administrators and two quality assurance officials from GTEC. Before the interviews, approval for this study was received from the Institutional Review Board of the researcher's university. The participants were informed about the nature of the study, and each was assigned a code to foster confidentiality.

Data Collection

Twelve in-depth face-to-face or telephone interviews were conducted with the participants. The sample was purposively selected from 10 private higher-education institutions. Thus, one administrator was purposively sampled from each institution in addition to the two officials from the accrediting agency. Each selected administrator was someone involved in the affiliation process of the institution and thus have substantial information. The interviews were personally conducted by the researcher, and the risks and procedures for participating in the study were explained to the participants before data collection started. The interviewer also sought permission from the participants for audio recording. All participants were asked open-ended questions about the affiliation process. Subsequently, the transcripts were transcribed verbatim and analyzed immediately. Some of the major interview questions included the following: How many institutions are you affiliated to? What criteria do you use to identify your affiliating mentors? What programs offerings has led to your affiliation to these institutions? How much do you pay to the affiliating institution for each program? The duration of each interview on average was about 50 minutes.

The quality assurance specialists that were selected for this study were two officials from the accreditation unit of Ghana Tertiary Commission. These specialists were initially contacted through emails and telephone calls and the interviews were conducted either via face to face or telephone. My justification for selecting these quality assurance specialists is based on the belief that they will provide significant insight into the affiliation process in a developing country like Ghana.

Table 1: Purposive Selection of Two Regions

Study Region	Purposefully Selected Private Higher Education Institutions	Number of Selected Participants (Administrators)

Eastern	2	2
Greater Accra	8	8
Total	**10**	**10**

Selection of Documents

Institutional documents downloaded from the websites of selected higher education institutions and that of their mentors were analyzed using the NVivo software to aid triangulation and also gauge the affiliation processes (Jehn & Jonsen, 2010). Documents selected were of five-year duration and the cut-off date for each was purposefully set at December 2022. The duration was selected to coincide with the timeframe for program accreditation which spans a maximum of five years. These purposefully gathered documents included news items, publications and PDF documents, as they relate to the affiliation process. The use of the qualitative processes will enable an in-depth understanding of the issues being investigated

Data Analysis

Interview Analysis

The first phase of interview analyses included preparing transcripts, memos, coding data into substantive and theoretical categories and summaries (Maxwell, 2005). Themes that emerged from the interviews were analyzed both deductively and inductively by the researcher. Second, the researcher examined linkages and patterns between the themes. The coding was done manually by reading through the interview transcripts several times to look for repeating ideas that would be of relevance to the research questions. Each interview transcript was read at least three times to acquaint the researcher with the themes that would emerge from the coding process. This enabled the researcher to accurately determine which thematic coding category to apply to words selected from the transcripts (Auerbach & Silverstein, 2003). Qualitative data analysis is noted by Miles and Huberman (1994, p. 10) as being made up of "data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing/verification", happening at the same time. Creswell (2009, p. 183) also indicates that data analysis "involves making sense out of text...." A second coder reviewed the data and identified major categories and themes based on the research questions posed for this study. This helped to determine the accuracy of the identified categories and themes. Member checking helped in the triangulation of the coding and analysis of the data.

Document Analysis

A folder was created for the information sourced from the websites of the ten selected private higher education institutions. Each document was read completely for at least two times to acquaint the researcher with the themes prevalent in each document. Nodes were

created from the themes generated from the reading of documents. The NVivo 'drag and drop' coding tool was used to code the information downloaded from the websites of the selected institutions. This 'drag and drop' tool function enabled the researcher to code large amounts of data from the websites easily.

Findings and Discussion

This section discusses the findings that were generated from the interviews with 10 administrators and two officials of the GTEC. The themes that emanated from the interviews included the following: high number of associated mentoring institutions, payments made to mentoring institutions for affiliation purposes, increased quality in program offerings at private higher education institutions/benefits, mixed reactions about enrollment increases at mentee institutions, challenges, and document analysis.

High Number of Mentoring Institutions

The interview data analyzed indicates that most mentee private higher education institutions had a high number of mentors because of increased number of program offerings. For instance, a private higher education institution (PHEI) could be affiliated to as many as eight institutions and this comes with associated costs. It is worthy of note that each mentor charges per program that mentoring is being obtained for.

One participant from a PHEI that I will call TF noted as follows:

> Based on the number of programs on offer, you first study the environment, do your research and identify a mentoring institution, and then you find out if they will accept your request to be affiliated to them. The identified mentors will then evaluate your documents and if they approve then you can send them finally for accreditation.

Thus, from the above quotation it can be inferred that the emulative as well as the coercive force is associated with the identification of a particular mentor for a program being offered at a mentee institution involved in continuing and professional education. Affiliation of a PHEI to a mentor institution, comes with certain obligations where the institution is mandated to follow whatever instructions that the mentor institution directs. Some participants also indicate that other private higher education institutions are offering programs in association with foreign affiliates. GTEC requirements on affiliation allow institutions to be affiliated to recognized mentors (supervisors), either within or outside the country. Foreign affiliations are, among others, regarded by the private institutions as further enhancing their status and credibility. Thus, they have to conform to guiding regulations.

Payments Made to Mentoring Institutions

All the participants complained about the high fees paid to mentoring institutions for affiliation purposes. They indicate that the mentoring institutions charge either in dollars

or the cedi equivalent of dollars. One participant indicated that for a program affiliation, an institution can be asked to pay as much as US$5,000 per program as indicated in research (Ansah & Swanzy, 2019). This implies that a mentee institution offering four programs will most likely pay the mentoring higher education institutions a cedi equivalent of an amount of US$20,000. Aside the payment of these fees, a participant who is an administrator, noted that the mentee has to pay other costs to the mentor and these include fees for pre and post moderation of end of semester examination questions among others. In a publication sighted on the website of one of the mentee institutions, the president of the mentee institution also reiterated the point that:

> The affiliation system as required by law is expensive and time consuming, adding huge costs to the budget of private universities and sometimes delaying innovation and speed.…. For example, a University College wants to run just one particular program and it has to be run under a new mentoring university, there is the need to pay for institutional affiliation ranging between $5,000 and $7,000 and is renewable annually." (regent.edu.gh)

Mentee institutions have noted that the costs associated with the affiliation process are quite high despite the benefits associated with the process. These high costs have impeded their infrastructural development.

Increased Quality in Program Offerings/Benefits

The findings indicate that ultimately, the mentoring and affiliation processes have resulted in increased quality of the programs on offer at the private higher education institution. However, one participant whom I will call BY stated: "In terms of quality, what I can say is that monitoring from mentoring institution has improved. "

The participant further indicated that though quality has improved the mentee institution is careful about how it addresses certain student issues such as examination malpractices. A participant whom I will call JT, noted:

> "….fomerly we were sacking students who were caught in examination malpractices but now we have stopped. We only cancel the exam paper that the student wrote that was involved in the examination malpractice.

Another participant at a mentee institution, when asked about how affiliation has impacted program quality, stated how their programs conformed to that of their mentoring (affiliating) institution as follows:

> We are affiliated to KNUST. Now because the certificates that the students have from here are KNUST certificates, the Vice-Chancellor expects that whatever we do here conforms to whatever they do there…And so basically the programs here are the same ones run over there. We cannot afford to do things which are different from our mentor (supervisor) institution, never, we cannot do that… There is a check on us to make sure we do the right thing. (RA, Administrator)

Participants in all ten private higher education institutions were unanimous in admitting that the requirements of GTEC and the quality assurance processes impact the affiliation procedures. Though GTEC has established minimum QA requirements that institutions have to follow, the respondents indicated that they go the extra mile by involving in other activities to enhance recognition in their environment. These included seeking affiliation and international linkages with foreign universities. However, it is important to note that the GTEC does not require institutions to have foreign affiliations, but the private institutions regard it as enhancing their image and credibility when they have such linkages.

The data obtained from the websites of mentee institutions indicate that a majority of them have affiliations with foreign institutions. However, though these affiliations have their quality assurance requirements that the mentee institutions have to comply with, the requirements of the GTEC takes precedence over the foreign affiliation requirements. A participant stated: "Every year somebody comes …… to monitor what we do here. And every five years they renew our accreditation. (VA, Administrator)

Mixed Reactions About Affiliation

According to the NAB L.I. 1984, the quality of mentee institutions is ensured through a number of measures, which includes affiliation to a mentoring (supervising) institution. The benefit of the affiliation process is to guide the mentee institution to become independent eventually. Its importance is affirmed by an accreditation official as follows:

> The whole concept of affiliation also depicts part of our power that is the ….. function to the mentoring (supervising) institution – to assist the younger institution to grow, which is also a quality assurance measure. (QF, GTEC)

The NAB officials are of the view that affiliation will ultimately assist the mentee institutions to obtain their charter. An instrument created to evaluate the affiliation relationship between the mentor (supervisor) and the mentee institutions has to be completed annually by both institutions. The contents of the instrument for the mentee and mentor (supervisor) institution differ slightly. The instrument completed by the mentee institution measures components including the duration of the affiliation process between the mentor (supervisor) and the mentee, the content of programs being supervised, student admission requirements, conduct of examinations, evaluation of academic staff's qualification, and providing service on boards and committees of mentee institution (www.nab.gov.gh). The instrument that the mentoring (supervising) institution evaluates the mentee institution on, examines segments including conduct of examinations and results, endorsement of external examiners, content of programs, communication with key officers of the mentee institution, assessment of qualification of academic staff, providing service on committees and boards of mentee institution, establishment of an internal quality assurance unit and assisting the institution to become autonomous (www.nab.gov.gh).

An additional excerpt on the evaluative role of the affiliating instrument is provided:

> If the mentoring (supervising) institution is not doing its work to ensure quality in the mentored institution, that instrument should be able to show it. If the mentored (supervised) institution is also not doing well the instrument should show that there is something wrong with the relationship. (RA, GTEC)

A number of the participants were of the view that some mentors see the affiliation process as a 'gold mine' where they can cash in on the mentee institutions. Another participant was of the view that without the mentoring/affiliation process, GTEC will think that they are not abiding by the correct procedures in the way they run their programs. Overall, affiliation is taken seriously by all concerned parties namely mentor (supervisor), mentee and the NAB.

Interview data further shows that there was similarity in the programs offered by a mentee institution and its mentor (supervisor) institution since the affiliation process is based on the type of programs offered by the mentoring (supervising) institution. These indicate the mimetic nature of the programs on offer. A mentee institution's programs had to conform to that of its mentor (supervisor). Even if there had to be slight modification in the programs, that had to be done with the approval of the mentoring (supervising) institution and GTEC. Mentee institutions would not want to deviate from the mentoring (supervising) institution's requirements, in order to be regarded as conforming to the mentor's (supervisor's) requirements.

Challenges

The participants indicated challenges that they have encountered with the affiliation process. Some participants were of the view that some of the mentoring institutions were always out to make sure they document minor mistakes and blow them out of proportion, which in their opinion was not necessary. Participants also indicated that the mentors also delay the mentees' release of students' examination results.

A participant noted that his institution is affiliated to at least three public universities because of the varied programs that they offer. Each institutional affiliation indicates the type of programs offered by the mentoring (supervising) institution. He explained:

> …we are affiliated to KNUST [Kwame Nkrumah University of Science and Technology], University of Education in Winneba, and also Trinity Theological Seminary. In other words, we have three different universities, and depending on the specialty we need to align ourselves to a particular university. So when you talk about KNUST affiliation, it is basically with the Engineering and Computer Science programs. When you talk about University of Education in Winneba, it is about the Psychology … And when you talk about Trinity Theological Seminary, it is about the theological and divinity programs. So one university cannot really mentor [supervise] you in all the specialties. So you have to align with those universities that are specialized in particular areas. (RA, Administrator).

This type of multiple affiliations generates the question about the cost element that the mentee institutions have to address.

Mentor (supervisor) and mentee institutions are sometimes in conflict over what the mentee was expected to do and what the mentee thought was the appropriate in the affiliation process. A participant at a mentee institution indicated that sometimes the form of assessment that they would like to use for the students differed from what their mentor (supervisor) would want them to do. She noted:

> Our mentoring [supervising] institution is UCC [University of Cape Coast], and UCC has a lot of private universities that they are mentoring [supervising]. And they have a process whereby in their pre-moderation where we send in our syllabi, our mid-term exams and final exams and they come for post-moderation after those exams have been graded and they go through. First, they tell us whether they like the exams or not, and we do some further work as a final form of evaluation. Sometimes it is not an exam, it could be a project, it could be a thesis, it could be a group project – they tend not to like that. They tend to like exams because it is easier for them to deal with. … It is harder for them to evaluate these projects or theses. Here, I can see that it would be good for me when we do get the charter. (PV, Vice-Provost)

In such conflicting situations, the mentor (supervisor) institution has the final word and it indicates the coercive authority of the mentoring (supervising) institution.

Document Analysis

The documents on the websites of the sampled private mentee institutions indicated their varied affiliations to both local and foreign universities. Some of the mentees were affiliated to as many as eight institutions from the document search on their websites. All the sampled institutions ensured that their websites carried information on their accreditation and affiliating institutions. These relates to the coercive force (DiMaggio and Powell, 1983) in the isomorphic framework since without accreditation and affiliation, they will not be recognized as legitimate. The number of affiliating institutions on the websites of mentees could also be interpreted as a sign of prestige.

<div align="center">

Conclusion

</div>

The study's findings validate the conceptual framework in the activities of GTEC, the regulatory frame that seeks to ensure conformity. Quality assurance as well as affiliation guides are offered to PHEIs to fulfill certain requirements, including affiliation, before accreditation is given. As a regulatory body, one of GTEC's goals is to ensure that the capacity of institutions is built and the policy requirements for the establishment of internal quality assurance departments are conformed to within a specified time frame. The study indicates ultimately that the affiliation process is a very important one despite the disadvantages enumerated. However, there is the need for additional stakeholder consultation so that procedures are well laid out as to what the expectations of the mentor

are for the mentee institution as well as vice versa. It can be implied from the study that there is the need for a rethink in the interpretation of the relationship between a mentor and a mentee institution in the affiliation process. Also, there is a call for a standardization in the affiliation fees charged by each mentoring institution to address the 'proforma' relationship between mentor and mentee institutions.

References

Altbach, P. (Ed.). (1999). *Private prometheus: Private higher education and development in the 21st century*. Westport, CT: Greenwood Press.

Ajayi, A. J. F., Goma, L. K. H., & Ampah Johnson, G. (1996). *The African experience with higher education.* Ohio University Press.

Ansah, F., & Swanzy, P. (2019). Affiliation policy rhetoric and reality in the Ghanaian higher education context. *Journal of Higher Education Policy and Management. 41*(2), 204-218.

Association of African Universities (AAU). (2007). *The quality assurance situation and capacity building needs of higher education in Africa*. Accra, Ghana.

Atteh, S. O. (1996). The crisis in higher education in Africa. *A Journal of Opinion, 24*(1): 36-42.

Auerbach, C. F., & Silverstein, L. B. (2003). *Qualitative Data*. New York University Press.

Creswell, J. W. (2009). *Research design: Qualitative, quantitative, and mixed methods approaches.* (3rd Edition). Sage Publications.

DiMaggio, P. J., & Walter, W. P. (1983). The iron cage revisited: Institutional isomorphism and collective rationality in organizational fields. *American Sociological Review, 48*: 147-160.

Effah, P., & Senadza, B. (2008). Ghana. In D. Taferra and J. Knight (Eds.), *Higher Education in Africa: The International Dimension*. CIHE, Massachusetts and AAU, Ghana.

Fennell, M. L. (1980). The effects of environmental characteristics on the structure of hospital clusters. *Administrative Science Quarterly, 25*, 484-510.

Ganiere, M. (2021). *Ghana Tertiary Education Commission (GTEC) established in 2020*. https://theconnection.ece.org/GhanaTertiaryEdCoun/1615/n

Giesecke, H. C. (2006). Legitimacy seeking among new private institutions of higher education in central and eastern Europe. *Higher Education in Europe, 31*(1), 11-23.

Girdwood, A. (1999). *Tertiary education in Ghana: An assessment: 1988-1998*. Report for the World Bank.

Hottenrott, H., & Lawson, C. (2021). What is behind multiple institutional affiliations in academia? *Science and Public Policy, 49*(3), 382-402. http://doi.org/10.1093/scipol/scab086

Jehn, K. A., & Jonsen, K. (2010). A multimethod approach to the study of sensitive organizational issues. *Journal of Mixed Methods Research*, *4*, 313-341.

Kinser, K. (2007). Sources of legitimacy in U.S. for-profit higher education. In S. Slancheva, & D. C. Levy (Eds.), *Private higher education in post-communist Europe: In search of legitimacy*. Palgrave/MacMillan.

Levy, D. C. (2006). The unanticipated explosion: Private higher education's global surge. *Comparative Education Review, 50*(2), 217-240.

Levy, D. C. (2007). A recent echo: African private higher education in an international perspective. *Journal of Higher Education in Africa, 5*(2&3), 197-220.

Materu, P. (2007). *Higher education quality assurance in sub-Saharan Africa: Status, challenges, opportunities, and promising practices*. The World Bank.

Meyer, J. W., & Scott, R. W. (1983). Centralization and the legitimacy problems of local government. In J. W. Meyer, and W. R. Scott (Eds.), *Organizational environments: Ritual and rationality* (pp.199-215). Sage.

Miles, M. B., & Huberman, M. (1994). *Qualitative data analysis: An expanded source book*. Second Edition. SAGE Publications.

Mkude, D. (2011). Higher education as an instrument of social integration in Tanzania: Challenges and prospects. *Research in Comparative and International Education 6*(4). www.wwwords.uk/RCIE

Patton, M. Q. (2002). *Qualitative Research & Evaluation Methods*. Sage Publications.

Santana, S., Moreira, C., Roberto, T., & Azambuja, F. (2010). Fighting for excellence: The case of the Federal University of Pelotas. *Higher Education, 60*, 321-341.

Shabani, J. (2013). Academic quality, assessment and accreditation. *International Higher Education, 73*, 16-18, Fall.

Suspitsin, D, & Suspitsyna, T. (2007). Private higher education in Russia: Free enterprise under state control. *European Education 39* (3), 62-80.

Tsevi, L. (2019). Confronting the challenges of the quality assurance process in private higher education: The Ghanaian experience2

Varghese, N. V. (2004). *Private higher education in Africa*. UNESCO, IIEP, ADEA, AAU.

Yalley, A. A., & Dodoo, J. E. (2022). Sustaining higher education accreditation through institutional affiliate mentorship. In *New Perspectives on Using Accreditation to Improve Higher Education.*

ADULT EDUCATION AND HUMAN CAPITAL DEVELOPMENT FOR ADAPTABILITY IN POST-COVID-19 ERA

Pere-ere F.T. Victor[1]
Prof. C. C. Zuofa [2]

ABSTRACT: The outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic revealed several inadequacies among Nigerian adults which include poor digital skills and survival techniques for adaptability in crisis. It was observed in the outbreak of the pandemic that most Nigerians lacked digital skills that was required for survival during the lockdown plus poor survival and coping techniques. The Nigerian adult must be well-rounded and fully educated for their role in developing the nation. Adult education focuses on continuous education and promotes human development and has become imperative to help promote digital skills and survival techniques among adults for adaptability in the event of a crisis. This paper discusses relevant concepts: adult education, human capital, adaptability, related literature in education, and digital literacy under three subheadings as well as proffered solutions on the way forward.

Keywords: adult education, human capital, adaptability

The transition from colonial rule to independence did not provide enough time to prepare the Nigerian adult with the necessary knowledge and skills to adapt to a new way, of life. (Ishaq, 2020). According to Safiya (2012), education was religious, political, and aimed at purifying the learner spiritually and was not relevant to individual needs and interest. American Historical Association (2022) opined that the Second World War ushered in a clamour for an end to slavery and colonialism that drove our colonial masters to begin preparing us for independence. Independence simply means freedom and that a society is considered mature enough to handle their affairs: building, growing, and driving their development to an achievable end without external pressures. Since independence, Nigerians have grappled with several national development plans and programmes, none of which resulted in national prosperity and stability. According to Deedam et al., (2019), the following development plans emerged after our independence in 1960:

- first - 1962-1968: This six-year plan focused on achieving an economic growth rate of 4% and increasing Nigerians' standard of living; however, was aborted by the Nigerian civil war in 1967.

- second -1970-74: This plan was enacted after the civil war. This plan focused on reconstructing, rehabilitating, and establishing Nigeria and its people. This was also termed as the "oil boom" period because Nigeria made huge sales from crude oil. Much as the plan achieved its objectives, a subsequent economic downturn/regression is traceable to financial indiscipline of then-governing elites.

- third -1975-1980: This long term and ambitious plan focused on increasing the nation's per capita income, creating employment, diversifying the economy, creating an indigenous economy, and balancing development through even income distribution and highly trained manpower. Although, this plan succeeded

---

[1] Department of Educational Foundations, Niger Delta University Wilberforce Island, Bayelsa State.
[2] Department of Educational Foundations, Niger Delta University Wilberforce Island, Bayelsa State.

in growing the economy to 5%, it failed in achieving major results in those sectors that would have directly improved the standard of living for the poor, e.g., education, housing, health, and welfare. Leadership failed to allocate resources as stipulated in the plan, thus neglecting human capital development.

- Fourth 1981-85: This plan was a reaffirmation of the third development plan and basically serviced its existing debts and loans. Despite achievements, this plan failed to meet Nigerians' expectations.

It is important to state here that there was a vision 2010 plan, but it is not considered as a development plan in Nigeria since it was not implemented. Presently the Buhari-led administration is on an economic recovery and growth plan (ER&GP) and is yet to achieve the UN sustainable development goals (SDGs) and a 7% economic growth rate as anticipated (Turkur, 2017). Although, most Nigerians believe that the several development plans and programmes by government may not have helped us achieve much (Uche, 2019); we cannot deny that these plans helped us grow and developed to a certain degree. Furthermore, studies show that Nigeria is a growing nation with much anticipation at achieving self-sufficiency and first world standards requirements. Tutor2U Limited (2021), highlighted certain parameters examined when defining the development gap between nations. They are termed key indicators for growth and development. These are:

- The Gross National Product: The Gross National Product (GDP) is the sum total of all profits made or income earned by investments from the products of a country and profits made by nationals who are outside the nation within a period of one year. This excludes profits made by non-nationals within that nation.

- Life expectancy: The life expectancy encompasses the entire birth and death rates in a nation and how healthy the general population of a country is and the level of health care available to sustain life. The more healthy, strong and controlled birth through good health care services to match the GDP, the less deaths of infants and adults such that the working population is not depleted. This will grow the economy and improve a nation.

- Infant mortality (0-12 months): The infant mortality rate is often used as an indicator of development. This is measured as the number of infants dying before reaching one year per 1,000 live births. While good healthcare plays a major role in sustaining 1000 live births per year, preventing mortality is critical in growing a population and determining development. A growing population is key in sustaining the status-quo for development. The different age categories cannot be static but must keep growing from infants to children, adolescents, adults, and senior citizens; they all play a role in the development. A low birthrate will affect the adult and working population at some point and hinder development; hence, the reason some countries seek migrants.

- Education (Literacy): Education is also very important in development. Education leads to improved choices, which results in productivity and promotes sustainability. An uneducated or ignorant population cannot make informed choices in health, business, career, or leadership and will not make progress in the social, economic, and political spheres of society rather, the nation retrogresses.

- Human Development Index: Certain indices are examined and calculated into index values and matched among countries. The index value is termed as Human Development Index (HDI). The life expectancy, education, mean years of schooling, income, and the expected years of schooling index is computed. The higher a country's index, the higher their ranking on the human development index rating scale. This indicates that their population is more developed than others.

According to the World Bank (2022); United Nations Development Programme (2020), in terms of human development, Nigeria ranks 152nd among developing countries with a human development index of 0.539. Furthermore, on the level of internet access in schools, Nigeria ranks 120th in the world at 3.19 % (World Bank, 2017). This is a clear indication that the government of Nigeria and all stake holders in society have to put more efforts in human development and focus on improving our human capacities beginning with growing our human capital.

During the COVID-19 pandemic, Government observed that most Nigerians were digitally illiterate and could not cope with challenges posed by the lock downs. They lacked coping skills, could not maximise available digital mediums as well as online information for their survival. With restricted movement and a complete shutdown of businesses, goods like food, water, and necessary services were only accessible through online transactions. The bulk of our uneducated adults, already shortchanged by illiteracy, could no longer participate and contribute their quota to development as they could no longer buy or sell. This revealed a gap in the quality of our net worth as a nation. Since human capital is a major determinant of economic growth (Spithoven 1991; Kenton 2022), human capital has become imperative to develop the human capital (comprising of Nigerian's adult population) through adult education to promote adaptability so they can cope better in the event of a similar crisis.

Education and Human Capital

According to Idoko (2021), 76 million adult Nigerians are illiterates. It is worthy to note that irrespective of this figure, Nigeria's educational budget keeps diminishing from 8.4% in 2019, 6.5% in 2020, 5.7% in 2021 and 5.4% in 2022 (Iyabo, 2021; Kalifat, 2022). Human capital is a cumulative summation of the intangible net worth of a human. When the humans in society are educated, they are empowered with knowledge and skills boosting their capacities and competencies to function and participating in the growth and progress of their nation. According to Merriam-Webster's dictionary (2022), human capital is measured by the multiple skills, level of knowledge, experience, and educational qualification a human has acquired. Kenton (2022) summarises human

capital as one's economic asset, which determines the economic growth of a country. Human Capital Development (HCD), which seeks to promote learning and enhance human capacity for sustainable development is oftentimes misconstrued with Human Resource Development (HRD). The elements of HCD and HRD are similar but different. HCD is the total net worth of intangible capacities of all humans within a country, while HRD is focused on the growth level of this entire net worth (HCD) nationally. According to Spithoven (1991), HCD promotes economic growth because HCD helps grow the knowledge and skills of human capacities within a nation. The more skilled members of society are, the more productive they will become, resulting in direct returns on investment and increased economic productivity at large. The human capital index of Nigeria is 0.4 compared to Singapore ranked first at 0.9 (World Bank, 2022). When the human capital index of a country is low, a bulk of the population will live below the poverty line line. HCD is measured and determined by the level of adult employability, accountability, professional knowledge and expertise, workers commitment and cooperation, skill, creativity and level of education (Han et al., 2008).

Education is a prerequisite for growth and development (King, 2011). According to Zuofa (2006) education helps humans to grow and adapt to their environment. Kingdom and Maekae (2013) opine that education is key in promoting socio-economic growth as it brings about knowledge, skills, character, and value that when inculcated into citizens, produces the necessary manpower for material productivity and development. Education promotes the quality of human capital in society. The value of enhancing human capital in post-COVID-19 era through education cannot be overlooked as it will aid development and promote adaptability. The human capital index gap between Nigeria and Singapore can only be bridged by increasing the level of knowledge, skills, character, and value of the Nigerian adult through education. With a high level of illiteracy and a youth illiteracy rate of 24.08 % (Knoema, 2018), education has become imperative to re-emphasize the value, need, and urgency and re-strategize for the ease of education access, especially for the digital illiterate. According to Victor and Asuka (2021), Nigeria requires an educated adult population to experience positive change. In this case, this change promotes the use of digital technology and skill for adaptability in post-COVID-19 era.

Digital Literacy for Adaptability in Post COVID-19 Era

Romina and Elena (2022) define digital literacy as the ability to use digital technologies including hardware devices and software applications. According to the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO) (2022) for someone to be termed digitally literate, they should be competent using Information Communication Technology (ICT) to process information and engage with the media. Presently, it is almost impossible to communicate, socialise, work, search for employment and acquire a comprehensive education without being digitally literate. Romina and Elena however opine that globally, digital literacy has gone beyond being an indispensable tool to becoming a life skill since the economic forum adopted it as a 21st century toolkit.

Lain and Vashwanath (2021) reported that Nigerians coped poorly during the pandemic because most Nigerians lacked positive coping skills and their inability to cope

threatened human capital. For instance, financial transactions were carried out on-line via banking apps. Most youths worked and attended school from home. Most buying and selling were done through the internet via shopping apps. The Government directed only few institutions in society namely-education, financial and trading houses- that maximized such mediums to their advantage. Furthermore, only institutions with digitally literate personnel thrived. Even though health care providers and those in service delivery were exempted from the restrictions, the pandemic slowed productivity growth across the world (World Economic Forum, 2021) and the growth rate of our economy, which affected our Gross Domestic Product (World Economic Forum, 2022). The pandemic clearly revealed that we were poorly prepared to adapt to changes.

One may wonder what the difference is between first world countries and developing countries like Nigeria. In a first world country, a man goes to a filling station and manages the pumps. Unmonitored, fuel is bought and paid for at the required price. In a third world country like Nigeria, things are different. Even with the aid of a fuel attendant, a litre falls short in quantity and quality. The government stipulated price is never the same everywhere but rather varies from station to station. Evidently, the people lack the skill to fully function and maximise digital devices for adaptability and productivity. During COVID-19 lock downs, Victor (2022) observed that the use of digital skills was near impossible to do without. Digital skills helped the digitally literate and Government approved institutions to adapt to the challenges of the pandemic and the lockdowns for survival. As a means to tackle these challenges, educating the Nigerian adult is important as a means to maximise acquired knowledge to their advantage and adapt positively in the event of another lockdown.

Adaptability according to the Google English Dictionary (2022) is the quality of being able to adjust to new conditions and change to suit a different condition. Adaptability is a necessary quality because change in life is inevitable. Adaptability is a very important skill that is necessary for every adult Nigerian in this ever-changing world. Kaplan (2022) considers adaptability as a soft skill and as one's ability to adjust easily to changing circumstances. Adaptability is among the top five skills valued by employers. Kaplan, conceives adaptability as involving critical thinking, having a mindset of growth, being resilient and collaborative, and giving response to feed back.

According to Knowles (2005) an adult learner's experiences plays a major role in learning. Adults find it hard to adapt to the new especially when that new goes contrary to what they know and what their personal experience has taught them. Pandemic challenges were relatively new to everyone however, while some adapted to the changes and adapted quickly in tackling them, others did not.

In the 21st century, illiteracy will not be measured as the ability to read, write and compute; rather, it will be the ability to learn, unlearn and relearn. (Toffler, 1970 as cited in Kenyon, 2022). The need to develop human capital and develop the digital capacities of the Nigerian adult is critical. We must seek ways to prevent a recurrence of the situation where our economy became grounded because we failed to learn (digital literacy), unlearn (discard digital superstition), and relearn (adopt the use of digital

technology). The challenges we face in our country today are not only illiteracy but lacking the ability to unlearn and relearn.

Adult Education for the Promotion of Human Capital for Adaptability in Post-COVID-19 Era

This discussion cannot present the concept of adult education as examined by numerous scholars however, for the purpose of this work, a few definitions will be considered. Bown and Tomori (1979) as cited in Nzeneri (2012, p. 9) define adult education as:

> The entire body of organised educational process, whatever the content, level and methods, whether formal of otherwise, whether they prolong or replace initial education in the schools, colleges or universities as well as in apprenticeship, whereby persons regarded as an adult by the society to which they belong develop their abilities, enrich their knowledge, improve their technical or professional qualification and bring about changes in their attitude or behaviour in a two-fold perspective of full-personal development and participation in balanced and independent social, economic and cultural development.

This definition is broad and embraces adult education as it may appear in other societies. In Africa, adult education endeavours focus on literacy (Ihejirika, 2012), perhaps because a large number of the adult population is still illiterate. It is therefore important to examine adult education as conceived in Nigeria.

The Federal Republic of Nigeria's national Policy on Education (NPE) (2014) conceives adult education as the equivalent of basic education, which is given to adults outside the formal school system to promote mass literacy and provide functional basic education, remedial and lifelong education, in-service vocational and professional training for workers, and professionals in order to eradicate illiteracy. The 2004 national policy's definition is far different from the present definition that defines adult education as the process that helps develop adult citizens physically, mentally, morally, politically, socially, and technologically, enabling learner to function effectively in any environment. Apparently, the Nigerian government clearly understand that illiteracy has become a cancer that must be tackled aggressively. Nzeneri (2012) further defines adult education as any education given to adults based on their social, political, cultural, and economic needs, enabling them to adjust fully to changes and challenges in their lives and society. Zuofa (2007) conceives adult education as a process that enables adults to enlarge their experiences and interpret them as adults. Zuofa defines adult education as a type of education that encourages adults to enhance their capacities and potentials through formal, informal, and nonformal avenues based on their needs, equipping them with abilities to tackle life's challenges. Evident to note among these definitions is that adult education provides a forum for continuous improvement so that adults can adapt to changes and improve capacity in skills, knowledge, attitude, and behaviour thus adult education is also a vehicle to develop human capacities and promote lifelong learning.

A major objective of adult education, however, is to promote functional literacy. Functional literacy equips citizens with the ability to function such that they can read, write, compute, and understand what is written and read and is required to for survival. Adults cannot function, contribute their own part, and participate in their immediate environment if they lack skills to read, write, compute or understand the common language used as the lingua franca. According to Martinez-Alcalà (2021) the outbreak of the pandemic revealed that the adult population, especially older adults, lacked digital skills, preventing them from functioning and participating to sustain their survival. The outbreak of the pandemic also revealed a lack of competence in adults and the need to develop human capital. In order to tackle the challenges that arose from the lockdown and to better prepare the Nigerian adult for subsequent events, enforcing digital literacy as well as promoting coping skills and survival techniques among adults has become necessary.

Digital literacy will help promote adult participation in ICT and help adults remain informed with the bulk of information online bridging the divide between the digitally literate and those who are not thus, creating parity where everyone can operate at the same level. Nigerian adults need to develop digital skills so that they can: (1) learn how to use digital devices and boost their human competencies; (2) maximize various online applications and platforms; and (3) participate in the digital world to their advantage. Developing digital skills is important because adult participation in the digital space will promote economic growth. Educating the adults in society and developing digital competences such that they can utilise ICT may not be an easy feat. Omokhabi and Osu (2018) suggest that to improve learning potentials in adult education, improving the capacities of community libraries is key because they promote reading, stimulate the imagination, promote creativity, and raise the standard from just acquiring basic literacy skill to employing ICT for developing digital skills. Olajide et al., (2018) also suggests that the educational curriculum should be designed in relation to the manpower needs of Nigerians, emphasizing the need to update and tailor the adult education curriculum towards the 21st century economy.

Developing human capital of all Nigerian adults can begin with improving the content of the Nigeria's Adult Basic Education Programme. Digital literacy can be added to the curriculum at the basic, intermediate, and advanced levels if not already included with avenues for practice to boost digital skills. All stakeholders in society should place more emphasis on nonformal digital literacy programmes since most adults and youth primarily acquire digital skills non-formally. For instance, to promote already existing digital training programmes, training programmes for staff of public and government parastatals could be conducted to promote digital skills. Staff should be trained and retrained since Romine and Elena (2022) reported that acquiring digital skills occurs in different degrees: basic, advanced and intermediate levels.

Conclusion

Nigeria as a nation faced several challenges before the pandemic's outbreak including literacy. The restrictions during the pandemic made digital literacy and its value more

evident aligning digital literacy with the critical need for basic literacy. Digital technology was one instrument that stood above the pandemic, however, most adults who were not digitally literate were excluded creating a gap in society. The world economic forum adopted digital literacy as an indispensable tool and a life skill; thus, digital skill must be among the human competencies of Nigeria's adult population. Adult education is the vehicle that can be a medium to help adults acquire digital skills leading to digital literacy. The following recommendations is hereby proffered: (1) digital literacy should be incorporated into the Adult Basic Education programme in Nigeria. (2) digital training programmes should be carried out and be top priority to management at all levels with training and retraining of worker and professional to promote digital skills and competencies.

References

American Historical Association (2022). The Colonial and Pre-Colonial eras in Nigeria. https://www.historians.org/teaching-and-learning/teaching-resources-for-historians/teaching-and-learning-in-the-digital-age/through-the-lens-of-history-biafra-nigeria-the-west-and-the-world/the-colonial-and-pre-colonial-eras-in-nigeria

Deedam, D., Akpe C. I., & Emeto. J. O. (2019). Nigeria development plans and its challenges: The way forward. *International. Journal of Advanced Academic Research, 5*(12), 4-8. https://www.ijaar.org/articles/Volume5-Number12/Social-Management-Sciences/ijaar-sms-v5n9-sep19-p24.pdf

Google English Dictionary (2022). *Adaptability*. https://languages.oup.com/google-dictionary-en/

Han, T., Lin, C. Y. & Chen, M. Y. (2008). Developing human capital indicators: a three-way approach. *International Journal of Learning and Intellectual Capital*, 5(3), 387-403. https://doi.org/10.1504/IJLIC.2008.021018

Hicks, N., & Streeten, P. (1979). Indicators of development: The search for a basic yardstick. World Bank. *World Development, 7*(6), 567-580.

Idoko, C. (2021, September 7). 76 million adult Nigerians are illiterates. *Tribune Newspaper*. https://tribuneonlineng.com/76-million-nigerian-adults-are-illiterates/

Ihejirika, J. C. (2007). *Fundamentals of adult education and community development*. Abigab Associates.

Ihejirika, J. C. (2012). *A handbook of Methods and materials in adult and non-formal education*. Abigab Associates.

Ishaq (2020, March 19). Nigeria: Is independence a curse among us? *Everyevery News*. https://everyevery.ng/nigeria-is-independence-a-curse-upon-us/

Iyabo, L. (2021, October 28). Despite promises, FG's budgetary allocations to education remain low. *Guardian Newspaper.* https://guardian.ng/features/education/despite-promises-fgs-budgetary-allocations-to-education-remain-low/

Kaplan, Z. (July 19, 2022). *What are adaptability skills? Definition and example.* Forage. https://www.theforage.com/blog/skills/adaptability

Kafilat, T. (2022, February 22). With N4.68 trillion budget allocation in 6 years, Nigeria's education sector struggles to improve. *Dataphyte*. https://www.dataphyte.com/latest-reports/education-

development/with-n4-68-trillion-budget-allocation-in-6-years-nigerias-education-sector-struggles-to-improve/

Kenton, W. (2023, March 22). Human capital definition: Types, example, and relationship to the economy. *Investopedia.* https://www.investopedia.com/terms/h/humancapital.asp

Kenyon, T. (16 March, 2022). Learn, unlearn and relearn-"The illiterate of the 21st century will not be those who cannot read and write, but those who cannot learn, unlearn, and relearn." *Thersa* https://thersa.org>comments>2022/03

King, E. (2011, January 26). Education is fundamental to development and growth. *World Bank Blogs.* https://blogs.worldbank.org/education/education-is-fundamental-to-development-and-growth

Kingdom, E. O., & Maekae, J. (2013). The role of education in national development: Nigerian experience. *European Scientific Journal. 9*, 315. https://doi.org/10.19044/esj.2013.v9n28p%p

Knoema (2018*).* Nigeria- Youth illiterate population. *World Data Atlas.* https://knoema.com/atlas/Nigeria/topics/Education/Literacy/Youth-illiteracy

Knowles, M. S., Swanson, R. A., & Holton E. F. III (2005). *The adult learner: The definitive classic in adult education and human resource development* (6th ed.). Elsevier Science and Technology Books.

Lain, J., & Vishwanath, T. (November 16, 2021). *The COVID-19 crisis in Nigeria: What is happening to welfare? New data call for expanded social protection in Africa's most populous country.* https://blogs.worldbank.org/africacan/covid-19-crisis-nigeria-whats-happening-welfare-new-data-call-expanded-social-protection

Merriam-Webster. (n.d). *Human capital.* https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/human%20capital

Federal Republic of Nigeria (2014). National Policy on Education. NERDC Press.

Nzeneri, S. I. (2012). *Handbook on adult education principles and practice* (2nd Ed.). Abigab Associates Limited

Olajide, M. F., Olajide, F. O., & Sijuade, F. A. (2018). Adult education funding in Nigeria: Issues, perspectives and challenges. In K. Kazeem, A. A. Kofoworola, O. T. Ogidan, & B. M. Oni (Eds.), *Understanding adult education practice in Nigeria. Essays in honour of Professor Kehinde Oluwaseun Kester* (pp. 96-99). John Archers.

Omokhabi, A. A., & Osu, U. C. (2018). Improving adult education learning potentials in Nigeria: The need to build capacities of community libraries. In K. Kazeem, A. A. Kofoworola, O. T. Ogidan, & B. M. Oni (Eds.), *Understanding adult education practice in Nigeria. Essays in honour of Professor Kehinde Oluwaseun Kester* (pp. 139). John Archers.

Romina, B., & Elena, M. L. (2022). *The digital literacy imperative*. Centre for Strategic and International Studies. https://www.csis.org/analysis/digital-literacy-imperative

Safiya, J. G. (2012). The impact of colonialism on Nigeria education and the need for e-learning techniques for sustainable development. *Journal of Education and Social Researc*h, *2*(7)*,* 54-56. https://citeseerx.ist.psu.edu/viewdoc/download?doi=10.1.1.666.4960&rep=rep1&type=pdf

Spithoven, A. (1991). Human capital as a determinant to economic growth. *Journal of income distribution*, 1(2), 18-19.

Toffler, A. (1970). *Future shock*. Random House.

Tutor2U Limited (2021). Geography: Key gap indicators of development. Study notes. https://www.tutor2u.net/geography/reference/the-8-key-gap-indicators-of-development

Turkur, S. (2017, April 5). Buhari launches Nigeria's economic recovery & growth plan. https://www.premiumtimes.com.

Uche, E. (2019). Development plans and policies in Nigeria: Observed impediments and practical best alternatives. *International Journal of Research and Scientific Innovation, 6*(7), 27. https://www.researchgate.net/publication/334635192_Development_Plans_and_Policies_in_Nigeria_Observed_Impediments_and_Practical_Best_Alternatives

United Nations Development Programme (2020). The next frontier: Human development and the Anthropocene. Nigeria. *Human Development Report 2020.* Retrieved November 13, 2022 from https://hdr.undp.org/sites/default/files/Country-Profiles/NGA.pdf

United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation. (2011). *Digital literacy in education. Policy brief.* Retrieved October 12, 2022 from https://iite.unesco.org/files/policy_briefs/pdf/en/digital_literacy.pdf

Victor, P. F. T., & Asuka, T. T. (2021). Adult education for healthy democratic practices in political socialisation in Nigeria. *Niger Delta Journal of Education*, *13*(1), 4-7.

Victor, P. F. T., & Asuka, T. T. (2022). Adult education for social rights in the practice of democracy in Nigeria. *Unilorin Journal of Lifelong Education, 7(1), 48-49.*

World Bank (2017). *World economic forum global competitiveness index: Internet access in schools*. Retrieved November 10, 2022 from https://govdata360.worldbank.org/indicators/h7411e40a?country=BRA&indicator=41277&countries=NGA&viz=line_chart&years=2007,2017

World Bank. (2022). *Data: Human capital index Nigeria*. Retrieved November 10, 2022 from https://data.worldbank.org/indicator/HD.HCI.OVRL?locations=NG

World Bank. (2022). List of 152 developing countries of the third world. *World Databank*. Retrieved November 10, 2022 from https://www.worlddata.info/developing-countrie.php

World Economic Forum (2021, October 15). *How COVID-19 has impacted economic growth.* Retrieved October 12, 2022 from. https://www.weforum.org/agenda/2021/10/how-to-be-realistic-about-covids-impact-on-productivity-growth/

World Economic Forum (2022, August 28). *Here is how COVID-19 has battered Africa's largest economy.* Retrieved October 12, 2022 from https://www.weforum.org/agenda/2020/08/africa-largest-economy-worst-contraction-in-a-decade/

Zuofa, C. C. (2006). *Issues in Women's Education in Nigeria*. Harey Publications Coy.

Zuofa, C.C. (2007). *Modern perspectives of adult education in Nigeria*. Pre-Joe Publishers.

MAPPING THE DEVELOPMENT OF TRANSFORMATIVE LEARNING THEORY ACROSS CONTINENTS: A LITERATURE REVIEW

Yidan Zhu[1]
Mona Askary[2]
Taiwo Isaac Olatunji[3]
Ruoyi Qiu[4]

ABSTRACT: This literature review paper aims to explore the current state of transformative learning theory in a global context by examining how scholars from different world regions understand, utilize, and develop transformative learning theory in their own contexts. Transformative learning theory has been a significant framework for investigating individuals' personal transformations (Mezirow, 1997, 2000) and promoting social transformations (Allman, 1999). Our review covers scholarship from the USA, Canada, Europe, Asia, the Middle East, Africa, and South America. The results reveal an unequal development of transformative learning theory among countries in the West and East and North and South. This paper argues that mapping the understanding of transformative learning theory in a global context could help bridge the theoretical gap between different regions, enrich our understanding of the broader meaning of transformative learning, and promote more inclusive and equitable practices in education.

Keywords: transformative learning theory, North America, South America, Europe, Asia, Middle East

Transformative learning theory (TLT) has garnered considerable attention as a framework for investigating personal and social transformations. While initially focused on individual growth, it has expanded to encompass the promotion of broader societal changes. This literature review paper explores the current state of TLT globally by examining how scholars from various regions interpret, employ, and advance the theory in their respective contexts. The review encompasses scholarship from diverse regions, including the USA, Canada, Europe, Asia, the Middle East, Africa, and South America. By mapping the understanding of TLT in a global context, this paper seeks to address the uneven development of the theory between different regions, foster a comprehensive comprehension of transformative learning, and promote inclusive and equitable educational practices.

As conceptualized by scholars like Mezirow (1997, 2000), TLT has traditionally focused on understanding individual transformations. However, it has become increasingly recognized that transformative learning also holds the potential for broader social change (Allman, 1999). This paper undertakes a literature review to examine the current state of TLT, considering perspectives from around the globe. By investigating how scholars from different regions engage with and contribute to the theory, this review aims to shed light on the varying development and utilization of transformative learning across the West and East, North and South. It seeks to bridge theoretical gaps, broaden the

---

[1] Assistant professor, Texas State University, San Marcos, TX, USA
[2] Ph.D. student, Texas State University, San Marcos, TX, USA
[3] Ph.D. candidate, University of Padova, Italy
[4] Ph.D. candidate, University of Padova, Italy

understanding of transformative learning, and foster more inclusive and equitable educational practices worldwide.

In this paper, we explore how scholars from different regions of the world conceptualize, utilize, and develop TLT in their various contexts. In the following sections, we delve into diverse perspectives on TLT across different regions, providing a comprehensive analysis of the current state of the theory in a global context. By critically examining the interpretations and applications of TLT, we aim to uncover patterns, disparities, and potential areas of convergence. Ultimately, this review seeks to contribute to a more nuanced understanding of TLT and promote greater inclusivity and equity in educational practices worldwide.

Methodology

This paper employs a summative literature review (Hernández, 2012) approach to map the understanding and utilization of TLT in a global context. The review begins with a comprehensive literature search, encompassing scholarly articles, book chapters, and relevant publications from diverse regions, including the USA, Canada, Europe, Asia, the Middle East, Africa, and South America. The selected literature is then organized and managed using reference management software, allowing for systematic data analysis and synthesis. Through developing a coding framework, key dimensions of TLT, such as individual-to-social transformations, practical-to-critical perspectives, and global dynamics, are identified and examined across the literature. The findings are then synthesized and interpreted, providing an overview of the current state of TLT worldwide. By utilizing a summative literature review, this paper aims to bridge theoretical gaps between different regions, enrich our understanding of the broader meaning of transformative learning, and promote more inclusive and equitable practices in adult education.

Findings: Transformative Learning in a Global Context

The research findings summarized transformative learning in the the USA, Canada, Europe, Asia, the Middle East, Africa, and South America. TLT has been explored and applied in various regions worldwide. The United States strongly emphasizes individual transformations, critical reflection, and social justice, with methodological contributions encompassing qualitative approaches and the integration of diverse theoretical frameworks. In Canada, the social dimension of transformative learning is recognized, incorporating collective change, power dynamics, and decolonizing pedagogies. European scholars focus on cultural contexts, active citizenship, intercultural dialogue, and transformative pedagogies. In Asia, cultural and spiritual perspectives are integrated, addressing societal challenges through Confucian values, Buddhism, and indigenous knowledge. The Middle East examines transformative learning in the context of social and political transformations, promoting peacebuilding and democratic participation. Africa emphasizes critical consciousness, emancipatory education, and community engagement, drawing on African philosophies and post-colonial perspectives. In South America, transformative learning is applied to management education, community-based

education, and academic freedom. Transformative learning is a valuable framework for personal and social transformation, promoting critical consciousness, equity, and social justice across diverse global contexts.

Transformative Learning in the United States

Transformative learning theory (TLT) originated in the United States with the influential works of Mezirow in the 1970s (Kitchenham, 2008). Over the years, Mezirow continued to refine the theory through revisions and in response to criticism and countercriticism (Mezirow, 1990, 1991, 1994, 1997, 1998, 1999, 2000, 2003, 2006). Despite critiques raised by scholars such as Clark & Wilson (1991), Collard & Law (1989), Dirkx et al., Mezirow & Cranton ((2006), and others, TLT gained traction in the 1990s, and scholars like Cranton, King, and Taylor further developed it into a comprehensive adult learning theory (Cranton, 1994, 1996; 2006; 2016; King, 1997; Taylor, 1994).

In the United States, TLT has been widely applied in various research, workplace, and community contexts (Mezirow & Taylor, 2009). However, there have been concerns about redundancy and the limited scope of TLT's development primarily within North America, especially the US (Taylor & Cranton, 2013). Scholars have noted the need for a broader perspective that includes non-Western ways of learning and the exploration of positionality and cultural contexts (Cranton & Taylor, 2013). To address these concerns, Taylor and Cranton (2013) called for research that incorporates positivist and critical approaches, challenging the dominant reliance on interpretive research in the field of transformative learning. While transformative learning theory has its roots in the United States, it has undergone extensive development, criticism, and expansion. Its application has extended to various contexts, but there is a recognized need to diversify research approaches and consider non-Western perspectives to fully explore the transformative potential of learning experiences.

Transformative learning theory (TLT) originated in the United States and has undergone extensive development, criticism, and expansion. Mezirow's initial work laid the foundation for TLT, and subsequent scholars like Cranton, King, and Taylor further developed it into a comprehensive adult learning theory (Cranton, 1994, 1996; 2006; 2016; King, 1997; Taylor, 1994). TLT has been widely applied in various contexts within the United States, but concerns have been raised about its limited scope of development primarily within North America (Taylor & Cranton, 2013). Within the field of transformative learning, scholars have categorized it into various dimensions and approaches. These include the psycho-developmental approach, depth psychology approach, planetary/ecological perspective, emotional/neurobiological approach, spiritual/transpersonal dimension, emancipatory/social critique approach, arts-based perspective, and metatheoretical approach (Mezirow, 2000; Dirkx, 1997; O'Sullivan, 2001; Taylor, 2001; Hart, 2000; Schugurensky, 2002; Lawrence, Hoggan et al., 2009; Cranton & Roy, 2003; Hoggan, 2016; Stuckey et al., 2013).

However, there are critical perspectives on the dominance of North American scholarship in transformative learning studies. Scholars like Taylor, Cranton, and Snyder have raised

concerns about redundancy and the need for broader perspectives that incorporate non-North American viewpoints and diverse approaches (Taylor & Cranton, 2013; Taylor & Snyder, 2012). They call for a more inclusive and diverse research approach, challenging the overreliance on interpretive research and advocating for the incorporation of positivist and critical approaches (Taylor & Cranton, 2013). Taylor and Cranton (2013) called for research that incorporates positivist and critical approaches, challenging the dominant reliance on interpretive research in the field of transformative learning.

TLT originated in the United States with the influential works of Mezirow in the 1970s (Kitchenham, 2008). Over the years, Mezirow continued to refine the theory through revisions and in response to criticism and countercriticism (Mezirow, 1990, 1991, 1994, 1997, 1998, 1999, 2000, 2003, 2006). Despite critiques raised by scholars such as Clark & Wilson (1991), Collard & Law (1989), Dirkx et al., and Mezirow & Cranton (2006), TLT gained traction in the 1990s, and scholars like Cranton, King, and Taylor further developed it into a comprehensive adult learning theory (Cranton, 1994, 1996, 2006, 2016; King, 1997; Taylor, 1994). Subsequently, scholars like Cranton, King, and Taylor further developed it into a comprehensive adult learning theory (Cranton, 1994; 1996; 2006; 2016; King, 1997; Taylor, 1994). As a consequence, scholars have categorized TLT into various dimensions and approaches within the field of transformative learning. These include the psycho-developmental approach, depth psychology approach, planetary/ecological perspective, emotional/neurobiological approach, spiritual/transpersonal dimension, emancipatory/social critique approach, arts-based perspective, and metatheoretical approach (Mezirow, 2000; Dirkx, 1997; O'Sullivan, 2001; Taylor, 2001; Hart, 2000; Schugurensky, 2002; Lawrence, Hoggan et al., 2009; Cranton & Roy, 2003; Hoggan, 2016; Stuckey et al., 2013).

In the USA, TLT has been widely applied in various research, workplace, and community contexts (Mezirow & Taylor, 2009). However, there have been concerns about redundancy and the limited scope of TLT's development in the USA and Canada (Taylor & Cranton, 2013). Scholars have noted the need for a broader perspective that includes non-Western ways of learning and the exploration of positionality and diverse cultural contexts (Taylor & Cranton, 2013; Taylor & Snyder, 2012). To address these concerns, Taylor and Cranton called for research incorporating positivist and critical approaches, challenging the dominant reliance on interpretive research in transformative learning.

Transformative Learning in Canada

Transformative learning in Canada encompasses a deep, structural shift in our fundamental beliefs, emotions, and actions, altering our way of existing in the world (O'Sullivan & Morrell, 2002). It encompasses various dimensions, including self-understanding, relationships with others and the environment, power dynamics, alternative approaches to living, and the pursuit of social justice, peace, and personal joy. O'Sullivan (2002) proposes three models for transformative learning: survival education, critical resistance education, and visionary transformative education. These models emphasize the development of independence, critical thinking, and creativity among students.

Building upon Gramsci's theory of hegemony and ideology, Allman (1999) explores transformative learning as a theoretical framework for social change in Canada. She views Western democratic power, referred to as hegemony, as an ideology that permeates all aspects of society. Additionally, she draws on Marx's writings on dialectics, conscience, and ideology to propose a revolutionary, transformative learning praxis. Carpenter and Mojab (2011) further critique current critical adult education by reexamining Marx's ideas and emphasizing the need to cultivate a revolutionary conscience for transformative learning in society. Hooks (1999) suggests an engaged pedagogy that acknowledges the holistic nature of individuals and seeks knowledge not only from books but also about navigating the world. Ng (2010) introduces embodied learning as a form of decolonizing pedagogy that dissolves boundaries between the self and the collective and between the individual and systemic realms. Transformative learning in Canada involves various approaches and perspectives that aim to bring about personal and societal transformation, fostering critical thinking, social change, and the integration of mind, body, and spirit.

Transformative Learning in Europe

It has been more than a decade since the first transformative conference was held in Greece, and that transformative learning has been receiving attention from European scholars (Fleming et al., 2019). Many factors have led to a decreased focus by Europeans on transformative learning. The first factor can be attributed to the fact that Europeans have adopted a different perspective on education, concentrating on social movements and advocating equity for poorly educated and socially excluded people, including workers' education, community education, and women's education (Fleming et al., 2019). So, they believe these aspects have been missed in Mezirow's (1978) transformative learning. In addition, most transformative conferences were held in the USA, and the journals were mostly written in English, which made transformative learning sources less accessible to Europeans since the advent of transformative learning (Kokkos, 2014).

However, among European countries, Greece is excluded as it has shown interest in the field of transformative learning (Kokkos, 2014). There was a time in Greece when they started their movement against dictatorship and towards emancipatory goals of education, coming from the theories of Freire (1972) and the school of Frankfurt. Greek people started welcoming transformative theory as it was rooted in Freire's (1972) theory and critical learning. In addition, Mezirow has used a wide range of references to European theories in his transformative learning, meaning he accepted the European frameworks in Adult Education. Moreover, Mezirow has shown incredible openness and flexibility regarding his theory and has changed and modified it based on some rational and logical European critiques (Mezirow, 1990, 1991, 1997). These reasons are why Greek scholars have accepted the second wave of Mezirow's transformative learning. Therefore, the theoretical frameworks of transformative research in Europe were based mostly on the works of Mezirow (2000), Brookfield (2012), Cranton (2006), and Taylor (1997, 2007). Also, European papers consisted of many references from European scholars whose works were related to critical thinking and social changes within education, including

Adorno (1953), Bourdieu (1984), Foucault (1983), Giroux (1983, 1988), Horkheimer (1938), Illeris (2003, 2014), and Jarvis et al. (2003).

European works were mainly centered on theoretical approaches and research to study Mezirow's transformative learning further to connect it to their own educational goal, emancipation within education. They used the theories of Freire (1972) to critique Mezirow's works regarding not having enough social dimensions. Europeans have published some works about higher education (Illeris, 2003; Illeris, 2004; Inglis, 1997), community development (Harvey & Langdom, 2009), cultural context (Fleming, 2000), and professional development (Dominice, 2003). Notably, only one work by European scholars focused on developing transformative theory and learning it with innovative views (Alhadeff, 2003). Therefore, there is not enough work on the implications of transformational learning in different settings among Europeans. They placed their focus on theoretical research of transformative learning and had little attention to the nature, concepts, components, and applications of transformative learning. Most European works on the transformational approach are critical of Mezirow's transformational theory, saying that he underestimated the intuitive and emotional aspects of learning (Fleming, 2000; Illeris, 2003, 2004), the dimension of social change (Inglis, 1997, 1998; Taylor & Pettit, 2007), the collective view (Wilhelmson, 2006), and the impact of spirituality (Preece, 2003), and unconscious modality (Hunt, 2009).

The field of TLT in Europe has historically shown limited involvement compared to American and Canadian scholarship. European adult education scholars have been less inclined to incorporate transformative learning as a framework, instead building on European theoretical paradigms. This lack of engagement has been identified as a hindrance to the development of transformative learning (Taylor & Cranton, 2013; Kokkos, 2012). However, recent trends indicate a growing base of European scholars delving into TLT and offering their unique perspectives (Hoggan, 2020). European scholars are increasingly referencing European theorists such as Habermas, Jarvis, Illeris, Bourdieu, Lefebvre, Foucault, Piaget, and Honneth, in addition to the core North American theorists Mezirow, Taylor, Cranton, Brookfield, and Kegan (Fleming et al., 2019). These European scholars often emphasize critical reflection, social dimensions, and societal change within transformative learning (Kokkos, n.d.). They also explore arts-based approaches, using aesthetic experiences and artworks to facilitate perspective transformation (Kokkos, 2010, 2021).

Among European countries, the United Kingdom exhibits notable activities related to transformative learning, including postgraduate courses, research, and published works (Kokkos, n.d.). Greece has shown a marked interest in transformative learning, drawing inspiration from Mezirow's perspective and connecting it to the views of Freire and other critical thinkers (Kokkos, 2014). Italy has experienced a delayed appreciation of transformative learning due to limited translations of Mezirow's works, but it is gaining recognition within some Italian universities (Biasin, 2018). Germany has engaged in a dialogue between TLT and the German concept of *bildung*, exploring their intersections and tensions (Laros, Fuhr, & Taylor, 2017; Biasin, 2018). These emerging European perspectives offer critical insights that complement American and Canadian scholarship

on TLT. European scholars' focus on social transformation and emancipation, along with their diverse theoretical traditions rooted in humanism, socialism, and critical social traditions, contribute to a more comprehensive understanding of transformative learning in a global context (Fleming et al., 2019; Jarvis et al., 2003). The engagement of European scholars in transformative learning research enriches the field and fosters an ongoing international perspective (Biasin, 2018).

Transformative Learning in the Middle East

The work of Middle Eastern scholars on transformative learning has been limited compared to the work of Americans and Europeans. The research on transformative learning focused almost entirely on applying this approach in their societies. No research was found about examining transformative theory or a critical dimension of it. Instead, the Middle East studied the application of transformative learning in different contexts. In their research, all Middle Eastern scholars have cited Mezirow's works as their main and first reference to transformational learning. So, the theoretical framework of scholars from the Middle East is rooted in Mezirow's work. In addition to Mezirow, they have also referred to other scholars such as Taylor, Cranton, Brookfield, and Giroux in their works. Most of the work of scholars from the Middle East is centered around the application of transformative learning. One study has considered transformational learning in higher education (Madsen & Cook, 2010; Nguyen, 2014), professional development (Romanowski & Al-Hassan, 2013; Hamza, 2010), cultural context (Eichler & Mizzi, 2013), adult education and women's education (Madson, 2010; Fursova, 2014), community education (Affolter, 2009), and English language learning (Safari, 2019).

Transformative Learning in Asia

TLT has been widely explored in various domains of adult education, spirituality, medicine, therapy, leadership development, and the arts in Asian contexts (Lau-Kwong, 2012). Scholars have examined the application of TLT in different contexts within Asia. For example, research conducted in Korea focused on understanding the appropriateness of using Western frameworks, particularly Jack Mezirow's TLT, in the Korean context (Kang & Cho, 2017). Studies have also explored transformative learning experiences among Chinese teachers working abroad, emphasizing the role of culture shock and intercultural encounters in shaping their perceptions (Ye & Edwards, 2018). Additionally, research in Thailand has discussed the implementation of transformative learning in graduate international programs and how it supports diversity and internationalization (Kitcharoen, 2011).

Furthermore, TLT has been linked to other disciplines and practices in Asian contexts. For instance, integrating bioenergetics and Taiji Qigong, a traditional Asian practice, has been explored to enhance wellness, learning capacity, and spiritual development (Ng, 2000; Beaupre, 2011). In the field of medicine, TLT has been applied to understand the experiences of family caregivers in Taiwan and their transformation from negative to positive caregiving (Yen, 2018). Additionally, TLT has been connected to neuroscience, leadership practices, sustainable development, and course settings, providing insights into

the transformative potential of these areas in Asian contexts (Chang et al., 2011; Indrawan & Sofjan, 2021; Beaupre, 2012). Overall, TLT has been widely explored and applied in various disciplines and contexts throughout Asia, shedding light on its relevance and effectiveness in promoting personal growth, cultural understanding, and social change in the region.

Transformative Learning in Africa

TLT is gaining recognition in Africa, with scholars seeking non-Western perspectives (Cranton & Taylor, 2013). African scholars are exploring transformative learning from diverse angles, including the Ubuntu pedagogy, which draws on the *Ubuntu* paradigm of southern Africa (Seehawer et al., 2022). The principle of Ubuntu, captured by "I am because we are," emphasizes the relational aspects of transformative learning (Gilpin-Jackson & Welch, 2022). Scholars like Biao (2013), Keane et al. (2022), and Gwekwerere and Shumba (2021) also incorporated the concept of Ubuntu into transformative learning. Ajayi and Olatumile (2018) explored Yoruba folklores as tools for transformative learning on environmental sustainability in Nigeria, incorporating indigenous spirituality and traditions. In connection with the continent's modern history, African scholars apply transformative learning within post-colonial contexts, particularly referencing the apartheid era in South Africa. Disruptions caused by regular disruptions in a post-apartheid South African adult learning program can catalyze learning and change (Cox & John, 2016). transformative learning is further explored in the context of historical and political challenges by Spooner and John (2020), Čubajevaitė (2015), and Keane et al. (2022). While many adopt a rational perspective of transformative learning based on Mezirow's conception, some studies incorporate the Freirean perspective of emancipatory/social critique (Bergersen & Muleya, 2019; Čubajevaitė, 2015; Akpomuje et al., 2022).

Moreover, African scholars have conceptualized collective transformative learning (CTL) and informal transformative learning (ITL). CTL highlights the importance of collective movements and social consciousness in transformative learning (Mejiuni, 2012, 2017). ITL explores how individuals make sense of their experiences through informal learning processes, incorporating rational and irrational perspectives on transformation (Akpomuje et al., 2022). Studies in Africa also focus on transformative learning in the context of environmental sustainability, investigating its implications in African societies (Ajayi and Olatumile, 2018; Collins, 2008; Dike and Ugwuanyi, 2022; Eguavoen and Tambo, 2020). African scholars employ quantitative and mixed-method approaches in transformative learning research, providing an empirical foundation for understanding transformative learning in African contexts (Ugorji, 2022; Onuoha, 2018; Opere et al., 2020; Ajayi and Olatumile, 2018). transformative learning is being applied in high school education, extending beyond the adult learning context (Okoye, 2022; Opere et al., 2020; Ojukwu, 2016). These observations highlight the growing engagement with transformative learning in Africa and the diverse perspectives and contexts it explores. African scholars contribute valuable insights, expanding the understanding of transformative learning within the African context, both in theory and practice.

Transformative Learning in South America

Paulo Freire first popularized critical reflection and consciousness-raising in South America to counter oppressive elements of reality (Freire, 1970). Inspired by Freire's work, Jack Mezirow developed the concept of transformative learning, which entails changing problematic frames of reference to be more inclusive, open, and reflective (Mezirow, 2000). This theory emphasizes critical self-reflection, dialectical discourse, and the consideration of diverse voices (Imperial et al., 2011). Research conducted in Brazil highlights the application of transformative learning in management education, where it promotes a change in values and the development of community-based competencies (Dal Magro et al., 2020). Another study explores transformative learning experiences with marginalized individuals in Northeastern Brazil, emphasizing personal growth and transformation (Qi, 2015). Additionally, a project in Mexico's prison system, the Inside-Out Prison Exchange Program, examines how transformative education can lead to personal and collective transformation in the face of multifaceted oppression, shedding light on the connection between reflection, conscientization, and freedom (Strickland, 2022).

Conclusion

Transformative learning has evolved to incorporate a broader social perspective, critical engagement, global and cross-cultural dimensions, and methodological contributions from various theoretical frameworks. These dimensions highlight the dynamic nature of TLT, its potential for personal and societal transformation, and its capacity to address pressing issues of social justice and equity. Our findings have shed light on the current state of transformative learning scholarship in different regions. In the USA and Canada, transformative learning has established patterns and frameworks, but there is a recognition among scholars that the field can benefit from the contributions of scholars beyond the region. Efforts are underway to export transformative learning as a work-in-progress, acknowledging that it is a continuously evolving field. European scholars are gradually adopting transformative learning but with a cautious approach considering their Euro-cultural heritage. The relationship between the USA and Canada, and Europe in the transformative learning field is being defined and strengthened, as evident in the shared editorship of journals and the hosting of transformative learning conferences. African scholars are making significant contributions to understanding transformation as a unique form of change that transfigures from within. They emphasize incorporating indigenous perspectives and traditions in transformative learning applications, highlighting transformative learning's spiritual, communal, political, and socio-cultural dimensions in Africa. Some African scholars are expanding the use of transformative learning beyond adult settings and employing positivist approaches. While these efforts hold the potential to advance the theory, it is essential to approach them with attention and caution, ensuring a comprehensive understanding of the theory.

In conclusion, the engagement with transformative learning across different regions reflects a growing global interest in transformative learning. The diverse perspectives and contexts in which transformative learning is being explored contribute to a more nuanced

understanding of transformation and provide valuable insights into the evolution of the field. Moving forward, it is crucial to continue fostering cross-cultural collaborations and dialogue to further enrich the theory and its practical applications.

References

Aanuoluwapo-Ajayi, E., & Olatumil, A. (2018). Indigenous folklores as a tool of transformative learning for environmental sustainability in Nigeria. *Andragoske Studije*, *2*, 29-44. https://doi.org/10.5937/andstud1802029a

Adorno, T. (1953). Perennial fashion—Jazz. In T. Adorno, H. Marcuse, M. Horkheimer, & E. Lowerthal (Eds.), *Art and Mass Culture* (pp. 123–137). Ypsilon.

Akpomuje, P., Akinsooto, T. A., & Mejiuni, O. (2022). Informal transformative learning experiences from humanitarian emergencies and other life events and transitions. In A. Nicolaides, S. Eschenbacher, P. T. Buergelt, Y. Gilpin-Jackson, M. Welch M. & Misawa (Eds.), *The Palgrave Handbook of Learning for Transformation* (pp. 591–610). https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-030-84694-7_33

Alhadeff, M. (2003). Rethinking transformative learning and the concept of 'critical reflection' through the paradigm of complexity. In C. Aalsburg Wiessner, S. Meyer, N. Lloyd Pfhal, P. Neaman (Eds.), *Proceedings of the 5th International Transformative Learning Conference* (pp. 20-26). Columbia University.

Bergersen, A., & Muleya, G. (2019). Zambian civic education teacher students in Norway for a year—How do they describe their transformative learning? *Sustainability*, *11*(24), 7143. https://doi.org/10.3390/su11247143

Beaupre, C. P. (2011). Transformative learning and bioenergetics. *International Journal of Science in Society, 2*(4). https://doi.org/10.18848/1836-6236/CGP/v02i04/51293

Beaupre, C. P. (2012). Applying transformative learning and bioenergetics to a course on interdisciplinary studies of Asia. *International Journal of Interdisciplinary Social Sciences, 6*(6). https://doi.org/10.18848/1833-1882/CGP/v06i06/52099

Biasin, C. (2018). Transformative Learning: Evolutions of the adult learning theory. *Phronesis, 7*(3), 5–17. https://doi.org/10.7202/1054404ar

Bourdieu, P. (1984). *Distinction: A social critique of the judgement of taste*. Routledge and Kegan Paul.

Brookfield, S. D. (2012). *Teaching for critical thinking: Tools and techniques to help students question their assumptions.* Jossey-Bass.

Chang, Y. H., Chen, M. C., & Tsai, Y. F. (2011). Leadership practices case study: Development of cross-cultural transformative learning model. *Review of Management Innovation & Creativity, 4*(10).

Collard, S., & Law, M. (1989). The limits of perspective transformation: A critique of Mezirow's theory. *Adult Education Quarterly*, *39*(2), 99–107. https://doi.org/10.1177/0001848189039002004

Cox, A. J., & John, V. M. (2016). Transformative learning in post-apartheid South Africa. *Adult Education Quarterly*, *66*(4), 303–318. https://doi.org/10.1177/0741713616648376

Cranton, P. (1994). *Understanding and promoting transformative learning.* Jossey-Bass Publishers.

Cranton, P. (1996). *Professional development as transformative learning: New perspectives for teachers of adults.* Jossey-Bass.

Cranton, P. (2006). *Understanding and promoting transformative learning: A guide for educators of adults (2nd ed.).* Jossey-Bass.

Cranton, P. (2016). *Understanding and promoting transformative learning: A guide to theory and practice.* (3rd ed.). Stylus Publishing.

Cranton, P., & Taylor, E. W. (2013). A theory in progress? *European Journal for Research on the Education and Learning of Adults*, *4*(1), 35–47. https://doi.org/10.3384/rela.2000-7426.rela5000

Dike, F. O., & Ugwuanyi, C. S. (2022). Learning towards environmental sustainability practices: Insights from a values-based participatory research approach. *Environmental Education Research*, *28*(4), 581–599. https://doi.org/10.1080/13504622.2022.2036705

Dirkx, J. M., Mezirow, J., & Cranton, P. (2006). Musings and reflections on the meaning, context, and process of transformative learning. *Journal of Transformative Education*, *4*(2), 123–139. https://doi.org/10.1177/1541344606287503

Fleming, T. (2000). Habermas on civil society, lifeworld and system: Unearthing the social in transformation theory. *Teachers College Record.* pp. 1-17. https://mural.maynoothuniversity.ie/1058/1/HabermasTFleming.pdf

Fleming, T., Kokkos, A., & Finnegan, F. (2019). Context and development of transformation theory in the European field of adult education. *European Perspectives on Transformation Theory*, 7–25. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-030-19159-7_2

Formenti, L., & West, L (2018). *Transforming perspectives in lifelong learning and adult education: A dialogue.* Springer.

Foucault, M. (1983). Afterword: The subject and power. In H. L. Dreyfus & P. Rabinow (Eds.), *Michel Foucault: Beyond structuralism and hermeneutics*. University of Chicago Press.

Freire, P. (1972). *Pedagogy of the oppressed.* Penguin.

Gilpin-Jackson, Y., & Welch, M. (2022). Conclusion chapter: Propositions at the threshold of transformation. *The Palgrave Handbook of Learning for Transformation*, 913–938. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-030-84694-7_51

Giroux, H. (1988). *Teachers as intellectuals.* Bergin & Garvey.

_____ (1993). Paulo Freire and the politics of postcolonialism. In P. McLaren & P. Leonard (Eds.), *Paulo Freire: A critical encounter* (pp. 177–188). Routledge.

Harvey, B., & Langdon, J. (2010). Re-imagining capacity and collective change: Experiences from Senegal and Ghana. *IDS Bulletin, 41*(3), 79–86. https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1759-5436.2010.00139.x

Hoggan, C. (2020). Transformative learning. In A. Hynds. (Ed.), *Oxford Bibliographies in Education*. Oxford University Press. https://doi.org/10.1093/OBO/9780199756810-0263

_____ (2020). Defining and analyzing transformative learning. *Labor et Educatio*, *8*, 109–124. https://doi.org/10.4467/25439561le.20.007.12998

Horkheimer, M. (1938). Art and mass culture. In T. Adorno, H. Marcuse, M. Horkheimer, & E. Lowerthal (Eds.), *Art and mass culture* (pp. 49–68). Ypsilon.

Illeris, K. (2003). Towards a contemporary and comprehensive theory of learning. *International Journal of Lifelong Education*, *22*(4), 396–406. https://doi.org/10.1080/02601370304837

_____ (2004). Transformative learning in the perspective of a comprehensive learning theory. *Journal of Transformative Education*, *2*(2), 79–89. https://doi.org/10.1177/1541344603262315

_____ (2014). *Transformative learning and identity.* Routledge.

Indrawan, M., & Sofjan, D. (2021). Co-production of knowledge and transformative learning towards a sustainable Asia. *APN Science Bulletin.*

Inglis, T. (1997). Empowerment and emancipation. *Adult Education Quarterly*, *48*(1), 3–17. https://doi.org/10.1177/074171369704800102

_____ (1998). A critical realist approach to emancipation: A response to Mezirow. *Adult Education Quarterly*, *49*(1), 72–76. https://doi.org/10.1177/074171369804900110

Jarvis, P., Holford, J., & Griffin, C. (2003). *The theory & practice of learning.* Falmer.

Kang, D. J., & Cho, S. (2017). Lost in travel or a different conception? (Mis-)appropriation of transformative learning theory in the Republic of Korea. *Asia Pacific Education Review, 18,* 163-174. https://doi.org/10.1007/s12564-017-9481-x

King, K. P. (1997). Examining learning activities and transformational learning. *International Journal of University Adult Education, 36*(3), 23-37.

Kitcharoen, P. (2011). Promoting diversity through transformative learning: Experiences of internationalization of higher education in Thailand. *International Journal of Arts & Sciences, 4*(8), 301.

Kitchenham, A. (2008). The evolution of Jack Mezirow's transformative learning theory. *Journal of Transformative Education*, *6*(2), 104–123. https://doi.org/10.1177/1541344608322678

Kokkos A. (2012). Transformative learning in Europe: An overview of the theoretical perspectives. In Taylor E., Cranton P. (Eds.), *The Handbook of Transformative Learning* (pp. 289–303). Jossey-Bass.

_____ (2014). Could transformative learning be appreciated in Europe? *Journal of Transformative Education*, *12*(2), 180–196. https://doi.org/10.1177/1541344614540052

_____ (n.d). Transformative learning in Europe: An overview of the theoretical perspectives.

Lau-Kwong, K. (2012). *Triggering transformative possibilities: A case study of Leaders' Quest in China* [Doctoral thesis, Fielding Graduate University]. Research@Fielding. http://research.fielding.edu/2014/02/triggering-transformative-possibilities.html

Laros, A., Fuhr, T., and Taylor, E. W. (Eds.). (2017). *Transformative learning meets bildung: An international exchange.* Sense Publishers.

Mejiuni, O. (2012). International and community based transformative learning. In E. Taylor & P. Cranton (Eds.), *Handbook of transformative learning: Theory, research and practice* (pp. 304–319). Jossey-Bass.

_____ (2017). Sustaining collective transformative learning. In A. Laros, T. Fuhr, & E. W. Taylor (Eds.), *Transformative Learning Meets Bildung. International Issues in adult Education*, (pp. 205–216). SensePublishers. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-94-6300-797-9_17

Mezirow J. (1990) (Ed.). *Fostering critical reflection in adulthood: A guide to transformative and emancipatory learning.* Jossey-Bass.

_____ (1978a). *Education for perspective transformation: Women's re-entry programs in community colleges*. Columbia University.

_____ (1978b). Perspective transformation. *Adult Education*, *28*, 100-110.

_____ (1991). Transformation theory and cultural context: A reply to Clark and Wilson. *Adult Education Quarterly*, *41*(3), 188–192. https://doi.org/10.1177/0001848191041003004

_____ (1991). *Transformative dimensions of adult learning*. Jossey-Bass.

_____ (1994). Understanding transformation theory. *Adult Education Quarterly*, *44*(4), 222–232. https://doi.org/10.1177/074171369404400403

_____ (1997) Transformative learning: Theory to practice. *New Directions for Adult and Continuing Education, 74*, 5-12. http://dx.doi.org/10.1002/ace.7401

_____ (1998). On critical reflection. *Adult Education Quarterly*, *48*(3), 185–198. https://doi.org/10.1177/074171369804800305

_____ (1999). Transformation theory: Postmodern issues. Adult Education Research Conference. https://newprairiepress.org/aerc/1999/papers/29

_____ (2000). Learning to think like an adult: Core concepts of transformation theory. In J. Mezirow, & Associates (Eds.), *Learning as transformation: Critical perspectives on a theory in progress* (pp. 3-33). Jossey-Bass.

_____ (2003, January). Transformative learning as discourse. *Journal of Transformative Education*, *1*(1), 58–63. https://doi.org/10.1177/1541344603252172

_____ (2006). An overview of transformative learning. In P. Sutherland & J. Crowther (Eds.), *Lifelong learning: Concepts and contexts* (pp. 24-38). Routledge.

Mezirow, J., & Taylor, E. W. (Eds.). (2009). *Transformative learning in practice. Insights from community, workplace and higher education.* Jossey-Bass.

Nicolaides, A., Eschenbacher, S., Buergelt, P. T., Gilpin-Jackson, Y., Welch, M., & Misawa, M. (Eds.). (2022). *The Palgrave handbook of learning for transformation*. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-030-84694-7

Oyetoro, O. S. (2015). The realities of teaching entrepreneurship education vis-à-vis the provisos of transformative learning theory in Nigeria's educational system. *Ife Journal of Theory and Research in Education, 16*(1), 94-111.

Preece, J. (2003). Education for transformative leadership in Southern Africa. *Journal of Transformative Education*, *1*(3), 245–263. https://doi.org/10.1177/1541344603001003005

Taylor, E. W. (1994). A learning model for becoming interculturally competent. *International Journal of Intercultural Relations, 18*(3), 389–408. https://doi.org/10.1016/0147-1767(94)90039-6

_____ (1997). Building upon the theoretical debate: A critical review of the empirical studies of Mezirow's transformative learning theory. *Adult Education Quarterly*, *48*(1), 34–59. https://doi.org/10.1177/074171369704800104

_____ (2007). An update of transformative learning theory: A critical review of the empirical research (1999–2005). *International Journal of Lifelong Education*, *26*(2), 173–191. https://doi.org/10.1080/02601370701219475

Taylor, E. W., & Cranton, P. (2013). A theory in progress? *European Journal for Research on the Education and Learning of Adults*, *4*(1), 35–47. https://doi.org/10.3384/rela.2000-7426.rela5000

Taylor, P., & Pettit, J. (2007). Learning and teaching participation through action research. *Action Research*, *5*(3), 231–247. https://doi.org/10.1177/1476750307081015

Wilhelmson, L. (2006). Transformative learning in joint leadership. *Journal of Workplace Learning*, *18*(7/8), 495–507. https://doi.org/10.1108/13665620610693042

Ye, W., & Edwards, V. (2018). Confucius institute teachers in the UK: Motivation, challenges, and transformative learning. *Race Ethnicity and Education, 21*(6), 843-857. https://doi.org/10.1080/13613324.2017.1376636

Yen, C. M. (2018). Models of transformative learning among family caregivers of people with dementia: Positive experience approaches. *Journal of Research in Education Sciences, 63*(2), 187. https://doi.org/10.6209/JORIES.201806_63(2).0008