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About CIAE

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 annual conference.

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Editor's Note

I am honored by once again having the opportunity to participate in creating the *CIAE Pre-Conference Proceedings* and grateful for the interest, support, and valiant efforts devoted by authors, reviewers, CIAE Leadership Team members, and—most especially—our Pre-Conference Chairs, Christy Rhodes and Sara Bano. I remain forever humbled by Dr. Wendy Griswold's mentorship.
Any inadvertent errors you find in this document rest with me.

Billie R. McNamara, MS

Dr. Christy Rhodes

Pre-Conference Co-Chairs

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Dr. Sara Bano

Every year, the Commission of International Adult Education of the American Association for Adult & Continuing Education holds a two-day Pre-Conference prior to the general AAACE Conference. Scholars and practitioners discuss international issues related to adult education, in addition to adult education in various countries across the globe. This year, presenters responded to the conference theme of "Creating New Trajectories for Adult Education" through sessions exploring international educational collaborations, the international student experience, emancipatory approaches in adult education, climate education, adult literacy teaching and programming, and intercultural learning—to name just a few.

In conjunction with their presentations at the annual Pre-Conference, speakers submit peer –reviewed papers for the published Proceedings. This year's Proceedings includes 17 papers from 22 international and U.S. presenters, which comprise a wealth of scholarship. Published *CIAE Pre-Conference Proceedings* are archived at ERIC (www.eric.ed.gov).

The success of the CIAE Pre-Conference and the 2024 Proceedings requires the effort and dedication of a team of volunteers. This includes the CIAE Leadership Team of Jane Teel, Mejai Avoseh, Sara Bano, Marcie Boucouvalas, Michelle Glowacki-Dudka, Rachel Gray, Wendy Griswold, Yvonne Hunter-Johnson, Billie R. McNamara, Táíwò Isaac Ọlátúnjí, Amy Pickard, Anita Samuel, Fujuan Tan, and Yidan Zhu. They selflessly guide the work of the CIAE throughout the year.

We were also fortunate that Sara Bano served as CIAE Pre-Conference Co-Chair, guiding the proposal, review, and planning of this special event. In conjunction, Billie R. McNamara coordinated the editing of this 2024 *CIAE Pre-Conference Proceedings* and designed the Pre-Conference Program. It is impossible to overestimate their hard work and attention to detail. Thanks again to Sara and Billie!

Finally, I would be remiss not to acknowledge the support and wisdom shared with our current Leadership Team by previous CIAE Directors, Wendy Griswold, Mejai Avoseh, and Marcie Boucouvalas. They are extraordinary mentors to many of us, and we greatly appreciate all they do in support of international adult education.

On behalf of the CIAE Membership, I invite you to join us online and at future Pre-Conference events. Follow us at https://www.aaace.org/page/CIAE

Christy M Rhodes • Director • Commission for International Adult Education

Contents

CHANGING THE TRAJECTORIES FOR TEACHER QUALITY IN NIGERIA: INNOVATIONS THROUGH IDEATING AND SELF-HELP

Frances A. Alimigbe, PhD[1]

ABSTRACT: Meaningful development in a society requires a sound teacher education. The Teachers Registration Council of Nigeria (TRCN) is saddled with the responsibilities of regulating the teaching profession in Nigeria, and it plays a pivotal role in regulating and ensuring quality control of the teaching profession across the country. It promotes partnerships with teachers' capacity building organizations across the country through providing guidelines for accreditation of programmes to enable for harmonization, supervision, monitoring, and evaluation and most importantly, to enable participants in such programs to get their status updated in the TRCN database for the purpose of renewing their teaching license. Self-help initiatives empowered by interested individuals collaborates and creates space for teacher autonomy to influence a future vision on teaching, and help build teachers' capacities in emerging issues. The organizations include *One Million Teachers*, *SEED Care & Support Foundation*, *SCHOOLINKA*, *Schoola, SabiTeach*, *TY Danjuma Foundation*, *TeacherX* and a host of others. This study focuses on the various self-help initiatives by well-meaning individuals across the country and how TRCN accreditation is changing the trajectories for teachers in Nigeria. The findings will enrich advocacy tools in advocating for consideration for more individuals to venture into system strengthening in education.

Keywords: Nigeria, teachers, self-help initiatives, TRCN Accreditation

The quality of education in any country is dependent on the quality of its teachers. NCTE (1998) affirms the pivotal role the teacher plays in the implementation of any educational process thereby putting the teacher at the heart of delivery of quality education to learners. Wokocha (2013) affirmed that the quality of a teacher is determined by intellectual competence, mastery of content, teaching experience, skills and dissemination of knowledge and highlights that Mandatory Continuous Professional Development (MCPD) programmes plays critical role in enabling these capacities. Awodiji et al. (2020) buttressed that teachers' quality output is largely determined by the quality of the teachers. The incidences of unqualified teachers that permeate all levels of education continues to threaten the quality of education, (Awodiji et al.). Students' learning outcomes and the overall development of the country is not alienated from this quality.

Teacher quality in Nigeria has been hampered by inadequate training, lack of continuous professional development, and insufficient support systems. Akpan et al. (2009) buttressed that the quality of education teachers deliver is dependent on the constant and appropriate professional development they receive. Thus, emphasizing the importance of Mandatory Continuous Professional Development (MCPD). This aligns with Alimigbe and Avoseh (2020), who emphasized that "one of the best ways to raise the quality of teachers is by building their capacity through Mandatory Continuous Professional Development Programmes" (p. 14). "Continuing Professional Development (MCPD) refers to a set of developmental goals, capacity building and strategies and service delivery for on-going, ceaseless improvement in the pedagogical and professional capacities of teachers" (p. 22). Despite efforts to improve the educational system, teacher quality in Nigeria remains a critical issue. More so, traditional methods of teacher training and development have not yielded the desired results, hence the need for innovative approaches, such as ideation and self-help, to change the trajectory of

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teacher quality. Ideation and self-help could be likened to what Biswas (2015) described as Public Private Partnership in teacher education. An approach where services are delivered by the private sector, with resources sourced from philanthropists, foundations, donor agencies and other private concern. This paper explores the potential of ideating and self-help strategies that are changing the trajectories around teacher quality in Nigeria.

Current State of Teacher Quality in Nigeria and Nigerian Teachers

Teacher education in Nigeria is governed by various policies and regulations aimed at standardizing the profession. Amongst some of these policies are the National Policy on Education, the National Policy on Teacher Education, the National Policy on Information, and Communication Technologies (ICT) in Education (EdTech). The National Policy on Education Nigeria (FRN, 2013) stipulate that all teachers in the educational institutions shall be professionally trained while teachers education programmes are structured to effectively equip teachers for the performance of their duties. However, the gap between teacher training in Nigeria and actual teaching competence remains a significant challenge. Little wonder Gbadamosi and Abosede (2004), inferred that the nation seems to have entered the 21st century insufficiently prepared to cope or compete in the global economy, where growth will be based even more heavily on technical and scientific knowledge. Akintola (2013), gave the impression that the process for human capital formation in Nigeria seems abysmal where the required technical, managerial and professional skills have become evasive and the need to re-invent education system is paramount. Akintola underscored the need for vigorous efforts towards producing competent teachers to uphold the versatility of the teaching profession which requires the accurate identification of indices of developments in the society and the need to move away from regarding everyone who possesses paper qualifications as competent teachers. Akintola's assertion was sustained by Adah et al. (2012) who faulted the inadequacies and inability of some secondary schools' teachers to make simple and correct sentences or prepare effective lesson plans in their areas of specialization. There abound scenarios of teachers with teaching qualifications and certification who are incapable of delivering quality instructions to learners in the classroom. This upholds research findings indicating that many teachers lack the necessary skills to deliver quality education effectively.

The ability to withstand the extremely difficult, complex and demanding processes needed in teaching and learning, is dependent on teachers' capabilities to demonstrate a wide range of knowledge and skills, (Childs et al., 2012). Rafaila and Duta (2015) maintained that, teachers becoming lifelong learners and sharing their expertise with fellow teachers and education stakeholders has potential of addressing the complexities associated with teaching and learning to teach. Similarly, Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD, 2014), buttressed that, teachers' professional knowledge and skills can be improved through continuous professional learning. Abakah et al. (2022) described continuous professional learning as that intricate ingredient required for upgrading teachers' content knowledge and improving their classroom practices. Danso-Mensah (2016) upheld professional development as those progressive learning opportunities available to the teachers and contemporaries to upgrade themselves as educators. Professional development for teachers is a *sine qua non* for acquiring topical and innovative ideas needed in upscaling their teaching, reflecting on their practice, improving teaching and learning and improving personal and professional development, (National Teaching Council, 2017). However, in Nigeria challenges imped teachers from getting regular and needed continuous professional development.

Challenges Confronting Quality Teaching in Nigeria

Olugbenga (2013), related the major challenge confronting teacher competence to what he refers as "the low-brook of candidates into the teachers training programme." This referred to the low criteria and procedures by which candidates are selected or recruited for entry to teaching programs and teacher education institutions, which Aghenta (2016) described as a major undoing of the profession. Aghenta argued that the selection criteria and procedures for teacher education program in Nigeria are flawed, leading to unqualified candidates being admitted, which ultimately affects the education quality. Siddiqui (2010) likened the cause of this challenge to the status ascribed to the teaching profession in Nigeria and the economic resources of the system. Other challenges are: (1) poor teacher training programs; (2) lack of continuous professional development; (3) inadequate resources and support; (4) socio-economic factors; (4) paucity of funds**;** (5) poor remuneration of teachers**;** (6) lack of motivation and orientation, poor infrastructure in schools especially the public schools; and, (7) low budgetary allocation to education amongst others. Remediating these challenges calls for concerted efforts from government, education stakeholders, education enthusiast and all well-meaning Nigerians to ensure the quality of instruction learners receive at school is up to date and can allow them the chances of competing globally and for the delivery of top-notch education in line with the set goals of Nigeria's National Policy on Education (2013) and National Teacher Education Policy (2009) of producing quality, highly skilled, knowledgeable and creative teachers capable of raising a generation of students who can compete globally (Akintola, 2013).

The TRCN, Mandates and Imperative of its Regulation to MCPD Providers

Teachers Registration Council of Nigeria (TRCN) is a parastatal of the Federal Ministry of Education established by Act 31 of 1993 (Now TRCN Act Cap T3 of 2004). It controls and regulate the teaching profession at all levels and sectors of the country's educational system to match teacher quality, discipline, professionalism, reward and dignity with international standards. In cognizant of the vagaries in the teaching profession in Nigeria, TRCN monitors and regulate teachers' continuous training and ensures high quality teaching standards. TRCN programmes includes; Professional Qualifying Examinations for Teachers, Certification & Licensing, Accreditation of Mandatory Continuous Professional Development (MCPD) Providers, Induction of Teachers, Issuance of Letters of Professional Standing, Updating of Teachers Register and Career Path Policy and Professional Standards for School leadership in Nigeria. TRCN continues to ensure that there is standardization, coordination and leadership in the delivery of continuous learning for teachers hence the Accreditation of MCPD Providers**.** MCPD facilitates; promotion, appointment to leadership position, renewal of the teaching license, qualification to participate in teacher MCPD evaluation test and enablement of providers to achieve consistency in the provision of high-quality continuing professional develop. TRCN initiates and encourages teachers to attend MCPD by TRCN or accredited providers. The detailed contents and credit units of respective programmes are determined by TRCN based on the needs of the teaching profession for a given time. Generally, the MCPD programmes cover annual general meetings, annual conference of registered teachers organized by TRCN, workshops and seminars as well as other training programmes approved by TRCN. Once a teacher is certified to have participated fully in a training programme and acquires a higher qualification, such person automatically earns the credit allotment designated to such training to qualify for license renewal.

All individuals, Agencies, and Ministries intending to organize MCPD expected to count towards the re- licensing of registered teachers in Nigeria shall get such MCPD recognized by

TRCN. This recognition is for the purpose of:

- Quality assurance;
- Maintaining a central/coordinated national data on MCPD of professional teachers in Nigeria;
- Complying with the provisions of the TRCN Act Section 1(1), which vests the Council with the responsibility of determining the knowledge and skills required for the teaching profession and raising those standards from time to time. The Act further empowers the Council to accredit, monitor and supervise training programmes intended to confer professional status on teachers in Nigeria.

According to TRCN (2017), to become a recognized MCPD provider by TRCN, the provider shall at least two months before the commencement of the programme formally notify TRCN and attach the requisite information thus;

- Synopsis of the programme.
- Names, contact addresses and qualifications of the resource persons.
- Type and scope of training provided, Venue of the programme.
- List of instructional facilities available for use at the programme.
- Estimated number of participants.
- Instruction/mode of training (physical, online/blended), and duration of the programme- including days and hours covered.
- Sponsorship of the programme/participants and fees (if any) payable by the teachers.

TRCN (2017) stated that, recognition of the MCPD shall be conveyed in writing to the provider at least a month before the commencement date of the programme. TRCN endorsement indicate that the programme has been evaluated and approved and that the approved provider can offer the endorsed activity for a maximum of three years before another re-evaluation. Part of the recognition conditions include those organizers must forward the names and contacts of all participants to enable upgrading their details in the TRCN database. Additionally, the Department of Regulation, Accreditation and Enforcement of TRCN is required to monitor the delivery of the activity to enable the Council to get feedback on the quality of the training. The feedback will also consist of a carefully designed questionnaire administered to participants at the close of the programme to obtain some vital information regarding the training. However, service providers who fail to comply with the MCPD guidelines are blacklisted for two years, and re-application is required after the suspension period for reconsideration.

Self-Help in Teacher Improvement and Professional Development

Self-help initiatives in education are grassroots efforts inspired by education enthusiasts aimed at empowering teachers to own their professional growth through accessible, innovative, and community-driven methods. These initiatives addressed gaps in formal systems by providing tools, resources, and opportunities for teachers to enhance their skills independently. Focused on underserved areas with limited professional development options, these programs established sustainable models of professional growth. They envisioned a cultural shift where self-help becomes a standard practice, fostering a more skilled and motivated teaching workforce. Ultimately, these initiatives aimed to ensure high-quality education for all by equipping Nigerian teachers with the skills and confidence needed to deliver exceptional education, regardless of their circumstances. This paper explores various self-help initiatives in Nigeria as explained by initiators.

Successful Ideation and Self-Help Initiatives in Nigeria

Alimigbe and Avoseh (2022) emphasized the importance of partnerships in infrastructural development and other issues related to education delivery. Governments in Nigeria (federal, state and local education areas) are so overwhelmed, leaving education solely to them will exacerbate the educational divides. This section highlighted specific case studies and examples of self-help initiatives in Nigeria helping to bridge the gap in education to improve teacher quality. Examples of these interventions are; One Million Teachers (1MT), SEED Care & Support Foundation (SEEDs), Teacher X, Bleu Sapphire, Schoolinka, SabiTeach, Schoola Initiative (Cori AI), TY Danjuma Foundation (TYDF), amongst others.

One Million Teachers (1MT)

One Million Teachers (1MT) is a non-profit organization founded in 2016 by a Nigerian entrepreneur to improve education quality in Africa through enhancing teacher professional development. 1MT's vision is to expand access to quality education globally through technology, empowering educators in under-resourced communities. The initiative provides inclusive, gender-responsive education through innovative tech-based programs, aiming to build a critical mass of trained education changemakers. 1MT's approach includes online and face-to-face training, workshops, mentorship, and collaboration with governments and organizations. It has impacted over 10,000 teachers across Nigeria, Ghana, and Kenya, enhancing their confidence in using technology and modern teaching methods, which has improved student outcomes and community engagement. By empowering teachers, 1MT seeks to create a ripple effect, positively influencing millions of students and contributing to a more educated and prosperous Africa.

SEED Care & Support Foundation

SEED Care and Support Foundation, is a non-profit focused on improving access to quality education for all children by supporting the affordable non-state education sector, particularly in low-income communities. SEED works with low-fee private schools, faith-based schools, and alternative learning centers to expand education access and improve learning outcomes. Despite their vital role, these institutions often lack support in addressing educational challenges in Nigeria. To tackle the shortage of qualified teachers and improve education quality, SEED initiated the SEED Teachers-in-Training Fellowship (STiTF). This program provides free online access to world-class teacher training, coaching, mentoring, and employment opportunities. By collaborating with teacher training institutions, governments, and other organizations, SEED aims to build a pipeline of qualified teachers, enhance professional development, and ultimately improve learning outcomes for Nigerian children, contributing to a more educated and prosperous Nigeria.

Blue Sapphire Hub

The Blue Sapphire Hub was established to break barriers and drive innovation across Northern Nigeria, focusing on developing sustainable solutions and building entrepreneurial communities. It brings together teachers, innovators, entrepreneurs, and freelancers to tackle challenges in digital learning and educational technology (EdTech). The hub addresses issues like teacher shortages and economic growth by enhancing teacher professional development through localized online content, webinars, and peer learning communities. It ensures education is accessible to all by creating culturally relevant, language-inclusive digital content tailored to

Northern Nigeria's diverse learners. The hub empowers teachers with digital tools for continuous professional development and data-driven instructional strategies, fostering inclusive learning environments. Additionally, it advocates for supportive policies and conducts ecosystem mapping to identify gaps and opportunities in the local EdTech landscape. Through its efforts, the Blue Sapphire Hub aims to transform education and improve livelihoods in the region.

TeacherX

TeacherX stemmed from the need for teachers to come together, support one another, and enhance their teaching practices, especially during the challenging times of the Covid-19 pandemic was launched in 2020 as "One teacher, one topic," community formed to support teachers. The inclusion of "X" in the name signifies the unique and exceptional qualities teachers bring to the community. It fosters teacher development and connection through technology, primarily using WhatsApp for inter-house-training sessions where teachers demonstrate educational apps. TeacherX is self-funded with additional support from teachers and well-meaning education lovers. It celebrates educators' achievements and has significant collaborative efforts with government initiatives like the Teachers Registration Council of Nigeria (TRCN) and other organizations to promote teachers' well-being and address educational challenges. In 2023, TeacherX members won all major education awards in Nigeria, and two members were recognized among the top 50 educators for the Global Teacher Prize.

Schoolinka

Schoolinka was founded to address the lack of continuous professional development (CPD) for teachers in Africa, aiming to enhance teaching quality and student outcomes. The platform offers accessible, high-quality training through self-paced courses, live masterclasses, and community-driven learning, particularly benefiting underserved areas. Supported by self-funding, partnerships, and grants, Schoolinka has scaled its operations while maintaining quality. Collaborating with government bodies, especially in Nigeria, it aligns its programs with national educational goals, including training primary school teachers in Ogun State. Schoolinka has trained over 5,000 teachers, with 86% reporting their professional goals were met, leading to improved classroom outcomes and significant cost savings for schools. The platform's cost-effective approach has reduced training expenses by over 90% for schools, making professional development more sustainable. Additionally, Schoolinka has influenced policy discussions on integrating CPD into national education strategies.

Schoola

Schoola was created to keep education accessible during COVID-19 lockdowns, initially focusing on assessments that rewarded students for completing schoolwork. Recognizing the need for engaging and interactive learning, Schoola evolved into a platform that enhances the teaching experience for African K12 educators. Its flagship tool, *Curri AI*, uses artificial intelligence to help educators create lessons 45 times faster, offering customization and integration with other e-learning platforms. Supported by National Information Technology development agency (NITDA), Schoola secured $200,000 in funding and now serves over 60,000 users. Despite challenges, such as a pilot with Kaduna state ending due to budget constraints, Schoola continues to expand, partnering with private schools and organizations like International Rescue Committee (IRC) and USAID to improve foundational literacy in

underserved regions. Through initiatives like Lessonthon, Schoola empowers teachers with technology, leading to better educational outcomes and a commitment to enhancing education quality across Africa.

SabiTeach

SabiTeach was founded to address challenges in Nigeria's education system, including inconsistent educational quality, limited access to specialized tutors, and the need for personalized learning. The platform connects students in underserved areas with expert tutors, bridging educational gaps and providing personalized support. It empowers underutilized teachers by offering them opportunities to reach more students and earn additional income. Leveraging digital technology, SabiTeach makes quality education more accessible, impacting over 7,000 teachers and 10,000 learners since 2020. Though independently funded, including grants from the Mastercard Foundation, SabiTeach aligns with broader educational goals, such as improving access to education and enhancing teacher empowerment. The platform ensures students receive instruction from vetted, qualified tutors and offers professional development for teachers, encouraging innovation and continuous skill improvement. SabiTeach also provides flexible income opportunities for educators, expanding their reach and recognition.

TY Danjuma Foundation (TYDF)

The TY Danjuma Foundation's initiative to upgrade teachers' quality in Nigeria was developed to address the significant skill gaps among educators in public schools. Research highlighted that many teachers in Sub-Saharan Africa, including Nigeria, lack the necessary qualifications and pedagogical skills, with nearly a quarter of primary school teachers unable to perform basic arithmetic. Recognizing that effective teaching is crucial for improving learning outcomes, especially in public schools, the Foundation focuses on enhancing teachers' knowledge and skills, ensuring access to instructional materials, and creating a better learning environment. The initiative aims to reduce the number of unqualified teachers, improve pedagogical skills, and provide necessary teaching resources. The Foundation partners with Non- Governmental Organizations (NGOs), Community Based Organizations (CBOs), and government agencies, using a catalytic grantmaking approach that includes Annual and Discretionary Grants. The impact of the initiative includes the empowerment of teachers, improved teaching quality, and strengthened institutional capacity in target communities, particularly in Taraba and Edo states.

Impacts and Future Trends

The impacts of self-help initiatives abound in the many testimonies shared by beneficiaries because, the initiatives are shaping the educational landscape in several ways. Overall, self-help initiatives are likely to continue evolving, driven by technological advancements and a growing recognition of the need for localized, teacher-driven professional development solutions. They will be evident in the increased teacher empowerment, skills enhancement, autonomy, accessibility**,** addressing gaps in professional development, increased digital integration and a platform for advocacy and policy influence.

Conclusion

By examining innovative approaches, this paper dissected some practical solutions adopted by stakeholders to impact education. It presented insights of how self-help initiatives could leveraged to achieve educational goals and quality. The low quality of teaching has direct

consequences on student outcomes, hence, improving teacher quality through innovative approaches has the potential to enhance student learning outcomes, thereby contributing to national development.

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TECHENLIGHT: EMPOWERING TEACHERS TO ADDRESS THE DIGITAL LITERACY GAP IN THE FEDERAL CAPITAL TERRITORY, NIGERIA

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ABSTRACT: Digital media transformed the landscape of information dissemination globally. However, rural communities in Nigeria often need help accessing and understanding media content; this background largely informed the HP Cambridge Partnership for Education EdTech Fellowship (HPCambridge) in Sub-Saharan African countries in 2023, of which one of the authors was a beneficiary. In response to the pressing challenge of digital inclusion, this paper draws evidence from the HPCambridge project alongside its prototype design. Thus, the paper elucidates on the collaboration undertaken by the presenters to actualize the prototype as an intervention in the six Area Councils of the Federal Capital Territory (FCT). Educators will explore different platforms and learn techniques to "access, analyze, evaluate, create, and act" (NAMLE, n.d.). This study aims to bridge the digital divide for rural teachers by grounding its theoretical framework in Van Dijk's (2005) resources and appropriation theory (RAT), which explores how individuals access and effectively use digital resources, and the technology acceptance model (TAM), which explains the factors influencing users' acceptance and adoption of technology. These theories outline the components of technology appropriation. This approach provides a framework for understanding how teachers engage with technology access in rural FCT, Nigeria. This conceptual review will raise awareness of the digital divide among rural teachers and explore how different stakeholders can collaborate to pool resources, accelerating equity and inclusion.

Keywords: Digital Literacy, EdTech, Fellowship, FCT, HPCambridge, Rural

In today's digital age, integrating technology into education has become imperative for fostering inclusive and quality learning experiences. Provision of instructional needs is key to successful teacher practice (Childress, 2014). Teachers receive the requisite professional support to build their capacities and support to function maximally in their expected instructional dimension. Wei (2024) upheld that teachers' competence in information and communication technology (ICT) applications can lead to a deeper integration of technology into the curriculum and improve the quality of education. However, its application and distribution could result in resource inequality and social injustice if not properly managed. Nevertheless, teachers in rural areas in Africa often face significant challenges in accessing and utilizing digital tools due to infrastructural limitations, exclusion, and dearth of digital literacy. Hadi et al. (2022) premised that digital literacy is one of the major issues that underdeveloped areas continue to face globally; despite how technological advancement is changing the world, rural areas remain oblivious to these dynamics. Since the implementation of digital use in teaching is paramount to content of instruction and resources for application according to Addai -Poku (2022), then rural teachers should be brought to speed. Rural teachers play a pivotal role in shaping the educational landscape of remote communities. However, many of them lack the essential digital literacy skills needed to leverage technology to enhance teaching and learning outcomes. Alimigbe and Avoseh (2021) explained that for educators "to effectively and productively enable a technology learning future, some core prerequisites like access to

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technological tools, data availability and accessibility and requisite operational skills, are desirable." There is a need for a robust investment in building their capacities to enable them to function appropriately and maintain control of the teaching process. Their position aligns with Murphy's (2016) assertion that, for educators to fully leverage the opportunities provided by technology-enabled learning, they must have access to necessary tools, skills, and support systems.

This intervention seeks to bridge the digital divide and empower rural teachers to adapt to the evolving educational landscape, ultimately improving the quality of education in rural areas. The COVID-19 pandemic highlighted the critical need for digital literacy in education, as the lack of digital infrastructure and teacher readiness led to significant disruptions in learning-vulnerable populations across the globe. Boeren et al. (2020, p. 201) dissected that COVID-19 certainly increased the downside of globalization by further making "difficult-to-reach and underserved populations face further obstacles" to education. By successfully implementing the design, the project can help minimize the digital divide and develop teachers' capacities, enabling them to acquire the necessary digital skills for effective teaching in the digital age. Additionally, teachers will access continuous professional development online. Addressing the gap in access to technology and education is crucial to ensure equitable and inclusive educational opportunities for all. The project's initiative outlines a proposed intervention to deploy digital literacy training to rural teachers in the six area councils: Abuja Municipal Area Council (AMAC), Kuje, BWARI, Abaji, Kwakiutl and Gwagwalada.

The Federal Republic of Nigeria is a multi-ethnographic diverse nation. The country has 36 autonomous states, the Federal Capital Territory, and 774 Local Government Areas. The FCT is a federally administered territory not designated as one of the federating 36 states of Nigeria. The FCT is governed directly by the federal government of Nigeria and is a separate entity that serves as the capital territory of Nigeria but is often included in national statistics and programs for convenience. Nigeria is home to the capital city of Abuja and a separate entity from the surrounding states. Abuja has a population of 3.6 million people with approximately 7,315 square kilometers. The six area councils of Abuja responsibly provide local government services such as primary education, healthcare, sanitation, and infrastructural maintenance to their respective localities. Of the six area councils, only the AMAC hub serves as the urban city center and metropolitan area, while the other five councils feature serene rural landscapes with emerging towns, agricultural heartlands, scenic hills, and valleys, which are less developed compared to the city center. These rural area councils occupy the land where the original settlers of Abuja were relocated after the city became the nation's capital in 1991, replacing Lagos State.

The intervention, aimed at improving digital literacy and technological resources, will focus on teachers from these area councils designated as rural. The intervention relies on data from a Teachers Registration Council of Nigeria (TRCN) "Master Trainers' Digital Literacy for Teachers" post-COVID-19 mandatory digital literacy intervention (Alimigbe & Avoseh, 2022). Before implementing the TRCN intervention, a Teacher Digital Literacy Needs Assessment was conducted in five basic education institutions within two area councils of the FCT: AMAC and BWARI Area Councils (Alimigbe & Avoseh, p. 14). The pilot study generally revealed that, although some respondents were aware of the digital ecosystem, they had not used it for teaching and learning purposes. It also showed that respondents struggled to integrate digital tools into lesson plans, were unaware of content creation tools for digital learning, lacked access to digital infrastructure, and had not attended any relevant training in the last five years. These challenges highlighted a significant gap in their digital literacy. Therefore, the goal is to

empower them with the necessary skills and tools to effectively utilize technology in their teaching.

Digital Divide

From a global perspective in developed countries globally the focus is often on digital literacy and access to advanced technologies. In contrast, developing countries struggle with basic internet infrastructure and affordable device access (United Nations, 2023). Urban-rural disparities further exacerbate this divide, particularly in underserved regions with scarce connectivity and digital resources. Education and digital literacy are crucial components of the divide, with the COVID-19 pandemic exposing the severe impact of unequal access on students' learning opportunities (Ramsetty & Adams, 2020). Social inequalities also play a role, with marginalized communities, including women, Indigenous peoples, and refugees, encountering additional barriers to technology access. The economic implications are profound: countries with widespread digital access gain a competitive edge in the global economy, while those without it are left behind, struggling to keep pace.

A recent study showed the disparities between urban and rural demographics identified poverty and low-level education as the root cause in Nigeria. The qualitative research, with 30 participants from six geolocations, discussed the negative effects of the digital divide, such as illiteracy, unemployment, and political weakness (Okocha & Edafewotu, 2022). Respondents suggested improving education, strengthening internet infrastructure, enhancing electricity access, and addressing cultural barriers as possible solutions. A literature review on the digital challenges of rural Nigeria further confirmed the difficulties with connectivity, access to devices, and the gap in digital literacy and the article proposed investments in technology and education to close the divide between urban and rural areas (Abdullahi & Muhammad, 2024). Nigeria's National ICT Policy outlines a strategy to implement digital literacy, expand technology infrastructure, develop e-government services, and grow the country's ICT industry (Gwani, 2023). The project has already begun, focusing on expanding broadband and connectivity in underserved areas, enhancing digital literacy education, creating Nigerian content, and strengthening cybersecurity. The ICT policy aims to promote inclusion and equity, bridge the digital divide, and position Nigeria as one of Africa's leading digitized countries, thereby opening up new socioeconomic opportunities (Gwani).

EdTech Fellowship Prototype Design Intervention in the FTC

The HP Cambridge Partnership for Education EdTech Fellowship in Sub-Saharan Africa 2023 launched an inaugural initiative to advance digital transformation in education systems across the region. This seven-month blended and in-person program aimed to increase the quality and equity of learning through digital means. The fellowship empowered participants to build and lead coalitions for change, and each was tasked with designing a prototype EdTech solution for their home country, which led to the creation of this concept note.

In 2023, the Partnership for Education EdTech, recognizing that successful and sustainable EdTech deployment depends on Policy, Technology, and Leadership, selected 25 policymakers and organizational leaders working with governments in Sub-Saharan African countries as the first cohort of EdTech fellows. The cohort provided a platform for the first EdTech fellows to collaborate, exploring strategies to accelerate effective digital transformation across education systems throughout Sub-Saharan African countries. The fellows collaborated to address common challenges in improving education technology, such as connectivity, access to devices,

creating digital content, and developing digital skills. Similarly, during the 7-month program learning from each other and expert faculty through workshops, independent study, and one-to-one coaching. The goal was to empower them to build and lead coalitions that drive change among diverse stakeholder groups. Each fellow's prototype was a critical aspect of the residential program at Cambridge, the prototype and proposed intervention aimed to ensure that each fellow returns to their respective institutions to implement an EdTech solution that benefits the delivery of quality education.

The prototype intervention was designed in phases, starting with developing a proposal and reaching out to the education authority and other key stakeholders in the selected state. This was followed by setting up meetings and seeking material, financial, and technical support. The next steps included developing a curriculum and organizing workshops for teachers, focused on digital and media literacy. These workshops aim to equip educators with the knowledge, skills, and resources to use EdTech to implement media literacy in the classroom, among other objectives. Thus far, the concept note for the prototype has been designed, and meetings with critical stakeholders have been held to secure their buy-in and ownership. The next phase of the Fellowship projects includes finance and digital resource sourcing; the selection of teachers to benefit from the training, and the deployment of the training as well as digital tools to the teachers. Educator development and access to the necessary resources are key to the success of this project.

The prototype's key components include strategic partners, such as TRCN, which will leverage its needs assessment and adapt its curriculum, along with a digital and media literacy expert from Fielding University in the United States. Other aspects are the objectives of the design and key components of the intervention, which consist of training, resource provision, mentorship, support, and follow-up. Additionally, the implementation modalities involve forging partners, training the trainer, using mobile learning platforms, scalability, and implementing a sustainability plan. And lastly are the expected outcomes and resource allocation budget. A detailed budget will outline the allocation of funds across different components, including training, materials, technology procurement, and logistics. A detailed budget, crucial for ensuring the project’s financial feasibility and successful implementation, will outline the allocation of funds.

Theoretical Framework

Understanding technology adoption and its psychological, social, and infrastructural impacts requires an integrated approach using multiple theoretical frameworks. The digital divide theory highlights the disparities in access to technology, particularly between urban and rural populations, where factors such as socioeconomic status and infrastructure affect individuals' ability to participate in the digital world (Van Dijk, 2005). RAT adds depth by exploring ways to access digital tools and the ability to meaningfully integrate these resources into daily life influences technology use. It is important to emphasize that users must also possess the skills and support systems to appropriate the technology effectively (Van Dijk). Finally, the Technology Acceptance Model (TAM) focuses on ways perceptions of a technology’s usefulness and ease of use shape user attitudes and intentions toward adopting new tools (Davis, 1989). Together, these frameworks provide a comprehensive lens to study technology adoption, particularly in rural or disadvantaged contexts where the digital divide is pronounced, and the need for effective appropriation and positive user perceptions is critical for technology integration.

Resources and Appropriation Theory

Van Dijk (2020) proposed the RAT framework to further explain the digital divide, outlining four key phases. The first phase requires individuals to have intrinsic and extrinsic motivation and a positive attitude toward technology. Second, technology is accessible, and third, the necessary skills to operate the technology. Finally, the usage phase is defined as frequency, how often a person engages with technology and nature, how the technology is being used. It's important to emphasize that these phases must follow a sequential order, as each one builds on the previous one.(Boerkamp et al., 2024).

The concept of resources plays a central role in understanding digital inequality. The concept refers to the various assets and capabilities individuals and groups possess, influencing their ability to access, use, and benefit from digital technologies. Van Duerson et al. (2015) argued that unequal resource distribution leads to differential access to and effective use of digital technologies thus promoting social inequality. The paradigm emphasizes that simply providing access to digital tools is insufficient: without the necessary resources to implement these technologies into everyday life, individuals and groups are less likely to benefit fully from digital opportunities, thus widening the digital divide (Van Duerson & Van Dijk, 2015).

Appropriation involves actively integrating, adapting, and mastering digital technologies to enhance individual or group capabilities, leading to more meaningful and effective use of these resources (van Duerson et al., 2019). While resources like technology access are external, appropriation is an internal process driven by motivation and the acquisition of necessary skills to effectively integrate technology. Motivation, which is central to all four phases of (RAT), reflects a person's willingness and desire to engage with digital tools to sustain engagement throughout all phases (Van Dijk, 2017).

Self-determination theory (SDT), postulates that motivation is rooted in the satisfaction of three basic psychological needs: autonomy or self-governing, competence or confidence in one's abilities and relatedness or the need to connect with others. SDT suggests that when these needs are met, individuals are intrinsically motivated, meaning they engage in behaviors out of genuine interest or enjoyment, rather than external pressure (Ryan & Deci, 2019). According to RAT, motivation is essential for initiating and sustaining engagement throughout the appropriation process (van Dijk, 2017). Fulfilling the psychological needs of autonomy, competence, and relatedness directly influences an individual's motivation to access, develop digital skills, and use digital tools in a meaningful way, ensuring successful appropriation of technology (Ryan & Deci, Van Dijk).

The role of psychology is a foundational element of RAT. Introduced in 1974, the uses and gratifications theory highlights that media usage is driven by motivations such as satisfying needs and achieving goals, which are shaped by psychological and social factors (Katz et al., 1973). These motivations also apply to media usage and digital technology, where users engage with platforms and tools to meet similar needs, such as entertainment, information-seeking, and social connection. Thus, media usage and digital technology are closely intertwined, both driven by the same underlying psychological and social motivations (Sundar & Limperos, 2013). Motivation and attitudes, where attitudes refer to an individual's evaluations or predispositions toward specific actions or objects, are key factors in the appropriation process. Attitudes help shape motivational behavior, by determining how individuals engage with and integrate digital technologies into their daily lives by influencing their willingness to learn and adopt new tools (Svenningsson et al., 2022). By understanding the psychological factors

involved, designers can create more effective interventions and support systems that help individuals overcome barriers to digital inclusion, ensuring that technology appropriation can be meaningful, empowering, and beneficial (Boerkamp et al., 2024).

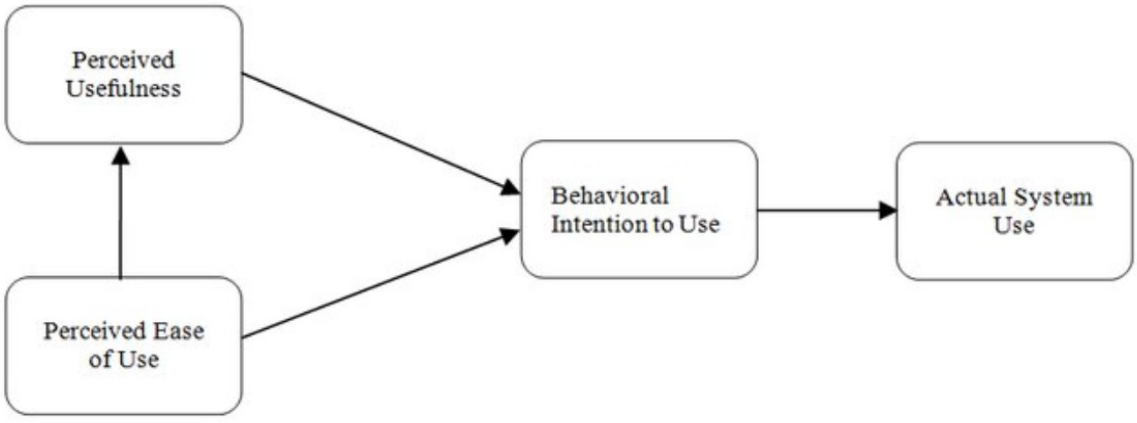
Technology Acceptance Model

The technology acceptance model (TAM) builds on the broader psychological framework of the theory of reasoned action and planned behavior (TRAPB) and explains the behavioral components of technology adoption (Ajzen & Fishbein, 1980). According to TRAPB, three factors influence the intention to perform a behavior: attitude toward the behavior, social norms, and perceived ability to perform it, which reflects the individual's belief in their capacity to engage in the behavior (Buabeng-Andoh, 2018). TAM attempts to predict and understand the motivational factors influencing behaviors beyond an individual's direct control, and to determine how and where to apply strategies for effectively changing behaviors (Marangunić & Granić, 2015). Although both theories emphasize the importance of attitudes and perceived control in shaping behavior, TAM focuses specifically on the adoption of technology. At the same time, TRAPB explains how psychological factors, such as social norms, attitudes, and perceived ability, drive intention and behavior (Buabeng-Andoh).

TAM's two main variables are perceived usefulness and perceived ease of use**,** the degree to which an individual assesses ways beneficial the technology will improve their tasks or performance. Perceived ease of use is the extent to which an individual evaluates the simplicity of a technology, influencing their willingness to engage with that technology. Together, perceived usefulness and ease of use shape an individual's positive or negative attitude toward technology. Finally, behavioral intention involves individuals forming, maintaining, and acting on objectives, which are mental representations of a commitment to carrying out a specific

Figure 1.

Technology Acceptance Model



Note. From "Usage pattern, perceived usefulness and ease of use of computer games among Malaysian elementary school students" by F. H. Naeini and B. Krishnam, 2012, *Research Journal of Applied Sciences, Engineering and Technology, 4*(23), p. 5288 (Maxwell Scientific Organization). Copyright 2012 by Maxwell Scientific Organization.

behavior or achieving a particular goal. TAM's framework explains the behavioral components that drive technology adoption as shown in Figure 1.

Integrating the Technology Acceptance Model and Resource and Appropriation Theory

TAM and RAT together offer a comprehensive understanding of how individuals adopt and use new technologies, especially in the context of digital inclusion and overcoming the digital divide. The integration of their components explains the role of motivation in technology adoption. RAT suggests that before TAM's factors can come into play, individuals need access to technology, including financial, physical, and skill-based resources. TAM focuses on perceived usefulness and ease of use as key factors that shape users' attitudes and intentions toward using technology, which is directly influenced by their motivation to improve performance or reduce effort. RAT emphasizes the role of social and cultural contexts, which can shape perceptions of usefulness and ease of use and adds depth by examining the resources and appropriation process. For sustained use and meaningful engagement, individuals must not only accept the technology but also appropriate it in ways that align with their needs and circumstances. Motivation drives the intention to use technology and how effectively it is integrated into users' daily lives and tasks in both frameworks (Davis, 1989; Van Duerson et al., 2019). When combined, TAM and RAT provide a framework for understanding how internal motivation interacts with external factors, such as access to technology and skills, in shaping both psychological attitudes and behavioral outcomes in the context of technology use.

Discussion

As the integration of technology in education continues to expand globally, frameworks like the TAM and the RAT model offer valuable insights into how mobile technologies can be effectively utilized to enhance teachers' professional development, particularly in low- and middle-income countries.

For example, a 2017 UNESCO study carried out a project in Pakistan and Nigeria that explored the use of mobile technologies to support teachers' professional development in low- and middle-income communities (McAleavy, 2018). The report specifically addressed teacher quality and recruitment through the use of mobile phones to deliver pedagogical content to early-grade and primary school teachers, in alignment with the UN's fourth Sustainable Development Goal: to "ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all" (McAleavy, p. 27). Teacher quality and recruitment are persistent challenges in sub-Saharan African countries. The article explains that using mobile phones for teacher professional development is both scalable and sustainable. The evaluation of a case study in Nigeria showed improvements in teachers' English language skills, a substantial increase in their use of ICT for teaching, and the development of communities of practice among educators. Similarly, in Pakistan, teachers reported higher pedagogical and technical skills, changes in their teaching practices with more activity-based learning, improved relationships with other teachers, parents, and pupils, and increased knowledge-sharing among colleagues.

A 2020 study on a project aimed at re-establishing basic education in Northeastern Nigeria surveyed educational managers and teachers regarding their access to ICT and their technology skills (Adeleke, 2020). The results identified significant challenges: educational managers reported a lack of access to technology; the internet, and professional development opportunities, teachers highlighted poor infrastructure, overcrowded classrooms, and insufficient resources. Very few teachers had access to computers or the internet. The study

suggested that, despite these challenges, low-tech tools including smartphones and applications such as WhatsApp can be deployed to share educational resources and provide teacher training.

Conclusion

Integrating digital literacy training for rural teachers through the proposed TechEnlight project is a critical step toward promoting equity and inclusivity in education. By investing in the professional development of these educators, the project's goal of sustainable development and empowering future generations aligns with their capacity to drive transformative change. Providing infrastructure is instrumental in achieving a technology-enabled learning future for all, regardless of status or location. This proposed intervention is a focused effort to bridge the digital divide and create a more equitable and prosperous future for rural communities through innovative education.

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GLOBALIZATION AND ADULT HIGHER EDUCATION: INTEGRATING INTERNATIONAL PERSPECTIVES THROUGH POLICY AND PRACTICE

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ABSTRACT: The paper explores how globalization integrates an international dimension into policy and practices that shape and inform adult higher education. Through a cross-cultural learning approach, focusing on technological innovations and challenges brought about by migration, case studies present experiences from around the world. It also looks at e-learning platforms and international collaborations that similarly contribute to more inclusive and effective adult education systems. The paper will identify strategies for sustainable global networking and modeling responses to common educational challenges at the local, national, and regional levels, aiming to promote more inclusive, responsive, and socioeconomically integrative pathways for adult learners in different cultural settings. The paper aligns with this year's CIAE conference objectives of raising awareness of global issues in adult education from a transnational, multi-directional, multicultural, and indigenous perspective.

Keywords: Cross-cultural learning, e-learning platforms, migration integration, international collaboration

American adult learning in the modern world integrates international perspectives, cross-cultural experience, and modern technology into its practice. Globalization allowed an extension of access through digital platforms, such as Massive Open Online Courses (MOOCs) and e-learning, offering flexibility to meet the various needs of adult learners. The interconnected globe has also helped collaborate across borders while U.S. institutions shared resources, knowledge, and best practices with other institutions worldwide, enriching the educational landscape. Globalization redefines adult higher education by increasing interconnectedness and internationalization of educational practices (Ogeh & Abe, 2020). In this regard, such changes have a vital role in the benefits of any educational system, from global collaboration to cross-cultural learning environments and innovative teaching methodologies. The education systems should be responsive to these challenges and opportunities presented by globalization since adult learners face an increasingly global world. The initiative addresses issues like course accessibility, learner engagement, and its relevance at both local and global levels concerning job markets. Adult higher education is one of the significant determinants of economic and social development (Chetty et al., 2022). However, migration from international perspectives, cultural diversity, and rapidly increasing technological advancements that challenge educational systems are areas of concern.

The purpose of this paper is to elaborate on these paradigms based on the practices offered in the global context of adult education. The case studies this paper explores consider the role of such practices, providing insight into the issue of education in multicultural settings and the enhancement of relevant policies. The paper explores the background of globalization and adult education, a description of data collection in worldwide practices, an overview of identified best practices, policy, training implications, and directions for the subsequent research.

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Systematic Literature Review

Globalization and the Reality of American Higher Education

According to Giesenbauer and Müller-Christ (2020), globalization has changed inclusiveness, diversity, and technology in adult higher education. As societies of the world become more integrated, dependent, and complex, their respective adult education systems require further enhancement to address opportunities and challenges adequately in a globalized society.

Cross-Cultural Learning Environments

According to Karacsony et al. (2022), schools for adults as a form of higher education have been marked by many changes about globalization. The changes include the formation of cross-cultural learning environments. The initiatives are ways by which one attempts to try and gather learners from different cultural backgrounds so that those people can understand one another and work together accordingly.

The context of cross-cultural learning is usually characterized by components of combined projects, cross-cultural experiences, and international dimensions in the curriculum (Shonfeld et al., 2021). The approach will make learning to be productive and fascinating. Projects developed by teams from different countries may develop creative and effective solutions to global challenges when adopting different perspectives regarding problem-solving.

Technological Advancements and E-Learning Platforms

The growth of technology revolutionized adult higher education through e-learning platforms and virtual classrooms. Technological advancements expanded the boundaries of adult education, allowing learners to access educational materials and opportunities from anywhere in the world. According to Ossiannilsson (2020), e-learning platforms, including online courses and MOOCs, enable flexible learning modes that respond to the different needs of adult learners. Consequently, they provide courses and programs on various subjects and skills that allow learners to pursue their educational objectives at their convenience and pace.

Virtual classrooms re-engineered the education experiences by supporting real-time interaction anywhere in the world between learners and instructors.

International Collaboration and Networks

Higher education development amongst adults also involves international collaboration through the development of international networks (Žalėnienė & Pereira, 2021). Collaboration between nations and educational institutes allows sharing of resources, knowledge, and best practices. Such collaborations often lighten the burden of common challenges in enhancing accessibility and engagement and making education relevant to the local labor markets. International collaboration may be proved in collaborative research projects, exchanges, and curriculum development. Following a collaborative approach to curriculum development, at least two-country perspectives and practices are reflected in the curricula, providing the necessary insights to make the current curriculum relevant and viable for more contexts. The other important aspect involves the development of international networks and partnerships that are sustainable within the frameworks since they form a crucial part of the process for the action on solving problems at the global level in the fields of education and promotion of adult education

(Glavič, 2020). Sharing knowledge and resources would help educational institutions and policy stakeholders develop effective yet inclusive education systems.

Policy and Global Educational Strategies

Desjardins and Ioannidou (2020) noted that implications of national and international policies affect design and actual practice of adult education programs. Fully inclusive, accessible, and quality-assuring policies form the basis that enables learners of all backgrounds to excel. On the national level, policies favor integration for an international outlook in adult education even inspire the effectiveness of education. In this regard, such policies on global perspectives include an infusion of global content in curriculum support, cross-cultural learning environments, and promoting technology in education.

Challenges and Future Directions

The integration into the perspective of internationality in adult higher education has many opportunities and challenges. Other challenges that must be faced mainly involve ensuring that the learning programs are available and inclusive for all learners, regardless of their background or geographical location. According to Alakrash and Abdul Razak (2021), one is faced with the issue of tackling digital literacy, technology access, and language barriers to ensure equity in learning. Other challenges that must be faced constantly relate to the quality of online learning experiences and the needs of diverse learners.

Research Methodology

The research design for this conceptual paper on internationalizing higher education of adults is multilayered. The design integrates a comprehensive literature review with a detailed analysis of case studies and thematic synthesis related to the interplay between global trends and adult education practices. It involves a comprehensive literature review presenting clear grounds for existing global practices and theories on adult education. First, the literature covers some vital areas, such as intercultural settings, and provides a critical evaluation of how incorporating different cultural perspectives enhances the learning of adults. The study investigated attitudes towards multiculturalism at different levels and those that impact the activity of learners and the learning process. The method also analyzes technological developments and how that has expanded access to facilities for adult learners. Higher education is an area in which e-learning platforms and virtual classrooms are a lifeline for breaking this barrier by having adult participants across the world participate in learning processes regardless of the location of the processes. Therefore, it assesses technological tools for supporting students with disabilities in learning and addresses some factors that affect the continuity of quality and interactivity in a technology-supported learning environment.

Another big part of the literature review deals with migration and integration issues. It clarifies how education would provide better integration into new communities and labor markets by showing practices and policies that would be good enough. It puts into proper perspective that the role of adult education in fostering social cohesion and consolidating economic stability needs a recommendation of tailored programs that match the diverse needs of immigrant populations. The second topic reviewed from the literature is international collaboration in adult education.

The literature review includes an in-depth case study analysis that showcases successful international models and practices along the continuum of adult higher education complements

this literature review. The literature review selects those case studies according to their relevance to the areas of focus of the study and their potential contribution towards efficacy in strategies and solutions. Scrutinizing each case study identifies some key factors that contributed to success in each case, such as the adaptability of educational practices towards the local context, the use of technology to facilitate learning, and the development of inclusive programs for diverse learner populations. In all, the case studies present concrete examples of how innovative practices have been implemented to enhance the quality of adult education in different countries and institutions.

A thematic analysis identifies and consequently explores recurring themes and patterns in the literature and case studies about integrating international perspectives in adult education service provision. The analysis supports synthesizing findings and deriving key insights from diverse sources. Themes such as cross-cultural learning opportunities and challenges, technology as facilitators of education, good practices in support of migrants, and, lastly, international collaboration have been detected during the thematic analysis of this text.

Findings

Higher Education in the United States

The U.S. higher education enrollment graphs from 2020 to 2024 show an inconsistent trend in higher education enrollment. The total enrollments for 2020 stood at 19,027,410 students, while 2022 decreased to 18,580,026 students (Hanson, 2024). The projected statistics for 2023 and 2024 show a slight enrollment increase at 18,939,568 (Hanson, 2024). During the fluctuation, the percentage of enrollment in public universities did not stop. The enrollment rate was 72.97% in 2020 and is also projected to be 73.19% in 2024 at public universities (Hanson, 2024).

The constant share of public institution enrollment indicates that public universities remain the dominant ground in higher education. This probably is because public universities are relatively more affordable and accessible compared to other private universities. However, taken as a

Table 1

Higher Education in the United States

Total College Enrollment (Undergraduate & Graduate Students) from 1950 to 2023, Selected Years

Year	Total Enrollment	% Public Institution Enrollment
2024 (Projected)	19,247,640	73.19%
2023 (Projected)	18,939,568	73.19%
2022	18,580,026	72.63%
2021	18,658,756	72.60%
2020	19,027,410	72.97%

Note. From "College Enrollment & Student Demographic Statistics" by Melanie Hanson, 2024, *Education Data Initiative* (https://educationdata.org/college-enrollment-statistics).

whole, this decline in enrollment shows that fewer students attend traditional higher education. The decline might be due to various reasons, such as demographic changes, economic difficulties, and the development of preferences for other modes of education, such as online courses, certifications, and skill-based courses. The COVID-19 pandemic probably crystallized the trend students and institutions moving to remote learning environments and further encouraged flexible learning options like MOOCs and other digital platforms. While the declines in enrollments may be of more concern for private institutions reliant on tuition, the slight increases projected for 2023 and 2024 suggest the stabilization or slow recovery of higher education participation. However, with a shifting landscape, universities must be flexible to students and technological evolution to be relevant within an increasingly competitive educational environment.

Higher Education in England, Portugal, and Brazil

Brazil's higher education sector actively develops international partnerships, especially with UK universities. However, the recent pandemic and a shift of focus towards the Global South have given it further impetus to develop its educational offerings. The TNE programs have grown, yet they still form a relatively small number of students compared to other countries (British Council, 2022). The Brazilian government sets out its approach to internationalization in terms of the best way to provide an opportunity for flexible and distributed learning programs that respond to the changing world dynamics of education.

The higher education system of the UK has the principle of subsidiarity, which means England, Scotland, Wales, and Northern Ireland can develop their specific policies for education. It enables multi-polar management and financing models of regions with a high emphasis on tuition fees and governmental grants. The UK continues to face several challenges, including the financial sustainability of its institutions in the context of inflationary pressures and the improvement of student support (Atherton et al., 2024). It remains one of the most popular countries for international students, although fewer students go abroad than other European countries.

Portugal’s higher education features a high degree of qualification and a close attachment to scientific development. In addition, diverse learning paths are available in the country technical and vocational courses at university and polytechnic levels (European Commission, 2024). Recent legislation has tried to provide easier access and smoother management for underrepresented groups, refugees, and foreign students. Portugal is actively working on implementing an open science policy and enhancing its research performance. The strategy aims to align educational outcomes with those of U.K.

Cross-Cultural Learning

One of the most asserted benefits involves adding a cross-cultural perspective to adult education (Karacsony et al., 2022). Cross-cultural learning environments widen the learners' horizons and improve their perception of global problems. Case studies reveal that institutions that welcome cultural diversity can develop more interactive and pertinent learning modes. Such environments offer more than the chance for learners to become culturally competent and equip learners to work effectively in an interdependent world. Examples of such programs are those that incorporate diverse case studies, guest lectures by international experts, and collaborative projects among learners of diverse backgrounds, which have efficiently expanded students' global awareness and developed their critical thinking skills.

Technology's Place in Education

Technology has greatly been integrated into adult education. E-learning platforms and virtual classrooms rapidly alter how adult education is delivered, ensuring reinforcement to learners worldwide. The study thus provides evidence to show how technology can enable the establishment of inclusive settings by removing geographical obstacles and providing more flexibility in learning opportunities. Indeed, the successful stories shared outlined how online courses, webinars, and other digital resources have helped people across borders learn and develop their professions. While this research underlines challenges to be dealt with, such as assurance about learners having acquired digital literacy and the quality of interactive learning when virtual, they essentially indicate the possible factors that make the educational settings inclusive.

Technological competition has hit U.S. higher education, with companies like Google releasing affordable alternatives to traditional college degrees. Google's work in establishing career certificates is done in collaboration with universities (Robertson, 2024). Such a shift of curriculum responsibilities from professors to external, for-profit entities reduces faculty involvement in course design and delivery. Companies adopt similar models of skills-based programs that emphasize current industry practices. Guild Education brokers employer-paid education benefits, with millions of adult learners earning branded credentials from Bloomberg, Salesforce, and other companies. The transformation to skills-based hiring and online learning is remaking higher education to prize agility, the latest tools, and work experience over traditional degrees.

International Collaboration

International collaboration plays a crucial role in developing adult education. The collaborative models and partnerships between educational institutions, governments, and non-government organizations allow for the sharing of resources, knowledge, and best practices through the formed networks (Žalėnienė & Pereira, 2021). Successful case studies inspire international networks to validate their potential to influence global challenges in education and improve the effectiveness of adult education programs. For instance, institutional partners from different countries have created shared educational programs, cross-border research projects, and combined professional development activities. Such professional engagement not only broadens access to educational programs but also leads toward establishing sustainable solutions for global educational problems.

Policy and Practice

Policies that enhance the quantity and quality of adult education worldwide are reflected in policies aimed at openness, availability, and flexibility. First, effective policies should be incorporated to provide equal educational opportunities for migrants and low-income adults. The policies usually eradicate costs by offering the target population subsidies, scholarships, or free education. The policies also provide culturally favorable curricula and language development for the learning needs of culturally diverse learners to enhance the accessibility and applicability of adult education. Second, accessibility-enhancing policies, including the availability of online courses and flexible timetables, create additional opportunities for working or parenting adults who are also learners. Technology features like MOOCs and various online learning platforms let learners across regions pursue education from renowned universities and institutions (Xiong et al., 2021). Policies oriented toward adaptability firstly encourage active cooperation between countries and contribute to developing programs and

curricula matching the local labor market requirements. Such policies foster collaboration between schools, governments, and business entities, where resources and common strategies for improving adult education are being provided and implemented so that they can meet the trends in the global economy. The policies increase the opportunities and approaches to delivering adult education that prepare learners for lifelong learning in a global society.

There are diverse practices that are efficient in the development of adult education programs focusing on the integration approach for migrants and refugees (Vanek et al., 2020). Some of these best practices include language training programs, foreign qualification recognition and validation, and culturally sensitive curricula. These elements are incorporated and harmonized to create programs that work so that migrants possessing certain attributes arrive in new communities and labor markets. For example, language training adapted to the specific needs of migrants, with scenarios of real-life language use, has proved to enhance language competencies and improve labor market outcomes. Programs recognizing and validating foreign qualifications also allow migrants to acquire the relevant credentials to integrate them into the workforce better.

Discussion

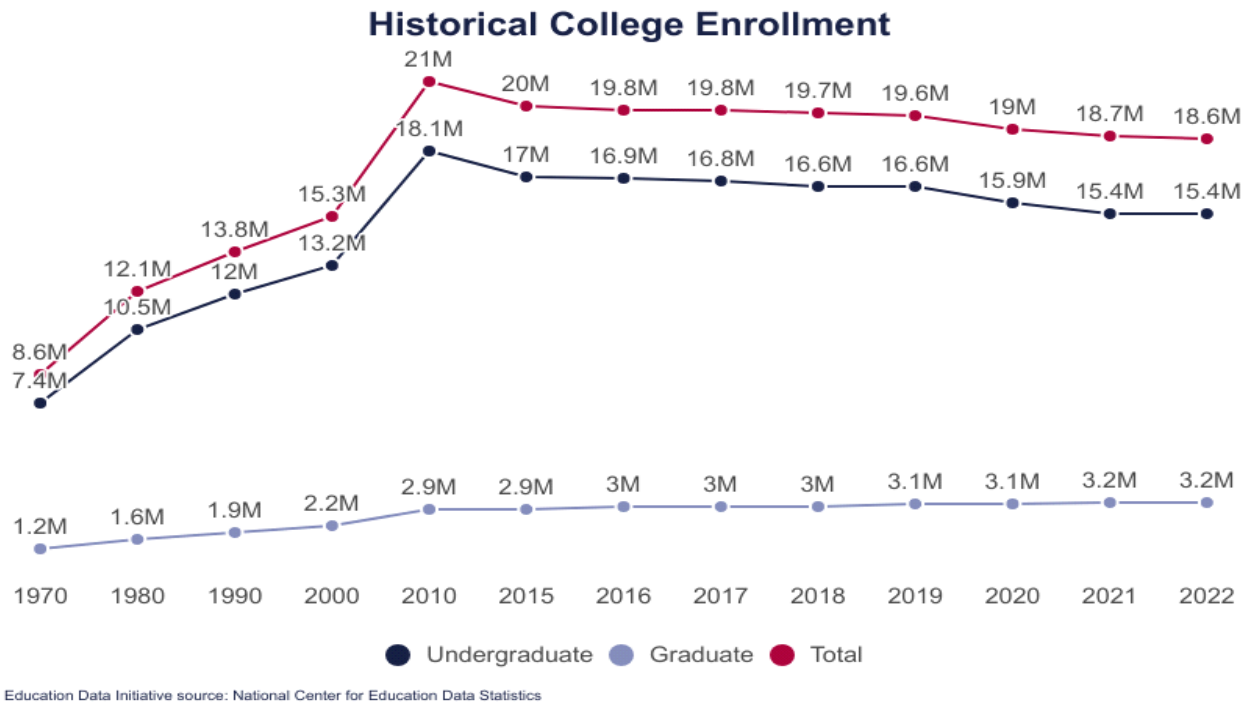
To understand United States-based higher education, one must consider its historical perspective based on existing figures and trends. Figure 1 presents a clear visual of the enrollment rates historically. There is a weak decreasing trend in enrollment in recent years. However, a look at the trend in Figure 2, visualized using the updated data in Table 1, reveals a sharp increase in the last two years. The information is current since it was last updated on 31st August 2024 (Hanson, 2024). The statistics of U.S. higher education enrollments for 2020-2024 show an inconsistent trend, as seen in Figure 2, due to various factors and a stable preference for public institutions. Therefore, the consistent preference for public institutions indicates that they remained consistent and could be attractive due to their affordability and accessibility compared to private universities. The overall decline in enrollment may, however, be due to various reasons. One pertinent factor at this time was the COVID-19 pandemic, which accelerated a shift to online learning in higher education. As a result, student demand permanently shifted toward more flexible, technology-enabled learning options. In the future, universities must heed these changing trends by offering cheaper, flexible, innovative programs as students choose their programs in the increasingly competitive educational marketplace.

The findings from this paper reveal globalization's multifaceted influence on adult higher education. Several critical themes that both support and extend existing literature are identified in the present study. Adult education can address the needs of a global populace through cross-cultural learning, exploitation of technology, effective migrant integration, and international collaboration. The findings show the transforming power of cross-cultural learning environments in adult education. Eminent literature argues that cross-cultural experiences enrich the learning process, increase global awareness, and improve critical thinking among learners. Cross-cultural learning environments prepare learners for operation within a globalized world and foster mutual understanding and respect among individuals from diverse backgrounds.

Adult education increasingly integrates technology. The literature on e-learning and virtual classrooms highlights how enhanced access increases educational accessibility and flexibility for learners worldwide. Technology places no geographical bounds on educational institutions and offers many learning opportunities while fostering international collaboration. However,

Figure 1

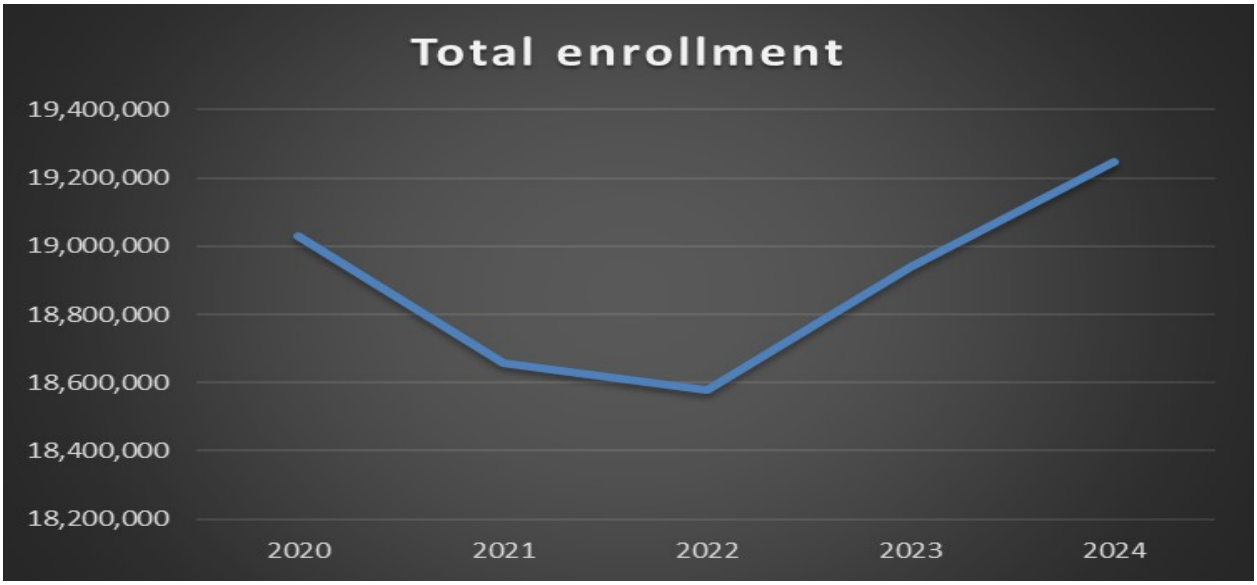
Analysis of Higher Education in the United States



Note. From "College Enrollment & Student Demographic Statistics" by Melanie Hanson, 2024, *Education Data Initiative* (https://educationdata.org/college-enrollment-statistics).

Figure 2

Analysis of Higher Education in the United States



Note. Prepared using data in Table 1 by Raquel Anderson (2024).

the literature indicates that one of the challenges with e-learning is the quality of and engagement with learning in a digital environment. The challenges involve ensuring digital literacy and creating interactive and engaging online experiences.

Literature on using essential measures such as language training, recognition of foreign qualifications and culturally sensitive curricula further supports such facilitation of integration. The language training programs, tailored according to migrants' specific needs, were combined with practical language use scenarios and showed improvement in language acquisition and employment. Recognizing and validating foreign qualifications helps migrants gain appropriate credentials and feel better integrated into the workforce. The culturally sensitive approach in curriculum design shows a valued respect towards students' diversity that creates conditions for a more inclusive and supportive learning environment.

The findings also identify international cooperation's role in encouraging adult learning. Literature has revealed that partnership and collaborative models across learning institutions, governments, and non-governmental organizations enable sharing of resources, knowledge, and best practices. Successful international partnerships translate to joint education programs, research initiatives across borders, and professional training. Such collaboration expands the possibilities of education programs and contributes to elaborating solutions for international educational problems that can be workable and sustainable.

Implications for Theory, Practice, and Policy

The findings have considerable ramifications for theory, practice, and policy. The research theoretically strengthens the imperatives of embedding cross-cultural responsiveness, technology, and international collaboration in adult education frameworks. Educational theories have to change with globalization's increasing challenges and opportunities. On a practical scale, best practices identified in the findings should be implemented by every educational institution to ensure the effectiveness of adult education programs. Specific needs include culturally diverse curricula and better use of technology.

Ideas for Future Research and Practice

Future research must also investigate the long-term impacts of cross-cultural learning environments for adult learners and find new technological solutions to enhance online education. Other areas that could be further developed relate to the effectiveness of specific practices for migrant integration in particular contexts and the impacts of international collaborations on educational outcomes. By contributing to development and piloting, researchers and practitioners can help develop more effective and inclusive adult education systems.

Conclusion

This paper adds to examining globalization's influence on adults' higher education. Learning across cultures, utilization of technology, appreciable practices of integrating migrants, and international cooperation will enhance quality and relevance in adult education. Potential outcomes hold significant theoretical, practical, and policy significance by highlighting a constant imperative for change and learning to address emerging challenges and leverage opportunities accompanying globalization processes.

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NAVIGATING TRANSITIONS: EXPLORING INTERNATIONAL DOCTORAL STUDENTS' TRAJECTORY FROM PRIOR WORKPLACE TO ACADEMIC PROGRAMS

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ABSTRACT: This paper presents insights from a broader study on doctoral students' educational and professional trajectories, with a particular focus on female international doctoral students in the United States. It explores how these women navigate their career paths while balancing the dual responsibilities of academic demands and motherhood. Drawing on feminist perspectives, the study focuses on the experiences of three women from Nigeria, Ghana, and Kazakhstan. It reveals that their decisions to pursue doctoral studies were influenced by both career ambitions and family considerations. The transition was challenging, as they had to balance academic workloads with family responsibilities and help their children adjust to new cultural environments. However, supportive networks—both within academic settings and in the community—were crucial to their success. This research underscores the intersection of gender, motherhood, and international student status, offering valuable insights for policies and practices aimed at better supporting this underrepresented group in higher education.

Keywords: doctoral students, trajectory, workplace, academic programs

Introduction

Over the past four decades, there has been a significant increase in the number of students studying abroad, with international mobility becoming a central feature of global higher education (Beine et al., 2014). In the United States, the number of international graduate students, particularly at the master's and doctoral levels, has seen a steady rise, especially following the COVID-19 pandemic (Opendoors, 2024). The 2022/23 academic year marked a 12% increase in the total number of international students at U.S. colleges and universities, reaching 1,057,188 students. According to Opendoors graduate student enrollment witnessed the most substantial growth, with 467,027 international students pursuing master's, doctorate, or professional degrees. As of Fall 2023, women comprised 51.68% of international students in the United States, a significant increase from 1979-80 when women constituted only 28% of this population (Shorelight, 2023). Among these students, there is a growing cohort of female graduate students, many of whom bring extensive professional experience to their academic pursuits (Gardner, 2009).

Despite a rich body of research focusing on the experiences of female doctoral students (e.g., Carter et al., 2013; Gildersleeve et al., 2011; Jaimes, 2020; Lynch, 2008), there remains a significant gap in understanding the holistic educational and professional transitions of female international doctoral students, particularly those who are also mothers. These students often face unique challenges during their academic programs, such as balancing their identities as scholars and caregivers while also navigating additional layers of marginalization, especially for women of color. While existing studies have documented some of these difficulties, few have explored the specific experiences of female international doctoral students through a feminist lens, particularly in terms of their decision-making processes, support systems, and navigation of critical life-course turning points (Lamichhane, 2023; Murad, 2023). Additionally, there is limited knowledge about the career trajectories of international female

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students who are mothers. This study aims to fill these gaps by using feminist perspectives to understand how their roles as mothers and caregivers influence their career motivations and trajectories. Insights from this research can inform policies and practices to better support this growing population in higher education and the highly skilled workforce.

Literature Review

Academic and Career Trajectories of International Doctoral Students

Perkins and Neumayer (2014) investigated the geographical distribution and mobility patterns of international students, focusing on the uneven flows across different regions and countries. They identified several influential factors, including economic opportunities, political stability, and cultural ties, that shape these mobility patterns. Similarly, Beine et al. (2014) examined the academic mobility of international doctoral students, noting that migration costs, network effects, and the quality of higher education at the destination significantly influence students' location choices. These choices are often driven by wage prospects, living costs, and the host country's capacity to accommodate international students.

However, while both studies provide valuable insights into the macro-level factors affecting international student mobility, they fall short in offering a more granular analysis. For instance, Beine et al. (2014) lack a nuanced exploration of how these factors vary by gender and degree level, which are critical dimensions that could influence mobility decisions and outcomes. The absence of such an analysis limits the understanding of the differential impacts that international mobility may have on diverse student groups.

Chen et al. (2020) contributed to this body of literature by focusing on the professional development and career trajectories of international doctoral students, comparing them with their domestic counterparts. Their research highlights significant challenges faced by international students, such as cultural adaptation, language barriers, and differing academic expectations. However, this study also has notable gaps, particularly in its examination of the decision-making processes that underlie international students' career trajectories. By not addressing these aspects, the study misses the opportunity to provide a deeper understanding of how international doctoral students navigate their professional development in the context of these challenges.

Collectively, these studies underscore the need for more comprehensive research that considers gender, degree level, and the nuanced decision-making processes of international doctoral students. Such research would provide a more complete picture of the factors influencing their mobility and professional development, ultimately informing better policies and support systems tailored to their needs.

Academic and Career Trajectories of Female Doctoral Students

The experiences of female doctoral students have been the focus of a substantial body of literature, with many studies examining the challenges they face in balancing academic careers with family responsibilities. For instance, Lee and Bami (2017) explored the emotional and practical struggles these women endure, including the pressures of cultural expectations, gender roles, and the lack of institutional support. Their findings underscore the difficulties female doctoral students face in managing their dual roles as scholars and caregivers. Similarly, studies have analyzed how marriage and parenthood impact the academic careers of graduate students,

particularly women, arguing that the traditional structure of graduate education often fails to accommodate the needs of those juggling family responsibilities alongside their studies (Brown & Watson, 2010; Mason & Goulden, 2004; Mirick & Wladkowski, 2018).

Female doctoral students who are also mothers frequently encounter significant challenges in navigating their academic environments. Studies by Carter et al. (2013), Jaimes (2020), and Lynch (2008) highlighted the struggle these women face in seeking belonging within their academic programs, validating their scholarly capabilities, and balancing their identities as both mothers and scholars. This dissonance between fulfilling academic demands and maternal responsibilities can lead to increased stress and, in some cases, attrition from academic programs. Moreover, female doctoral students of color may experience additional layers of marginalization and discrimination, encountering more oppressive and dehumanizing environments in academia due to endemic racism (Gildersleeve et al., 2011).

Recent research suggests that some female doctoral students find empowerment by engaging with epistemological frameworks like Black feminism and methodological tools such as collaborative ethnography and autoethnography. These approaches enable them to challenge patriarchal assumptions about the roles of women, scholars, and mothers (Grant, 2021; Phu, 2020). However, while these studies provide valuable insights, they primarily focus on domestic students and do not fully explore the unique challenges faced by international female doctoral students who are mothers.

Academic and Career Trajectories of International Female Doctoral Students

Research specifically addressing the experiences of international female doctoral students who are mothers is sparse. Murad (2023) examined the challenges and support systems for international doctoral students with children, focusing on their academic and social engagement. Lamichhane (2023) similarly explored the experiences of female graduate students who were mothers in Australian higher education. These studies begin to address the intersection of international student status, motherhood, and academic career trajectories, but they do not delve deeply into how these factors intersect to shape the unique experiences and career paths of this group.

Gaps in Literature and Rationale for Our Study

Despite the growing body of research on female doctoral students, there remains a significant gap in the literature regarding the experiences of international female doctoral students who are mothers, particularly in terms of how children and family responsibilities impact their academic and career trajectories. Existing studies have largely overlooked how these women navigate the complex transitions between countries, degree programs, and varying social and academic cultures. Moreover, there is limited understanding of how their roles as mothers and caregivers influence their decision-making processes, support systems, and career motivations.

Our study aims to fill this gap by exploring the experiences of international female doctoral students who are mothers, focusing on how they make decisions and receive support at critical life-course turning points. By examining these intersections, our research seeks to contribute to a more nuanced understanding of the challenges and opportunities faced by this underrepresented group, ultimately informing policies and practices that can better support their academic and professional development.

Theoretical Perspectives

Feminist perspectives have emerged as a crucial lens for examining the specific life experiences of female graduate students, particularly in the context of their academic and career trajectories. We used feminist perspectives to investigate the academic and career trajectories of international female students who are mothers. Cook and Fonow (1986) established a foundational framework that outlines five key principles for analyzing feminism within sociology: (1) acknowledging the impact of gender on women's experiences, (2) raising awareness among women about their life transitions, (3) rejecting the objectification of women in research, (4) critically evaluating the ethical considerations of involving female participants in research, and (5) empowering women, policymakers, and activists to advocate for transformative changes in women's rights. These principles have been adapted and expanded by scholars to challenge traditional notions in qualitative research, enabling a deeper exploration of gendered experiences (Palmer et al., 2022). This feminist framework is well-suited for our study since it provides the tools necessary for a nuanced understanding of the intersectionality of gender, motherhood, and international student status. We argue that this framework is particularly relevant as it enables an exploration of how these women's identities are shaped by, and in turn shape, their academic and career trajectories in the context of systemic gendered, cultural, and institutional dynamics.

Research Methodology

The qualitative research methodology was employed to explore the nuanced experiences of women through feminist lens. For our ongoing project we conducted semi-structured interviews with eight participants at an R1 university in the Midwest United States, focusing on international doctoral students' academic and career trajectories. For this paper, we decided to focus on three female international doctoral students who are mothers. The decision to focus on three participants from the total pool of eight was driven by the desire to provide a more detailed and in-depth analysis of their unique experiences as international female doctoral students who are also mothers. By narrowing our focus, we were able to delve deeply into the specific challenges and transitions these women face, allowing for a richer narrative that captures the complexity of their academic and career trajectories. Additionally, their diverse backgrounds—from three different countries in West Africa and Central Asia—offered a valuable comparative perspective, highlighting the intersection of cultural, academic, and familial influences on their experiences. This focused approach aligns with the qualitative nature of the study, enabling a more nuanced understanding of the issues at hand.

The participants in this study pursued their doctoral programs at different stages of their lives as mothers. Sophia had her child before starting her PhD, entering the program as a single mother. Olivia also had her children before beginning her doctoral studies, bringing her family with her

Table 1

Sample Demographic Information

Pseudonym	Gender	Country of Origin	Field of Study
Olivia	Female	Nigeria	Teacher Education
Sophia	Female	Ghana	Educational Psychology
Mia	Female	Kazakhstan	Educational Administration

as she transitioned into the academic environment. Mia had her children prior to pursuing her PhD, after gaining significant professional experience. Each participant entered their doctoral programs with the responsibilities of motherhood already in place.

The data analysis process involved all three research team members independently reviewing the interview transcripts to identify key themes and codes related to the participants' academic and social integration (Saldaña, 2021). To ensure consistency in coding and enhance the reliability of our analysis, the team held discussions to reach consensus on the codes for each participant's narrative. We adopted narrative analysis to examine and reconstruct the participants' experiences, offering a comprehensive understanding of their unique educational and professional journeys (Jeong-Hee, 2016).

Findings

Motivations and Considerations for Career Move

For our three participants, the decision to pursue a doctoral program in the United States was influenced by a combination of personal ambitions, professional goals, and the perceived advantages of the US higher education system. Additionally, the participants' aspirations for their children's futures played a significant role in their decision-making process, making the move to the US not just a career choice but a strategic family decision.

One of the primary motivations for Olivia was her passion for teaching and the desire to influence education policy. She explained that her experience as a teacher in Nigeria led her to realize the importance of teacher education and policymaking. She was motivated by the need to "have a voice" in how education is shaped in her context, especially in a system where she observed that "people that were positioned as experts on… African schools were not African people or non-Nigerian people". Olivia's decision to pursue a Ph.D. was largely driven by her aspiration to be in the rooms "where important conversations are being had and decisions are being made"

Sophia was motivated by a lifelong ambition to become a university lecturer, a goal she had set during her undergraduate studies. Her experience working at a research center during her national service in Ghana reinforced this ambition, as she was inspired by the women researchers who "had gone to school, gotten their PhDs, and were doing serious high-level national research." This experience solidified her decision to pursue a Ph.D., as she sought to contribute to academia and inspire others in her field.

For these women, the decision to pursue a doctoral degree was deeply influenced by considerations for their children. Mia initially planned to pursue a PhD before starting a family, but her circumstances changed during her master's program when she got married and had two children. She reflected on how "with the children in the family, everything slows down," recognizing that "having a family is different." Consequently, Mia decided to delay her PhD plans, understanding that the demands of raising a family required her to reassess the timing and feasibility of furthering her academic career.

Sophia shared a similar experience, recalling that during her master's program, she didn't have a child and could "just pack my bag and go." Now, as a mother with a toddler, she acknowledged that she "just can't move around" as freely. However, Sophia saw this not as a challenge but as a blessing, emphasizing that "having a child in itself is a blessing" helps her

feel that she is "never lonely." This shift in perspective shaped her motivation for pursuing a PhD, as she embraced motherhood as an enriching aspect of her academic journey rather than an obstacle.

Olivia also made her decision with careful consideration of its impact on her children. She strategically timed her PhD to align with her children's transitions in school, such as moving from middle to high school, noting, "It felt like a good time to move" to minimize disruption to their social and educational lives. Olivia was also driven by a desire to set a positive example for her daughters, demonstrating that it is possible to pursue and achieve academic and professional goals while managing family responsibilities. Her focus on her children's future underscored her belief in the importance of being "a role model" who shows that one can "pursue what you love in different ways."

Challenges of Career Transition as Mothers

The transition into doctoral programs as mothers presented a unique set of challenges for the women interviewed, including the socio-cultural adjustment of their children, balancing academic and family responsibilities, and the physical and emotional toll of cross-cultural transitions.

One of the most significant challenges these mothers faced was helping their children adjust to a new cultural environment. Olivia shared that her oldest daughter particularly struggled with making friends and integrating into a new social setting. The move disrupted established social networks, and her daughter found it difficult to join existing friend groups, especially in a context where many peers had known each other since childhood. Olivia described the emotional difficulty of watching her child navigate this transition, explaining that "you can't follow her to school and help her talk to someone… she has to figure it out" on her own. The adjustment was further complicated by cultural differences, such as accents and backgrounds, which made the transition even more challenging for her children.

In addition to family responsibilities, balancing the demands of a rigorous academic program presented another significant challenge for the participants. Olivia described her PhD as requiring her to be "almost constantly in [her] brain space," managing an intense workload while also caring for her family. She recalled, "The first year in particular, I remember there was just so much reading… I was exhausted but also excited." Despite the support of her husband, who shared household and parenting duties, the demands of her academic workload often required long hours of study and writing, which inevitably took time away from her family.

The physical and emotional toll of cross-cultural transitions was another major challenge. Olivia spoke candidly about the mental effort required to adapt to a new cultural environment, even though she had previously lived in the United States. She noted that adjusting to the cultural nuances of a different region and academic setting was exhausting, sometimes feeling like a "performance" where she had to remain constantly vigilant about how she was perceived and whether she was adhering to unfamiliar social norms.

This emotional strain was intensified by the physical distance from her extended family and support network back in her home country. Olivia expressed how the absence of close family members, such as her parents and siblings, heightened her sense of isolation and made the adjustment period more challenging. "It's just me and my family here," she reflected,

underscoring the emotional burden of being far from home and the difficulty of building a new support system in a foreign country.

Supportive Networks and Community Engagement

Supportive networks and community engagement played a crucial role in the success of Olivia, Sophia, and Mia during their doctoral journeys. These networks provided essential emotional, academic, and practical support, helping them navigate the challenges of being international students and mothers.

In their academic environments, the participants found mentors, peers, and institutional resources vital to their success. Olivia emphasized the importance of her advisor, stating, "My advisor was really my lifeline… she was always there to guide me." Similarly, Sophia highlighted the support she received from faculty and peers at her university, who helped her find daycare and connected her with other mothers, providing both practical help and a sense of community.

Beyond academia, religious and social communities were crucial for emotional and logistical support. Mia, who faced isolation during the pandemic, relied heavily on her church community. "My church was like a second family… they were there for me when things got tough," she shared. Sophia also found strength in an African church near campus, which offered spiritual support and practical assistance, helping her manage her dual roles as a student and single mother.

International student networks provided a shared space for connection and support. Olivia found camaraderie among fellow international students, noting, "We were all in the same boat… It really helped to have people who understood exactly what I was going through." Mia echoed this sentiment, praising the international student activities at her university for offering a sense of community during challenging times.

These supportive networks were instrumental in the participants' academic and personal success. They offered practical assistance, emotional support, and a sense of belonging, which helped the participants navigate the pressures of their dual roles. As Olivia reflected, "Knowing that I wasn't alone, that there were people rooting for me, made all the difference."

Conclusion and Implications

This study sheds light on the complex and multifaceted experiences of female international doctoral students who navigate the intersecting challenges of academia and motherhood within the U.S. higher education system. The findings reveal that these women's decisions to pursue doctoral studies were not merely driven by academic and professional ambitions but were also deeply intertwined with considerations for their families, particularly their children's futures. Their journeys highlight the critical role of supportive networks—both academic and community-based—in mitigating the challenges they face, such as balancing intense academic demands with caregiving responsibilities and managing the cultural transitions their children undergo.

The implications of this study are significant for higher education institutions seeking to better support this underrepresented demographic. Universities should consider developing targeted support programs that address the unique needs of female international doctoral students who

are also mothers. Such programs could include more flexible academic schedules, enhanced childcare support, and culturally sensitive advising that takes into account the dual roles these women navigate. Furthermore, fostering strong, inclusive communities within academic institutions can provide much-needed emotional and practical support, which is crucial for the well-being and success of these students.

Additionally, this study underscores the importance of integrating feminist perspectives into the development of institutional policies and practices. By recognizing the specific challenges faced by female international doctoral students, particularly those related to gender, motherhood, and cultural transitions, universities can create more equitable and supportive environments that enable these students to thrive academically and professionally. This approach not only benefits the individual students but also enriches the academic community by fostering diverse perspectives and experiences.

In conclusion, this research contributes to the growing body of literature on the intersectionality of gender, motherhood, and international student status, offering insights that can inform the development of more nuanced and effective support systems. By addressing the specific challenges highlighted in this study, higher education institutions can better serve this unique population, ultimately enhancing their academic experiences and professional trajectories.

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ASSESSING DOCUMENTATION AND LEARNINGS ABOUT WOMEN'S HISTORY IN TWO MUSEUMS IN OSUN STATE, NIGERIA

Dr. Adejoke Clara Babalola[1]

ABSTRACT: This study focused on the different types of documentation about women's history in museums in Osun State, Nigeria. The study identified the types of documentation available about women in the museums. In addition, it assessed how women were represented in museums documentation and examined how the museum visitors viewed the documentation. Findings revealed that there was considerable documentation about women's history in museums in Osun State. The findings showed that some representations were on great women who had contributed immensely to the betterment of their nation. Although some women were presented as weak, some were viewed as traitors, wicked or as helpers/subordinates to men. In addition, some visitors, especially women, felt they were being relegated and disrespected. It can therefore be concluded that while there is representation about women's history in museums, it was glaring that the documentation was not even in the visibility given to men which actually reinforced the patriarchal orientation of the country. History about women could be a way to inspire women generally. This study equally advocates museum study in Nigeria especially to boost government's efforts at encouraging adult and lifelong learning.

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EFFECTIVE ACTIVITIES IMPACTING BOTH INTERNATIONAL AND NON-INTERNATIONAL STUDENTS

Dr. Waynne B. James[1]

ABSTRACT: This session will share my most effective ways of being a professor who has worked with many learners who are both international students and those students who interact with the international students. My most effective activities for changing perceptions about international students will be shared. Through my years as a professor, I have worked with hundreds of international students and introduced hundreds more students to international students. I have found many activities to be extremely effective, although occasionally a few students are so biased, nothing works.

Keywords: changing perceptions, biases, international students

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INTERNATIONAL EDUCATION HUBS: PERSPECTIVES AND REFLECTIONS ON A NOVEL APPROACH TO UNIVERSITY PARTNERSHIPS, COLLABORATIONS, AND CROSS-CULTURAL ADULT LEARNING AND TEACHING

Joellen E. Coryell[1] and Monica Fedeli[2]

ABSTRACT: In this presentation and conference proceedings paper, we discuss a pilot program for international education and examine the development and preliminary assessment of an international education hub between Texas State University (TXST), USA and the Università degli Studi di Padova (UNIPD), Italy. Launched in 2024, the TXST-UNIPD hub (henceforth called the hub) aimed to foster cross-institutional collaboration, student and faculty exchanges, and global learning. A survey conducted among the 32 participating students revealed themes of increased confidence, adaptability, and cultural awareness, while faculty feedback underscored the value of team-teaching and deeper student integration. A logic model guided reflection on the program's benefits, including enhanced cross-cultural communication and academic content application. Challenges included limited student interaction with locals and the need for structured collaboration. Moving forward, the hub will focus on enhancing cross-cultural engagement and refining curricular strategies to support both undergraduate and graduate education, ensuring sustainable and meaningful international learning experiences.

Keywords: international education hubs, higher education partnerships, cross-cultural adult learning and teaching

In 2019, Bates-Gallup conducted a national study titled, *Forging Pathways to Purposeful Work: The Role of Higher Education*. In this report, A. Clayton Spencer, President of Bates College, asserted, "For higher education, the accelerating rate of change means that it is no longer sufficient or even plausible to prepare our students for lives based on a notion of 'career' as a stable and well-defined pathway through working life" (p. 1). The report also suggested that most graduates were likely to hold more than 11 distinct jobs before the age of 50.3 years, and that growing global interdependence will require graduates to be "equipped to navigate a complex and highly competitive labor market and world…with agency and adaptability" needed to thrive (p. 2). As such, international cross-cultural learning and development is an important component of finding purposeful work and developing adaptability and agency in students' lives and careers. Learning and development opportunities for meaningful work in this era of change will need to be collaborative across institutions of higher education as well as communities, organizations, businesses, and governments.

International education hubs are an approach to inter-institutional partnerships and cross-cultural learning and teaching experiences in higher education. A hub is an access point to a world of potentially significant impact that can bring two or more universities' faculty, students, and local communities together in dialogue and joint activities to collaborate, to learn, to construct, and to discover. These hubs are opportunities to build a network of significant, enduring partnerships with peer institutions in strategic locations around the world that provide support for student interactions and exchanges, faculty collaborations, and potentially alumni integration (for an extensive discussion on international education hubs, see Knight, 2014). Further, they can build linkages to policymakers, non-governmental organizations, private sector actors, and local communities. In addition, international education hubs may support more faculty and students to go abroad to geographically diverse locales by reducing barriers to

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accessing quality programs and learning and research opportunities with local partners and communities (Global Cornell, n.d.).

We, the authors, first met at the American Association for Adult and Continuing Education in 2010 and immediately learned we had similar research and teaching interests. That began almost 15 years of research and teaching collaborations including additional faculty and students at our universities. Texas State University (TXST) in the United States and the Università degli Studi di Padova (UNIPD) in Italy have enjoyed partnership experiences beginning with a memorandum of understanding in 2014 and resulting in extensive collaborative adult and higher education research and student and faculty mobility between the two institutions. Given the long-running, highly successful partnership in scholarship and teaching, and our own current roles in higher education leadership, we believed an international education hub could be a natural next step.

In early fall 2023, TXST and UNIPD engaged in planning meetings to discuss an international education hub program. We were interested in identifying customized, valuable, and reliable support for study abroad courses and exchange programs between our universities and to engage in enhanced international, interdisciplinary, and cultural exchange. Using a logic model structure (W. K. Kellogg Foundation, 2004) to identify the resources and inputs, potential pre- and on-going hub activities, likely outputs, aspirational outcomes, and envisioned impact, we planned a 3-week timeframe in summer 2024 for TXST faculty and students to travel to Padova to engage in coursework and to live and learn in the community and with UNIPD students and faculty.

Planning for a Cross-University International Education Hub

In summer 2023, TXST had recently hired a new Vice President for International Affairs and Online Learning. One of his goals was to develop international education hubs for more TXST students and faculty to engage in affordable international, cross-cultural learning than the university had in previous decades. Given the long-standing partnership already between the two universities, TXST invited UNIPD to discuss the possibility of developing an international education hub. Joellen, who would be directing the possible hub, began by constructing a logic model to identify and outline what each university had brought to the partnership in the previous 10 years, as well as potential hub activities, benefits, and impacts that both universities might enjoy if we added an international education hub to our partnership. In that initial meeting, Monica invited UNIPD leadership associated with internationalization and teaching, and Joellen invited TXST's leadership in international affairs to discuss the definition of international education hubs and a few examples of hubs from other university partnerships. Joellen then introduced the five areas of the logic model illustrated in Figure 1.

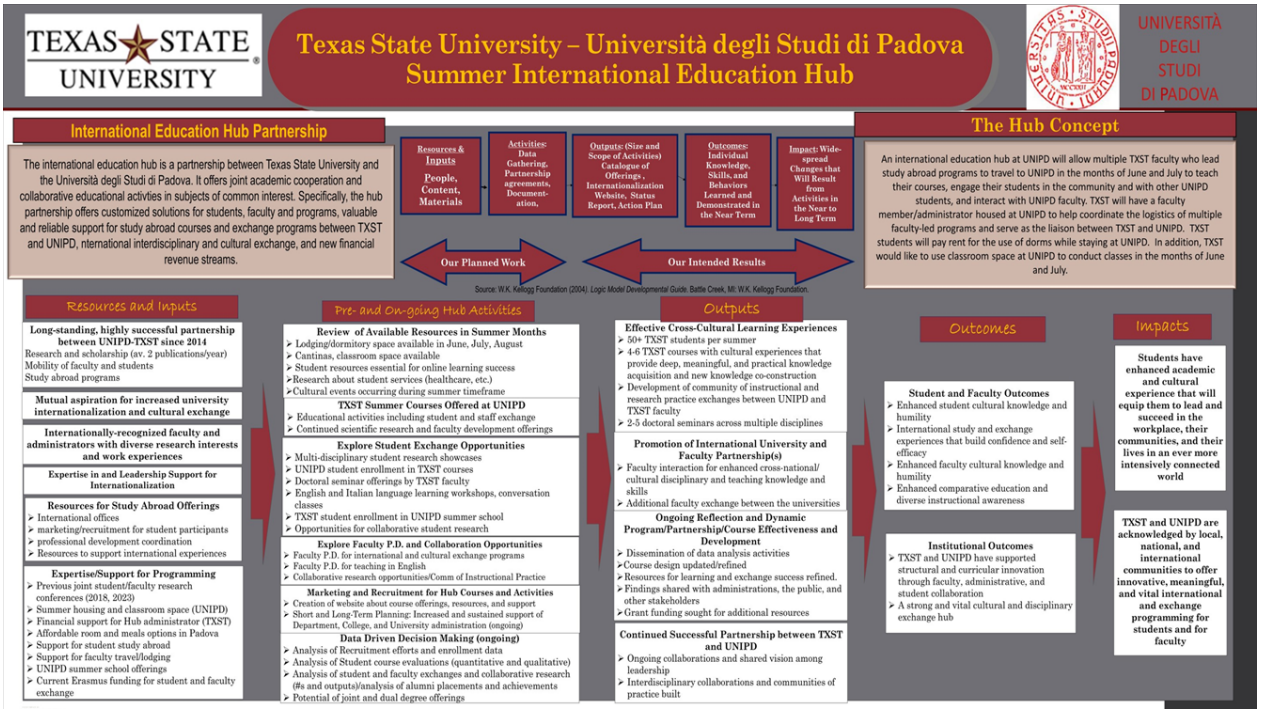
The conversation then moved to TXST's preliminary thoughts about a timeline to launch an inaugural hub the following summer. Finally, Joellen initiated discussions about what each university might hope/expect from these activities and future partnership approaches. TXST was interested in offering its students opportunities to study internationally at an affordable cost. UNIPD leadership voiced a strong interest in planning for student interaction between their students and those from TXST where possible.

Logistics and Partnership Negotiations

While Monica and Joellen had known each other for many years, the planning meetings included administrators and staff who were learning cautiously about each other, and

Figure 1

TXST-UNIPD Hub Logic Model



importantly, the processes and procedures that belied the organizational cultures present at both institutions. It was clear that we were building a team that spanned not only great distance but also cultural differences, semester and academic course offering variances, communication and language barriers, turnaround time and interaction formality expectations, and international office experience and expertise.

Initially, identifying lodging for TXST students and faculty; budgeting; and official approvals from varying levels of leadership, offices, and oversight. TXST opened a proposal process for faculty to submit a course they would be interested in offering in Padova, as well as why they felt the course would work in Italy, how many students they felt they could recruit, and the ways they would approach recruitment. Three faculty and courses from liberal arts and engineering were chosen. In order to schedule classroom space and connect with similar programs and faculty, UNIPD provided names and contact information for faculty in social-psychology, engineering, and British literature. A budget and student fees were established with the expectation that each course would enroll 10 students, for a minimum of 30 in total, creating the initial hub.

Preparations for Hub Teaching Activities

In late fall 2023 and early spring 2024, TXST faculty and its international office worked to promote the hub and its courses with a deadline in February for students to apply. The three TXST faculty members finalized their syllabi requiring class meetings three to four times/week and designing instruction that included the local context when viable. To keep the hub experience as affordable as possible, TXST's international office chose to omit required

excursions that would increase student costs. Given the rich learning experiences these kinds of activities can add to course goals, the decision to omit learning excursions concerned faculty and Joellen. Some faculty then offered optional excursion opportunities (e.g., a tour of the Ducati factory in Bologna for engineering students) or paid out of the instructor's own travel funds to offer required content-focused experiences in nearby cities.

TXST instructors also communicated with their UNIPD faculty counterparts to learn about classroom spaces, available daily timeframes for classes, and ways to involve UNIPD students. TXST agreed that up to five UNIPD students would be welcome to audit each of the courses without fees. Additionally, TXST faculty were encouraged to brainstorm how they might collaborate with UNIPD faculty for potential guest lectures and invitations for UNIPD students to join in specific class activities or optional excursions. While the initial goal was to house TXST students in UNIPD student lodging, differences in semester timelines between the two institutions and limited student housing options precluded that goal. Identifying classroom space, student interaction opportunities, and faculty collaborations also complicated the variations in semester course and examination timelines. Finally, only three UNIPD students engaged with the courses offered (engineering and social-psychology).

In advance of the hub activities in Italy, Joellen and representatives from TXST's Education Abroad office provided a student orientation to outline several matters including: (1) required documentation, (2) processes, (3) security, (4) tuition/fees, (5) behavior and engagement expectations, (6) lodging, (7) UNIPD history and layout in the city of Padova, (8) an overview of Italian culture and language basics, (9) roommates, and (10) deadlines. A final activity during the orientation session was a team-building exercise to help students across the three courses meet and work together on a shared activity. The individual classes also met separately to get to know each other and the expectations for participation. The two institutions negotiated contracts and payment processes, secured lodging, scheduled airport transportation, and determined TXST student access to UNIPD eating facilities (canteens) and libraries.

Designing for Instruction in Adult Study Abroad

Designing for instruction in adult study abroad should incorporate opportunities for students to develop cross-cultural and co-participant relationships that respect the cultural and geographical experiences of learning in an international context (Coryell, 2017; Coryell et al., 2014). A week before everyone traveled to Italy, the courses officially started in online modules to front-load content, outline learning products and grading parameters, and engage in personal reflection activities about their own culture and the cultural influences on the academic content. In June 2024, the hub courses began with 32 students, 3 faculty members and Joellen, and a few faculty family members. Students were sophomores, juniors, or seniors with ages ranging from 19 to 28. All of the students and two of the faculty resided in a pensione-type hotel that offered breakfast and two shared kitchens for meal preparations. The first two days in-country began with tours of UNIPD's historic buildings and academic departments and walks around the city to identify important goods and services. Students attended classes in the departments of the three content areas where learners could mingle with UNIPD students in public spaces and nearby cafés and university canteens. Class meetings were scheduled Monday-Thursday, and we encouraged students and faculty to explore Padova, nearby Venice, and other locations in Italy and southern Europe on the weekends, if their personal funds allowed. After the initial meetings between the two institutions, the 2024 Summer hub timeline of activities was as follows:

October 2023:	Presentation about hub opportunity to TXST faculty
November 2023:	Course proposals were due
November 2023:	Announcement of TXST faculty and courses for 2024 hub
December 2023:	Program details finalized (housing, dates, cost, marketing materials, etc.)
January 2024:	Student applications opened
February 2024:	Joellen visited UNIPD for ongoing information sharing; visits to lodging, academic departments, and classrooms; meeting with leadership and international office
February 2024:	Students accepted to programs after faculty application review
March 2024:	Students registered for hub classes
April 2024:	Pre-departure student orientation
May 2024:	TXST Education abroad/special projects visited UNIPD to prepare for TXST President visit and MOU addendum signing
June 2024:	Students arrived in Padova
June 8-June 30:	Courses held 3-4 days/week
June 30, 2024:	Students and faculty departed from Padova
July 8, 2024:	UNIPD Rettrice and TXST President sign MOU addendum for summer hub activities

Preliminary Assessment of the hub's Development and Next Steps

To gather data for initial evaluation and encourage student reflection on their learning and development in the hub courses and experiences, Joellen conducted an electronic survey in each of the classes during the final week in Italy. Surveys were anonymous, and all thirty-two students responded. Preliminary thematic analysis (Saldaña, 2009) of responses to, "In what ways may you have changed since arriving in this country?" themes of increased confidence, independence, patience, and a need to build and nurture new and existing connections. Example quotes include:

"I've learned how to be alone with myself and not be so scared of it."

- "I have learned to not be afraid of trying new things or doing thing alone, though I still get anxious I now ***feel more confident*** in myself."
- "Culturally, being more aware of the world and that there is more world to see and understand."
- "I think I have learned how to be ***more independent*.*"***
- "Living in Italy has brought about significant positive changes in me, particularly in ***how I perceive and practice patience***. The Italian way of life, with its emphasis on enjoying the moment and valuing human connections, has taught me to slow down and appreciate the present."
- "It has shown me the value of taking the time to ***build and nurture connections***."

Analysis of responses to "What new perspectives have you gained in your field of study while participating in the hub course?" resulted in themes including: (1) enhanced abilities to adapt, (2) excitement of seeing the academic content come to life, (3) understanding of the importance of interactions with professionals/students, and (4) that there is not only one truth when understanding and learning about a content area. Example quotes include:

"It ***brings the material to life***. It was ***also incredibly impactful to have Italian students join the class*** as well as have a ***guest lecture from our UNIPD counterpart***, who spoke about his area of expertise."

- "I've been able to ***see some examples of where my field of study can lead me in career choices.*** So, it's been eye opening to see what all can be done if I dedicate the time to it."
- ***"I got to see the Ducati factory which further reinforced that I want to go into motorsports."***
- "This class ***helped me understand the deeper concepts of social interaction***."
- "I've learned that ***we all have different perspectives and experiences in life, but there's not one 'correct' truth on a specific experience.*** We all see things and process them differently and that's a beautiful thing."
- "I've learned that there are so, so, so many different areas of psychology to study as well."

Learners were also asked to reflect on what they may have learned about themselves while abroad. Themes included increased resiliency and adaptability/self-efficacy. The following quotes offer a few examples:

- "***I'm capable of doing anything I set my mind to***. It was a difficult road getting here but now that's it coming to an end ***I feel so accomplished***."
- "I've learned that ***I'm a lot more resilient than I had previously thought***."
- "I have ***learned that I can adapt to certain situations***, they may be good or bad."

Learners also highlighted that cultural interaction is important in developing open-mindedness, valuing tradition, and a willingness to learn from others. Example quotes include:

"The ***importance of interacting with students from other cultural backgrounds***, and how participating in different learning approaches is an enriching experience and can help me use more study techniques."

- ***"One of the most profound lessons I've learned through cultural exchange is the importance of open-mindedness and empathy***. Immersing myself in Italian culture, with its rich history, traditions, and customs, has required me to step outside my comfort zone and approach new experiences with curiosity and respect. This process has ***highlighted my inherent willingness to learn from others and to value their unique viewpoints***. Whether it's understanding the significance of local festivals, appreciating regional cuisines, or participating in traditional practices, I've realized that genuine cultural exchange goes beyond mere observation—it involves active engagement and mutual respect."
- "I've also ***discovered a deeper sense of self-awareness***. Engaging with the Italian community has made me more conscious of my own cultural biases and assumptions."

Finally, students responded to, "Reflecting on your experiences with the hub and class, what would you like us to know for future iterations of this hub?" Learners expressed a desire to socialize and integrate more with other hub classes, local students, and professors. They also wished to learn more of the local language and culture to be respectful and polite in their

interactions. They appreciated the class structure and content, but wanted more interactive and applied activities, as well as more class excursions. They wished for a balance between coursework and cultural experiences. They also recommended having an earlier and stricter selection process, more meetings and icebreakers before departure, and more information on transportation and eating options. Example quotes included:

- "Get the classes ***more involved with each other*** before departure."
- "Classes should be [include more] ***language and culture****."*
- "We should ***be more involved with local students/professors****."*
- "…. ***more interaction with the university***."
- *"****I found the application process [to gain access to canteens] from the Italian university very complicated…few students participated****."*
- *"****Stricter age or class restriction****."*
- "I would've really enjoyed ***excursions and trips as a class****."*
- "…***more class excursions***."
- "I would like the hub to know that they did a ***wonderful job with this trip and planned it out wonderfully***!*"*
- *"****It would be a shame if other students in the future do not get to experience this hub****."*

Along with the student survey, we asked participating TXST and UNIPD faculty members to provide their reflective insights. When asked if they would be interested in team-teaching a course in a way that would include a set of UNIPD students as well as TXST students, the responses were overall positive. Two of the three TXST faculty were very interested in this approach for the following year. UNIPD faculty indicated: "It would be very useful;" and "to collaborate again to this course or similar courses and to conceive and develop a 'team-teach' course with both UNIPD and TXST students" would be valuable to both universities. We also requested input on how to enhance the hub for future iterations. Both sets of faculty emphasized their desire for more structured involvement of UNIPD students, and the TXST faculty highlighted the possibility of including graduate students in stacked courses.

Benefits and Challenges

We turned to the logic model to reflect and assess the current status of the imagined outputs and outcomes of the initial hub. Reflection on the program, process, and partnership development continues. Eventually we will work to ensure that the hub will offer more students from both universities opportunities to interact. We will also support faculty teams to develop courses that enhance global perspectives and skills within academic content, skills for cross-cultural sensitivity and collaboration, and knowledge necessary for meaningful workplace capabilities. We are pleased with the preliminary survey evaluations which indicated learning outcomes related to overarching goals of international education and study abroad. These goals include: (1) increased cross-cultural communications, (2) increased subject matter knowledge, (3) enhanced appreciation for the foreign culture (Chieffo & Griffiths, 2004), (4) increased self-confidence, appreciation for diversity, and career and learning development (European Commission, 20150; Hartford, 2010), and (5) enhanced self and global perspectives, agency, and cross-cultural effectiveness (Ogden, 2010).

However, we are aware of some missed opportunities. While TXST students engaged in a learning environment that did not change from location to location like many short-term study

programs, much of the interaction TXST students had with locals and UNIPD students came from one or two UNIPD students who volunteered to join in classes. TXST students also had the opportunity to interact with local peers in social situations in the evenings, on weekends, and while students embarked on personal travel. Reflection and anecdotal data emphasize that hub courses will be much more successful with extensive collaboration and interaction embedded into the hub's activities.

Also linked with the logic model, we note that faculty partnerships across disciplines are being developed for future hubs. We believe cultural knowledge, cultural humility, and enhanced comparative education and diverse instructional awareness will result. Importantly, extensive communication, mutual understanding of cultural and organizational differences, and faculty and student interactions are – and continue to be – complex and areas for improvement. Ultimately, we feel there is much potential for supported structural and curricular innovation and vital cultural and disciplinary exchange in future hub activities.

Next Steps

A significant push for much more interaction between TXST and UNIPD students is at the forefront of what is next for our partnership and the hub. We believe interaction will require flexibility, openness, intellectual curiosity, and more nuanced cultural understandings about each university's processes, timelines, and communication preferences and methods. Acknowledging 2024 was a pilot year and that the partnership and hub activities were designed to continue each summer, the TXST-UNIPD hub is on its way to accomplishing its goals thanks to careful reflection, ongoing planning and cross-culturally sensitive communications, flexibility, and increased attention to both undergraduate and graduate student engagement and research collaborations.

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TESTIMONIO AND PLÁTICA AS REFLECTIVE PRACTICES FOR EMOTIONAL LEARNING AND SOCIETAL CHANGE

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ABSTRACT: *Testimonio* and *plática* (conversations) are useful tools for sharing the life stories of marginalized populations such as the internationally trained professional immigrant women who participated in this study. The ultimate goal of sharing *testimonios* is to promote societal change from within the self to the outer community. Together, *testimonio* and *plática* promote adult and community learning. Sharing their life stories, the study participants experienced a wide range of emotions and a strong desire to continue moving forward. Their narratives illustrate the challenges and successes of professional immigrant women as they navigate U.S. systems (school and work) and the development of new identities as professionals, community activists, and citizens.

Keywords: ITP women, professional immigrant women, social and emotional learning

Introduction

Internationally trained professional (ITP) women lack opportunities to connect with their peers to find support and solutions to issues relating to gaining employment. They also lack access to resources for updating their professional credentials to adhere to U.S. standards. There are over 23 million female immigrants in the United States, and they play a valuable role in the society and economy (Ward & Batalova, 2023). *Testimonio* and *plática* (conversations) are useful tools for sharing the life stories of marginalized populations such as the internationally trained professional immigrant women who participated in this study.

Beverley (1989) defined *testimonio* as a narrative told in first-person by a narrator who is also the protagonist or witness of the events recounting a significant life experience. *Testimonio* promotes societal change and has the ability to provide life experiences and authority not historically granted by systems of knowledge and power (Flores Carmona, 2014; 2018). *Testimonio* legitimizes the knowledge and truth of the marginalized and serves to document their histories (Flores Carmona, 2018). *Plática* is an informal conversation between the participant and the researcher. These conversations are opportunities to teach values and life lessons, encourage people to talk and co-create knowledge (Fierros & Delgado Bernal, 2016; Guajardo & Guajardo, 2010).Fierros and Delgado Bernal added that *plática* focuses on daily experiences to analyze interconnectivity and how people's lives intersect.

Testimonio and *plática* are two narrative forms useful for gathering and sharing the life stories of marginalized populations such as professional immigrant women. *Plática* and *testimonio* promote emotional learning, community learning, and identity development. The data presented in this article came from three focal participants and 34 ITP women who attended a day-long summit promoting networking opportunities for professional immigrant women. The research questions guiding this article are: (1) How can *testimonios* and *plática* promote emotional learning and societal change? (2) What can be learned from testimonials rendered by ITP immigrant women?

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Methodology

Under the umbrella of narrative research, *testimonios*, *pláticas*, and *anatomy of story* served as qualitative research tools for the current study. Riessman (2008) described narrative as a method used in a variety of ways by different disciples, often synonymously. In *plática* the participants often engage in storytelling and *testimonios*, which can trigger a wide range of emotions, crying, laughing, sadness, anger, happiness, etc., all at once, but always resulting in something learned (Fierros & Delgado Bernal, 2016). Emotions are a response to an event and serve to organize cognitive, social, and physical behavior in relation to the event and the learning derived from it (Mackeracher, 2004). Similarly, Weissberg et al. (2015) explained that social emotional learning (SEL) promotes understanding of self and others, the ability to communicate emotions, attitudes, and opinion, and working towards goal setting.

Data Collection

Data were collected at an event planned by the researchers and community partners, which consisted of a one-day summit offering networking opportunities for ITP immigrant women. The purposeful sample for the study consisted of three focal participants and 34 ITP women attending the event. The summit started with a panel session in which three guest speakers rendered *testimonios* regarding their immigration journeys and the roles they have played in U.S. communities as activists, professionals, and academicians. Three participants namely, Adelaida, Liz, and Elena (pseudonyms) are the focal participants for this article. The summit was attended by 34 ITP women who were also engaged in *plática* in small groups as well as with the larger group. As Guajardo and Guajardo (2008) explained, at first, the conversations are very general and tend to be guarded. As they get to know and trust each other, participants engage in deeper dialogue, known as *plática*. After the panelists rendered their *testimonios*, summit attendees asked questions, shared a meal, and participated in a series of *pláticas* seated in small and large circles. All these data support the telling of a collective story as described later in this article. Fieldnotes constituted another source of data collection to capture what the researchers heard, saw, experienced, and thought during the event (Bogdan & Biklen, 2007). Other data sources included video and photographs (Patton, 2002), which were also a way for the summit attendees to help promote what was learned through the event via social media.

Data Analysis

Inductive and deductive analysis were helpful to identify meaningful pieces of data to create the collective story to be shared. Inductive analysis refers to the "immersion in the details and specifics of the data to discover important patterns, themes, and interrelationships…" (Patton, 2002, p. 41). On the other hand, deductive analysis requires the use of *apriori* coding, the components of anatomy of a story, in this case: Navel, heart, mind, hands, and legs (Guajardo & Guajardo, 2010). In looking at each component, the researchers ask questions to guide the analysis. The questions relating to the 'navel' are: Who are the participants in the story? In which context did the story take place? The questions relating to the 'heart' of the story are: What moves the participants to action? The questions relating to the 'mind' of the story are: What moves the participants to action? What are their suggestions for change? What are the stereotypes? How do the stories disrupt the status quo? The questions relating to the 'hands' of the story are: What change can happen and how can we participate in making it possible? The questions relating to the 'legs' of the story are: What should we remember/learn? How can the story move forward? What do we want others to learn? Each of the components of the story allows for an in-depth look at meaningful parts of the individual to discover commonalities and

differences. Therefore, *anatomy of story* also served as the structure to organize the data generated through the networking summit.

Focal Participants

Adelaida - The Activist

> My name is Adelaida, born in Mexico, I enjoyed a carefree early life. At the age of 13, I emigrated to Texas after my father's death in a work accident. With the assistance of relatives, my mother obtained our papers and brought me and my three siblings to the United States. Education was always a top priority for my parents; my mother worked tirelessly as a domestic worker to support and educate us. I learned English while attending school and assisted in caring for my younger siblings.
>
> Despite dropping out of high school and marrying early, I began a career with the State of Texas. Initially in clerical roles, I then progressed to earn a college degree while raising six children. Over the years, I have worked as an accountant, auditor, and program manager.
>
> I was elected in 2010 as a member of the Board of Trustees of Austin Community College District. This achievement marked the culmination of many years of community service as a servant leader, which began in San Antonio and continued upon my relocation to Austin, Texas. In Austin, I established a neighborhood association. She garnered community support for establishing a college campus in South Austin and advocating for a future campus in Southeast Austin.

Adelaida emphasized the importance of volunteering, and civic involvement. She explained how often women, particularly immigrants, hid themselves and their knowledge out of humility. She urged the participants to share their knowledge as having it is not arrogance. She explained, “knowledge belongs to you; you have earned it—use it!”

Liz - The Professional

> My name is Liz. In 2005, at the age of 19, I immigrated from Mexico, pregnant with my first child, finding myself in a strange country 13,000 miles away from my family and struggling to meet my basic needs. When I arrived in the United States, I could not read, speak the language, or legally drive. My initial years were spent working multiple jobs as a waitress at a small restaurant, cleaning houses, and cleaning a church, all the while caring for my daughter.
>
> I worked weekends at the university, and dreamt of returning to school. When the opportunity arrived, I enrolled in a community college, earned two associate degrees and multiple certifications. Always balancing work, studies, and family responsibilities, I completed my Bachelor of Applied Arts and Sciences from Texas and subsequently, in 2022, I earned a master’s degree from the School of Business. Since graduating from college in 2012, I have been giving back to the community by mentoring students who have faced similar challenges. The journey hasn't been easy, but my perseverance and dedication are paying off as I continue to thrive in my personal and professional life.

Liz highlighted the relevance of finding your voice. She mentioned being afraid to speak because of her English proficiency level. So, she stayed quiet and often did not speak up for herself. She urged the summit participants to find their voice and, once they do, to ask everyone they know to help them. She stated that "no one accomplishes their goals in isolation—we all need help at some point."

Elena - The Professor

> I was born in South America. I have a master's degree in English and a PhD in Bilingual Education. Coming from a humble family, I pursued higher education despite facing significant economic challenges. Currently, I am a professor at a public university. My job gives me purpose and allows me to serve as a role model for minoritized populations. I share my story and struggles to encourage others to walk the path towards achieving their dreams with conviction. I also tell them: *Remember you are not alone. Work with others. People want to connect. People want to help*. *There will always be obstacles along the way but having a clear goal and passion to achieve it makes the difference.* My conviction is that many people with talent and means do not make it to the finish line. This is because they need to have the right amount of hunger and courage to make it. I believe that dedication, collaboration with others, and hard work are the perfect formula for success. However, one needs to keep in mind that success means different things to different people. One must not let others define our success. Society has a way of oppressing and dictating what success should look like which includes having a husband, children, a mortgage, a profession, being pretty and being feminine. But oftentimes, success is narrowly defined and does not work for all of us.

Elena urged summit participants to prioritize life because we miss what is truly important when we do not. She encouraged the participants to be prepared, gain the skills needed, collaborate with others, and work hard. She indicated that "you should work hard and do your best; the Universe will take care of the rest, doors will open, and opportunities will come to you."

The Collective Story

'Anatomy of story' serves as the structure to make connections and tell the collective story of the focal participants, three professional immigrant women. Storytelling affords the opportunity to "celebrate, commemorate, romanticize, or struggle with issues of the past, present, and future" (Guajardo & Guajardo, 2010, p. 93). The participants' stories illustrate the creation of their identities as professionals, community activists, and contributing citizens inspiring other women to achieve their goals. Stories are useful to recall, reflect, organize ideas and memories, to reconcile with or solve issues, as well as to promote values and learning (Guajardo & Guajardo, 2010; Trubi, 2008). In particular, Guajardo and Guajardo present *anatomy of story* as a method to structure and remake the collective story through examining the components of the story: Navel, heart, mind, hands, and legs.

Navel: Main Characters and Focal Issue of the Story

The summit was attended by 34 ITP women from eight nationalities (Mexico, Venezuela, Salvador, Colombia, Puerto Rico, Argentina, Costa Rica, Peru) and three guest speakers who rendered *testimonios*. They all immigrated to the United States hoping to achieve the American Dream. The 34 women in attendance were professionals in their home countries, but in the

United States they were struggling to achieve the status they had prior to immigration. These immigrant women represent a sample of professionals going through occupational downgrading and deskilling phenomenon.

Heart: Passion, Motivation, Values Expressed in the Story

The participants aspired to create connections, learn from one another, ask questions, and find new motivation and inspiration to continue to strive to achieve their professional goals. Adelaida, Liz, and Elena shared stories about the need to develop new identities as professionals, community activists, and citizens. They felt a deep desire to create community around their shared experiences as immigrants and as women. The summit event made it possible to enact the cultural concept of *comadres*, which refers to the close relationship established and shared by women from Latino cultures. It is a deeper relationship than being friends, similar to a familial connection but without being biologically related. Based on this concept, creating a safe space where the participants could be vulnerable, share openly and suspend judgment of themselves and the others was an important focus of the summit. The participating ITP women brought up larger social, cultural, and political issues. *Plática* helped create a safe space where the women could share their experiences. The *testimonios* by Adelaida, Liz, and Elena aimed to inspire others to move forward despite challenges and systemic issues. Through *plática*, they celebrated their intersectionalities (nationality, language, culture, ethnicity, race, gender) and they connected as *comadres*. While the focal participants rendered *testimonio*, the rest of the women shared their struggles, hopes, and future dreams.

Mind: Analytical Thought Aiming to Disrupt the Status Quo

Adelaida, Liz, and Elena described their challenges with language, cultural adjustment, misogyny, xenophobia, socio-political stigma, and stereotyping. The stereotypes included notions such as immigrants have little education, immigrant women are subject to cultural gender roles, and the professional credentials from abroad are not equivalent to those of the United States. They also struggled to be heard in the different settings where they studied and worked. They each have learned to navigate this barrier through public speaking, language learning courses, and writing. They each urged the participants of the summit to be bold and fearless in using their voices, to speak up. However, all three women, as many others in attendance, have disrupted the status quo motivated by personal, familiar, and professional goals. Listening to the *testimonios* and participating in *plática* allowed everyone to reflect, empathize, and learn from each other.

Hands: Creative Force to Mold the Story

The *testimonios* rendered by Adelaida, Liz, and Elena illustrated the contributions that they have made through their lifetime to U.S. society in different fronts. As an activist, Adelaida serves as a community advocate and lobbying the Texas state legislature to effect changes for better housing and access to education for her community members. Liz works for a large technology company and provides mentorship and internship opportunities for people of color paying close attention to women who want to work in the business sector. She serves on the board of several large non-profits whose goals are aimed at helping marginalized populations out of poverty through education and civic participation. As a university professor, Elena has supported the educational goals of minoritized populations and graduate students in general. Over the past two decades, she has worked with community-based organizations to promote adult and family learning.

Legs: Lessons Learned, Legacy, and Potential for Change

Adelaida's message was to encourage participation in civic engagement. Liz invited ITP immigrant women to find their voice, learn the English language and take the risk to speak, even if in imperfect English. Elena compelled the women to find a support system, work together, and define what success means to them as ITP women. Participating in *plática* and sharing their stories was cathartic. The summit generated several ideas to continue moving forward and promote positive change. For example, moving from *comadres* to *madrinas* (godmothers) to extend the network of support was a call for all to reach a larger number of women. Another important idea was to repeat the networking summit at different locations. Thus, as a result, one of the participants started their own chapter in another city. Another effort was writing for a grant to provide funds for newly arrived ITP immigrant women to afford translation of their academic transcripts.

Discussion

The article aimed to explore how *testimonios* and *plática* promote emotional learning and societal change. Over the last decades there has been an increasing understanding of the important role that social and emotional learning (SEL) plays in human growth and development. SEL is a strength-based, developmental process and while it begins at birth, it also evolves across the lifespan (Weissberg et al., 2015). This is why SEL is relevant in the field of adult learning and development. Carter and Nicolaides (2023) explained that embodied cognition involves an integration of both the emotional and intellectual functions of cognition: "The nature of an uncomfortable sensory or emotional experience, such as fear, anger, or sadness, is to bring attention to a physical need or threat from the environment… These experiences are helpful and serve to inform for purposes of survival and learning" (p. 27). Recognizing, managing, and reflecting on these experiences are crucial processes in adult learning. SEL influences communication, personal management, and the ability to collaborate and work well with others, crucial for personal success and important universal employability skills. Employers report that these are foundational skills they cannot teach, unlike job-related advances in science, technology or innovations (CASEL, 2022).

Adult SEL includes five core competencies: (1) self-management, (2) self-awareness, (3) social awareness, (4) responsible decision making, and (5) relationship skills (Weissberg et al., 2015). SEL supports adults to continue to grow and model social and emotional competencies as well as the structures and practices that promote adult well-being. At the summit, *testimonios* and *plática* brought a wide range of emotions and a strong desire to continue moving forward. As Adelaida, Liz, and Elena rendered testimonio, raw emotions surfaced, which helped establish a deep and instant connection with the women in the audience. Their stories were relatable and recurrent. Sharing sensitive information about their immigration stories presented them as vulnerable and also as strong role models. Their life trajectories were similar and different at the same time. The summit provided a supportive learning environment, a space for the women to process what was happening. The summit allowed participants to situate their experiences within the historical moment and helped them be more equipped to relate to the views of others (CASEL, 2020).

Listening to the stories of why they migrated was powerful to the women as a group and inspired them to move forward. *Testimonios* served to contextualize historical events and allowed the women to consider the human experience in a different way (CASEL, 2020). *Pláticas* and *testimonio* create imagery, allowing the listener to visualize a human face attached

to the story. The stories in this article represent the collective testimonio of immigrant women in search of a professional identity to feel respected and acknowledged for their talents and contribution to U.S. society.

Testimonios helped create self-awareness, understanding emotions and thoughts, and how these influence people's behaviors. SEL became evident through a sense of self-perception, self-confidence, and social awareness for responsible decision making, and relational skills (Weissberg et al., 2015). Thus, Adaleida's story reinforced self-management and social awareness when promoting civic engagement and critical thinking. It was a reminder of our responsibility to remember, react, and combat all forms of injustice. Liz demonstrated self-awareness supporting relationship skills when explaining the importance of speaking up and using your voice even if your language skills are not what you would like them to be. In her testimonio, and through teaching, research, and service, Elena promoted responsible decision making, relationship and social awareness skills in adult learners and community leaders.

Pláticas and *testimonio* proved effective in helping ITP immigrant women share and digest information and relate to each other. In collaboration with community partners, as researchers and community educators, we, the authors of this article, helped organize and mobilize the summit attendees. This event served as a springboard to motivate and inspire ITP immigrant women to continue this work. The concept of *comadres* is not new but it is still pertinent in Latino culture. For example, Lopez (1999) writes about comadres as a social support system and Comas-Diaz (2013) describes the healing power of this female bond. This concept proved relevant to the purpose of the summit and the use of *testimonio* and *plática* since all of the women participating in the event were eager to connect and find more *comadres*. Our hope is that they now move forward from *comadres* to *madrinas* and continue the domino effect that the networking summit started.

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Climate Change Activism and Sustainability Education: Experience of Informal Adult Learners in Germany

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ABSTRACT: This study stemmed from a scholarly interest to conduct empirical observations on the implementation of the United Nations (UN) 2030 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and sustainability education in relation to the challenges posed by climate change and the dynamics of climate change activism. The purpose of the study was to explore the experience, beliefs, and perspectives of informal adult learners in Germany regarding the relationship between climate change activism and sustainability education. The study is conceptually informed by the dynamic relationship between sustainability education and climate change activism. The study used a basic interpretive qualitative research design. A total of 17 participants from Germany were interviewed for this study. Data were transported to NVivo for analysis. The researcher used first-order and second-order coding to identify key patterns, emerging themes, and the collapsing of emerging themes, which led to the development of final themes reported in the findings. The participant profiles are described, as well as (a) their experience, beliefs, and perspectives regarding sustainability education. The findings are discussed and concluded with recommendations for policy scholars, practitioners, and policy makers.

Keywords: sustainability, activism, climate change

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THE MÉTIS OF CANADA:
WAYS THEIR EXPERIENCES MIGHT SUPPORT THE UN AGENDA

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ABSTRACT: To initiate this discourse, I first address key issues highlighted in the "International Council for Adult Education [ICAE] *Spotlight Report for CONFINTEA VII*" (Ireland & ICAE Executive Committee, 2022) which identifies critical areas for achieving the objectives outlined in the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. Following this, I examine the adult education literature, with a particular focus on experiential, w/holistic (as defined in this paper), and lifelong learning. I next present an overview of significant events in Métis history in Canada, starting with an introduction to their origins, transitioning to the conflicts they faced with colonial powers, and concluding with their contemporary situation. Finally, I explore the interconnections between the experiences of the Métis and the issues outlined in ICAE report, raising questions about the development of strategies and tools that could facilitate progress toward the goals of 2030.

Keywords: experiential, w/holistic, lifelong learning, informal learning, Indigenous worldview

The International Council for Adult Education (ICAE) Spotlight Report for CONFINTEA VII provides a comprehensive overview of adult education's role in advancing the United Nation's (UN) Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) (2015): 1) no poverty; 2) zero hunger; 3) good health and well-being; 4) quality education; 5) gender equality; 6) clean water and sanitation; 7) affordable and clean energy; 8) decent work and economic growth; 9) industry, innovation and infrastructure; 10) reduced inequalities; 11) sustainable cities and communities; 12) responsible consumption and production; 13) climate action; 14) life below water; 15) life on land; 16) peace, justice and strong institutions; and 17) partnerships for the goals (Ireland & International Council for Adult Education (ICAE) Executive Committee, 2022). These goals encompass a wide range of objectives aimed at eradicating poverty, promoting health and well-being, ensuring quality education, achieving gender equality, and fostering sustainable communities. Lifelong learning is identified as a critical component essential for achieving these goals, particularly SDG 4, which emphasizes inclusive and equitable quality education for all (2015).

To address these issues, I delve into experiential learning and how it aligns with progressive educational approaches rooted in post-colonialism and advocate for a broader understanding of knowledge exchange and community building. I will look at how w/holistic learning encompasses diverse perspectives, including Indigenous and Eastern worldviews that emphasize community, spirituality, and environmental stewardship. This contrasts with traditional Western educational paradigms, highlighting the importance of integrating such perspectives into global educational frameworks like the SDGs. Additionally, the concept of collectivism in learning stresses interconnectedness among individuals and their environments. Lastly, lifelong learning, essential to achieving the SDGs, differs from traditional education in its focus on continuous personal, social, and professional development throughout one's life. This approach, supported by educational theorists from Dewey (1916, 1938) to contemporary scholars, underscores the need for inclusive and lifelong educational opportunities that support sustainable development globally.

Examining the historical experiences of the Métis reveals a narrative of adaptive learning and cultural resilience. From early interactions with European traders to their cultural hybridity and

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ongoing informal learning, Métis history exemplifies lifelong, w/holistic learning principles that contribute to sustainable development goals.

In conclusion, integrating experiential, w/holistic, and collective learning approaches from Métis and other Indigenous perspectives enriches global educational discourse. By embracing diverse worldviews and learning methodologies, educators can foster inclusive and sustainable development as envisioned by the UN's 2030 Agenda.

Experiential, W/holistic, and Lifelong Learning in Adult Education and Learning

Experiential Learning

Historically, Experiential Learning Theory (ELT) can be associated with "William James, John Dewey, Kurt Lewin, Jean Piaget, Lev Vygotsky, Carl Jung, Paulo Freire, Carl Rogers and others" (Kolb & Kolb, 2012, p. 192). However, Dewey (1938) coined "a theory of experience," and he drew on a distinction between experiential learning and the" miseducative"(p. 25)—that stems from trauma and hinders experiential learning. Still, - Kolb and Kolb credit Lewin's 1940 to 1960s work as foundational to experiential learning (2012). Drawing from the previously enumerated theorists' aggregate concepts that learning is evolutional, iterative, dialectical, holistic, synergistic, and constructive and while focusing on Lewin's work, Kolb (1984) formed ELT. Four cyclical aspects of ELT begin with an experience followed by reflection, cognition, and action.

Later, Fenwick (2003) highlighted that Kolb's (1984) Cartesian-like theory incorporates a binary taxonomical split between experience and reflection, followed by the dynamic and static split within reflection in experiential learning theory and practice. Fenwick, also adds that there is a problem of hegemonic control of what knowledge has value in experiential learning. Fenwick offers suggestions to make experiential learning more w/holistic by including "interobjectivity". I see an echo here with the Métis worldview *wâhkôhtowin* (all-related) (Jarvis, 2023; MacDougall, 2006) and *buen vivir* (Brown & McCowan, 2018). These concepts offer a human characteristic to the inanimate. For the *wâhkôhtowin* and *buen vivir* perspectives, nurturing these relationships is paramount. Lastly, Fenwick criticized that experiential learning is now becoming synonymous with informal learning. Kawalilak and Groen (2020) echoed Fenwick when they pointed out [s]cholars have increasingly acknowledged that learning is experienced in multiple ways—"formally, nonformally, informally" (p. 73).

Schugurensky (2000) identifies three forms (or types) of informal learning

> [1] self-directed learning…is intentional …and…conscious… [2] incidental learning…is unintentional but conscious.. and [3] socialization…(also referred to as tacit learning)…the internalization of values, attitudes, behaviour, skills, etc. that occur…not a priori intention…not aware that we learned something" (pp. 2–4).

Subsequently, Bennet (2012) extended Schugurensky's model by adding "integrative learning" that is "intentional nonconscious processing of tacit knowledge with conscious access to learning products and mental images" (p. 28). This kind of informal learning involves the intention of self-directed learning, the consciousness of incidental learning, and the unawareness of socialization.

Lastly, Merriam and Baumgartner (2020) pointed out that the informal setting provided "life skills that have kept…families fed and clothed" and that if "educators helped learners recognize the many places and ways they have gone about learning in adulthood, more adults might see themselves as active learners." (p. 53)

In summation, experiential learning can be complex. Reflection has been an important element of the process of conscious learning, but it seems reflection needs a more w/holistic approach. Coupling reflection with Dewey's (1938) "miseducative" experience is important when applying the SDGs because most of the goals are for those who have experienced some kind of trauma.

W/Holistic[1] Perspectives

Stemming from Fenwick's (2003) call for change in the definition of experimental learning, is the perspective that learning is [w/]holistic (Merriam & Kim, 2008). This shifts away from the Western emphasis on cognitive knowing to acknowledge other ways of knowing such as somatic, spiritual, emotional, moral, experiential, and social learning discussed by Merriam and Bierema (2013). As highlighted by Fenwick, non-Western views do not separate these ways of knowing.

Latin American Indigenous cultures hold a belief called *buen vivir* (Brown & McCowan, 2018), which aligns with the African concept *Ubuntu* (Nafukho, 2006) and Eastern philosophies such as "Buddhism, Taoism, and Advaita Vedanta" (Brown & McCowan, 2018, p. 318). Essentially, all these philosophies share a common bond, much like Villalba's (2013) definition of *buen vivir*, that life is a "harmonious coexistence and living with nature in accordance with principles of reciprocity, complementarity, solidarity and relationality" (as cited in Brown & McCowan, 2018, p. 318). The Cree/ *nêhiyaw* say "Aboriginal epistemology…is a mysterious force that connects the totality of existence—forms, energies, or concepts that constitute the outer and inner worlds. (Ermine, 1995, p. 103). This mysterious force is the spirit, and spirit is in everything. Merriam and Baumgartner, (2020) discussed spirituality by highlighting Bohm's explanation that]"w]e may thus think of spirit as an invisible force—a life-giving essence that moves us deeply, or as a source that moves everything from within" (p. 248).

Ermine (1995) added an individual connection to this w/holistic view: one must seek their individual gifts from the spirit, and these gifts are one's contribution to the whole. Moreover, Merriam and Baumgartner (2020) said that "andragogy, self-directed learning, and Mezirow's theory of transformational learning all focus on the individual becoming an independent learner who relies mostly on himself or herself in the process" (p. 286), all of which pertain to Kolb's

[1]Please note Miles et al. (2023) said

> the term wholistic should be seen to hold a distinctive meaning and be used in place of the term holistic, especially when relating to Indigenous pedagogies, cultures, practices, traditions, health, and wellness...[we] contend that the term wholistic is more inclusive of Indigenous ways of knowing, understanding, being, and doing. This includes being more reflective of the coming together of the four elements in life encompassing the physical, spiritual, emotional, and mental elements of wellbeing" (Miles 2023, p. 3)

Although a great deal of adult education literature does use the "h" instead of the "w" when discussing w/holistic ideas even when they reference Indigenous worldviews as seen in Merriam and Baumgartner (2020): "the Western view of science is "objective" and outward looking, the indigenous perspective is more holistic" (p. 271), when I discuss w/holistic, I will use w/holistic as a form of inclusion.

(1984) four aspects of ELT. The Western view disconnection leaves out how such learning should be reciprocated.

Lastly, Merriam and Baumgartner (2020) encouraged "learning to include perspectives outside of our traditional Western views…[so] that we will be personally enriched" (p. 271).

I have not seen discussion in the adult education literature regarding w/holistic approaches in *panpsychism*. This ancient concept is the everything has a mind down to the smallest particle (Skrbina, 2017). This important idea supports the Indigenous perspective of "all my relations" and Fenwick's (2003) "interobjectivity."

Lifelong Learning

Jarvis (2004) identified lifelong education as "the process of education begins in childhood and continues throughout the lifespan." (p. 61). Dewey (1916), an important influencer on adult educators said "education means the enterprise of supplying the conditions which insure growth, or adequacy of life, irrespective of age" (p. 51), but he was not specifically an adult educator like Linderman (1926/1961) and Knowles (1984). Smith (1919) best expressed who and when of adult education

adult education must not be regarded as a luxury for the few exceptional person here and there, nor as a thing which concerns only a short span of early manhood, but that adult education is a permanent national necessity, an inseparable aspect of citizenship, and therefore should be both universal and lifelong. (p. 5)

Later, the Faure Report (1972) and the Delors Report (1996), echoed Smith: "education should be both universal and lifelong, claiming that education precedes economic development and prepares individuals for a society that does not exist" (Jarvis, p. 63). The value of a happy life for everyone, not necessarily meaning a focus on economic growth, stands out and is most important in the Faure Report, the Delors Report, Smith's and Dewey's work (1916, 1938).

Considering the ICAE Spotlight Report recognizes that adult education and learning is critical, I believe it is appropriate to distinguish between learning and education (Ireland & ICAE executive committee, 2022). The United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) 2012 Notice suggests that the term lifelong "learning" instead of lifelong "education" because "learning" is more focused on the learner, the learning process, and the outcomes. Alternatively, "education "is more associated with the act of imparting knowledge." This view on lifelong learning and education was intiated chiefly by UNESCO in the 1960s and 1970s. UNESCO report, *Learning to Be* (Faure et al., 1972) was a comprehensive reform of education promoting an "over-all lifelong education for…a complete man"(p.viii). Delors (1996) expanded on the Faure report by introducing life long 'learning' and means for a free and peaceful society.

Jarvis (2004) identified a problem in that the "concept of lifelong learning is extremely confusing since it combines individual learning and institutionalized learning" (p. 64). Hutchins (1970) introduced the idea that everyone would learn and develop through and within a society that provided learning resources for everyone, a concept reflected in his book's title, *Learning Society*. Hutchins' idea was more fully developed by Delors et al. (1996), Freire (1972a) and Horton et al. (1990), each of whom described the learning society as a utopia. Coombs, Prosser, and Ahmed (1973) distinguished three settings for learning: formal, non-formal and informal. Formal is through traditional institutions; non-formal is through non-accredited institutions; and

informal can be in the formal and non-formal settings or in settings that are neither formal or non-formal. As mentioned earlier, informal learning contributes to one of the new definitions of experiential learning: it can occur in any setting (Merriam and Baumgartner, 2020).

Indigenous Methodology

Fairness is a requisite for there to be a utopian society and inclusiveness of Indigenous methodology supports it. Indigenous methodology requires the "recovery of ourselves" (Smith, 1999, p. 8). Authenticity for Indigenous people engaged in academic research requires the process of *decolonization*, such as the application of the "four R's" (Kirkness & Barnhardt, 1991, p.1): there must be *respect* of one's cultural way of being including *relevant* diversity and transformation, with *reciprocity* perspectives between power dynamics that foster mutually developed viewpoints. Additionally, there is a *responsibility* to participate in social change (1991). Within this process of decolonizing and honouring the four R's is one's axiology that "speaks to what knowledge is important and worthy of pursuit" (Little Bear, 2009, p. 10). One's epistemology "speaks to theories of knowledge: how we come to know…[and this] is a methodology or a validation process. For Aboriginal peoples, knowledge is validated through actual experience, stories…[and] observation" (2009, p. 10).

Autoethnography of the Métis

After 1670, the French on Turtle Island found surviving the harsh winters in their forts was challenging, and they needed to conserve supplies. So they dismissed from the forts the expendable men who were the least skilled, to undertake the task of building transactional relationships (versus belonging relationships) with the Indigenous peoples. Both relatonships are reciprocal, but opposite: the former expects a quick return, and if there is not one, the relationship is terminated. The Indigenous Peoples embraced these foreigners and nurtured them. The Algonquins taught the French how to survive on what the Catholics called unclaimed land (Jarvis, 2023b); once relationships were built among the males, the Europeans were then introduced to the Indigenous females. Soon these 'country marriages' produced offspring, and this was the origin of the Métis nation (Foster, 1994). In 1885, a war called the Northwest Rebellion broke out between the Métis and the Canadian government. Following the war, the Métis suffered starvation, racism, and sanctions, and were labelled traitors.

Early ethnographies of Indigenous people of the Americas were Eurocentric, recorded from the lenses of explorers, clergy, and other European researchers. Following Said (1978) and Fanon's (1963) critical reflections of Othering, this qualitative research methodology became the foundation for autoethnography, a social justice method employing a self-reflexive narrative based on a phenomena blending one's self and one's culture (Anderson, 2006; Chang, 2008; Ellis and Bochner, 2000, 2006; Poulos, 2021). I will share some personal stories of experiential learning within my Métis community of *manito sakahikan* in Treaty Six of Alberta, Canada.

My Stories of Informal Teaching and Learning

I recall my community members built objects as large as a home and as small as a three-legged stool; yet, all they had was a Western-built house and a four-legged stool as models to copy. Community members built houses with settlers who came to the *manito sakahikan* area. The Métis adapted designs by inspecting and measuring the model, then adapting those measurements and materials. They created their own drawings to follow and converted the measurements for their purposes.

A second story arose from observing Métis members of my community undertake auto body repair and vehicle mechanic employment.. Again, there was not any formal or non-formal training, but informal apprentice like teaching and learning from within our community. Métis members skills progressed to the point the members became employed within the settler community.

Another story was Métis who saw an outfit someone was wearing and used that outfit as a model. The women would adapt what they saw to their liking and make a similar outfit from repurposed fabric such as an old curtain. No "store-bought" sewing pattern was used.

The fourth observation was us making a traditional food called bannock. We had no written recipe to follow nor measuring cups or spoons to use. We would "eye" it, and use our hand to measure. This process was learned by years of watching skilled members, then practicing making bannock. The "eyeing" it, I think, was intuitive; this intuitiveness developed from practice. Lawrence (2012) said the "most primal way of accessing knowledge is through the body as our earliest forms of knowing are preverbal" (p. 3). Epistemological theorizing or conscious learning did not explain how the intuitiveness of "eyeing" a measurement developed through the trial and error process. The knowing appeared to be spiritual in the sense of trusting and being with *manito* (the spirit) and *wâhkôhtowin* (all our relations), rather than analyzing (Jarvis, 2023a).

Many Métis I previously observed did not learn from someone outside the community who told them what they needed to learn or how to do something. A person, or several persons from within the community usually had individuals participate with them, and the telling to do something was emergent. This format was iterative and highly observant —much like the adult education apprentice model highlighted by Pratt and Smulders (2016), but in an informal setting and way versus formal or non-formal setting. The learner often elected to participate in the learning as a desire and as a form of sharing responsibility.

I think my family member had high observation skills. The Métis were trying to survive in this new rapidly growing settler world that ostracized them following the Northwest Rebellion. They did not know European behaviours, such as their form of etiquette, fashion, time orientation and formal ways of being. In order to fit in in this new world, the Métis had to observe, as they lacked the shared layers of knowledge that the Europeans had, such as the Imperialist worldview.

The above examples above were from Métis from the Baby Boomer generation (born between 1946 and 1964) and earlier generations. The examples below are from Métis from Generation X (born between 1965 and 1981).

I witnessed many Métis strengths (gifts, talents) emerging, which I think the informal learning setting nurtured, and the following examples might shed light on how the earlier mentioned examples surfaced. The Métis in our community were often provided with space to engage in the activities they enjoyed—space to find themselves. More than that, I found it phenomenal how they seemed to instinctively know how to do and learn a new activity. Two two post-preschoolers provide examples: riding horses and playing the piano. The horse-lover was not nurtured around a horse environment in any way, but had a desire for a horse; the community, without judgement and with pleasure, supplied the horse and barn. The Métis child got on the horse and began riding bareback almost instantly. A few years later, they entered horse competitions and won. No one taught them; they just knew. The piano player went for non-

formal lessons. A week into their first lesson, after the instructor modelled an advanced version of the song they were learning, the child went in their room at home and practiced unprompted for a few days until they were able to play the advanced song by ear. The settings for these two examples offered support for desired learning to emerge.

Analysis

I found that experiential, w/holistic and lifelong learning were innate as well as possibly a survival form of teaching and learning within the Métis community. This kind of learning was also an informal teaching and learning enculturation within the Métis community. Observation skills with iterations, apprenticing, nurturing and spirituality formed a breeding ground for enjoyable teaching and learning- and an innate capacity to adapt and create. Therefore I raise the following questions:

- Is the relational bond (with Homo sapiens and beyond) important for teaching and learning?
- Is it important to continue the thread of the teaching and learning from generations before us? Does a connection with our primal selves nurture our innate creativity, strength and aptitudes?
- Is unconditional support important for teaching and learning? Is space needed for teaching and learning to develop?
- Is informal learning valuable?
- Is trial and error more an effective way to develop intuition?
- Is intuitive teaching and learning a survival mechanism?
- Are some or all of these ways ones that could facilitate progress towards the SDGs? For example, could intuition help eradicate poverty?
- Is locality important for forming strong community teaching and learning environments that are reciprocal and sustainable?

Conclusions

The experiential learning from these stories was self-directed (from the children too) because the projects taken on were intentional. I submit the cases described take for granted the consciousness of learning in the process. However, their observational learning appeared to be incidental and intentional, but the consciousness of learning was unintentional. The incidental learning appeared to be a product of the socialization and tacit learning that formed through their Métis enculturation. I suggest the kind of informal learning that was most prominent is Bennett's (2012) integrative learning. There was a "*conscious access to the learning products and mental images*" (p.28). The house example recounted the model and practice with the settler houses, and the three-legged stool was founded on a four-legged stool. The cars example had models for apprenticing. The outfits' creation from visualized examples required mental images of outfits that often had to be remembered. "[S]ynthesiz[ing] new and existing knowledge" occurred (p. 28). Existing knowledge came from years of observation and practice, and new knowledge came from creating new models, such as the four-legged stool and outfits. Also, most of the process of these projects required "insight" and "unconscious" knowing (p. 28). Insight was seen especially when children knew what they wanted to learn and when the

community knew to support the children unconditionally. Possibly, the child examples showed how the adult abilities were formed. The Métis practiced this form of teaching and learning for generations and from childhood.

The w/holistic learning that took place in these stories was implicit. The observation skills were a community competence from generations before us that were learned from our elders. The development of one's skill was their contribution to the whole. Building a house, making a chair, repairing vehicles, sewing clothes, and making bannock were all skills learned from the community and given back to the community—a reciprocation. As for the "ecological and interconnected[ness]" of w/holistic perspectives, several factors stood out: the locality of the houses being built; the four-legged stool to copy; the outfit seen to adapt the curtains; the hands and eyes for measuring. The spiritual aspect versus analytical aspect allowed for flow and non-judgment. Lastly, the lifelong informal learning process was a generational perseverance the Métis applied for their keen observational expertise to develop.

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UPDATES FROM GLOBAL LIFELONG LEARNING WEEK 2024

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ABSTRACT: The 2024 Global Lifelong Learning Week was an unprecedented meeting of leading theorists and practitioners in lifelong learning from over 40 countries at University College Cork, Ireland. The week included the ASEM LLL Hub Conference (May 27-29) and the EUCEN (the European University Continuing Education Network Conference) (May 29-31) with representatives from UNESCO, the European Commission, the Department of Foreign Affairs and the Southeast Asian Ministers for Education Organization in attendance. The theme, "University Lifelong Learning: Leading Positive Change in Challenging Times," highlighted the crucial role of continuous education in societal resilience and adaptability.

Keywords: global adult education, international organizations

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NAVIGATING NEW TRAJECTORY FOR INCLUSIVE EXCELLENCE: UNDERSTANDING IMPOSTOR PHENOMENON AMONG NONTRADITIONAL INTERNATIONAL DOCTORAL STUDENTS

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ABSTRACT: In the globalized higher education landscape, international students are integral to the academic community. International students often face unique challenges, including language and cultural barriers, adjusting to American classroom expectations, and feelings of isolation. This qualitative study explores impostor feelings among nontraditional international doctoral students at an R1: Doctoral University, by probing how these experiences intersect with their pursuit of higher education. Six students shared their experiences and coping strategies, revealing a pattern of self-doubt fueled by internalized stereotypes and societal expectations. Participants developed coping mechanisms, including self-care practices and seeking support from family, academic, and social networks. This study highlights the need for inclusive excellence initiatives that address the specific needs of nontraditional international doctoral students, underscoring the importance of fostering a more inclusive environment for diverse student populations.

Keywords: impostor phenomenon, imposter syndrome, nontraditional students, international students, doctoral education, R1: Doctoral University

Conceptual Framework

The concept of inclusive excellence in higher education centers on the strategic integration of diversity, equity, and inclusiveness within the fundamental operations of academic institutions (Sanger & Gleason, 2020). This model aims to cultivate environments where every student, particularly those hailing from diverse backgrounds, can flourish. A critical focus is placed on the success and well-being of international students, who often face unique challenges in their academic journeys. Creating an environment that transitions from mere demographic diversity to genuine intercultural pluralism is not solely the responsibility of administrators. Students do not compartmentalize their experiences based on settings like the classroom, laboratory, studio, athletic field, residential building, or dining hall. Faculty members, in collaboration with students, play a crucial role in cultivating a community that utilizes the unique identities and perspectives of each student. A pertinent aspect of this framework is the impostor phenomenon, which describes a psychic struggle where students, irrespective of their accomplishments, grapple with pervasive self-doubt and a fear of being exposed as frauds—a condition first articulated by Clance and Imes in 1978. Within research universities, where the quest for knowledge and innovative inquiry is prioritized, creating an inclusive environment becomes indispensable for meeting these academic objectives.

Inclusive excellence places emphasis on both the representation of diverse student bodies and the establishment of structural supports and policies that enable full engagement of these populations. Researchers in higher education have identified several critical elements vital for facilitating an inclusive excellence framework, particularly as it pertains to international students. These elements include fostering diverse learning environments, implementing support systems, enhancing cultural competence, and creating ample opportunities for student engagement (Berry, 1997; Gurin et al., 2002; Hurtado et al., 2012).

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This study operates within a conceptual framework that amalgamates inclusive excellence principles with the exploration of how the impostor phenomenon affects nontraditional international doctoral students at an R1: Doctoral University. This integrative approach aims to enhance understanding of how these interconnected factors shape the academic experiences and achievements of this distinct student demographic, thereby addressing both psychological and systemic issues impacting their success.

Literature Review

Inclusive Excellence in Higher Education

Inclusive excellence represents a foundational concept vital for improving the academic lives of nontraditional international doctoral students in research-intensive institutions. As academic entities evolve to embrace diversity, it becomes critical to identify and address the unique experiences and obstacles these students encounter in order to nurture equitable educational environments.

Historically, movements aimed at promoting diversity in educational systems from K-12 through higher education have witnessed transformative shifts. Initiatives such as the ethnic studies movement laid groundwork for curricula that honor and reflect diverse cultural narratives (Banks, 1996). As higher education institutions adjusted their recruitment, admission, and hiring practices to enhance access for students of color, it became increasingly clear that such strategies were insufficient to dismantle the disparities experienced once students entered academic environments. Research illustrates that despite increasing enrollment rates for minority groups, including international students, many still face distinct challenges adversely impacting academic performance and social integration (Williams et al., 2005).

Contemporary studies continue to illuminate the persistent achievement gaps feigned by minority students in higher education, with evidence suggesting lower academic performance, delayed progress, and heightened dropout rates compared to their white counterparts (Bauman et al., 2005). The situation is exacerbated for nontraditional international doctoral students, for whom the impostor phenomenon—a psychological construct characterized by self-doubt regarding accomplishments and fears of exposure as frauds—poses additional hurdles (Clance & Imes, 1978; Kheang, 2023). This condition disproportionately impacts individuals from diverse backgrounds, as cultural and contextual factors may amplify feelings of isolation and inadequacy, significantly hindering their academic performance.

Understanding the Impostor Phenomenon in Higher Education

The term “impostor phenomenon,” often referred to as “imposter syndrome,” was introduced by Clance and Imes in 1978 as a manifestation of self-doubt many individuals experience, reflecting a pervasive feeling that success is attributable to external circumstances rather than personal merit (Acker, 1997; Bell, 1990; Clance & Imes, 1978; Zorn, 2005). Research indicates that international students, especially those from non-Western cultures, may be particularly vulnerable to impostor feelings due to hurdles such as cultural misunderstandings, language barriers, and issues related to integration, which further deepen their sense of alienation in academic environments (Kheang, 2018, 2023).

Clance and Imes (1978) highlighted four critical behaviors that often complicate the experience of impostor phenomenon among women in particular. The first behavior pertains to an over-reliance on hard work and diligence, where individuals tie their sense of achievement to

external validation and performance metrics. This creates a fleeting sense of accomplishment accompanied by the fear that perceiving oneself as competent may lead to eventual failure. The second behavior encompasses a persistent sense of phoniness, as felt by many participants who feared revealing their true opinions or identities in academic settings, adhering instead to expected norms. Additionally, behaviors related to employing charm and perceptiveness serve to engender approval from authority figures, suggesting a psychological struggle that pits self-worth against external expectations.

The impostor phenomenon can hinder individuals from thriving, especially in high-pressure environments typical of academia (Cowman & Ferrari, 2002). Clance's (1985) extensive work on the subject led her to develop the Clance Impostor Phenomenon Scale as a diagnostic measure. Through this scale, she identified several common symptoms experienced by those grappling with impostor syndrome, including anxiety, stress, feelings of inadequacy, and discomfort with accolades for achievements, among others.

The intertwining of the principles of inclusive excellence with the concerns surrounding the impostor phenomenon serves to provide a more enriched understanding of how these constructs collectively shape the experiences of nontraditional international doctoral students in research universities. Recognizing impostor phenomenon as a significant barrier to academic performance and the emotional well-being of students underscores the necessity for universities to implement intentional strategies aimed at addressing these challenges while fostering an environment that promotes diversity and equity. This integrated model may enable higher education institutions to better support nontraditional doctoral students, empowering them to navigate their academic journeys with confidence and resilience.

Research Methodology

This qualitative case study specifically investigates the impostor phenomenon's impact on nontraditional doctoral students at an R1: Doctoral University in the southern part of the United States. The research endeavors to (1) ascertain the nature of students' experiences concerning the impostor phenomenon and (2) identify coping strategies that could foster inclusive excellence within academic settings. The study involves six participants who took part in in-depth interviews conducted via Zoom during the fall semester of 2022.

Each in-depth interview lasted approximately 60 minutes and was recorded, followed by transcription for analysis. The researcher used thematic analysis method to examine the data. The interview framework is divided into three segments targeting specific research inquiries. The first section contained six demographic questions alongside explorations of participants' challenges and experiences with impostor syndrome. The second part incorporated queries assessing the impacts of the phenomenon on personal, academic, and professional dimensions. The third segment solicited insights regarding support systems and coping strategies that students employed throughout their doctoral journeys.

Findings

The participants in this research comprised a diverse cohort of six international doctoral students hailing from countries across India and the Middle East, all enlisted in STEM programs. Each participant's identity is anonymized, and their names are pseudonyms. Their ages ranged from 30 to 39 years, denoting a nontraditional student demographic actively engaged in various stages of their academic journeys. Maliwan, at 31, represented the youngest participant, currently in her third semester, while Mohammed, 39 years old, had impressively

spent seven years navigating his program. Sirirath and Komar, also 31, were advancing through their fourth year and three-and-a-half years of study, respectively. Rahu, at 37, was in his second year, and Sanyoo, the youngest male participant at 30, had completed two years in his doctoral program. This diverse representation reflects a wealth of experiences and perspectives that shape their academic endeavors (see Table 1).

Table 1

Summary of Participants' Profiles

Participants	Age	Gender	Year/Semester of Study in the Doctoral Program	Major
Maliwan	31	Female	3rd semester	STEM
Sirirath	31	Male	4th year	STEM
Komar	31	Male	3 and half years	STEM
Mohammed	39	Male	7 years	STEM
Rahu	37	Male	2nd year	STEM
Sanyoo	30	Male	2 years	STEM

Challenges Faced by Nontraditional International Doctoral Students

Most participants in this study entered academia as international students to fulfill life goals surrounding job satisfaction, personal growth, and professional exploration. Such aspirations, while significant, were met with numerous challenges encountered along the way, impacting their journeys as nontraditional international doctoral students at an R1: Doctoral University. Participants spoke candidly about the personal and academic hurdles that contributed to their experiences with the impostor phenomenon.

Personal Challenges

Nontraditional international doctoral students face myriad personal and academic challenges that greatly shape their experiences and impede efforts to foster inclusive excellence within universities. As these individuals embark on their academic journeys, they often engage in significant opportunity costs, emphasizing sacrifices made in pursuit of doctorate degrees. Participants frequently reflected on the trade-offs involved, especially the loss of time spent with family and friends, as illustrated by one participant's poignant articulation of this dilemma: "It is an opportunity cost for both… graduate school experience is built around the convention, community of students" (Sanyoo). The resulting sense of loss often leads to feelings of isolation and disconnect from peers, as Rahu stated: "My nontraditional status prevents me from spending time with them because I have more responsibilities."

Compounding these personal sacrifices is the upheaval caused by relocation, which introduces stressors disrupting established social networks and community connections. Adjusting to a new environment can prove disorienting and isolating for many nontraditional students. One participant noted a significant drop in social activities, sharing, "We reduce church attendance" following a move, which underscores how relocation can truncate personal engagement (Sanyoo). Homesickness and separation from loved ones constitute significant emotional burdens, as expressed by Maliwan: "What really sucks about this whole experience is that I had

to spend a tremendous amount of time away." This sense of emotional uprooting exacerbates feelings of disconnection, complicating efforts to form supportive relationships within the academic context.

Additionally, experiences of prejudice and microaggression leave participants dealing with identity threats, resulting in emotional and psychological fragility. This aspect of their journeys was highlighted by Mohammed, who expressed disappointment regarding perceived cultural biases from his faculty advisor. He stated, "I feel disappointed, isolated, and frustrated." The emotional toll of such encounters intertwines deeply with the pervasive issue of impostor phenomenon, further complicating academic experiences of these students.

Academic Challenges

Beyond personal hurdles, nontraditional students encounter a broad spectrum of academic obstacles that amplify feelings of inadequacy and reluctance. Common themes emerged regarding a significant lack of support from advisors. Several participants articulated a feeling of disconnection during their advising relationships that led to heightened anxiety about making academic progress. Mohammed lamented, "My advisor is totally indifferent after the first semester… I did not receive any help from him." This absence of guidance left him grappling with feelings of helplessness, uncertain about meeting the rigorous demands of his program.

Moreover, gaps in knowledge and experience within their respective fields presented significant hurdles. Participants also reported feelings of falling behind their peers, leading to pervasive self-doubt and insecurities regarding their academic abilities. "I feel like I'm much behind others," Maliwan stated, exemplifying the fear of inadequacy that often plagues nontraditional doctoral students. The complexity of academic reading and writing further complicates the path to success. For instance, Komar said, "I thought I was a good writer before… but I realized that my writing was good from the persuasive style, which is not the solid writing used in academic publication." Such feelings of inadequacy can hinder these nontraditional international doctoral students' ability to pursue academic expectations fully.

The interplay of personal and academic challenges facing nontraditional international doctoral students emphasizes the need for higher education institutions to critically assess their support systems. The unique environment of graduate studies can foster deep self-doubt, as highlighted by Rahu, who observed, "The PhD system is designed to make people feel stupid… unless you're one of the relatively few who has a naturally very self-confident personality." Addressing systemic issues at play is essential for fostering an academic atmosphere that supports diversity of experiences and promotes the success of all students.

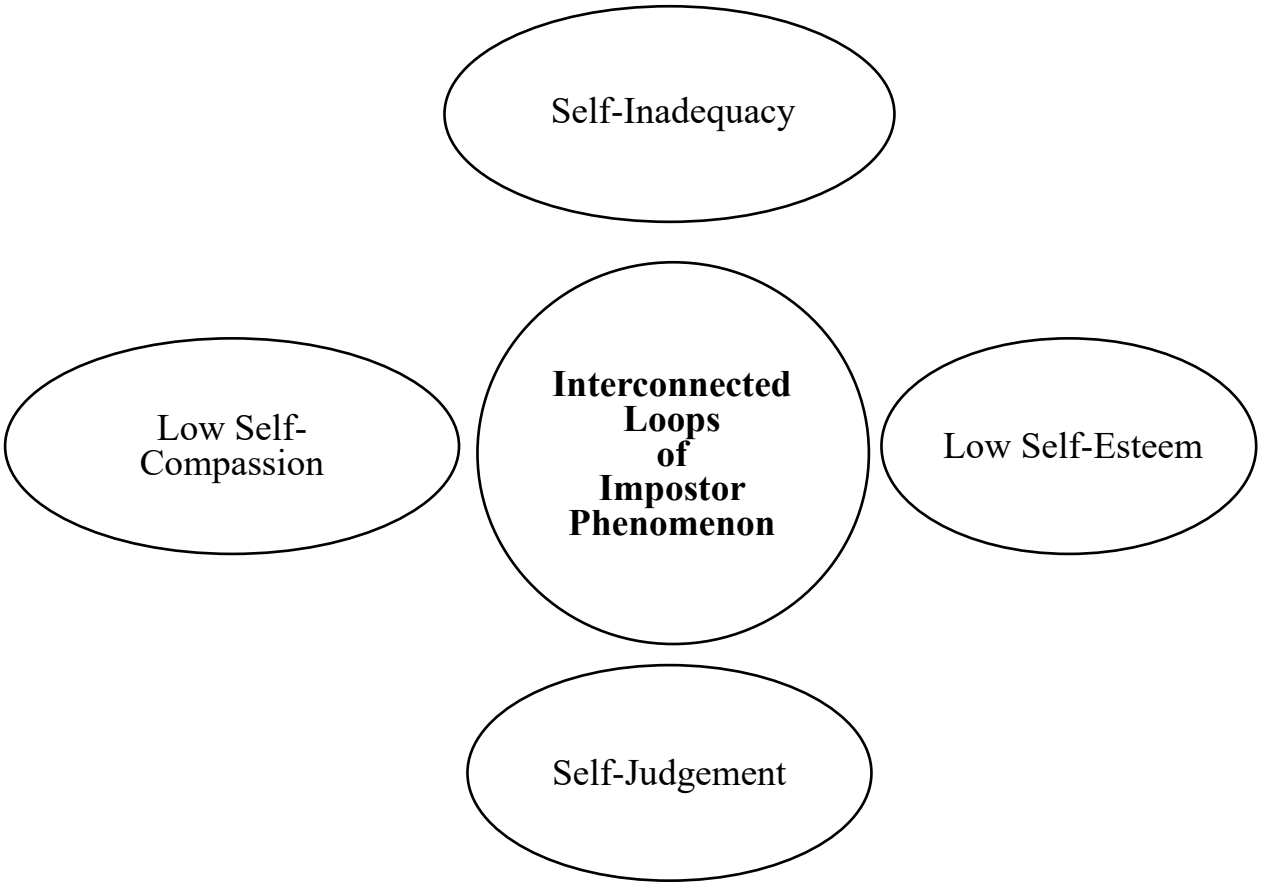
Additionally, the research findings reveal that all six participants perceived themselves as impostors, tying their internal struggles to a combination of four interconnected loops representing the impostor phenomenon: self-inadequacy, low self-esteem, self-judgment, and low self-compassion (see Figure 1).

Impostor Loop 1: Self-Inadequacy

The self-inadequacy loop prominently emerged among participants, often related to past traumatic experiences or preconceived limitations placed upon them. Mohammed articulated this sentiment: "I felt the imposter syndrome a lot more in the past… It was a constant feeling of inadequacy and competition with others." Some participants identified perfectionism as a contributing factor to their feelings of self-inadequacy, while others felt immense pressure to

Figure 1

Interconnected Loops of Impostor Phenomenon: Internal Challenges



meet expectations from advisors or peers. Rahu echoed these sentiments: "I still feel like I am not good enough… it's hard to overcome the idea that you are not qualified."

Sanyoo illustrated this loop further, sharing how his interactions with faculty heightened feelings of inadequacy: "When I'm around faculty… I just feel a little bit out of my league." Komar articulated a similar struggle, capturing the exhausting nature of balancing perceptions of "what is required of him" against self-acceptance. Maliwan summed up the perpetual feeling of inadequacy succinctly: "No matter what it takes, I would always feel like I'm inadequate."

Impostor Loop 2: Low Self-Esteem

Low self-esteem was identified as a significant contributor to the impostor experiences among participants. Many recounted childhood expectations shaping their self-worth, which continued to inform their challenges with feelings of inadequacy. Sirirath described familial pressures to excel, stating, "My childhood… my parents compared me with other people." This constant comparison fueled Mohammed's need for validation from others, placing him in a constant state of insecurity: "It was like needing to feel the best—to be recognized as the best."

Several participants, including Maliwan, indicated a tendency to idolize mentors, amplifying feelings of inferiority: “He’s so knowledgeable… if I don’t understand something he said, I should figure it out on my own.” During orientation, Rahu’s self-doubt intensified after comments made by faculty, leading him to question his capabilities: “Am I able to achieve that or to compete?” Komar echoed these feelings of competition, emphasizing a hesitancy to seek help owing to a desire to prove his worth.

Impostor Loop 3: Self-Judgment

The self-judgment loop involved critical evaluations of personal capabilities, further exacerbating negative self-perceptions. Participants repeatedly described this cycle as worsening their low self-esteem and feelings of inadequacy. Maliwan admitted to “always underestimating” her achievements, despite recognition from her advisor: “It’s just me that I feel like I should have achieved something better.”

Sanyoo labeled himself as “a mean coach,” where self-criticism served as a motivator, whereas Mohammed lamented an inability to enjoy personal accomplishments due to relentless self-judgment. “I need to work on myself to rid the feeling of underestimating the significance of my work,” he stated, illustrating the burden this loop placed on self-esteem.

Rahu noted that pressure to publish intensified his self-judgment, fostering feelings of inadequacy in the face of peers: “I feel insufficient… Everyone is doing it so quickly. Why am I not doing that?” Meanwhile, Komar highlighted that critical self-judgment prompted feelings of hopelessness, remarking: “I will never meet the expectations—I’m slow on writing and slow on publications.”

Impostor Loop 4: Low Self-Compassion

Low self-compassion manifested in participants’ tendencies to engage in self-blame and apathy when confronting challenges. Komar revealed that he often blamed himself, stating: “I sometimes tend to blame myself, like why am I not able to get such a simple thing to work.” Maliwan expressed frustration with herself, asserting, “I always feel like if I can't do this thing the first time that it's like, oh, gosh! Like I screwed up massively.”

Sanyoo remarked on disengagement from celebrating accomplishments: “I stopped celebrating my success,” symbolizing how impostor phenomenon can sap enthusiasm for personal milestones. Rahu disclosed that he neglected self-care during difficult times, isolating himself to avoid burdening others: “I don’t want to feel like I’m burdening anybody else.”

These intertwined loops created a cycle that participants found challenging to break free from, ultimately resulting in compounded feelings of self-doubt and unworthiness. The insights provided by the participants illuminate the complex nature of the impostor phenomenon while highlighting the necessity for targeted interventions to dismantle these cycles.

Coping Strategies

The research findings indicate that participants employed two primary types of coping strategies to manage their impostor feelings: self-help strategies and external assistance.

Self-help

Self-help strategies emerged as predominant among participants and included critical self-reflection, self-care practices, and self-motivation. Self-reflection included introspective exercises that allowed participants to unpack the nuances of their impostor experiences, engaging in evaluations of "what," "when," "why," and "how." For instance, Maliwan noted the importance of understanding how various values influenced her doctoral experience to define her life purpose. Sirirath underscored the significance of recognizing the origins of his feelings, connecting his impostor experiences to academic struggles of the past.

Self-care practices incorporated physical activities or hobbies, with participants like Rahu and Sanyoo identifying exercise as a crucial outlet for managing stress. Additionally, self-compassion and mindfulness featured prominently, with Mohammed indicating, "Practicing self -awareness helped me to focus on improving my self-inadequacy rather than beating myself up." Self-motivation was evidenced through positive self-talk and affirmations, with Komar deploying phrases like "You can do it" to counter negative thoughts surfacing during moments of self-doubt.

External Help

The pursuit of external sources of assistance emerged as vital among participants, encompassing professional help through therapy and medication. Mohammed described relying on medication, stating, "I've been on a pretty heavy dose of antidepressants, and that's really the only thing that has been successful for me." Support from advisors, mentors, families, life partners, and friends proved crucial, as Sanyoo emphasized that conversations with his partner helped him navigate challenging times. Participants like Maliwan highlighted the importance of shared experiences among peers: "Talking to peers who understand my situation has been vital." Nonetheless, several participants faced challenges in locating adequate support within their academic communities, underscoring a pressing need for improved mental health resources. Ultimately, participants navigated their impostor experiences through a combination of self-help strategies and external support, reflecting a holistic approach to combat academic pressures.

Conclusion

This exploratory study sought to investigate how the impostor phenomenon impacts nontraditional international doctoral students within the context of inclusive excellence in higher education. Findings reveal that interconnected loops of self-inadequacy, low self-esteem, self-judgment, and low self-compassion create a complex web of challenges experienced by these students. Despite notable academic achievements, participants grappled with feelings of self-doubt, fears of exposure, and a sense of non-belonging, all of which significantly influenced their educational experiences and emotional welfare. The diverse backgrounds and unique challenges illuminated by participants underscore the necessity for higher education institutions, particularly research doctoral universities, to address these issues with a nuanced understanding of the diverse experiences of international students.

Implications

The implications derived from this study extend to institutions actively striving for inclusive excellence, emphasizing the importance of fostering supportive environments specifically catered to the needs of nontraditional international doctoral students. The intrinsic loops of the

impostor phenomenon illustrate how systemic factors interwoven within academic cultures can exacerbate feelings of inadequacy and isolation among these individuals. Therefore, universities must prioritize the cultivation of structures that promote mental well-being, academic growth, and community connectedness. This pursuit includes enhancing mentorship and advising practices, fostering peer networks, and adopting culturally responsive policies to facilitate open dialogue regarding impostor feelings. Such strategic measures can empower students, enabling them to surmount self-doubt and engage wholeheartedly in their academic endeavors, fostering a sense of belonging and affirmation within the academic community.

Recommendations for Further Research

Further research could explore various avenues to build on the findings established within this study. Longitudinal studies could yield insights into how the impostor phenomenon evolved over time for nontraditional international doctoral students, especially during transitions throughout their academic careers. Additionally, comparative studies across diverse cultural contexts could illuminate how differing cultural attitudes towards success and failure shape the experience of the impostor phenomenon and inform the strategies students employ to navigate these feelings. Assessing the effectiveness of specific interventions tailored at mitigating the impostor phenomenon, such as mentorship programs, mental health initiatives, and peer support networks would also be invaluable. Lastly, broadening the participant pool to encapsulate a wider array of disciplines and institutions could enhance the generalizability of findings and further enrich practices aimed at promoting inclusive excellence in higher education.

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EXAMINING COGNITIVE ASPECTS OF SOCIAL INTERACTIONS FOR INTERNATIONAL STUDENTS

Angelo Marade, Ed.D.[1]

ABSTRACT: As noted by UNESCO, the Marrakech Framework for Action can be considered as a call for action to promote and maintain a socially cohesive learning environment inclusive of all. As it pertains to international students successfully attending American schools, colleges, and universities, a welcoming socially cohesive learning environment has been found to be a matter of great importance. This study features primary resources and existing literature that details international students' successes and challenges as they relate to social interactions in academic settings. Findings from this study can be useful to instructors, administrators, student counselors, event planners, and academic advisors of international students.

Keywords: International College Students, Technology, Generational Changes, Sense of Belonging, Cognitive Processing, Alternative Learning Methods, Social Integration in Academic Settings

Introduction

In 2022, the UNESCO Institute for Lifelong Learning (UIL) introduced a global call to action (UIL, 2022). The intention of the Marrakech Framework for Action is to promote and maintain a socially cohesive learning environment that will be inclusive of all. In discussing the framework, Victor Godoy, the Minister of Education for Brazil pointed out the importance of the framework and noted that it "makes commitments to transform the right of lifelong learning into reality" (UIL, 2022a, 01:39). In another discussion, Li Andersson, the Minister of Education from Finland pointed out the framework's potential to "invest in adult education" (UIL, 2022b, 00:04). Andersson also stated that the framework "further strengthens the human rights-based approach" (UIL, 2022b, 00:07). Finally, Ibu Suharti, the Deputy Minister of Education for Indonesia asserted that the framework is likely to have a strong impact on "the health and well-being" of learners (UIL, 2022c, 04:35).

As it pertains to international students, each of the previously mentioned factors are matters of importance, and this is especially true regarding the health and wellness of learners. Zhang and Goodson (2011) examined the health and wellness of international students. In their review of sixty-four peer reviewed studies spanning from 1990 to 2009, they found that social interaction and stress were among the most reported predictors of psychosocial adjustment for both graduate and undergraduate international college students. An additional concern is the fact that recent studies including Kolnhofer-Derecskei et al. (2017), Ngotngamwong (2019), Martirosyan et al. (2019), and Gopalan and Brady (2020) have found similar results as it relates to psychosocial adjustment in academic settings.

This study details some of the factors that have been found to contribute to today's international students' challenges in academic situations. Notable factors include isolation, bouts of low self-confidence, stress, and anxiety (Gopalan & Brady, 2020; Siebert, 2021). Prensky (2001) and others, including Twenge (2017), Chicca and Shellenbarger (2018), and Ngotngamwong (2019) have affirmed that solo-participant types of technological activities are playing a role in hindering the social abilities of some individuals from our most recent generations. This study examines these findings and points out some of the variables that are likely to help today's

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international college students improve their social abilities, achieve cognitive stability (Marade, 2021), establish a sense of belonginess, and ultimately, reduce stress and anxiety (Chicca & Shellenbarger, 2018; Martirosyan et al., 2019; Seibert, 2021; Strayhorn, 2012).

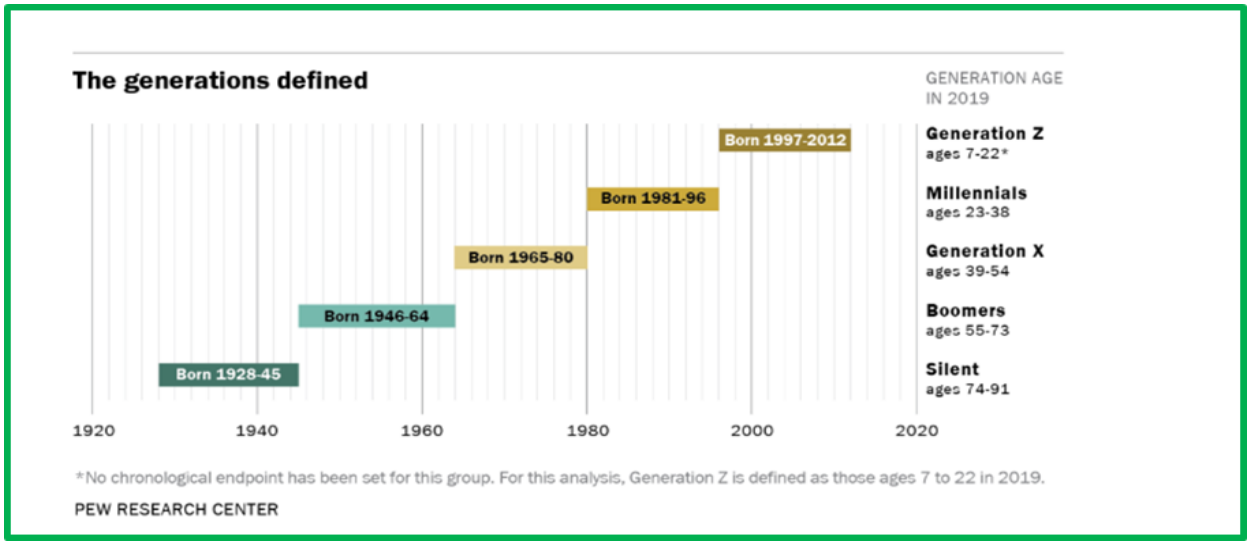
Technology and Generational Changes

For the past seventy years there have been numerous discussions regarding challenges related to social support and the successful integration of international students into their host country environments (Martirosyan et al., 2019). As we enter the year 2024, these types of discussions are becoming even more important. This is because obstructions and distractions associated with technological advances are increasingly being considered to be factors that affect many of today's college students. Similarly, solo-participant digital activities are considered to be additional factors that are likely to interfere with the social integration of international college students. More specifically, as described by Prensky, "Digital Natives" have "spent their entire lives surrounded by and using computers, videogames, digital music players, video cams, cell phones, and all the other toys and tools of the digital age" (Prensky, 2001, p. 1). Along those lines, Kolnhofer-Derecskei et al. (2017) pointed out the fact that the environment from which a person develops can be the "determinant" of their behavior and system of operations (p. 109). Similarly, Ngotngamwong (2019) found that there are both functional and behavior differences in today's generations compared to generations of earlier times. In summation, researchers agree that generational changes including functional and behavior changes can be considered as an effect of technological advancements and individuals' reliance on digital media as a main source of activities and communication.

The grouping and chronological labeling of generational continuities is not a simple task because a precise ending and beginning point between two generations does not exist (Twenge, 2017). Considering the multiple issues that can complicate the goal of chronicling and labeling generations, Reeves and Oh (2007) distinguished a parameter from which to follow. That is,

Figure 1

The Generations Defined



Note. The Dimock (2019) representation of past and recent generational time spans. Copyright 2024 by Pew Research Center. Reprinted with permission.

"Despite the lack of consistency in nomenclature and chronology, most authorities agree that a great deal of variance exists among the distinguishing characteristics within any given generation" (p. 297). That being said, for the purpose of this discussion, a reliable source of distinction is the documentation of Dimock (2019) as compiled for the Pew Research Center.

In his presentation, Dimock (2019) outlined generational changes dating back to the 1920s. As Figure 1 shows, Dimock effectively noted some of the "distinguishing characteristics" (Reeves & Oh, 2007, p. 297) that have defined generations during the past ten decades.

For the purpose of this study, the focus begins with the Baby-Boomer (1946-1964) generation. The Baby-Boomer generation is notable because these individuals lived most of their adult life communicating and functioning in non-digital ways. Moreover, Baby-Boomers were some of the oldest living individuals transitioning to electronic media and digital communications when the new technologies became available for personal use.

Generation X Transforming Baby-Boomers

The longevity of the Baby-Boomer (1946-1964) generation's time span helps to explain the lasting effects of their steadfast way of life prior to the digital age, and their challenges adjusting to new technologies. More specifically, many Baby-Boomers were unmoved as far as entering the new phase of technology was concerned (Heaggans, 2012). As time progressed, the introduction of digital media became a major concern for many individuals of the Baby-Boomer generation because new technologies created the types of changes that would begin to forever change the way that Baby-Boomers experienced life. That is, many personal interactions such as local banking, handwriting letters and physically mailing them, and other basic means of communications were gradually beginning to change. Nonetheless, many older adult learners of technology persevered and eventually learned (Heaggans, 2012).

Heaggans (2012) pointed out that many older adults were much more challenged with the new technologies than the younger generations, and some were overwhelmed in the beginning. In effect, many of these older adults from the Baby-Boomer generation were faced with the choice of learning these new technologies and progressing or ignoring personal advancement and remaining left behind in a rapidly changing world. Looking back, the efforts of Generation X (1965-1980) played a defining role in many Baby-Boomers learning to function in a technological environment. In fact, it was deemed important to determine and document the methods and strategies that contributed to the Baby-Boomers' learning so the process could be continued (Heaggans).

Bridging the Gaps Between Generational Comfort Zones

During the 1980s, Generation X were the primary associates transitioning Baby-Boomers into the technological age. However, today, generational interactions are more diverse. This is because the longevity of generational time spans have changed during recent decades (Kolnhofer-Derecskei et al., 2017). Specifically, the "lifetime-long generation transition has become much shorter in the case of the recent generations; the quicker the technological innovations are implemented, the more difficult it is to determine the transition between the generations" (Kolnhofer-Derecskei et al., p. 108). Hence, due to the rapid technological innovations, and the shortening of generational time spans that have occurred during the past 40 years, it is very likely that four generations including: Baby-Boomers (1946-1964), Generation X (1965-1980), Millennials (1981-1996), and Generation Z (1997-2012) may interact at any given time (Chicca & Shellenbarger, 2018; Dimock, 2019; Seibert, 2021; Twenge, 2017).

An issue regarding interactions between multiple diverse generations is the concern that some individuals from the earlier generations may be more socially interactive than some members of the most recent generations prefer (Twenge, 2017). Twenge explained that some members of the most recent generations are highly active online, and they prefer minimal face to face interactions. Twenge credited Generation Z's preferences for mostly texting and communicating via social media to theirs being the first generation to have constant internet access. However, Twenge also stated, some millennials reported extreme technology use, and communication preferences identical to Generation Z.

In a global sense, generational preferences have been reversed over time. More specifically, whereas the Baby Boomers were transformed from their world of personal communications to the digital age, some individuals of more recent generations are being recognized as individuals who may need a transformation from the solo-participant digital world to a zone of personal communication. Kolnhofer-Derecskei et al. (2017) explained one possible solution as follows:

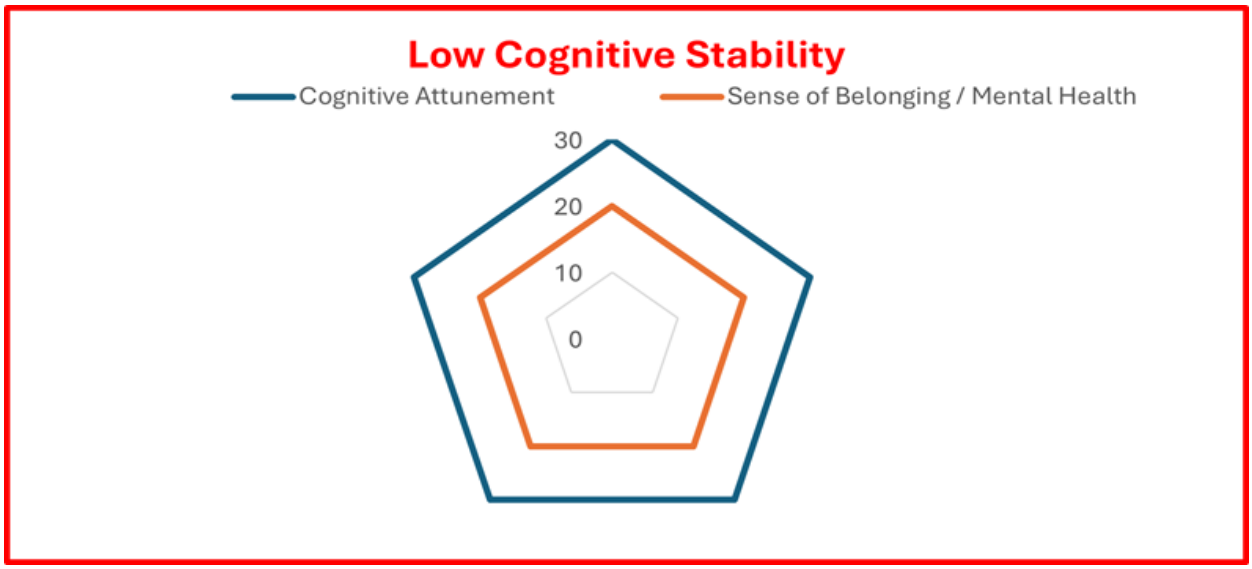
> The discrepancies between generations are often due and strengthened by the different communication of the two generations. As long as a generation is being educated and served by the previous generation, this education will be responsible for any issues with the new generation. (p. 124)

Another perspective was introduced by Chicca and Shellenbarger (2018), they suggested:

> Explaining and demonstrating proper group and interpersonal skills, such as active listening, providing constructive criticisms, and respecting others' perspectives, can help increase social and relationship skills. When providing education, consider including activities that require short bursts of social interactions to help cultivate this skill in Generation Z. (p.252)

Figure 2

Low Cognitive Stability



Note. A visual representation of low cognitive stability. Copyright 2024 by Angelo Marade.

Students' cognitive stability, and ultimately, student success is related to their ability to relate to others, communicate with others, and feel a sense of belonging on campus (Gopalan & Brady, 2020; Marade, 2021; Strayhorn, 2012). As demonstrated thus far, multi-generational communications (Kolnhofer-Derecskei et al., 2017) and successful personal interactions are likely to help achieve these goals.

Cognitive Stability

Many educators have established that there is a relationship between students' sense of belonging, mental health, and student success (Gopalan & Brady, 2020; Kitzrow, 2009; Marade, 2019; Stebleton et al., 2014; Strayhorn, 2012). Specifically, a student's sense of belonging is related to sound mental health and cognitive processing (Drigas & Mitsea, 2021; Strayhorn, 2012; Zhang & Goodson, 2011). Along those lines, sound cognitive processing, and student success (Sweller, 1994) result from cognitive stability (Marade, 2021). Taken together, a student's mental health and their sense of belonging can affect their cognitive stability because decreases in sense of belonging can lead to decreases in cognitive stability as Figure 2 indicates.

Regarding students' sense of belonging, Gopalan and Brady (2020) stated, "In college, feeling a sense of belonging may lead students to engage more deeply with their studies, leading to persistence and success" (p. 1). However, a student's sense of belonging can be based on varying personal perceptions. Specifically, a perception of being valued by others, and a perception of being respected by others relates to a sense of belonging (Strayhorn, 2012). At issue is the circumstance that perceptions of acceptance, including being respected, and one's opinions being valued, are unlikely to be achieved without effective communication skills and effective social exchanges of information (Seibert, 2021; Strayhorn, 2012). Consequently, efforts towards enhancing communication skills and social interaction abilities should be attempted in order to increase the likelihood of achieving a sense of belonging and ultimately, cognitive stability (Marade, 2019).

Cognitive stability is important because a stable cognitive frame of mind is a step forward towards achieving cognitive attunement. As Marade (2021) stated, "cognitive attunement as a process, "revolves around the assumptions that incremental interferences in learning are normal" (p.15). However, interferences must be "attuned/resolved" in order for an individual to "return to a state of cognitive attunement" (p. 15). Experiencing a sense of not-belonging in an academic or social situation can result in destructive stress (Drigas & Mitsea, 2021). In a discussion of metacognition and the intrapersonal experience, Drigas and Mitsea discussed "destructive stress" (p. 12). Specifically, while creative stress can be beneficial, destructive stress cannot. Destructive stress is a form of cognitive interference that can lead to decreases in cognitive stability (Marade, 2021). Accordingly, in order to reach the point of cognitive attunement, destructive stress should be minimized. The ensuing discussion regarding "centers of fear" (Drigas & Mitsea, p. 12) "low-stakes experiences" (Sprinkle & Urick, 2018, p.107) provides further clarification.

In their analysis, Sprinkle and Urick (2018) described the effects of low-stakes experiences and the importance of creating and encouraging low-risk participation in situations when students require assistance interacting with others. Concurrently, the relationship between low-risk opportunities and cognitive attunement is the ability to resolve an issue and proceed forward. More specifically, activities that limit challenges can facilitate likely successful outcomes rather than failures because low-risk opportunities can help to limit fears that individuals may have

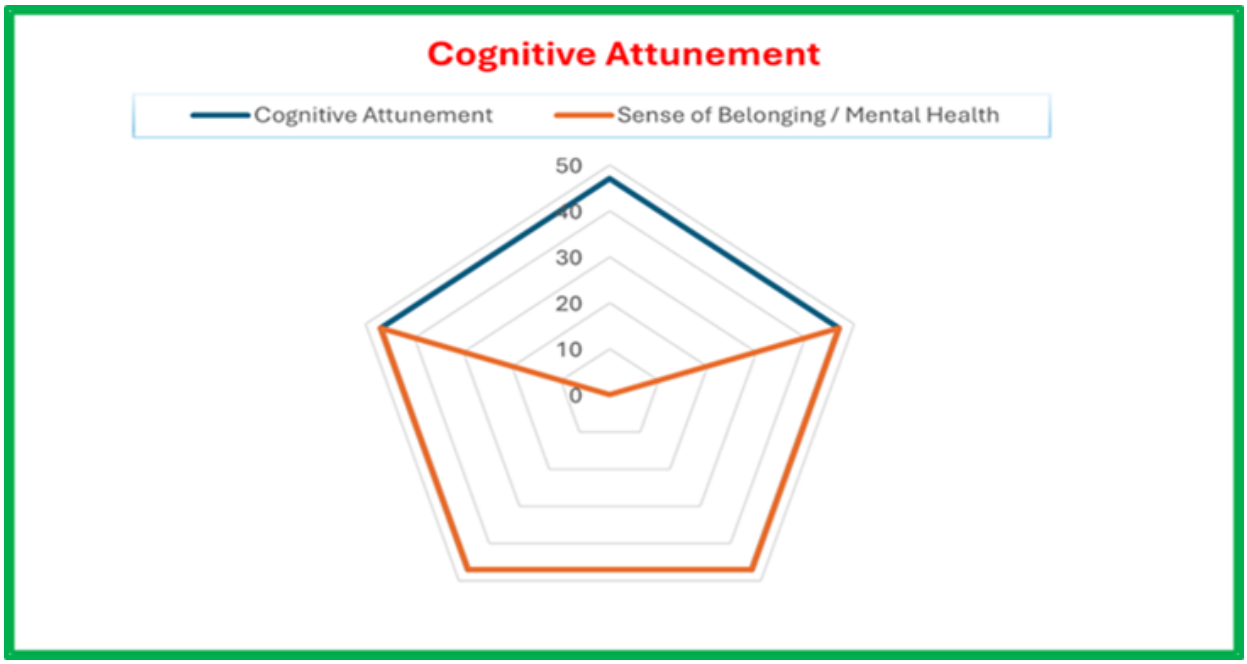
about their perceived inferiorities (Drigas & Mitsea, 2021). These types of activities can be helpful for international Generation Z college students who may be less socially interactive because of generational factors, and likely also feel inferior because of their English-speaking skills.

Regardless of their low value in categories such as earning college credits or winning awards, low-risk opportunities can be valuable in several ways. For example, in a recent case involving longitudinal observational research (Marade, 2024), a Chinese student was enrolled in an intermediate Chinese language class. The course-design focused on both Chinese language and culture studies. As the course progressed, the Chinese student was able to help other individuals better understand Chinese culture and language. During that process, the student learned more effective English language skills from conversations that he had with other students who spoke proficient English. In the end, the value of the course was low from the perspective of credits earned. However, taking the course resulted in a high-value outcome that was demonstrated by the student's emotional development, identity development, and improvement in cognitive stability which contributed to his cognitive attunement (Marade, 2021).

In summation, the low-risk low-value experience resulted in a high intrinsic value outcome for the student. The experience helped to make the student feel valued and respected. The experience also helped to make the student feel important to the group, all of which are described by Strayhorn (2012) as factors that contribute to feeling a sense of belonging. As demonstrated in Figure 3, the student's level of cognitive stability increased, which in turn contributed to his reaching a level of cognitive attunement.

Figure 3

Cognitive Attunement



Note. A visual representation of cognitive attunement. Copyright 2024 by Angelo Marade.

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Essentially, the student experienced what Marade (2024) termed "confidence compensation" (p. 3) and increased his cognitive stability. More specifically, the student's English-speaking confidence was low. However, the student compensated via his ability to utilize his proficiency in Chinese language and culture to help others achieve their established goals. Taken together, the student experienced a role-reversal transition from always following to leading. Lee (2013) recognized these types of international student role reversals for herself. Specifically,

> In my own experience as a professor, I have found that many international students tend to be quite shy and quiet in class but have much to offer in a friendlier environment where they don't have to compete with other students for attention. I have truly enjoyed getting to know them during class but especially during my office hours and after class. In many cases, roles reversed whereby my international students were my teachers, enlightening me about their respective cultures and how the class material might relate to their home countries. (Lee, 2013, p. 3)

Role-reversal and confidence-compensating activities can be implemented in other areas as well. For example, a group activity with a focus on areas where one excels – such as art, playing cards, or book reading can increase social interactions when participants have similar interests and relatable conversations (Nielsen et al., 2021). Additional examples include sports activities as a means of social cohesion (Moustakas, 2022). Gil-Lopez et al. (2021) utilized physical education courses to enhance social integration and English-speaking skills. In a related case study, Li and Zizzi (2018) utilized the game of badminton as a means to demonstrate that "physical activity can serve as a social vehicle which facilities intercultural communication within international students" (p. 404). Each of these types of role-reversal and confidence-compensating activities can effectively ease tensions for students who may feel inferior to others. Accordingly, these examples can serve as viable options for event planners and organizers. After all, the fundamental purpose and the ultimate goal in student planning is the activities fall within the skillset and the comfort zone of the students.

Activity planners for international students consistently plan varied events (Martirosyan et al., 2019). However, some international students tended to avoid certain activities (Lee 2013). Li and Zizzi (2018) explained the possibility of international students feeling awkward at social events. The researchers stated:

> In general social occasions (e.g., parties, pubs), international students might feel confused and uncomfortable. For example, international students might need the in-depth knowledge of the local language, social, and cultural background to understand and respond to Americans' jokes. Even if they were knowledgeable in English, the context information was missing. The intercultural communication in physical activity (i.e., sports play, recreational exercise) can be an easier start which does not require context information. (p. 404)

The preceding Li and Zizzi dialogue described perceptions of an event and a person's reaction based on their personal preferences and comfort zone. The situation as a whole aligns with the discussions of Gopalan and Brady (2020) and (Strayhorn, 2012) as they addressed a sense of belonging. In summation, the way an individual feels internally, is their reality. Hence, if an individual feels that they belong, they do. However, if an individual feels as if they do not belong, in their mind – they don't. Thus demonstrating, the cognitive aspects of social interactions can be affected by generational differences, individual preferences, and an individual's perceptions.

As it pertains to generational changes, the combined effects of generational changes that have taken place over the past decade created a complexity of variables that affect international students, and students in general. Generational changes have added another dimension to challenges in regard to social interactions. Specifically, earlier generations consider in-person social interactions to be the normal mode of functioning in our society. Conversely, members of recent generations who are high consumers of technology, consider texting and interacting online to be their normal mode of communication.

Regarding technology, an individual being a high consumer of technology is not a concern solely because of the amount of usage. Instead, extensive usage of electronic media is a concern because it is related to isolation, and challenges with social skills (Kolnhofer-Derecskei et al., 2017; Ngotngamwong, 2019; Seibert, 2021). As it pertains to social interactions, Chicca and Shellenbarger (2018) found that "underdeveloped social and relationship skills", and "increased risk for mental health concerns such as isolation, anxiety, insecurity, and depression" were attributes of Generation Z (p.255). Knowing that high technology usage is related to mental health concerns, and mental health is related to cognitive stability, preventive methods should be considered in an effort to support students in need of assistance.

Conclusion

Cell phones and personal computers became prevalent during the late 1980s and 1990s. As time progressed, technological advancements continued and expanded to include the internet, email communications, and ultimately, social media platforms (Heaggans, 2012; Prensky, 2001). The timing of these new technologies benefited Generation X (1965-1980) and Millennials (1981-1996) because these generations transitioned more gradually from a world of extensive personal communication to the digital forums and electronic media that followed. On the other hand, Generation Z (1997-2012) was found to be more affected by technological advances because of their highly digitally driven living environments compared to generations before them (Chicca and Shellenbarger, 2018; Twenge, 2017). In sum, as educators, we should take into consideration both the possible stressors and the possible comfort zones of all students when planning for their endeavors, thus ensuring that they can maintain cognitive stability, achieve true cognitive attunement, and perform at the peak of their ability.

Implications for Future Research

This literature review and presentation of primary observational research demonstrates some of the current effects of generational changes and their effects on cognitive stability. Additional research is needed to better understand the underlying causes of students' lack of a sense of belongingness. Additionally, the roles that low-risk confidence-compensating opportunities including sports can play in reducing students' anxiety and increasing students' sense of belonging in academic situations should be further examined.

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EMANCIPATORY PATHWAYS FOR ADULTS RETURNING TO TECHNICAL TRAINING: THE CASE OF CONTINUING COLLEGE EDUCATION IN QUÉBEC

Jonathan Martel, Ph.D.[1]

ABSTRACT: This article focuses on the trajectories of adults returning to full-time study in technical and vocational education and training. The results presented are drawn from a critical ethnography conducted in a General and vocational colleges (referred to as cégep, their French acronym) in Montréal, Québec. The aim of the study was to describe and analyze the educational practices used to support the training and social integration of students enrolled in technical programs in cégep adult continuing education services. This study is based on a document analysis, the researcher's experience, classroom observations and biographical interviews with teachers, active students and graduates. The theoretical framework is built upon andragogy, defined as a humanist and existentialist philosophy of adult education that provides the basis for a critical theory of adult education, aimed at emancipation and self-realization through lifelong learning. The research shows that the transformative learning trajectories of adults returning to school, while highly varied, demonstrate a certain convergence in terms of the elements that drive their return to training. Firstly, before making this choice, they live in a state of low recognition and socio-economic precariousness. Then, dissatisfaction, opportunity and the support of an outsider propels their return to education. This choice is based on the absence of a negative relationship with school, a drive for learning and intellectual stimulation, and a latent desire to return. Finally, favorable socio-economic conditions facilitate the act. The research shows that by giving adults a sense of competence, self-esteem, and a place in society, the success of the academic pathway enables social reintegration.

The Canadian French-speaking province of Québec offers technical and vocational education and training (TVET) at two distinct levels. The secondary level training focuses on the acquisition of skills specific to trades such as hairdresser or welder. The college level training for professions requiring a higher level of task and responsibility, such as nursing, computer technician or police officer. General and vocational colleges (referred to as cégep, their French acronym) provide those programs. Cégeps also offer two years of pre-university training, all within the same institution.

Within the cégeps network, a Continuing Education (CE) service aimed specifically for adults delivers two types of technical diploma: Diploma of College Studies (DCS) and the Attestation of College Studies (ACS). In 2022-2023, there were 30,516 adults attending CE services, including 26,060 in technical education. These students represent around 25% of the total of technical education student in Québec (103,444 students) (Banque de données des statistiques officielles, 2024). Despite their number, adults have been a marginalized category in the education systems and in research, and still are (Donaldson et al., 2004; Kasworm,1990; Langrehr et al., 2015; Martel, 2023a; Scanlon, 2008). Moreover, several studies have shown that the precarious status of adults returning to training is a fundamental element in understanding their pathway (Barkoglou & Gravani, 2022; Bélanger & Valdivielso, 1997).

For adults making this choice, returning to school marks an important moment in their lives. Beyond aiming to obtain skills and a recognized degree, it takes the form of a process of self-transformation and social reintegration (Mezirow, 2000; Martel, 2023b). Returning to training is part of the process of acquiring greater capability (Sen, 1997) and the social recognition

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needed to "*apparaître en public sans avoir honte* [appear in public without feeling ashamed]" (Honneth, 2006, p. 175).

The paper is divided in four parts. In the first part, I present the analytical framework of the study. Then, the research methodology is briefly exposes. After, the results obtained are presented and discussed. This specific part begins with the presentation of the overall characteristics of adults returning to school. Then, it establishes the different types of pathways that lead to this return, and the effects of this return on these students. The last part of the paper is a conclusive discussion with a plea to see CE and the education system as social justice institution that have a transformative and emancipatory role for adult through lifelong learning.

Analytic Framework

My analysis is based on two frameworks. Firstly, I build a critical theory of adult education founded on andragogy, seen as an existentialist and humanist philosophy of adult education (Hartree, 1983; Knowles, 1975; 1978; 1980). This theoretical proposition places the person at the center of his or her concerns, and makes learning a fundamental element in the individual's being and emancipation. Based on the foundations of transformative learning theory (Mezirow, 2000), the theoretical framework aims for emancipation and self-realization through lifelong learning. I follow the impetus given by Fleming (2014, 2016, 2018) and Huttunen and Heikkinen (2004), who have proposed a refoundation of the transformative learning theory on the work of Honneth (2000, 2004, 2006, 2014). For them, Merizow's theory cannot grasp the complexity of today's social struggles without following the same path as the Frankfurt School. This proposal is based on the conceptual richness of the Hegelian concept of recognition, and on the existence of symbolic conditions of alienation or marginalization in today's societies. Honneth takes up the Hegelian concept of recognition, firstly as a source of legitimacy for their ability to act in social space (Honneth, 2004) and secondly, by extension, as an essential condition of social freedom (Honneth, 2014). Without recognition of the other as a "generalized other," to quote Mead (1934), it is not possible to found a society based on the ethical or good life. In this context, recognition is seen as a vital need for personal development (C. Taylor, 1992).

To capture the phenomenon of variability in educational pathways without passing moral judgment, I used a second framework consisting of four axes (Picard et al., 2011). The first axis focuses on the transaction between the individual and the educational institution. It brings to light the stakes involved in individual pathways within formal education systems. The second deals with the articulation of subjective and objective experience, which can show that changes in student attitudes are the result of new sources of influence and learning. The third axis seeks to analyze transactions between in-school and out-of-school experience. It calls for attention to social context, but also to life transitions, such as immigration, and adult futures. The fourth axis is the extension to longer temporalities. Through biographical approaches, they invite us to account for educational pathways through a broader temporal horizon, grasping the entanglement of the logics of action mobilized and the sociohistorical determinants of the individual, considering also the bifurcations linked to disappointed expectations, and the historical transformations of institutions. These axes lead us to an open and humanistic reading of subjective experiences, based on individual experience, taking into account a long temporality.

Methodology

The research objective was to describe and analyze the educational practices used to support the training and social integration of students enrolled in technical AEC or DEC programs in cégep continuing education departments. The approach is based on Carspecken's critical ethnography (1996). The fieldwork was carried out in a CE department of a cégep in the greater Montreal area, which welcomes around 1,000 adult students annually. The investigation involved four modes of information gathering. First, a document analysis that includes official documents produced by various institutional sources, such as internal cégep policies, ministerial directives, laws and regulations, collective agreements, minutes of various meetings and documents related to the program of study (syllabus, course outlines, framework plans). Second, I observed the educational practices of the teachers (n=7) in class (32 class sessions, i.e. 96 hours of classroom observation spread over three weeks). Third, I conducted interviews with observed teachers to deepen the understanding of their practices and obtain their views on adult education. Moreover, I conducted extended biographical interviews with graduates (n=12) and students (n=14) to find out about their backgrounds and contextualize their educational experiences (n=26). All participants (teachers, graduates and students) were from the same program. The verbatims of the interviews were analyzed to extract themes relevant to the research objectives. Fourth, the research was also informed by the teacher-researcher's experience as an instructor in a cégep CE department.

Students with Rich and Varied Backgrounds

Non-Traditional Students

Statistics and various studies carried out over the last few decades show that these non-traditional students are of more variable age, often older, have greater and more diversified experience, have multiple responsibilities and have acquired heterogeneous educational capital. These findings by Hughes (1983) are echoed by other researchers such as Bélanger (2015), Donaldson et al. (2004) and Merriam et al. (2007). For example, between 2015 and 2020, at a cégep CE program in the greater Montreal area, 68.4% of registrants had French as their mother tongue, 64.4% were born outside Québec and only 13.9% were under 25 and 27% were over 40. The average age of the total number of students enrolled in a CE technical program in Québec was around 32, and 24% were over 40. By comparison, only 7.5% of technical training students in regular education were over 30 (MEQ, 2015). In contrast to adults in CE, the majority of first-time cégep students have a relatively homogeneous educational background. On average, they are 17 years old, the majority are born in Canada (87.4%), have French as their main language of use (88.7%) and almost all come from secondary school (93.4%) (Guay et al., 2020; Gaudreault et al., 2018).

Several authors have shown that this experience must be considered when understanding adult learning (Jarvis, 2004; Merriam et al., 2007). While experience is the foundation of our ability to learn, it can also be a brake that limits our openness to new learning (J. E. Taylor, 2021). This resistance to learning potentially arises when there is a conflict between previous experience and the experience gained in training. This conflict may be related to previous and new learning, or it may lie in too great a difference between educational or other cultures. In so doing, persons involved in CE need to consider the variety of life paths and experiences of adults, to respond appropriately to their educational needs. The next section will present the initial education and adult life pathway of those learners returning to training in CE services.

Initial Educational and Adult Life Pathway

When they returned to school, many of them already had a post-secondary diploma, had been employed on a stable basis, and had not experienced any major problems in their initial educational path. This is the case for almost half of the participants. However, this is not the case for everyone. In the study, I set out to classify the pathways leading to a return to full-time study for the participants, considering their initial educational pathway and their adult life pathway. The initial educational pathway ends with the discontinuation of studies, with or without a diploma. The adult life-course includes the post-study period up to the return to college CE. It may include multiple returns to school, with or without a diploma.

Initial School Pathway

An analysis of the participants' experiences reveals three types of initial educational paths: the simple path; the path that ends abruptly; and the rocky path. Whether marked by ease, success or failure, the initial school path was described as situated in a pivotal and difficult period of life. The age of first choices in the pursuit of post-secondary education, or simply the high school period that accompanies adolescence, were often cited as moments of instability, upheaval and great change. Emancipation from parents, the need to leave an inadequate or violent environment, the accumulation of new responsibilities, particularly financial, and the search of oneself were just a few of the themes raised by participants to explain the early end of studies.

While adolescence and early twenties can be difficult, for many this period unfolds quite simply. Some have relatively linear initial educational path, with no major obstacles or pitfalls. This pathway is characterized by a rather positive relationship with learning and an implicit acceptance of the school environment. This is the case for half of the participants (graduate and student) in the study who have obtained a qualifying diploma which could lead to a job (n=13). They describe adequate support at home, good integration with the learning environment and ease to learn.

For others, it is a path full of obstacles that makes success more difficult and leads to an abrupt end (n=7). While the beginnings of their journey are like that of the previous category, it is marked by the abandonment of their studies for a variety of reasons. Lack of interest in their initial training, the weight of life's preoccupations (financial pressure, break-up, etc.), a low sense of academic competence and a lack of confidence in the future are often cited as reasons for leaving school early.

Finally, there is the rocky road, marked by great difficulty and a lack of support for successful study. This path is not conducive to obtaining the desired diploma, or even to completing a basic secondary diploma. Complex family situations, violence, immigration, racism and traumatic events mark this pathway (n=6). These are difficult life situations that have left their mark on them. Despite their good will and the absence of major learning difficulties, it is mainly external contingencies that lead them to deviate from the classic trajectory of continuity studies. So, it is not their capability that is at issue here, but rather the social conditions under which these individuals realize their potential - they're in an incapacitating environment.

Adult Life Pathway

The second phase, the adult life pathway, includes life experiences from the time of first leaving school, with or without a diploma, and sometimes includes periods of returning to school with

varying degrees of success. These people have a different relationship with school and a different initial educational trajectory. They have also accumulated diverse work and life experiences. Before returning to school, some had experienced a linear career path, with few changes, in a single field (n=9). The quasi-linear experience is described as directly in continuity, after the end of studies, in a specific field without great variability. Of the nine people, eight had a straightforward initial school career, one had an abrupt end, and none had a rocky path. A return to school, when it comes after a period of several years' work, completes this phase.

For many, it is a heterogeneous journey of work and professional experience that marks part of their adult lives. Their work history is marked by numerous changes in the field of work or the accumulation of unskilled jobs (n=12). For five of them, their initial school career fell into the simple category, six were categorized as abrupt endings, and only one was in the rocky category. This heterogeneous pathway is sometimes short but can also stretch over several years.

Finally, the adult life course of some is marked by a succession of resumptions and exits from training with or without a diploma, often combined with various unsatisfactory work experiences (n=5). All the cases in this category had a rocky initial school career. They fall into this category because they all left their initial studies at various times to enter the job market, before returning to training on at least two occasions. What is more, their work experience through these returns is short-lived and often heterogeneous. It is a complex journey, marked by several setbacks and difficult moments in the lives of these people. As with the rocky path from which they came, the participants' backgrounds are marked by low social status, low self-esteem, discrimination and difficult psychosocial situations.

What Leads to a Return to School

Irrespective of initial schooling and adult life path, the decision to return to school seems to take place in similar contexts for all our participants (n=26). According to the data, this decision is taken at a time when the person is in a state of low social recognition, i.e. feels unappreciated by others, not recognized for their true worth (materially or symbolically) or is no longer able to give meaning to their daily life. This may be compounded by a low sense of competence, a depressive episode or a perceived stagnation in the career. These people are experiencing a negative episode in their lives, whether from a life experience, social or psychological point of view. The situation is also frequently linked to a form of socio-economic precariousness. They can no longer project themselves into the future, either socially or economically, in continuation of their career or in their current domain.

This return is propelled by dissatisfaction and an opportunity that presents itself. This decision is often triggered or supported by an outsider. All but one participant said that someone related to them had told them about a program or a possible source of funding. I also note that these people had already expressed a desire to go back to school. It was therefore a possibility they were already considering, and those around them were aware of it. Moreover, these people had a positive perception of school. Even though some of the participants had not succeeded in obtaining a first qualifying diploma, they expressed no resentment towards school as an institution. From the outset, they saw school as a possible solution, a preferred route to change their situation.

Finally, a return to school is encouraged by favorable socio-economic conditions, such as the availability of financial support such as loans and grants, subsidies or from family. It is then that this latent project becomes feasible, an experience within reach that can lead to a way out of an inadequate situation.

The Transformative Role of CE and TVET

While education is generally perceived as a path to emancipation, empowerment and escape from precarious social situations, the role of TVET establishments seems to suffer in comparison with universities (Legusov et al., 2021; Verdier and Doray, 2021). Various international organizations such as United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) consider TVET to be an essential element in the prosperity of states and the emancipation of individuals. For UNESCO (1999), TVET

> is one of the most powerful instruments for enabling all members of the community to face new challenges and to find their roles as productive members of society. It is an effective tool for achieving social cohesion, integration and self esteem (p. 10)

The aim of these programs of study is not only to train skilled, qualified workers who will enter the job market by meeting the specific needs of the production system, but is also to give these individuals a valued place in their communities. For Raby et al. (2022), the contribution of TVET establishments is also aimed at objectives other than qualification or requalification. This training sector enables educational establishments to achieve sustainable development objectives, such as integrating people who are poor, marginalized and have few skills suitable for the labor market. This includes skills that are outdated or poorly recognized in an ever-changing labor market. For these authors, TVET establishments achieve these objectives: thanks to their local roots, their ability to maintain close relations with the job market, their flexibility in terms of training curricula and their policies favoring access for a large number of people.

The relevance of developing the TVET is twofold. Firstly, to improve employability and contribute to economic growth, and secondly, to respond to more general social issues such as poverty and the reduction of inequalities. It should no longer be seen as the end of the initial educational pathway, or linked to a specific stage in the biographical journey (Picard et al., 2011). As part of a lifelong learning perspective, I believe that cégeps should be seen not only in terms of initial training for young people continuing their studies, but also in terms of CE for people requiring further training and initial training for adults undertaking a career change. So, without denying the importance of TVET for young people, we must also support its contributions in relation to the training and educational needs of adults.

Transformative Training for Adults

As mentioned above, adults returning to school are usually in a state of low recognition. The decision to go back to school is a way out of this situation. Going back to school is perceived as an important moment, even a totally unexpected turning point that has completely transformed their lives. This can be seen in two different ways among graduates. Firstly, in the enthusiasm they all demonstrated as they talked to us about their experience in CE and what they were able to achieve as a result. Then, in some cases, by explicitly alluding to the direct effect it had on them.

- *Mais ça a changé ma vie […] Ça a vraiment changé ma vie.* [But it changed my life [...] It really changed my life] (MD)

- *Ça a comme changé ma vie.* [It changed my life] (PG)

- *C'était sûrement le meilleur choix que j'ai fait de toute ma vie.* [It was probably the best choice I ever made in my life] (FT)

- *Ça change tout. Et…, là, c'était, je me sentais vivant.* [It changes everything. And…, there it was, I felt alive.] (PY)

- *Ça a vraiment été un moment hyper important pour moi.* [It has been a really important moment for me.] (MG)

None of the participating graduates have a bad outcome. Graduates emphasize that their lives have been affected in three ways. They have gained access to a new job or a new career that would have been impossible before their training. They perceive that the transition to CE has acted as an accelerator or a creator of opportunity, opening up a new field of employment. While the employment aspect is important in the testimonies of graduates, other aspects are also mentioned explicitly or appear in their general discourse.

Their attitudes and perceptions of themselves and their own abilities are changing. Some have become personally aware of their own ability to learn. Many saw it as a passage to "a form of adulthood," a pivotal moment where there was a before and an after. Others, after less successful educational experiences, gained in confidence.

Graduation itself also leads to this change. In some cases, it acts as a catalyst for a transformation in the person's attitude towards themselves. This is also the case for others who see that the changes have affected several spheres of their personal and professional lives, such as propelling them out of their initial social class.

The post-training testimonials of the participating graduates show the positive effect this trajectory has had on both the professional and personal aspects of their lives. While they all mentioned the efforts required to succeed, the fact remains that, for them, the result has been important in terms of their new being.

Conclusion

Adults tend to return to training after complex and variable initial education and adult life pathway. As my theoretical framework suggests, recognition of the complexity of these journeys is essential to respond adequately to their educational needs. Supported by the research data, I consider that beyond the simple requalification of individuals, college CE supports people in their process of transformation and social reintegration which is in phase with my theoretical framework build on andragogy seen as an existentialist philosophy of adult education based on a critical theory of adult education that aims for emancipation and self-realization through lifelong learning (Bélanger, 2015; Fleming, 2016; Hartree, 1984; Honneth, 2000; Knowles, 1978, 1980; Mezirow, 2000). Most of all, it seems to me that college CE represents a social justice institution that aims, in particular, to reduce inequalities. I proposed that the return-to-study pathway be consistent with the concerns of Honneth's critical theory, which makes the struggle for recognition a fundamental element in understanding the issues

facing adult students.

It is in this respect I propose that a critical theory of adult education that aims at emancipation and self-realization through lifelong learning is able to help us propose a fruitful analytical approach to understand adult education. In this sense, I believe that schools and the educational system as a whole cannot be conceived outside of society and their study must be grounded in a theory of social justice. They must be seen in their social role and with their social stakes.

As such, as a social institution, the educational system in which cégeps are embedded is the bearer of standards and values that must ensure the conditions of possibility for social justice. Moreover, the results of the research enrich the understanding of the conditions that lead to undertaking a training course, the school experience and the impact on adults' post-training life courses.

They must be offered the right conditions to support them in their learning process. I therefore invite scholars to reflect on the role of institutions as cégeps in adult education, in particular on the various recommendations and international work such as the Marrakech Framework for Action (UNESCO, 2022) and on the possibility of renewing national's adult education policy from a perspective of social justice and equity (Honneth, 2014). In Québec's education policies, adult education recognition was a hard-fought victory, but it still requires keeping advocating for its importance as a social institution (Mercier & Thériault, 2023).

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BUILDING NEW BRIDGES: REFLECTING ON INTERNATIONAL COLLABORATION ACROSS ADULT EDUCATION MASTERS PROGRAMS

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ABSTRACT:

Formalized processes of reflection can enhance the growth and development of higher education faculty and support changes in professional practice (Wlodarsky, 2018). This session will describe the shared reflection undertaken by two faculty members who facilitated an international online collaboration among students in the Master's of Adult Education programs in which they taught.

In the fall of 2020, students from [University 1, U.S.] Master's of Adult Education and [University 2, Europe] Master's in Adult Education for Social Change engaged in a 6 week online collaboration, focused on globalization and adult education. We chose globalization because we considered it a critical but underexplored topic in graduate study of adult education. Furthermore, globalization was deeply relevant to our context of international collaboration. A cooperative approach to global citizenship (Wallerstein, 2009 in Walters, 2014), which de-emphasizes the role of corporate interests and highlights the development and rights of individuals and cultures, aligned with our teaching/programmatic philosophies and guided our processes.

Students in the two programs were quite different. In total our student cohort for the project consisted of 41 adults from 17 different countries across 5 continents, with students physically located across multiple time zones. Students from University 1 were largely part-time students who worked in a wide variety of fields, including healthcare, academia, law enforcement, and social work/community development. Most were from the same region in the United States, some had little previous exposure to international perspectives, and the program was entirely asynchronous. Students from University 2 were all full-time students; most were on full scholarships and had moved internationally to be part of this face-to-face program.

Students were mixed into small groups of 4 or 5; in these groups, students explored multiple definitions of globalization and sought to connect it to both their lived experiences and their work as adult educators. The final project for each group was to create a dialogue representing multiple perspectives on a topic related to globalization and adult education. The topics the groups selected for these dialogues included citizenship education, global migration, gender, technology, and cultural perspectives on policy.

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This project provides a rich opportunity for critical reflection on international collaboration in adult education graduate programs, which - in line with our conference theme - is a promising pathway for creating new trajectories for adult education. The challenges of facilitating collaboration across these programs, groups, and individuals was compounded by being situated in the early stages of a global pandemic. In our session we will share our processes of collaboration as we designed and engaged in the project (including one of the dialogues students produced), and the results of our reflection as we sought to understand our experiences and make improvements for future international collaborations. These reflections focus on questions of teaching important to us as facilitators and faculty, such as those identified in Wlodarsky (2018) and Stokes and Craig (2022), but also questions of power in adult education, as identified in Brookfield (2017).

Keywords: international, adult education, globalization, collaboration

INNOVATIVE APPROACH TO LITERACY PROMOTION: A REVIEW OF THE LITERACY BY RADIO PROJECT IN NIGERIA

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ABSTRACT: The literacy by radio project was adopted as an innovative intervention to widening access to literacy programmes for the non-literate groups in Nigeria. Thus, the purpose of this research is to review the contributions of literacy by radio in Nigeria. The researcher adopted the survey design for the study. The population for the study consisted of 2,706 participants and 47 facilitators of the literacy by radio programme in the 10 pilot states in Nigeria. A sample of four states made up of 302 participants and eight facilitators was used for the study. Information collected through Focus Group Discussion (FGD), interviews and content analysis of official documents were used for the study. The data were analysed qualitatively to determine the efficacy of this innovative approach in facilitating literacy in Nigeria. Results showed increased access to literacy programmes through this innovative approach. The pilot project was 88% successful; not less than 2,110 adults were made literate through the project in 2017. However, poor funding, lack of enthusiasm and commitment on the part of the technical committee and facilitators, poor signals from radio stations, low community involvement in decision making in the project are major challenges to the success of the project. Improved and timely funding of the project by the Government, setting up of independent radio stations for airing the programmes, customization of materials and proper monitoring and evaluation of the project for greater effectiveness was recommended. Conclusively, literacy by radio has contributed significantly in literacy promotion in Nigeria.

Keywords: Innovative approach, Literacy, Project, Radio, Survey

Introduction

In an era of an increasingly knowledge-based economy, various forms of literacy are imperative to the sustainable development of any nation. This is why the Nigerian government took a great interest after World War II to reduce illiteracy in the country. United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO) as cited in Ahmed (2011) defined literacy as the ability to identify, understand, interpret, create, communicate and compute using printed and written materials associated with varying contexts. Furthermore UNESCO (2017) stated that a literate person is one who can with understanding, both read and write a short, simple statement on everyday life, and an illiterate person as one who cannot with understanding both read and write a short simple statement about daily life. The Hamburg Declaration and the Agenda for the Future of Literacy (CONFINTEA) conceptualises literacy through a broad lens, referring to it as "the basic knowledge and skills needed by all in a rapidly changing world" (UNESCO, 1997). Following the importance of literacy, Ihejirika (2013) observed that the colonial government realized the need for mass education of Nigerians if their programmes were to succeed, hence their acceleration of literacy education from 1945. On the whole, the government of Nigeria has launched not less than four mass literacy campaigns since 1945. Unfortunately, these campaigns did not record the expected success due to various reasons. Some of these include: inadequate funding, lack of commitment by successive government to the course of the project, lack of reliable data, and non-involvement of the people.

In 1987, a significant milestone was recorded in the development of literacy in Nigeria when the Federal Government directed that the Federal Capital Territory (FCT) and all the states of

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the Federation should establish Adult and Non-Formal Education Agencies to handle literacy education in Nigeria. This directive led to the establishment of the State Agencies for Mass Education (SAME) in all the states of the federation and the National Mass Education Commission (NMEC) at the federal level. The State agencies have the responsibility of eradicating illiteracy by providing adult and non-formal education literacy programmes that suit the economic, cultural, social and political needs of non-literates in their areas. The Commission, later renamed the National Commission for Mass Literacy Adult and Non-Formal Education and still popularly called NMEC, is a parastatal under the Federal Ministry of Education in Nigeria. The Commission, through Decree No. 17 of 1990 (now Act No. 18 of 2004), was charged with the responsibility of formulating national policies and guidelines for uniform standards of implementing mass literacy, adult and non-formal education programmes at the federal, state and local government levels (Nigeria, National Commission for Mass Literacy Adult and Non-Formal Education 1990). The target of the Commission as specified by the in the Federal Republic of Nigeria (2014), is to provide functional literacy and continuing education for adults and youths who have never attended school or did not complete their primary education.

Some of the projects and programmes executed by the National Commission for Mass Literacy Adult and Non-Formal Education towards eradication of illiteracy and achieving the above stated mandate include the mobile literacy project, basic literacy and post-literacy programmes, mass literacy campaigns, Literacy for Family Empowerment (LIFE), worker's education, and nomadic adult literacy. In spite of these efforts at delivering these programmes, literature still shows that the illiteracy rate remains high in Nigeria. About 60 million Nigerians are non-literate; nearly two thirds of them are women who are expected to nurture their children to literacy (National Commission for Mass Literacy Adult and Non-Formal Education, 2010). The National Bureau of Statistics (2010) reported that the literacy rate in the country stood at 57.9 per cent. This means that the non-literacy rate stood at 42.1 per cent. Furthermore, the National Literacy Survey carried out in 2011 indicated that about 1.5 million children of primary school age were not attending school (Federal Ministry of Education, 2011). United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund (UNICEF, 2022) also observed that at least 10.5 million children are out of school in Nigeria-the highest rate in the world. Federal Ministry of Education (FME) (2018) reported that the national female young adult literacy rate is 59.3%, while that of males is 70.9%. The publication also puts the national literacy rate in Nigeria at 65.1%. This is really worrisome for a developing country like Nigeria that occupies a strategic and significant position in Sub-Saharan Africa. It is, therefore, pertinent that something be done about this situation; hence, the need for more innovative approached to literacy promotion.

Literacy by Radio in Nigeria

The high non-literacy rate in Nigeria forced the government to search for innovative approaches to literacy promotion and delivery. The literacy by radio project was adopted as an innovative and better intervention to literacy delivery in Nigeria because the radio is the cheapest and most easily affordable medium for non-literates. NMEC (2010) states that the general objective of the Literacy by Radio project in Nigeria is to evolve a fast and effective approach to eradicate illiteracy in the country in furtherance of the Education for All (EFA) and Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). Literacy by radio is a process of promoting basic education (reading, writing, and calculation) in Nigeria through the use of the radio. Borode (2011) asserted that radio is particularly useful when the objective is to present up to date or local information to the adult. For example, radio can be effectively used in providing information to local farmers on planting, sourcing of fertilizer and other farm inputs, harvesting, and

distribution of farm products. Literacy by radio is cost-effective; Nigerian families are kept together; no schools are needed; a limited number of facilitators are required; and individuals can learn from the comfort of their homes.

The literacy by radio project in Nigeria started in 2002 aimed at widening access to literacy programmes for the non-literate marginalized and disadvantaged groups—women, physically challenged, out-of-school children, and youths in Nigeria—by taking literacy programmes to their door steps. The literacy by radio project is also aimed at increasing the enrollment of participants in literacy programmes. Literacy by Radio started as a pilot project in 10 states of the Federation: Oyo Kwara, Kebbi, Katsina, Kano, Ebonyi, Borno, Bauchi, Cross River, and Federal Capital Territory (FCT) Abuja. The pilot project has a six-month duration within which the learners are expected to acquire literacy. It adopts the mixed delivery method, whereby the radio listening session is augmented with occasional face-to-face sessions. After three radio listening sessions, the facilitator plans a face-to-face session with the learners at a time and place conducive for the learners. This session enables the learners to clarify issues and solve some existing problems. The government distributes transistor radios to the learners to facilitate the learning process.

The literacy by radio project covered programmes on basic literacy, environmental education, civic education, agricultural education, life skills, health, and hygiene awareness. The government recognised the relationship between culture and education in the design of the primers for the learners. The primers are developed in the local language of the learners and are distributed to the learners on assumption of the programme. There is also the facilitator's guide to direct the activities of the facilitators towards effective teaching and learning. The project makes use of government radio stations in delivering the programmes. Air time slots are allotted to the programmes, and payments for the air time are made by NMEC through funds from the Federal Government.

The project employed facilitators and a technical committee in each state to facilitate the project. The facilitators monitor the progress of the learners and organize face-to-face sessions, while the technical committee in each state is expected to take over the full implementation of the literacy by radio project in the states of the federation in the future. NMEC saw the need for a scale-up of the project to 13 new states: Kaduna, Jigawa, Zamfara, Niger, Yobe, Nassarawa, Akwa Ibom, Edo, Ogun, Ekiti, Ondo, Anambra, and Abia.

Research Methodology

Literacy by radio has been going on for 22 years, and the efficacy and contributions of this innovation need to be constantly investigated empirically. Thus, the purpose of this research is to review the efficacy and contributions of the literacy by radio project as an innovative approach to literacy promotion in Nigeria with a view to identifying the successes recorded and the challenges confronting the implementation of this approach to literacy. Four research questions were raised to guide the study. These include the following:

1. How accessible are the literacy by radio programmes to the beneficiaries?
2. How user-friendly are the instructional materials?
3. How successful is the literacy by radio project?
4. What are the challenges confronting the literacy by radio project?

The research adopted the survey research design for the study. The population for the study consisted of 2,706 participants and 47 facilitators of the literacy by radio project in the 10 pilot states in Nigeria. A total of four states were randomly selected from the ten pilot states through balloting. The states are Bauchi, Cross River, Ebonyi, and Kwara. Eight centres were further sampled from the four states (two from each state), and this gave a final sample of 313 participants and eight facilitators. This sample comprises 210 females and 103 males. The instruments for data collection are Focus Group Discussion and interview schedules and content analysis of official documents. The instruments were face validated by five experts in literacy education and measurement and evaluation. The experts determined the adequacy of the content, language and relevance of the instruments to the study. The modifications suggested by the experts were affected. Research Assistants were used to administer both the Focus Group Discussion and interview schedules. Each of the eight centres is a focus group, while the facilitators were interviewed individually. The data collected were analysed qualitatively to determine the efficacy and contributions of the literacy by radio project, so as to determine the proactive nature of this innovative approach in facilitating literacy in Nigeria.

Findings

Results from the study showed greater accessibility as more non-literates have access to literacy programmes through this innovative approach. The FGD with the participants and interview with the facilitators using the schedules showed that the programmes are accessible to the participants to a great extent. They do not have problems with the language of delivery and time of broadcasts. The programmes were delivered in the major dialects, and that enhanced comprehension of the instruction. They also reported that they have adequate access to the aired programmes so long as they are present while the programme is being delivered. On the issue of time for face-to-face contact, the participants observed that the facilitators consult them before scheduling time for interactive sessions; thus, they do not have problems. However, on few occasions when the facilitators schedule time without due consultation, some of the learners miss the contact sessions. This shows that the participants and the facilitators are satisfied with the accessibility of the programmes. However, the participants complained that they sometimes experience poor signals from the radio stations through which the programmes are delivered.

Observations on user-friendliness of the instructional materials indicate the participants and the facilitators found that the primers and facilitator's guide are very user-friendly. The language of development and the graphic materials were commended, indicating that the presentations are simple to understand and properly sequenced. The participants stated that in situations where they have problems with the content of the materials, the problems were clarified during the face-to-face contacts. The participants further reported that the materials cover the relevant subject areas, and the content coverage is adequate. To the participants, the content of the materials and the learning experiences are culture- and local environment-based. To them, this makes for easy adaptation to the issues raised and discussed in the materials. During the discussion, the finding showed that that the content of the materials and the entire programmes address the needs of the respondents and made them functional in their environment. The contents of the materials provided the respondents with functional skills for effective adaptation. The radios that were provided by the government are simple to operate and can easily be manipulated, and this makes them user-friendly. However, some of the participants and facilitators complained that the radios distributed by NMEC are of low quality and depreciate after a short while, with the result that they sometimes experience technical hitches.

Findings determined the literacy by radio project is quite successful. The participants and the facilitators reported that the project, since inception, has made more adults literate and functional in the society. The project has equipped them with the skills of reading, writing, and calculation. The skills have made participants more functional politically, economically, socially, and agriculturally. Some market women among the participants emphasised that, with the skills they have acquired, they are now able to keep records of their sales and communicate better with their customers. The farmers are overwhelmed because they are better informed about improved agricultural inputs and yields. The participants all confirmed that, socially, they experience better relationship with others, make optimal use of their time, and are better equipped to carry out their social responsibilities both in the family and the society at large. To them, some level of political awareness has been created. Some acknowledged that they can now make wise political decisions. All achievements were gained without leaving the confines of their homes daily.

Table 1 buttresses the responses of the participants and facilitators on the success of the project in equipping adults with literacy skills in Nigeria.

Table 1 shows that, based on available data, not less than 70 per cent success rate was recorded in each of the pilot states of the Federation. Kwara and Oyo states had the highest success rate of 100 per cent respectively. This is followed by Bauchi and Borno states with success rates of 97 per cent and 96 per cent respectively. The success rates in Cross River, Ebonyi, FCT, Katsina and Kebbi ranged from 70 per cent to 86 per cent. The total indicates that 2,133 adults out of 2,421 adults were made literate through the literacy by radio project in 2017. This further shows 88 per cent success rate in literacy promotion in Nigeria.

Table 1.

Data on Success Rate of the Literacy by Radio Project in the Pilot States

States	Enrolment	Number Examined	Number Passed	% Pass
Bauchi	395	375	362	97
Borno	252	222	212	96
Cross River	153	127	108	85
Ebonyi	100	91	78	86
FCT	492	383	321	84
Kano	NIL	NIL	NIL	NIL
Katsina	257	257	193	75
Kebbi	400	354	247	70
Kwara	199	162	162	100
Oyo	521	450	450	100
Total	2,706	2,421	2,133	88

Source: National Commission for Mass Literacy, Adult and Non-Formal Education.

The interviewed facilitators reported that the project recorded some level of success with the training of facilitators and the technical committee (the proposed administrative arm of the project in the various states of the Federation). Among other findings, both the facilitators and the participants accepted that the programme has provided better access to literacy and empowered more adults through acquisition of self-sustaining skills.

On the challenges confronting the project, the participants and facilitators observed that inadequate funding is a major challenge of the project, and this has adversely affected the implementation process and success rate of the project. Lack of enthusiasm and commitment on the part of the technical committee and some facilitators due to non-payment of honoraria were also identified as challenges. Other challenges, identified as factors that have slowed down the success rate of the radio project as specified by the respondents, include poor monitoring and evaluation strategies, poor signals from radio stations, interruption of lectures with commercials, low community participation and involvement in decisions concerning the project.

Discussion

The study found participants and non-literates have reasonable access to the programmes of the literacy by radio project. This is in line with the finding of Olaniran (2013), who reported that participants in literacy by radio project have a very high level of accessibility to the aired programmes. He further reported that the respondents claimed they have unlimited access to the programmes aired on radio. This can mainly be attributed to the fact that radio has very wide coverage and is available to everybody who wishes to have it. Thus, radio is highly effective in the instruction of non-literate adults. Radio is known to have limitless boundaries in information dissemination, and it is cost effective. In developing countries, radio is the most-affordable electronic gadget; it is accessible and available to almost all the families because it is relatively cheap and makes use of both battery and electricity. These qualities of radio facilitated the accessibility of the literacy by radio programmes to the non-literates and neo-literates in Nigeria.

The finding that the instructional materials are user friendly is predicated on the fact that the materials' language National Commission for Adult and Non-Formal Education is simple, and materials are developed in the dialect of the participants. Primers for the project are now available in 19 dialects of the Federation. Where the primer is not in the dialect of the participant, it is in the dialect of the immediate community of the participant, which the participant fully understands. UNICEF/NMEC (2010) observed that the materials are discretely developed with very clear logos and symbols for effective learning. The materials are also developed in a didactic manner, and learning experiences are locally-based. Conversation and hands-on-assignments at every stage of the participant's progress are adequately provided in the course material. Radios distributed by the government are simple to operate and do not require unique skill for operation. The radios are also easy to repair, and the technical-know-how for the repairs is readily available. All the foregoing factors make the instructional materials very user friendly.

The respondents and the documentary evidence showed that the project recorded appreciable success. UNESCO (2017) reported that more than 16,700 learners have been made literate through the literacy by radio project in Nigeria. The success rate has generated enthusiasm in the participants of the programme, with the result that many of the participants indicated during the FGD that they can read, write, and calculate and would want to further their studies for

higher achievements. With the success recorded, the participants now have improved communicative, vocational, political, health, economic and agricultural skills for survival. This is in line with UNESCO's (2017) account of Halima, a non-literate, who turned house-help at the age of 9 years. According to UNESCO, she listened to literacy by radio programmes and attended classes secretly; today Halima testifies to being literate and has completed her primary school. However, there is need for greater commitment of the government and stakeholders in the project to reduce illiteracy to the barest minimum level.

The challenges identified are similar to major challenges confronting the literacy by radio project in Nigeria reported by UNICEF/NMEC (2010), including technical issues, poor funding, lapses in monitoring and evaluation, and field capacity depletion. However, the identified challenges from this study clearly show lack of political will on the part of some stakeholders and government at all levels. Funds from the Federal Government are grossly inadequate, and State and Local government support remains very poor. Between 2004 and 2012, the budgetary allocation to education in Nigeria was between 4.83% and 9.15% (Okogu, 2017), despite UNESCO's recommendation that countries should devote not less than 23% of their annual budget to education (Murtala et al. 2013). If the political will is not there, these challenges will continue to be strong barriers to the project and the literacy level achieved can be neither sustained nor increased.

Recommendations

Based on the findings of this study, the researcher recommends:

- Improved and timely funding of the literacy by radio project by the Federal Government to enable NMEC fulfill its obligations towards the success of the programme.
- Federal government should establish independent radio stations solely charged with the responsibility of airing literacy by radio programmes.
- State governments should set up community printing presses that will help the participants practice and sustain the acquired literacy.
- NMEC should supplement radio teaching with CDs/VCDs and encourage formation of family learning groups.
- There should be consistent and proper monitoring and evaluation of the project by NMEC and State Agencies for greater effectiveness.
- Advocacy and sensitization by all stakeholders are vital at this point to enlist government interest and increase the participation of non-literates in the project.
- NMEC should customize all materials and broadcasts in all the dialects of the participants and incorporate more civil rights, environmental protection, and agricultural skills into the instructional materials for the project.
- Full time and well paid facilitators should be recruited by the Federal and State governments. This will elicit full commitment and greater success stories.
- International organisations such as UNICEF, UNESCO, and World Bank are appreciated for what they have been doing. However, they should step up their support to ensure that non-literacy is completely stamped out of Nigeria.

Conclusion

The literacy by radio project in Nigeria is an innovative approach aimed at the use of radio to facilitate and enhance literacy. The project has made significant contribution towards non-literacy reduction as evidenced from the study. However, substantial commitment and effort are required from the government, non-governmental and international organisations and to enable the nation eradicate illiteracy bearing in mind the contributions of literacy towards national development. Nigeria must strive towards greater success by addressing the identified challenges from the study through the implementation of the suggested recommendations.

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THE NEXUS OF MIGRATION AND ADULT EDUCATION: CLARIFYING CONCEPTS AND CREATING NEW TRAJECTORIES FOR INTERNATIONAL ADULT EDUCATION

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ABSTRACT: The unprecedented movement of people across borders presents complex challenges and opportunities, particularly in the field of adult learning and education (ALE). Despite the scale of migration, there is a critical gap in how existing ALE frameworks address the educational needs of both migrants and host communities. Hence, we explored the nexus between migration and ALE, arguing for a transformative paradigm that goes beyond traditional models of assimilation, multiculturalism, and integration. We proposed Migration Education (MigEd) as a comprehensive approach that equips migrants with essential language, vocational, and life skills while promoting intercultural understanding, social cohesion, and mutual respect between migrants and host communities. After discussing essential migration-related concepts and theories and highlighting the potential of MigEd to facilitate personal and societal transformation, we outlined new trajectories for research, practice, and policy in international adult education. Among others, we called for greater international collaboration and policy alignment to ensure that MigEd programs are responsive, effective, and aligned with global human rights standards.

Keywords: host nationals, inclusion, migrants, migration education, transformation

Introduction

Migration is unprecedented in today's world (Morrice et al., 2017), with the number of international migrants estimated to be 281 million. This accounts for around 3.6% of the world population (McAuliffe & Triandafyllidou, 2021). The United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO, 2022, p. 114) suggests that "mass migration" is one of the challenges confronting human civilization, resulting in demographic shifts. The complexity of migration is heightened by the diverse motivations behind it—voluntary or otherwise—ranging from marriage and family obligations, educational pursuits, employment opportunities, and humanitarian concerns such as fleeing persecution and forced displacement due to prolonged conflicts, environmental disasters, and extreme poverty (Castles et al., 2014). Morrice and colleagues (2017) argued that the growing global inequalities and the scale of human crises add to the complexity of migration trends. Despite the scale and complexity of migration, there remains a critical gap in how adult learning and education (ALE) frameworks address the ambivalent educational needs of both migrants and host communities (Wildemeersch, 2017). This paper seeks to address this gap by exploring the nexus between migration and ALE, to propose new trajectories for research, practice, and policy in ALE. Although historically ALE has created migration-related learning, these responses to mass migration have been driven by the needs of labor markets (Guo, 2010; Merriam & Brockett, 2007; Morrice et al., 2021). We argue that there is a need to conceptualize the nexus of migration and ALE in a holistic manner that acknowledges and addresses the changing needs of migrants and host societies in the current socio-political climate. Hence, in this paper, we

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provide definitions of common terms and expand current theoretical frameworks by proposing a transformative model of inclusion for ALE to facilitate the integration of migrants into new societies and the transformation of host societies. Consequently, we outline future research directions and recommendations for Migration Education (MigEd) in ALE.

Definition of Key Concepts and Terminologies

In this section, we present common terms used related to migration. Although these terms are derived from the International Organization for Migration's *Glossary of Migration* (IOM, 2019), we are conscious that some terms are still debatable while others are settled.

Migration, Types of Migration, and Migration Crisis

According to the IOM (2019), migration is defined broadly as the movement of individuals and groups from one place to another. The topic of migration is vast, encompassing various aspects such as irregular, irregular, legal, and illegal migration, permanent migration, temporary migration, economic migration, forced migration, internal migration, and international migration. Regular migration happens "in compliance with the laws of the country of origin, transit, and destination" (IOM, 2019, p. 175), whereas irregular migration occurs "outside the laws, regulations, or international agreements governing the entry into or exit from the State of origin, transit, or destination" (IOM, 2019, p. 116). Migration, especially in its irregular forms, is frequently associated with the notion of "crisis," giving rise to what is termed a "migration crisis." IOM defines a migration crisis as arising from "the complex and often large-scale migration flows and mobility patterns caused by a crisis, which typically involve significant vulnerabilities for individuals and affected communities and generate acute and longer-term migration management challenges" (IOM, 2019, p. 137). Such a crisis can be either internal or international and may be triggered by natural or human-induced factors, occurring abruptly or gradually.

Migrant, Emigrant, and Immigrant

Migrant is a broad concept without a specific definition in international law (IOM, 2019). According to IOM, the term migrant encompasses various legally defined categories, including migrant workers, individuals whose movements are legally classified, such as smuggled migrants, and those whose status or means of movement are not explicitly defined under international law, such as international students. This paper is concerned with international migrants—persons who are traveling or have traveled across a defined international border with the intent of residing in the destination country. IOM defines an international migrant as an individual residing outside the country where they hold citizenship or nationality, or in the case of stateless individuals, outside their country of birth or habitual residence. As noted by the IOM, "the term includes migrants who intend to move permanently or temporarily, and those who move in a regular or documented manner as well as migrants in irregular situations" (p. 112). Depending on the perspective of the country of origin or the host country, a migrant may be termed an emigrant or immigrant. From the standpoint of the country of departure (origin), an emigrant is someone who leaves their country of nationality or usual residence to reside in another country. Conversely, from the perspective of the host country, the individual becomes an immigrant. Sub-categories of migrants further include economic migrants—those who move primarily for economic reasons; environmental migrants—individuals who relocate due to sudden or progressive changes in the environment that negatively impact their lives; and refugees—persons who, due to a well-founded fear of persecution, are outside their country of

nationality and unable or unwilling to return (IOM, 2019; USA for UNHCR The UN Refugee Agency, 2024).

Adult Learning and Education and Migration Education

Traditionally, ALE has been a means to facilitate the integration of migrants into their new communities, providing them with the skills and knowledge necessary to navigate their new environments. For example, during the American Revolutionary War, the focus of ALE switched to civic education; and during the Industrial Revolution, it was vocational education and specialized educational programs for immigrants because there was increased immigration and the introduction of new technologies (Merriam & Brockett, 2007). ALE in the context of migration can help individuals and societies achieve their optimal learning needs, preparing them to deal with today's challenges and facilitating their transformation (Finnegan, 2022; Hoggan & Hoggan-Kloubert, 2022). We argue that given the complexities of the current migration landscape, there is a growing need for a component of ALE that is more intensively and extensively dedicated to migration-related issues and experiences of adults and their communities, in both the origin country and destination country and across global borders; hence, MigEd.

By MigEd, we mean a comprehensive and dynamic process of teaching and learning that supports individuals who are migrating or have migrated, as well as the communities they are moving into, by facilitating social, cultural, economic, psychological, academic, and political integration of immigrant and host communities. It encompasses formal, non-formal, and informal education that equips migrants with essential language, vocational, and life skills while promoting intercultural understanding, social cohesion, and mutual respect between migrants and host communities. MigEd extends beyond "migrant education," which essentially only focuses on the migrant and falls short of addressing deeper issues of power and inequality (Shan & Guo, 2020). Furthermore, we would like to emphasize that IAE as a section of ALE is crucial for the development and implementation of MigEd. IAE can serve as a critical platform for the exchange and dissemination of knowledge through collaborative efforts such as travels, conferences, and publications (Merriam & Brockett, 2007).

Theoretical Frameworks

Migration as a multi-faceted topic has been theorized from economic and social lenses. The neoclassical economic theory posits that migration is primarily driven by individual rational decision-making, where people move from low-wage regions to high-wage regions to maximize their economic well-being (Todaro, 1969). The human capital theory suggests that education and training enhance a migrant's productivity and economic potential (Becker, 1993). Meanwhile, the push-pull theory explains migration through the interaction of factors that push people away from their origin (e.g., poverty, unemployment, conflict) and factors that pull them toward a destination (e.g., job opportunities, political stability, better living conditions) (Lee, 1966). Other migration theories include the world system theory (Wallerstein, 1974), the network theory (Massey et al., 1993), and transnationalism (Glick Schiller et al., 1992). Furthermore, a relatively new theory, the aspirations-capacities framework, frames migration as an integral part of social change, where individuals' aspirations to migrate are shaped by their agency, which, in turn, is influenced by the broader social and economic structures (de Haas, 2021).

However, while the above theories are insightful, they largely lack a comprehensive interlinking of migration and ALE. The transformative learning theory (TLT) offers a compelling framework that introduces a critical, human-centered dimension to our understanding of migration and ALE. Migrants often undergo transformative learning as they navigate new cultural contexts, re-evaluating their identities, worldviews, and roles within their home and host societies. TLT focuses on how adults significantly change their frames of reference and interact with the world through rational and extrarational processes (Hoggan, 2016; Mezirow, 1991, 2000; Stuckey et al., 2022). This theory highlights the potential for migration to be a transformative experience—not just for the individual migrant, but also for the societies they interact with. It emphasizes the capacity of ALE to foster personal and social transformation, challenge existing power structures, and promote social justice and equity. The next section traces the phases of the interplay of migration and ALE as influenced by the theories and others, and further argues for the place of a transformative paradigm in the social inclusion discourse.

Migration and Adult Learning and Education: Four Models

This section delineates the application of various models of social inclusion within migration contexts, highlighting how the dynamic relationship between migration and ALE has been shaped by evolving societal values and policies. Bauloz et al. (2019) provide a comprehensive summary of three main inclusion models that, historically, have influenced this relationship, delineating the phases of assimilation, multiculturalism, and integration. We propose a fourth model grounded in a transformative paradigm.

Assimilation posits a unidirectional process wherein migrants are expected to relinquish their cultural identities and adopt the host society's norms and values. This model, prominent in the early 20th century, was exemplified by policies such as Australia's White Australia policy (1901-1966), which enforced cultural conformity and excluded non-white immigrants (Bauloz et al., 2019). In the context of ALE, assimilationist policies often manifested in programs designed to instill the dominant culture's language, values, and social norms in migrants, aiming for their complete integration into the host society. Such programs frequently disregarded the cultural capital and diverse experiences that migrants brought with them, focusing instead on molding them to fit the host society's expectations. This approach is criticized for burdening migrants with adaptation while offering little accommodation from the host society.

Multiculturalism emerged as a correction to assimilation, advocating for the recognition and valorization of cultural diversity within the host society. This model, adopted in the 1970s by countries like Canada, emphasizes the coexistence of diverse cultural identities while encouraging full societal participation (IOM, 2019; Bauloz et al., 2019). Under this model, ALE programs have evolved to recognize and integrate the diverse cultural backgrounds of migrants, aiming to enhance intercultural understanding and mutual respect between migrants and the host community. These programs are designed to support migrants in preserving their cultural identities while facilitating their engagement in the broader society. Despite its inclusive aims, multiculturalism has been critiqued for potentially leading to cultural segregation and inadequately addressing deeper structural inequalities. While it promotes cultural preservation, it is criticized for failing to tackle systemic issues and fostering divisions rather than promoting genuine integration.

Integration represents a balanced approach between assimilation and multiculturalism, advocating for reciprocal adaptation by migrants and the host society. The European Union's Action Plan on the Integration of Third-Country Nationals (2016) exemplifies this model,

describing integration as a dynamic two-way process (Bauloz et al., 2019). In ALE, integration-focused policies promote mutual learning and social cohesion, supporting migrants and host communities in navigating diversity and fostering inclusive environments. It emphasizes ALE's role in promoting dialogue and understanding to develop inclusive and safe communities.

Transformation is a newly proposed paradigm that transcends previous models by emphasizing profound personal and societal change. Rooted in transformative ALE practices, this model envisions ALE as a mechanism for critical self-reflection, collective action, and social justice (Formenti & Hoggan-Kloubert, 2023; Formenti & Luraschi, 2020; Hoggan-Kloubert & Hoggan, 2022). We argue that ALE programs based on this would not only address the immediate needs of migrants but also empower them and the host nationals to become active agents of change, challenging existing power structures and contributing to the social, economic, and political transformation of their societies.

Overall, the assimilation, multiculturalism, and integration models have each distinctly influenced the field in past decades. The proposed transformative model introduces a progressive and forward-looking paradigm that emphasizes personal and societal transformation, aiming to foster more inclusive, equitable, and cohesive communities through MigEd. This model advocates for MigEd to extend beyond mere skill acquisition to address deeper issues of systemic inequalities and power dynamics within host societies vis-à-vis the lived experiences of migrants.

Implications: New Trajectories for International Adult Education

The implications of the foregoing analysis for future research and practice in ALE, particularly in the context of migration, are multifaceted and call for a deeper exploration of more humane and inclusive approaches. First, there is a need to advocate for humanistic ALE approaches that prioritize the dignity, rights, and well-being of migrants. This shift toward more humane migration policies and educational practices can contribute to a more just and compassionate global society, where the complex needs and experiences of migrants are acknowledged and addressed. Second, future research should emphasize the transformative dimension of MigEd. Migrants often undergo significant personal and social transformations as they navigate new cultural contexts, and ALE programs should be designed to facilitate this process. By fostering critical reflection and intercultural competency, MigEd can empower migrants to adapt to their new environments while contributing positively to their host communities.

Third, it is essential to educate host nationals and communities about migration. Developing educational programs that promote a better understanding of the causes, challenges, and contributions of migration can help reduce xenophobia, foster social cohesion, and create more welcoming environments for migrants. This approach aligns with the broader goals of diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) in education, ensuring that the needs and perspectives of all community members, including migrants, are respected and valued. Furthermore, MigEd must also be integrated with DEI initiatives. By embedding MigEd within DEI frameworks, ALE can be deployed to promote social justice and equity in increasingly diverse societies. This approach supports the recognition and celebration of cultural differences while addressing the systemic barriers that migrants often face.

Finally, future research and practice should consider the preparedness of migrants from and by their origin societies. ALE programs in countries of origin should equip potential migrants with the skills, knowledge, and resources they need to navigate the migration process and succeed in

their host countries. This preparedness enhances the potential for successful integration and reduces the vulnerabilities that migrants may face during their journey and settlement.

Conclusion

The IAE is a critical area of focus in the era of global migration. This paper has explored the complexities and dynamics of this intersection, highlighting the gaps in current ALE frameworks. MigEd, embedded in a transformative paradigm, transcends the traditional models of assimilation and integration, fostering personal transformation and social transformation among migrant and host communities. By positioning MigEd within the broader context of IAE, we can better respond to the pressing global issues of migration, ensuring that educational initiatives contribute to creating more resilient and just societies. This requires collective effort, innovative thinking, and a commitment to social inclusion and lifelong learning.

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ADULT LITERACY IN DEVELOPING ECONOMIES: FROM ELSINORE TO MARRAKECH—A REVIEW

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ABSTRACT: Adult literacy is an essential subject to examine given its impact on human development indicators. A significant gap exists as nation-states progress on these indices, especially in developing economies. National governments and international and bilateral development organizations seek to improve adult literacy metrics for the developing world through policy interventions and initiatives. Being highly associated with economic development, education—and the outcomes of education, including literacy and numeracy is critical in this process in the reflection of the quality of human capital, gender equality, and reduced economic disparity. Since the first international conference on Adult Education in 1949 in Elsinore, Denmark, United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) member states have dedicated themselves to ensuring that adults can exercise the basic right to education. This was reiterated with the adoption of the Marrakech Framework for Action at the Seventh International Conference on Adult Education in June 2022. Over these 70-plus years, the landscape and understanding of adult education is evolving. That said, limited access to educational opportunities has 773 million adults lacking basic literacy skills; two of every three being women. In many developing countries, adult learning program initiatives still need to meet their objectives, hence the need to revisit the factors impacting adult literacy and to identify newer approaches and tools in efforts to achieve near-universal literacy. Improved functional adult literacy deserves attention and effort because it gives people the opportunity not just to survive, but to flourish.

Keywords: Adult literacy programs, developing economies, human development index

Adult literacy broadly refers to adults' ability to read, write, and understand information effectively; to function in society and achieve their goals; and to develop their knowledge and potential (McCaffery et al., 2007). Adult literacy is crucial for enabling individuals to engage with written content that is integral to daily activities in the current text-driven society. By extension, adult literacy has become crucial for personal empowerment and social development (Stromquist, 2009). Having adequate literacy skills allows adults to manage their health and economic affairs, engage with the community and government, participate in the workforce, and support their children's education. Literacy also opens doors to personal growth, economic opportunity, and social inclusion. Literacy is much more than the ability to read and write. Literacy impacts adults, families, and communities and provides a key input to nation-building (Henschke, 2013). Access to adult education and literacy programs is fundamental to enriching lives and creating an equitable society where everyone can thrive. According to the United Nations Development Program (n.d.) literacy serves a key input to human development indicators. The United Nations (UN) 2030 Agenda adopted by the UN national assembly also includes quality education and life-long learning as one of the key agenda items for sustainable development (UN, 2015).

Literacy varies in definition and distribution across cultures and historical periods with differing demands on differing socio-economic and cultural environments (LeVine et al., 2011). However, one constant across contexts is that literacy skills contribute to a range of valuable and desirable outcomes, leading to better placements on the Human Development Index (HDI). The connection between literacy and development has long been highlighted. Least developed countries have the highest illiteracy rates, supporting the observation that literacy unshackles untapped human potential and leads to increased productivity and better living conditions

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(Blaug, 1966; Mehrara & Musai, 2013). Adult literacy is a privilege not gained by all due to various social, economic, and political factors, causing people to lose out on getting the necessary education in the structured course of time. Such adults should have opportunities to renew their learning journey towards individual upliftment and, by extension, family and community upliftment. This paper provides an overview of adult literacy in developing economies highlighting countries and regions that need specific attention.

Adult Literacy Programs

The World Health Organization (2024) defines an adult as someone older than 19 unless specified otherwise by local country laws. The United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) (2004) defines literacy as the ability to identify, understand, interpret, create, communicate, and compute using printed and written materials associated with varying contexts. Literacy involves a continuum of learning enabling individuals to achieve their goals, develop their knowledge and potential, and participate fully in their community and broader society (Hanemann, 2015). A developing economy, also called a less developed economy or underdeveloped country, is a nation with a low industrial base contributing to GDP and a low HDI relative to other countries (Kammoun et al., 2020). There is no universal, agreed -upon criterion for what makes a country developing versus developed or which countries fit these two categories. However, general reference points exist such as a nation's GDP per capita compared to other nations. For the purposes of this review, developing economies will be identified as countries not included in the list of Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) primary members. Studies show economic growth in OECD countries is higher than countries with lower HDI with a higher level of quality of life and level of wellbeing of citizens (Metzger & Shenai, 2021). In the context of adult literacy, in about 45 countries, mostly in sub-Saharan Africa and South and West Asia, adult literacy rates are below the developing country average of 79% (UNESCO, 2013). None of those 45 countries are in the OECD member countries list.

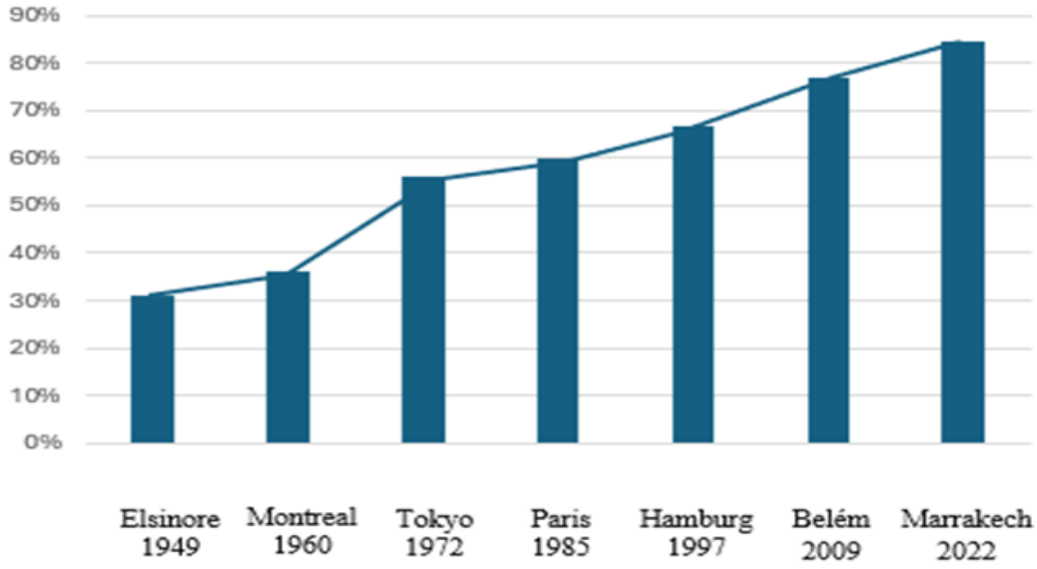
The cohesion of the three components “adult”, “literacy” and “developing economy” for this review looks at adult literacy being a crucial life skill that enables individuals to participate more fully in the practices of their community. Higher adult literacy levels help reduce the gaps in achievement levels in developing countries that reflect the quality of human capital of the country (Mazumdar, 2005). Much of the review will look at the importance of Adult Literacy Programs (ALP), an important vehicle to improve adult literacy and numeracy skills, and their impact on increased labor market participation, income, civic awareness, and social benefits. ALPs can be defined as programs to assist adults to become literate and obtain the knowledge and skills necessary for employment and self-sufficiency (Mosenthal & Kirsch, 1989). ALPs can be particularly useful for upskilling populations with low levels of human capital across multiple dimensions of income, health, and safety, leading to improvements in community and civic participation.

Significance of the Review

Serious global institutional discussions in the field of adult literacy started in the post-World War II era. The first international conference on Adult Education was held in 1949 in Elsinore, Denmark underscored the fundamental belief that humanitarian, social, and political deficiencies in societies can be remediated through education (Knoll, 2007). Since then, major International Conferences on Adult Education (CONFINTEA), which is a UNESCO intergovernmental (Category II) conference for policy dialogue on adult learning and education

Figure 1

Progression of adult literacy rates in developing economies (non-OECD)



Note. Adapted from Historical data visualization: Adult literacy rates, by Harvard Business School (n.d.), Harvard University. Copyright by Harvard Business School (n.d.), Harvard University.

(ALE) and related research and advocacy have been conducted. CONFINTEA takes place every 12 to 13 years since the first conference in Elsinore in 1949; Montreal (Canada) in 1960; Tokyo (Japan) in 1972; Paris (France) in 1985; Hamburg (Germany) in 1997; and Belém (Brazil) in 2009. CONFINTEA VI led to the adoption of the Belém Framework for Action (BFA) which recognized the critical role of lifelong learning in addressing global educational issues and challenges. At CONFINTEA VII, which took place in Marrakech, Kingdom of Morocco, in June 2022, participating countries committed to making progress in five key areas of ALP: policy; governance; financing; participation, inclusion and equity; and quality (UNESCO Institute for Lifelong Learning, 2010). Significant progress is being made in adult literacy rates since CONFINTEA I. Figure 1, represents country level adult literacy rate averages in developing economies. That said, a population weighted average can provide further insights. Sub-Saharan Africa with 66% and Southern Asia with 73% adult literacy rates represent a significant portion of adult illiterates in the world (UNESCO Institute for Statistics, 2020). These regions house major population centers in the developing world and comprise more than 9.5% of the 773 million adults globally who lack basic literacy skills (UNESCO Institute for Statistics).

Factors Impacting Adult Literacy in Developing Economies

In developing economies, changes in demography, technological evolution, and labor markets are the key drivers that impact adult literacy numbers. Access to adult literacy is highly stratified, and the returns to educational re-entry vary across social, economic, and urban/rural divide categories. The decision of adults to seek literacy after stepping away from school into work, family, or other roles has become a prominent feature of social stratification. Several social and macroeconomic trends drive the increased incidence of adult literacy. Adults unable to continue with formal education due to social, economic, gender, and policy-related reasons

enter the workforce as unskilled labor. There is a need for institutionalized adult literacy program initiatives for this unskilled labor force to re-seek literacy.

Social Factors

Literacy attainment is a defining parameter for an individual's social origin and self-esteem. Freire (1972) speaks about the objectification of the oppressed in society alongside uncritical models of education, resulting in the internalization of oppression. Those aspects still hold when analyzing the key demographics of adult illiterates today, especially based on gender, poverty, and racial prisms. Social and political movements have integrated adult learning and education to support personal, social, and political empowerment (Mayo et al., 2009). In Tanzania, for example Julius Nyerere's vision of socialism embraced adult education as a means of mobilizing people for self-reliant community development and societal transformation (Omolewa, 2008). The introduction of adult education policies as a means for economic development redefined community-based political and cultural traditions of adult education (Bannon, 2016). Within the human capital frame, these policies were developed, either solely or partly, as learning outcomes primarily regarding return on investment (Goldin, 2024).

There is an emphasis on adult literacy as a part of overall adult education as a social movement for self-improvement and personal empowerment , where adult literacy helps individuals overcome the disadvantages of educational "late starts" or "delayed completions," thereby serving as a "second chance" for those initially left behind (Jarvis, 2007, p. 191). From a sociological viewpoint, adult literacy is a potentially important tool for lessening social inequalities that emerged in the earlier life course by improving the initial educational level, changing a qualification, and acquiring skills and knowledge. A "second chance" schooling significantly increases the likelihood that individuals will achieve more secure jobs with higher wages than lowest socio-economic rungs likely resulting from illiteracy. ALPs aim to arouse a sense of dignity, confidence, and self-reliance among the participants. As evidenced by Brazil's experience through the movement for literacy training of youths and adults (MOVA) project, these programs work in a social setting and are usually originated by non-governmental organizations, religious congregations, social movements, community organizations, and political parties, and can also be originated by various levels of government – municipal, state and federal (del Pilar O'Cadiz & Torres, 1994).

Arguably, literacy is a fundamental human right. Providing an opportunity to develop literacy and facilitate language development effectively is paramount to observance of Article 19 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (United Nations General Assembly, 1948). In contemporary society, literacy is important for decision-making, equality, and active participation in local and worldwide community affairs as it upgrades the individual’s state of mind (Barton, 2007). Acquiring literacy skills helps adult learners view the world differently—they can understand their prevailing unfavorable conditions and their rights. Such an awakening and acquiring requisite knowledge and skills become tools for individual and social change (Addae, 2021). Studies in Botswana also show that participants in ALP programs reported improved confidence to participate more in community development activities than their non-participating counterparts (Kolawole & Pusoetsile, 2022). Adult education acts as an instrument to make informed citizens, and ALP programs provide for second chances driving social changes in various aspects, such as gender equality, equity and inclusion, and technology acceptance.

Economic Factors

Adult literacy is a crucial component of human capital advancement. The estimated cost of illiteracy to the global economy is estimated at USD 1.19 trillion, with a major portion of this economic loss contributed by non-OECD developing and emerging countries (Cree et al., 2023).Studies have shown the positive relationship between literacy levels and economic advancement (Chua, 2017). Cree et al. also show that countries with lower adult literacy and numeracy skills are likely to experience substantial economic loss, with the resident populations disadvantaged in finding suitable employment. Adult literacy programs can transform this into an opportunity to ensure that socio-economic well-being ensues. Adult literacy participants are more likely to move from economic inactivity and unpaid family work towards self-employment, especially in rural areas (Blunch, 2009); highlighting the need for adult literacy in supporting the transformation of developing economies from low-wage subsistence farm-based economies to value-added manufacturing and service-based economies – areas that need a literate workforce. Studies in developing economies such as Ghana have shown that households with literate adults and adults engaging in literacy programs had 8.5% to 14% higher incomes than households without literate adults (Blunch & Pörtner, 2011).

A nation with a higher literacy rate is more likely to attract a large pool of investors and entrepreneurs and an inflow of money, significantly impacting the nation's economy (Gulcemal, 2020; Robinson, 1998). China provides an example: since the 1970s, per capita income levels rose with implementation of universal literacy initiatives (Yeoh & Chu, 2012). However, there is also evidence that ALP initiatives are not always successful; in the case of Venezuela higher literacy rates have not translated into economic accretion (Blunch & Pörtner, 2011) but can be attributed to macroeconomic anomalies (Bull & Rosales, 2020). Literacy positively affects people and labor force status, and adults with literacy skills are more likely to be employed and command higher wages than individuals with weaker literacy skills (Appleton & Teal, 1998). Higher literacy rates impact the quality of human capital, which plays a key role in the economic development of developing countries.

Rural-Urban Divide

Literacy statistics also report higher illiteracy levels among rural than urban populations. Studies in Namibia (Lind, 1996) show the added pressure of lack of time in rural populations due to the high demand placed on their labor arising from low or absent domestic technologies and infrastructure and competing subsistence living priorities. The rural-urban divide in education appears to be more pronounced in developing economies where there is a correlation between socioeconomic development gaps and adult literacy levels (Glewwe & Kremer, 2006). Adults from rural areas face geographic and institutional disadvantages due to low population density and remoteness, limiting access to doorstep or near-door literacy opportunities. Much of the current rural literacy and education infrastructure in developing economies is geared towards primary and secondary schooling, leaving adults with fewer avenues to re-enter the education path (Agyekum, 2022).

Gender Related Factors

With two of every three adult illiterates being women, low female literacy is an issue that needs attention. The issue is more acute in high-population countries such as India, where the adult female literacy rate in 2021 projected to 65.66% based on the 2011 national census (Chattopadhyay, 2018). The situation in African countries is also not very encouraging.

Demographic and health survey data from one survey showed 31 nations with only a small percentage of adult women with literacy skills, especially in Western and Middle Africa (Smith -Greenaway, 2015). Investing in female education can improve a country's economic growth; more educated female workers participating in the labor force are an indicator of higher human capital levels (Cooray & Potrafke, 2011). Norton and Tomal (2009) stressed the importance of female education, stating that educating females can potentially affect economic growth because literate mothers can educate their children, having a positive, deferred impact on their children's generation.

Gender-based division of labor and patriarchal subordination also influence women's educational participation (Stromquist, 1990). Despite such constraints, women in developing economies understand that education is critical and leads to individual and family growth and development. Studies in India show that women understand that education could help them get better jobs, enhance their income, deal with challenges in daily life better, and boost self-confidence (Aggarwal et al., 2022). Considering the importance of female literacy, it is worthwhile to find the determinants of the gender gap in adult literacy in developing countries to reduce it and increase human capital (Liu & Feng, 2019).

Political and Policy-Related Factors

Adult literacy policy and governance needs to acknowledge the implications of lifelong learning in various forms such as formal, non-formal, and informal education (Chisholm, 2008; Colley et al., 2004; Du Bois-Reymond, 2005). Establishing comprehensive formal education and training systems is not as easy in countries with poorly developed education infrastructures as it is in more affluent nations.Therefore, adult literacy programs need to consider the significance of such learning for individuals and communities. Mazumdar (2005) stresses that government expenditure on education represents a country's commitment to its developmental goals. In most developing countries with a low ranking for education on HDI parameters, adult education is politically a low priority, institutionally weak, and substantially dependent upon external funding (UNESCO Institute for Lifelong Learning, 2022). Countries must devise progressive policy, create and support organizational structures, and provide funding for not only essential literacy skills but also contributions towards human capital development. For example, Tanzania will only achieve UNESCO's Agenda 2030, Tanzania Vision 2025, and Sustainable Development Goal 4.6 if national policy formulation and implementation become culture-sensitive with consistent local government funding (Fute et al., 2022). A critical first step is demonstrating that learning is socially valued and that public policy is committed both to fostering learning cultures and investing in ALPs. Despite the poor performance of ALPs in improving the literacy and numeracy skills of participants in many developing countries, other beneficial outcomes suggest that these programs are helpful policy options (Blunch, 2017). Some recent successful programs offer potential examples to follow, particularly the utilization of novel methods and modern technology as Arthur-Mensah and Shuck (2014) covered in their exploration of e-learning adoption in Africa with available technology resources and practices and its positive implications on workforce training and development.

The "systemic environment" of institutions plays a vital role in individual choices and decisions to participate in education and in constraining or facilitating educational returns to the labor market (Allmendinger, 1989). Hence, developing economies need to further strengthen this systematic environment to meet universal adult literacy. Such nations have the greater need to invest in education to encourage adult education (Kilpi-Jakonen et al., 2014). Comprehensively

designed and targeted ALPs that incorporate use of new technologies have the potential to be a powerful tool to achieve universal adult literacy (Wagner, 2012).

Conclusion

Literacy plays a crucial role in determining a country's Human Development Index (HDI) and its global ranking. Adult literacy rates are influenced by factors such as rural-urban divides, gender inequalities, disparities among social groups, institutional support, funding, and regional differences. Marginalized and illiterate individuals require literacy skills to cope with unprecedented changes in the context of the knowledge-based economy and globalization. Without policy and sustained ALP interventions, the lack of adult literacy in developing economies will continue to be a humanitarian challenge for many upcoming decades. Case in point: India – with its large, developing economy and significant adult population base will not achieve full adult literacy even by 2050 (Venkatanarayana, 2015).

Lessons should be learned from similar mass remediation drives that have shown positive results. The global polio eradication initiative eliminated polio in less than 25 years. Managed by the World Health Organization Executive Board and the World Health Assembly, combined efforts successfully mobilized: (1) political and social support; (2) policy development and strategic planning; (3) partnership management; (4) donor coordination; and, (5) operational support, oversight, audit, and monitoring (Cochi et al., 2014). It is notable to see similar overlapping populations and geographies lagging in adult illiteracy eradication. Establishing a central authority to oversee literacy initiatives—capable of receiving and managing financial resources, coordinating efforts between governments and NGOs, securing government commitments for funding, and mobilizing volunteers and instructors (Cree et al.); would be a valuable step in addressing adult illiteracy.

Implications for the Field of Adult Literacy in Developing Economies

Considering the contributions of various stakeholders practical steps must be taken to expand both the quantity and quality of adult literacy opportunities worldwide, within the broader framework of lifelong learning. These efforts should focus on a capability approach aiming to enhance overall human capabilities, including personal and economic development, social interaction, and political participation (Youngman, 2000). Furthermore, literacy education on multiple topics will enhance sustainable development in any knowledge economy. Such topics include environment, production, preventative actions, personal income generation, improved human capacity, and social justice through the sustenance of democratic institutional structure (Oghenekohwo & Frank-Oputu, 2017). Institutional support with the necessary funding and policy backing is crucial for Adult Literacy Programs (ALPs) to operate in mission mode to eliminate adult illiteracy.. Tanzania's case provides strong evidence where the adult literacy rate dropped from 90.4% reported in 1986 to 71% in 1997 (Fute et al., 2022), a drop of almost 20 percentage points in about 11 years due to a lack of sustenance of ALP initiatives.

Importance of Continued Research

Developing economies must implement more cohesive, rather than piecemeal, improvements and interventions in adult literacy. Many still need to establish a clear and unified definition of adult education and how it should be measured (UNESCO Institute for Lifelong Learning, 2022). Countries are still striving to establish a shared understanding of the broader scope of the adult education sector, which spans everything from basic literacy programs to higher

education, workplace professional development, and skill-building and vocational training initiatives.Digital literacy, e-learning, and various communication tools based on the internet and mobile technology further support the adult literacy paradigm. Application of policy coherence, creates a need for additional research to pinpoint gaps and apply targeted solutions in the eradication of adult illiteracy.

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COSTA RICAN WOMEN'S SUSTAINED LEARNING: THE VALUE OF LIVED EXPERIENCE, IDENTITY & FAMILY

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ABSTRACT: This research highlights how 20 Costa Rican women sustain their learning and overcome adversity in Colegios Nocturnos (Night High Schools), with the unrelenting support of family, friends, and their own "sense of self." Zuga (1999) stated that women's experiences are shaped by their societal position, which directly impacts their learning and how they construct knowledge. To gain insights into participants' learning, we drew on feminist pedagogy (teaching women about marginalization brought about by intersectional structures of race, ethnicity, class, sexual orientation, and gender) to facilitate students' discussion and critique of their circumstances and the systems of oppression and privilege that have informed their lived experience (Tisdell, 1995, p. 57), including schooling. To analyze the findings, we applied the funds of knowledge framework and adult learning pedagogy to explore two questions: Which Funds of Knowledge did El Cerro Night High School women students use? How did Funds of Knowledge resources reflect participants' learning and coping strategies? Findings demonstrated that participants (a) drew on *multiple* interlocking sources of Funds of Knowledge, (b) used the classroom as a place to be heard, and (c) emphasized experiences as sources for motivation in the classroom. Findings brought into focus Costa Rica's educational infrastructure for adult women. This study contributes to reconceptualizing funds of knowledge as adult learning pedagogy and the teaching strategies that create opportunities for meaningful Adult Education, one in which women's life experiences and conditions are seen, validated, and utilized as the fundamentals underlying the success of their learning.

Keywords: words

Scholars have increasingly acknowledged the influence of sociocultural backgrounds on students' learning. Yet there remains a resistance in harnessing these backgrounds as valuable resources. In particular, research often neglects the value of knowledge and practices brought to the classroom by underrepresented groups including women and other minorities.

The researchers undertook this study with 20 adult women night high school students from rural Costa Rica while they learned English as a foreign language in an informal learning study group called "The Club." We applied the funds of knowledge framework (augmented by adult education and feminist pedagogies frameworks), which challenges prevailing educational paradigms by foregrounding the cultural and historical assets of minority communities and harnessing students' lived experiences. This study explored two questions: Which funds of knowledge did El Cerro Night High School women students use? How did these resources reflect participants' learning and coping strategies?

Using feminist pedagogy to address marginalization across various intersecting factors—such as race, ethnicity, class, sexual orientation, and gender—encourages students to critique the systems of oppression and privilege that shape their experiences (Tisdell, 1995). Zuga (1999)

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noted that women's historical societal roles influence their knowledge construction and coping mechanisms in challenging situations. Researchers agree that coping involves managing stress and adverse circumstances (Banyard & Graham-Bermann, 1993).

The study aimed to show the value of students' social and cultural capital and shed light on how these students learned, despite living in a system that marginalizes them. These goals fill a literature gap, bringing into focus the country of Costa Rica, women's education, and coping strategies from the aforementioned theoretical perspectives. This research offers tools for scholars and teachers to provide better opportunities for meaningful education, one in which women's life experiences and conditions are considered when sharing a learning environment with them.

To understand the funds of knowledge the female students used and why these reflected their learning and coping strategies, we offered a safe space for them to express themselves. This allowed students to share their life experiences, family, daily routines, jobs, dreams, and fears with us and their peers. In other words, we allowed students to be heard, valued, and understood. To achieve this understanding, the researchers used three main theoretical lenses, namely funds of knowledge, adult learning pedagogy, and feminist pedagogy.

Theoretical Lenses

Funds of Knowledge

Funds of knowledge theory considers that social relationships are fundamental in the construction of knowledge (González et al., 2005). In essence, this theory assumes that the learning process is more effective when teachers learn about and incorporate knowledge and practices from students' lives, values, and culture into educational contexts. This process includes knowing about students' families and their communities. In this sense, learning about students is a step forward in advocating for more equitable educational experiences that celebrate all (especially the non-mainstream) students' life experiences and prepare them for the challenges of the world and the real contexts in which they live.

Resonating with Bourdieu's (1986) conceptualization of cultural capital, funds of knowledge recognizes that underprivileged people from lower socio-economic strata have life experiences that can be used to their benefit in school and other environments as long as they are recognized as valuable. This theory promotes the idea that this capital is respected and celebrated as such: as an asset, not a liability.

Different studies consistently document that women's roles in various fields are characterized by invisibility, discrimination, submission, and abuse (Chant, 2009; Higgins, 2010; Lakoff, 1973; Morgan et al., 2010). Funds of knowledge from a feminist lens brings forward insights into ways women in the study coped and navigated through their difficult situations to continue learning.

Adult Education

Even though teachers who have taught grownups agreed that adults do not learn in the same way as children, it was not until Knowles's 1968 publication that the term "andragogy" became known in the United States (Reischmann, 2004). Knowles (2014) defined andragogy as "the art and science of helping adults learn" (p. 61). Furthermore, he stated that it centered on two key

attributes: (a) adults' being self-directed and autonomous; and (b) the teacher's having the role of facilitator, not the sole possessor of truth (Knowles, 1977).

Knowles and other authors expanded on the term of adult education and added new assumptions. The scholars explained the guiding points to understand how adults learn (Ozuah, 2016): the need to know, the learner's self-concept, the role of experiences, readiness to learn, orientation to learning, and motivation.

For decades, adult education theoretical principles have served as a foundation for understanding how adults learn. Nevertheless, at the beginning, these principles also exposed that the principles were based on the non-inclusive particularities of the adults sampled.[1] In a world where equality and justice should be at the foreground of educational environments, andragogy needs amplification to include intersectionality, a term coined by Kimberlé Crenshaw in the 80s, which highlights how oppressive forms can intersect (Grady, 2018); perspectives drawing on this term are used nowadays as a platform for all types of feminisms (McKibbin et al., 2015). Similarly, feminist pedagogy further refines that amplification, as this study aims to show.

Feminist Pedagogy

Alongside andragogy and funds of knowledge, feminist pedagogy further amplifies the analytical lens. This means that, although Knowles' (1977) andragogy framework highlights the mindset underlying best practices for adult education, principles do not capture adequately (if at all) feminist pedagogy's focus. When working with women "the nature of structured power relations and interlocking systems of oppression and privilege based on gender, race, class, age, and so on" (Tisdell, 1995, p. 77) are fundamental considerations in learning.

These factors affected the female population in this study. Feminist pedagogy positions women students as integral beings who act, think, and learn according to their life experiences and conditions. As stated by Kramsch and Von Hoene (2001), Feminist pedagogy focuses on the being and "appeals not only to the learner's mind and behaviors, but to a subject's emotions, body, and his or her social and political habitus" (p. 297). More simply, pedagogy looks at the world of education not through a male-centered lens but other-centered lens. What does the world of education look like when we examine it with the lenses of women and other previously excluded populations?

For example, how does the phenomenon of teenage pregnancy change or shift when we take up a woman-centered understanding of the issue? Is this phenomenon still the "problem" as hegemonic cultures frame it? If so, in what way? If not, how? Why should pregnancy in school be a problem at all? What are the aspects of culture that frame it as such in the first place? Is it a problem for adult education? None of these questions arise when learners are understood in gender-invisible terms. Funds of knowledge, moreover, incorporate questions raised by feminist pedagogy that specifically involve women's strategies for social functioning and well-being.

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[1]Although ground-breaking research, William Perry's (1999) research on adult education generalized findings to all adults when, in reality, his participants were only men, evidencing a gap in research to understand how women learn.

Methodology

Context and Participants

Twenty (20) women ranging in age from 18-40 years old, all from underrepresented groups attending a night high school in Costa Rica comprised The Club. Participants were representative of people who interact within a given space (Creswell, 2014). (The participants' names were anonymized to protect the participants' privacy.) To recruit participants from among the 20 students, we did purposive sampling, the "intentional selection of informants based on their ability to elucidate a specific theme, concept, or phenomenon" (Robinson, 2014, p. 5243). Inclusion criteria for participation were: (a) adult women, age 18+, (b) attending the night high school, (c) known for their academic excellence, and (d) regular participation in The Club.

Eight participants were single mothers from low-income households. Most of them worked during the day or took care of their families and could only attend school at night. Eighteen (18) students had low-income jobs as vegetable vendors, house cleaners, waitresses, cooks, coffee pickers, factory workers, and operators. Students' earnings were between $2-$3 per hour, and they worked 8 to 12 hours per day. Some worked during late night or early morning shifts. Per month, each student's earnings was approximately $305, while the median income for Costa Ricans was approximately $750. Laws require patrons to insure workers; however, only one student was insured.

Five (5) students dropped out of high school but continued attending The Club and finished the one-year project successfully. Thirteen (13) finished the academic year with straight As, and five (5) were given awards for academic excellence; seven (7) students became class presidents; two (2) were seniors and graduated at the end of the year: one (1) is currently attending university, and enrolled in an English-teaching major; one (1) is majoring in international relations at a top university in Costa Rica.

Two (2) students were undocumented immigrants from another Central American country, and one (1) of them was in the process of collecting money to pay for registration for her citizenship test. Most of the participants were natives of El Cerro (in rural, Western Costa Rica), but some migrated from even more rural areas, including San Carlos and Perez Zeledón. Because El Cerro's economy depends mainly on coffee production, it is an attractive area for people looking for a job in coffee-picking. Also, the town's strategic location only 45km from the capital offers additional opportunities for people who live in underdeveloped areas.

Data Sources and Collection

Semi-structured Interviews

The researchers used purposive sampling (choosing the most articulate and vocal participants best able to address the questions) to choose eight (8) participants to interview. Preliminary fieldwork preceded this sample, allowing researchers to better understand the group and identify possible themes and patterns. Travel restrictions due to COVID-19 forced us to change our original intention to interview eight participants in person. As a result, we conducted the interviews remotely using the Zoom platform during Summer 2020, Fall 2020, and Spring 2021, with an additional Zoom interview in 2022.

Photovoice Projects

Photovoice reflects participant realities through a photo that highlights the idea that every picture has both a told and an untold story (Wang et al., 1998). In these assignments, participants decided on a general theme --e.g., family, grades, friends, pregnancy, poverty, bad habits, fear, courage, stress, impotence, success– that exemplified their paths as students. Next, they took a photograph that metaphorically represented the chosen theme. Inspired by their photographs, we asked participants to reflect, analyze, and share their stories. The project culminated in a public presentation at a large regional museum near the school. In all, we collected 14 photovoice assignments each consisting of a photograph and a descriptive or narrative paragraph ranging from 100-400 words each.

Example:

Nancy

This photo takes place on my bedroom's wall. In this photo there is a wall with a small and big foot print [Nancy explained that she wanted them to be foot and not hand prints, but she was not able to do it like that, but she decided to look at them as feet moving forward]. I believe that in this photo you can see reflected the footprints of a past that marked the present of a person. With this photo I remember that it was my point of start to take a decision of continuing with my studies and I understood that I have a son that depends on me and my decisions. The footprints are the past we have left behind and the process I have been through since I retake my studies. [Nancy, Photovoice Assignment, 2019]

WhatsApp Conversations

During The Club's existence (2018-2019), the digital WhatsApp platform was the primary means of communication with participants because the participants did not have their own computers or easy access to the equipment in the school. Using the WhatsApp platform we created a group chat where we distributed information about assignments, schedules of visiting teachers, field trips and other activities planned for The Club. We logged all chat interactions including individual chats with non-public conversations. These conversations supported and expanded the information collected through interviews and observations. In total, we collected 159 pages (70,597 words) of conversations. These were downloaded from the WhatsApp platform and transferred into a Microsoft Word document.

Data Analysis

Through the analysis, we searched for patterns that would highlight how the participants worked, lived, and learned (Creswell & Poth, 2016). We used a thematic analysis approach (Braun & Clarke, 2006):

> The first cycle of deductive coding (Miles et al., 2014) focused on themes related to the research questions and theoretical frameworks. After over 12 months of contact and gathering extensive data from participants, we initially generated

more than 70 codes before distilling the final codebook down to 37 codes. As we coded, additional codes and subcodes emerged through inductive coding, which we directly integrated into the process. Subcodes added specific meaning to particular text extracts; e.g., the code "self-reflection" included subcodes for personal growth, age, and better future.

Findings and Discussion

In response to the research questions, this study formally explored the types of funds and how underrepresented women at a night high school in Costa Rica used them as learning and coping strategies. After data coding was completed, the following themes emerged as answers to the two research questions:

1. Which Funds of Knowledge did El Cerro Night High School female students use?
2. How does the use of these resources reflect their learning and coping strategies?

Three main themes acted as the funds of knowledge used by the participants in this study; also the students' coping strategies manifested as explained below.

Participants,

1. drew on *multiple* interlocking sources of funds of knowledge;
2. used The Club as a place to be heard; and
3. emphasized experiences as sources for motivation in the classroom (both for success in academics and desired life goals).

Unsurprisingly, the hybridity of funds shown in the list above centers predominantly on family and extended family. Contrary to researchers' belief that low-income student populations lack parental support in academic matters (Abrams & Gibbs, 2002; Epstein, 1995; Lareau, 2000; O'Connor, 2001 cited in Smith, 2006), the student population in this study consistently demonstrated strong family involvement in their education and a commitment to valuing education. For example, Silvia shared that her mother enrolled her in a course with a Peace Corps representative when she was younger, which motivated her to continue improving her English. Similarly, Nancy, who lived with her mother, two brothers, and her son, arranged with her mom to care for her son while she attended night school. They also created a schedule that allowed them both to work and care for him, with the brothers participating since they attended high school during the day. As participant Jacky, a school bus driver assistant, prepared for the Bachillerato exams (comparable to the SAT), her workplace supervisors provided supportive resources and opportunities to facilitate Jacky's progress. In addition to allowing Jacky to bring books to work, the supervisors asked passenger-children to ride in complete silence and not "bother" Jacky, who needed to focus. Jacky explained: "My bosses are amazing; I loved them so much; they cared for me, too. I could tell" [Jacky, personal communication, September 2021]. Vicky explained that a trusted group of friends helped her get through childhood trauma so she could stay in school. Vicky's drug-addicted, schizophrenic uncle was the laughingstock of the town everyone knew Vicky was his niece, and they made fun of her. Vicky described becoming very shy and insecure as a result. "But I'm not like that anymore," she concluded. When I asked what changed, Vicky said: "I found good friends"[Vicky, personal communication, January, 2022.]

The dynamics and family relationships described above highlight our finding that the students relied on a robust support network that significantly bolstered their interest and capacity for studying. This support, including financial aid, child care, and emotional encouragement facilitated their educational goals and made their challenges more manageable. These findings are consistent with other studies (Hedges et al., 2019; Sebolt, 2018), which emphasize the critical role of family support structures—ranging from immediate family to extended relatives and chosen networks—in academic success.

This study accentuated the daily struggles the participants went through. One clear example was Silvia's dropping out of College. Silvia's world fell apart during the period in which she began college. With Covid-19 Silvia's network of support was decimated. Silvia found herself isolated by online classes, her husband's leaving the marriage, and no one for support. As a result, Silvia's grades dropped, and she lost her scholarship. Indeed, research (Herrman et al., 2011) showed that students' relationships with others help them develop higher levels of resilience in a "process of positive adaptation, or the ability to maintain or regain mental health, despite experiencing adversity" (p. 259). Silvia lost spousal support, which was key to her emotional and financial well-being.

The Club also became a fund of knowledge as the participants used it as a site of skill-sharing, and mutual physical, emotional, spiritual, and scholastic support. Individually or collaboratively, members used the Club as a kind of "tool" that advanced their attainment of English-language proficiency. Funds of knowledge are both personal and communal. Research findings generally argue that students' funds should fall under a teacher's gaze and interests so that these professionals can include the students in the classroom—as much to make lessons more culturally relevant and relatable (scaffolding) as to acknowledge students' lived realities and perspectives (respect). Part of becoming aware involves tracking how available funds of knowledge change and the ways students begin to navigate the lived-in space of the classroom, especially as learned skills from others. For example, Nancy expressed she finally felt safe to tell her story and did so because she felt she would not be judged.

Another study finding connects the value of life experiences and situations participants accumulated through involvement with different jobs. Rios-Aguilar et al. (2011) stated that "Funds of Knowledge has been used by educational researchers to document the competence and knowledge embedded in the life experiences of under-represented students and their families" (p. 164). In this study, all participants had one or more jobs during the day while studying at night. A sense of workplace belonging, navigating workplace ethics, and the development of skills (both "hard" and "soft") aggregately generated funds of knowledge and coping mechanisms that teachers observed students utilizing in the classroom and incorporated into praxis. For example, Yessenia spent about three minutes describing her job at the plant nursery, using technical language to explain her responsibilities. She provided detailed insights into the processes involved in producing plants for export. This demonstrated her ability to understand and articulate complex mechanisms, skills she likely applies in her everyday life as a student.

> . . .at the plant nursery I learned how to produce. . . . I was a temporary employee for the high season. I learned a lot there. I learned what is the slip or cutting of a harvest, what is the slip that is not good because it has dried and has to be thrown out. We also had to clean the water pipes when they got clogged, they got filled up with the plants' roots so we had to open them up and clean

> them, scrape them and take out all the rubbish. [Yessenia, personal communication, April, 2021]

Interviews revealed that participants were largely unaware of ways workforce skills translated into classroom abilities. For example, despite having jobs for most of their lives, many lacked knowledge about composing a cover letter or CV. Guidance in identifying and articulating skills led to surprising realizations about participants' competencies, including those gained in jobs they did not view as "professional." For instance, skills like making accurate change once considered trivial, now hold significance for professional roles such as bank tellers. Thus, using funds of knowledge with the participants in this study was instrumental in surfacing the value of these skills.

Conclusions and Implications

This study explores the implications of the findings regarding their practical applications and their contribution to reconceptualizing funds of knowledge within the frameworks of feminist pedagogy and adult learning pedagogy. Feminist pedagogy and its application in the classroom can promote the discovery of students' funds of knowledge as it allows for a safe environment to create, discuss, share, and learn. Additionally, as funds of knowledge, feminist pedagogy principles advocate for the underrepresented; therefore, merging these theories centers initiatives to support social justice in education.

Furthermore, this study provided insight into ways an all-women classroom might be a remedy for classroom inequity: understanding school settings as sites where social inequalities are a part—albeit invisible—of the curriculum, The Club offered spaces where direct patterns of systemic sexism were absent and sororal support was common. When asked how they felt about The Club's being women-only, all of the participants wanted it to continue because they felt understood by other members.

A key point throughout this research was allowing students to share what they do and have learned in their workplaces and lives through moments of free talk, show and tell, formal speeches and presentations, or specific assignments. Students not only supported their learning as *they* taught classmates about their experiences but also supported the proposals of feminist pedagogy and adult education that emphasize valuing students' experiences and knowledge in the classroom.

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THE GLACIER GRAVEYARD: UNLEARNING GRIEF AND GUILT IN ANTARCTICA

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***ABSTRACT*:** Transformational learning theory is a cornerstone within the field of adult education. However, are all learners ready for their disorienting dilemma which instigates transformational learning? To answer this question, this autoethnographic paper unpacks an adult learner's personal journey on a research expedition to Antarctica. Using Antarctica as their disorienting dilemma, this reflective memo presents a critical self-assessment of unexpected feelings of grief and guilt experienced framed by the author's experiences as an adult learner on a research expedition. In doing so, the researcher explores the ways experiencing and unlearning grief and guilt are untidy and discursive emotions during a transformative learning journey. This paper considers how confronting grief and guilt can deepen the transformative learning process and reframes these emotions as lessons in the self. While the adult education discipline limits its interaction with grief and bereavement studies, this paper puts these emotions at the center of a learning journey to uncover just how Mad grief can be.

"It's called a glacier graveyard."

I turn back from looking out at the Antarctic waters near Cuverville Island and face our expedition leader.

Pointing at a nearby ice sheet, he continues,

> *See—when parts of these glaciers cleave into these waters, some pieces are too big to exit this bottleneck area. Lots of times, the resulting icebergs stay floating in this area around Cuverville. The warmer saltwater from the Drake will keep chipping away at them and eventually they'll break apart. But sometimes, the ice from these glaciers can't escape this area. So, it's become its own glacier graveyard.*
>
> *It's where this ice comes to die.*
>
> (J.W., personal communication, November, 23, 2023)

In November 2023, I embarked on a research and study abroad program to one of the most barren places on earth: Antarctica. Joining thirty-one other Texas A&M University students and four faculty members with interdisciplinary expertise across the atmospheric sciences, oceanography, cruise tourism, and educational psychology, I undertook this learning journey to test the boundaries of transformational learning and adult education theory in an extreme environment. Armed with waterproof notebooks and shoes approved by the international Antarctic Treaty System, I spent the year leading up to my journey to the seventh continent reading up on Antarctic policy, glaciology, eco-tourism, and more. Finally, stepping foot onto our vessel named the *Ocean Victory*, I felt as ready as any researcher could when preparing for the treacherous waters of the Drake Passage leading to Antarctica.

However, even equipped with the best gear and academic articles, I was wholly unprepared for my journey to Antarctica—not as a researcher or practitioner—but as an adult learner

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confronted with sudden emotions of grief and guilt. While adult education has taken tentative steps towards considering educational and school-based trauma that shape the learning trajectories of adult learners, we the field rarely confront the ways in which these may echo in our own learning journeys as researchers and practitioners. This paper illustrates the ways in which grief and guilt can manifest in an adult learning journey—often in the most surprising ways. While our instinct is to speak about our work solely as researchers or practitioners, I hope to draw us towards an often-overlooked identity within adult education: ourselves as learners. This autoethnographic study reflects on the ways in which grief and guilt manifested in my learning journey to Antarctica via four grief narratives, followed by a critical reflection on the unlearning of grief and guilt norms during a transformative learning process.

A Starting Point: Transformational Learning

My academic starting point for learning in an extreme environment was to test a hypothesis: in what ways could Antarctica be my disorienting dilemma? Informed by Mezirow's transformational learning theory (TLT), I wanted to see how my prior learning experiences of being a global scholar and researcher would inform my learning experience on the seventh continent. How could Antarctica help me face habits of learning that I have internalized? How would the regular cadence of my meaning making processes be disrupted by the blank space of the southern continent? Would Antarctica help me uncover new facts of my frames of reference—from my habits of mind to my points of view (Mezirow, 1990; Mezirow, 1996)?

I planned for Antarctica to be my disorienting dilemma—that it would surely help me uncover the convictions I held as part of my "mental furniture" (Dewey, 1933, p. 4). This seemingly wild continent felt like the perfect backdrop as a space without tradition or institution. I could observe, think, and react how I wanted, to what I wanted, and in whatever capacity I wanted. Antarctica is a decolonization theorist's dream, and I planned on writing about the travel experience of a woman from the Global South by observing, researching, and learning in the southern continent—a frame of reference that has little to no available literature since women were barred from stepping foot on Antarctica until as recently as the 1990s. In theory, my well-intentioned plan felt impenetrable.

Implementing this plan revealed an entirely different pathway. While Antarctica was my disorienting dilemma, a self-examination of my resulting feelings made me realize how ill-equipped I was for this disorientation. When I could learn without observation, supervision, or judgment, feelings of overwhelming grief and intense guilt inundated my learning journey until I was unable to do anything but critically assess my emotions. I assumed that I had dealt with the trauma of my past and successfully tucked it away into the furthest recesses of my being. Antarctica allowed me to face my feelings without the medicalization or individualization of these emotions. Instead of shamefully turning from these emotions, I realized that I needed to face them head on and do what Mezirow (1996) suggested: practice empathetic listening, critical self-reflection, and involve myself in informed discourse. With an initial sample (n=1) focusing only on me, my first challenge was to be empathetic *to myself*. This paper is a testament to that process.

Research Methodology

I decided to utilize an autoethnographic qualitative approach to catalog and analyze my learning journey by reflecting on a central research question: *how does a historically marginalized woman from the Global South experience transformational learning in*

Antarctica? Autoethnographies leverage the personal narrative and storytelling techniques for the meaning-making process within scholarly research (Ellis, 2004; Ellis & Bochner, 2000; Heidelberger & Uecker, 2009). Personal storytelling emphasizes reflexivity, or the continuous self-reflection and self-critique of a researcher on their research and contexts within the research process, thus making it merge well with Mezirow's push for critical self-reflection during a transformational learning journey (Ellis, 2011; Olmos-Vega et al., 2023). Autoethnographies are typically relayed via epiphanies or confessions from the researcher's experience. This study shares four personal grief narratives, their potential root, and an informed discussion to critically self-reflect their impact on me.

Data Collection Methods

An autoethnography relies on the singular views of the researcher taking on the mantle of *researcher-as-participant* (Ellis, 2004). To this end, personal journaling, field notes, recording voice memos, and observations were the primary data collection methods for this qualitative study.

The voyage comprised a total of thirteen days, during which the research team began our expedition at the port of Ushuaia, Argentina. On our third day in Ushuaia, we made our way to the launch point for our vessel, the *Ocean Victory*. After roughly two days spent crossing the Beagle Channel and the treacherous waters of the Drake Passage, we reached Antarctica on the fifth day of our expedition. Over the next five days, we explored the Antarctic Peninsula and the South Shetland Islands through nine different excursions:

- Yankee Harbor
- Spert Islands
- Mikkelson Harbor
- Neko Harbor
- Cuverville Island
- Orne Harbor
- Wilhelmina Bay
- Telefon Bay
- Walker Bay

During each landing, I took extensive photographs to catalog my expedition experience and maintain points of reference to review later. After each landing, I reflected on my experience in either written or verbal form to capture my emotional state and learning outcomes. I also participated in daily discussions with fellow researchers during evening meals and end-of-day debriefs, resulting in necessary discourse and meaning-making moments to improve individual and group reflexivity by narrating experiences, reflecting on bias, and reclaiming moments from the day.

In the following section, I will share four grief narratives revealed by my study data. An inductive analysis unpacking my data artefacts failed me. I was undoubtedly uninformed and ill prepared to participate in discourses on grief or guilt. I support my critical self-assessment with literature on grief and bereavement to help me unpack my experiences.

Grief Narratives in Antarctica

Iceberg, Straight Ahead

I saw my first iceberg from my cabin's port light on the fifth day of our expedition. Located on the bow of the fourth deck of the ship, my shared cabin had a four by three-foot rectangular port light instead of a porthole. There was also a small seating area in front of the port light so passengers could comfortably sit and look out at the Antarctic waters. While I expected my excitement, I could not understand why I would not stop crying at the sight of my first iceberg. I obsessively planned for and waited for this moment for over a year; yet, I sat in my cabin's port light, eyes blurred and tears streaming down my face, watching my first-viewed (albeit now fuzzy) iceberg float in front of me.

I roughly dried my tears and berated myself saying, "*You're so ungrateful. You're lucky to be here. How dare you ruin this moment by being emotional and teary. You are pathetic."* In that moment, I felt such deep shame over my outburst—even if it was in the privacy of my own cabin. I kept asking myself why I was being so emotional but could suddenly only think of my father, who had passed away at the age of 46 when I was in seventh grade. It had been years, and I had come to terms with his death. Why think about him now?

Three more days passed for me to come to a quiet realization during this journey. I was standing on the shores of Orne Harbor looking out at an unbending horizon and faced again with feelings of grief and guilt. I realized that while I had accepted my father's absence, I was faced with the heavy realization that I would out-live and out-experience him. My father was a kind and gentle parent, instilling in me quiet confidence and a strong sense of self. The idea of out-doing him in anything—experience, education, or expeditions—seemed unfair and disrespectful. Knowing that I was undergoing this transformative learning journey, with opportunities he never had, felt like a crushing burden. I have seen the Antarctic as a scholar and researcher, but he never got to see me as an adult.

Knee-ding a Hand

Ushuaia, Argentina, commonly referred to as the end of the world, serves as a major launch point for most Antarctic vessels leaving from South America. Built on the shores of the Beagle Channel, Ushuaia is surrounded by subpolar forests and abuts a mountainous region referred to as the Martial Glacier. Important to this anecdote: many of the streets in Ushuaia are built at a steep incline with cobbled stairs.

On the second night of our expedition, returning from dinner, I twisted my foot going uphill on an uneven cobblestone and felt a snap in my right knee. With pain burning in my side, I slowly made myself walk back to our hotel and covered my knee in pain medication. Throughout the rest of the expedition, I was too afraid to speak out about my injury. I was afraid that someone would stop me from hopping in and out of the Zodiac boats or wading up the Antarctic shoreline during our excursions. Even with a ship doctor on board, I hid my injury and pretended to use ski poles when walking around to "look the part" of an Antarctic researcher.

A deep source of my fear stemmed from the cost of this expedition. Even with scholarships and student pricing, this 10-day expedition cost almost US$15,000 out-of-pocket. I knew the expedition was an investment in the chance of a lifetime to test myself in a space I would never again get the opportunity to visit. I knew this excursion was the right academic move for me.

But it was also money that I spent on myself and not the entire family. When my mother became widowed, she found that we only had US$95 in the bank. My father loaned his life savings to his younger brother who needed help with a business investment; which said brother later denied receiving. For the next decade, my mother, sister, and I lived on the edge of financial ruin. With every step burning as I made my way shakily across the soft ice of the Antarctic, the snap in my right knee and unending pain felt like divine punishment for spending an egregious amount of money on myself.

Looking back, this mindset and my silence seem ridiculous. I should have asked for a hand; however, already ashamed by my emotional state, I didn't want to come across as needy and unprofessional. To this day, I still feel the guilt of spending US$15,000 on a trip to Antarctica with every *click* my right knee makes.

The Drake Shake

My excursion on the *Ocean Victory* was the first time I had been on an overnight cruise. Though much smaller than other cruise lines to Antarctica, the *Ocean Victory* can house up to 200 guests (as compared to other cruise lines, which can accommodate up to 2,000 passengers). Though smaller and without the marketing gimmicks of an on-deck water slide, the *Ocean Victory* provided a luxury cruise experience complete with a daily buffet, on-board Wi-Fi, a gym, and nightly games such as cruise karaoke. In reality, no amenity can save you from the Drake Passage, a 500-mile stretch of some of the most treacherous water in the world. Once the dreaded *Drake-Shake* starts, passengers can expect 30-feet tall waves for a continuous 36 to 48 hours. You rise and fall the entire time, feeling your heart in your throat. Looking out of your porthole, all you can see is water in every direction. The Drake Passage is so deep that its water looks inky black. Palpable fear runs through your body.

Anytime I felt fear I also felt grief and guilt. The only other person I know who has been on a ship was my maternal grandmother, who migrated as a teenager during a period of colonial unrest. My great-grandfather was a post office clerk for the British Crown and was transferred from Ludhiana, India to Entebbe, Uganda at the start of his marriage. Born in Entebbe, my grandmother and her four siblings were raised in Uganda until their late teens. In the late 1930s, with the rise of the Second World War and the waning power of Britain over South Asia, my great-grandfather sent his wife and children back to Ludhiana for their safety. With only lemons, crackers, and some water, my grandmother, her mother, and younger siblings embarked on a two-month long steam ship journey from Kenya to India. They ran out of water before the journey was over. As my body rose and fell with each wave of the Drake, I asked myself what right I had to feel fear. I had access to buffets and hot chocolate machines, pampered by a diligent crew who served me with smiles on their faces. The guilt of simply experiencing fear and dread twisted my insides, making me feel ungrateful- like I was somehow denying the luxury of my surroundings.

Service in the South

I was one of three people, and the only woman, from our expedition group who needed a visa to enter Argentina. The majority of the guests on our vessel were from Australia, New Zealand, and the United States. However, the service crew staffing the kitchen and dining areas were from the Global South, particularly Indonesia, the Philippines, India, and Pakistan. They immediately recognized me as one of them; and they were so proud of me. The *Ocean Victory*'s staff were thrilled that I was onboard as a guest and not as a cabin attendant or

waitress. I was their daughter and their little sister—the one who had made it. One server had a 9 year old son back in his village in South Asia. He said, "*I'm going to tell my son about you. I'm going to tell him that we can see the world too.*" Thus, I became a role model for unseen children.

The guilt of being a marginalized learner in a position of power is confusing and upsetting. I tried to deny this reality whenever they held breakfast for me or would run to give me a glass of water at lunch. Twice, the kitchen staff surprised me by making a single serving of a South Asian dessert—*jalebis and savvayian*—just for me. It was all to celebrate me. Despite being enrobed in grief and guilt across my learning journey, I became an accidental role model for the staff on my ship—adding unexpected layers to my learning transformation. It is a role of colonial power and mobility that I am still coming to terms with.

Unlearning Grief and Guilt

While Mezirow's transformational learning theory provided an appropriate structure to my learning journey, it did not have the content I needed to further unpack my grief narratives (1996). I turned to literature on grief and bereavement to find my thoughts a home.

Much of the scholarship on grief and bereavement cites seminal scholars such as Freud, Lindemann, or Worden. From Freud's perspective, mourning and melancholia result in his theory of loss, suggesting that individuals in grief and mourning must relinquish their emotional ties with a loved one and reattach those emotions to another person (Pomeroy & Garcia, 2010). Once a bereaved individual realizes that such a transfer of emotions is possible, they can pull themselves out of a mourning state and avoid deep melancholia. Similarly, Lindemann presented crisis theory to resolve grief —echoing Freud's argument that a disengagement from the deceased individual is necessary (Pomeroy & Garcia, 2010). Lindemann's crisis theory has three steps to resolve grief. First, an individual must relinquish their attachment to a loved one. Second, this grieving individual must adapt to life without their loved one. Finally, this individual must establish new relationships with others. Finally, Worden proposed a task-oriented framework to mourning, with threads similar to Freud and Lindemann (Pomeroy & Garcia, 2010). Worden argued that mourning and grief can be resolved by completing four tasks. These four tasks include: accepting the reality of their loss; working through the pain of this loss; adjusting to the environment without the deceased; and emotionally relocating the deceased to move on with life (Pomeroy & Garcia, 2010).

While I recognize the importance of giving seminal scholars their due consideration, my experience did not resonate with Freud, Lindemann, or Worden's works. My grief and guilt were not neat—how could I 'emotionally relocate' my love for my father and grandmother to another person? How could I simply disengage from the crew of the *Ocean Victory*? How would these theories help me as an adult learner on a transformative learning journey? Why did these guidelines sound so clinical?

The most critical question arose: is this how I conceptualize grief and guilt, shaming myself for experiencing basic emotions? With a dearth of literature investigating adult learners in grief, does the field assume either that grief impacts adult learners in the same way as it impacts children and young people in learning settings or that grief does not impact adult learners at all? Neither hypotheses resonate with me. Fortunately, I found critical grief theory to help me unlearn grief and guilt.

Lessons from Mad Studies and Critical Grief Theory

Western social norms related to grief and mourning center on masculine patriarchal rules framing grief and its associated emotions as something that should be "quiet, tame, dry, and controlled" (Poole & Ward, 2013, p. 95). In this sense, "Good" grief is private and encourages individuals to return to "normal" as quickly as possible (Granek, 2009, p. 45; Willer et al., 2021, p. 28). In this subconscious vein, educators tell their students to "leave their emotions at the door" or to "act professionally"—implying that strong emotions such as grief, guilt, and sadness are wrong or bad. In contrast to this, the concept of Mad grief draws from Madness studies and the feminist perspective as "*a resistance practice that allows, speaks, names, affords, welcomes, and stories the subjugated sense of loss that comes to us all*" (Poole & Ward, 2013, p. 95). Mad grief rejects the notion of silencing grief in public or professional spaces—particularly in contexts of learning where students already may be facing isolation, anxiety, depression, guilt, and more. Mad grief argues that grief is not and should not be civil. It is meant to be felt and to bind us together in the experience (Willer et al., 2021).

Mad grief, in turn, gives rise to critical grief pedagogy (CGP), which turns away from the notion of tidy grief and presents a crucial communication pedagogy encouraging students and teachers to address grief in learning settings (Willer et al., 2021). The authors outline four tenets of CGP, including de-medicalizing inappropriate grief; unpacking power that delimits grief; witnessing grief narratives; and developing compassionate communication skills (Willer et al., 2021). Using CGP for my personal growth, I reframe the grief narratives presented in this study as untidy, transformative moments of self-reflection meant to help readers and myself articulate these emotions during a learning journey. They are not inappropriate or uncivil. They are crucial facets within me.

Conclusion: Delimiting Grief and Guilt

Antarctica is a silent and persistent specter in my journey of critical reflection. The continent's barren landscape allowed me to transform as an adult learner in unexpected ways. Grief and guilt are not tidy and linear, but discursive. Looking back with a more empathetic and informed lens, I wish I had not stifled my tears or emotions; that I simply allowed myself to exist within my learning transformation. I should not have bound my feelings. My grief and guilt did not make me ungrateful or pathetic, nor did they signal a need for medication or supervision. These emotions hinted that I was trying to escape a glacier graveyard of my own making to better understand myself, my past, and my future. It was a transformation that needed to be unpacked, witnessed, and communicated to others.

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ITALIAN DUAL CITIZENSHIP AND THE *CABRINI* MOVIE AS A LENS: A NEW TRAJECTORY IN ADULT LEARNING AROUND EMOTIONAL, PSYCHOLOGICAL, AND INSTITUTIONAL ABUSE

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ABSTRACT: In the Angel Studios 2024 movie *Cabrini* set in 1889, an Italian immigrant woman comes to America with a fierce passion for helping marginalized children. Charged with a seemingly impossible task, she perseveres through each obstacle. While watching the movie, I felt angry throughout at the injustices faced. Afterwards, I felt inspired by the truly amazing life's work of Mother Francesca Cabrini in this biopic. Her vision and transformative mark on the world created a new trajectory. Mother Cabrini stood up to misogyny, prejudice, rigid ideology, and harsh institutional policy meant to stop her, yet she kept going, persisted, never gave up hope, and realized her own power through voice when others tried to silence, cripple, and shut down the efforts of what she and others worked hard to accomplish. Our stories matter. Getting real in adult education is being safe enough to be who we are, where we are. Trauma-informed pedagogy allows a student to show up as they are in an educational environment of acceptance. Whether we are talking about my grandparents' immigration to America from Sicily, Italy in the early 1900's fleeing poverty for the perception of a better life and my connection to them now through dual citizenship, the *Cabrini* movie, or immigrant issues we face globally today, the actions one takes as a student, professor, or administrator make a difference. Advocating for victims of abuse of any form changes the trajectories of lives.

Keywords: adult learning, adult learner, emotional abuse, psychological abuse, institutional abuse, trauma-informed practice, trauma-informed pedagogy

It is time to tell the truth about what happened. It is way past time to speak authentically and clearly about what is still happening. It is also imperative to change the narrative and deconstruct the tyrannous hold that emotional, psychological, and institutional abuse has had on my life. This deeply personal story captures complex layers and decades of intergenerational hurt and trauma. This story, my story, speaks to what it means to be human. My narrative could be ubiquitous to your story. In Africa, a Zulu proverb states that the essence of being human is called *Ubuntu* (Clinton Foundation, 2012; Igboin, 2021; Ogude, 2019, 2019). Archbishop Desmond Tutu believed that we are people through other people. He stated that his humanity is tied to ours (Ogude, 2019, 2019). Truth-telling and *Ubuntu* principals intersect and relate with one another (Clinton Foundation, 2012). Ogude wrote that Ubuntu is rooted in a relational form of personhood, which means we are because of others. Ogude, interviewed by Steve Paulson and Anne Strainchamps in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia said that as human beings, our humanity and personhood is fostered in the relationship we have with other people. Therefore, Ubuntu philosophy maintains when one person hurts, we all suffer.

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According to Davidson (2017), telling the truth and getting real in adult education using a trauma-informed pedagogical approach means educators and administrators meet students where they are and model respect, compassion, and empathy. “Over the past 30 years, researchers have built a strong evidence base for trauma-informed approaches in medical and judicial fields” (p. 3). Davidson wrote, “Awareness of trauma and its wide-reaching negative impacts is also becoming more widespread in education, and educators are developing their own approaches to help break the cycle of trauma for students” (p. 3). McInerny and McKlindon (2014) stated that educators at all educational levels are becoming increasingly aware of recognizing and supporting trauma-affected students. They stated that educators are engaging students in academic learning, finding helpful resources, and creating safe spaces for students to succeed. Trauma-informed practice and pedagogy recognizes that what an adult learner brings into the physical or virtual classroom matters whether the student ever speaks their truth or not. Paramount to speaking one’s truth and showing up authentically is safety. Without psychological safety, learning, self-growth, and self-actualization is impaired (Davidson).

Based on Maslow’s hierarchy of needs and the theory of human motivation, basic physiological needs must be met foundationally before an individual can progress to a higher hierarchical need, with the second level being one of safety and security (Maslow & Lewis, 1987). Safety and feeling safe is a basic human rights need as well with developmental, psychological, and attachment theory (Bowlby, 1979) implications. We see bonding rituals across human and animal species for survival and protection. The ability to speak up about what we know, question our uncertainties and felt injustices, and express ourselves emotionally differentiates us from all other living creatures. When we as people are compromised through neglectful and abusive environments and toxic people and situations, this dilemma and level of dysfunction is not only raised as a personal lament, but also as a public health concern. How one makes sense out of what happens to each of us is an essential task in how we construct meaning in our lives and is neither inconsequential nor a small thing.

College campuses need to provide safe spaces for people to engage in difficult conversations. This is not just about seeking to construct a safe, conflict-free zone, but focused on generating a dialogue open to tension and disagreement, yet one in which each voice matters (Shrewsbury, 1987). Transparency in course design, clear expectations communicated, and managing sensitive discussions and conceptual changes from a student-focused approach are paramount in helping students succeed (Shrewsbury). Creating these spaces on campuses and in communities requires human capital and resources, as well as courage, energy, compassion, commitment, and time. In the absence of safety, mistrust and fear reside. Spaces that provide safety will mean different things to different people and across different cultures. Without repercussions, people need places they can go to decompress, de-stress, unwind, relax, recharge, and rest. We also need places and spaces that stimulate and promote intellect, culture, thought, creativity, and connection.

As adult educators and administrators, we serve in roles in which we are called to model humane ways of being and to serve as advocates for all students. Marginalized student populations bring various challenges into the learning environment. Students sharing their real struggles builds resilience (Lohr, 2018). When we take action, connect a student to a needed resource, or take the time to listen to a part of their story on a particularly stressful day, the trajectory of one's life may be altered positively. We may never know or fully realize the impact of a seemingly small act or the influence of one person throughout time. This is how I see the importance of each person’s journey whether it is crossing an ocean or crossing a stage

to receive a diploma. I relate the movie *Cabrini* as a call to stand up against emotional, psychological, and institutional abuse as barriers that continue to exist today.

Language of Abuse and Definitions

Abuse: What We Know

The abuse literature is vast. After conducting a review of the literature encompassing the last fifty years on abuse and how emotional and psychological abuse fits into the larger abuse literature that includes child abuse and domestic and family violence over generations, I concluded that the language of abuse is better understood when recognizing how this body of literature has evolved depending on the time, field, and place in society. Questions from my review include how to define abuse? And more importantly, how to differentiate the various forms of abuse to gain clarity into a complex issue?

Emotional and Psychological Abuse

It is important to set the historical context of emotional abuse as a form of psychological abuse and to ground emotional abuse in the context of other types of abuse such as physical, sexual, and childhood abuse. Literature about trauma and abuse exists among many disciplines (Chang, 1996; Gelles & Straus, 1979; Hague, 1999; Hall et al., 2009; Resko, 2010; Vidourek, 2017; L. Walker, 1978; 1979; 1984; 2015; M. Walker, 1999; Zink et al., 2006). Abuse language in the literature changes depending on the context and perspective. For instance, trauma and abuse can be referred to as domestic violence (DV), intimate partner violence (IPV), bullying, battering, harassment, sexual harassment, dating violence, family violence, and physical, sexual, psychological, and verbal abuse. Over the past decades, much has been written about physical, sexual, and childhood abuse, along with trauma, post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), IPV (Hague, 1999; Resko, 2010), DV, lateral violence, bullying, perpetrators, victims, and batterers. Current literature across fields on emotional abuse either links emotional abuse with the prevalence of physical, sexual, and childhood abuse, as a precursor to other forms of violence, or as part of an escalation of types of abuse. Emotional abuse can be part of a continuum of abuse to include verbal, physical, or sexual abuse, but emotional abuse can also be experienced in adulthood without other forms of abuse (Loring, 1994).

In 1978 Lenore E. Walker developed the Battered Woman Syndrome Questionnaire (BWSQ) to assess the psychological effects of abuse as part of her domestic violence research. Walker (2015) updated the 1978 definition of battered woman syndrome and addressed the detrimental psychological effects of domestic violence as significant. Walker identified women as the primary victims and stated more research was needed. Emotional abuse is a form of psychological abuse and trauma that is underrepresented in the literature and often missed in practice settings (Gelles & Straus, 1979; Loring, 1994; L.Walker, 1979; Zink et al., 2006). Emotional abuse is just as destructive as other forms of abuse such as physical, sexual, or childhood, yet emotional abuse often is insidious in nature, embedded within the social construct of one's cultural context, is minimized, rationalized, denied, dismissed, and often goes unnoticed and undetected (L. Walker, 2015).

Gaslighting

The term "gaslighting" and emotional abuse have found their way into popular culture. Even ten years ago, emotional abuse and gaslighting were less understood or acknowledged as forms

of abuse. Sweet (2019) stated that gaslighting has captured the public's attention and is a "type of psychological abuse aimed at making victims seem or feel "crazy," creating a "surreal" interpersonal environment" and that gaslighting is "rooted in social inequalities, including gender, and executed in power-laden intimate relationships" (p. 851).

Institutional Abuse

For the context of this article, institutional abuse refers to such forms as microaggression, mobbing, bullying, workplace or lateral violence, incivility, or harassment (Namie, 2003; Namie & Namie, 2003; Olweus, 1978, 1993; Randall, 1997, 2001). This form of abuse occurs in employment and academic settings and occurs for students, athletes in training, and those in professional roles. This can include roles in which the victim of the abuse is in an unequal relationship such as a student with a teacher, professor, coach, or administrator. Positionality and privilege create power differentials to exist in many settings in the workforce and in academia. Anytime a person in a contextual role gains power that can impact a person's life, abuse of that power can occur. Examples include grading, scoring, gatekeeping, job or academic performance, reviews, athletic performance, evaluations, subjectivity in testing, retention, graduation, and in high-stakes professional, academic, and athletic advancement. Compassion can go alongside academic and workplace rigor without mitigating standards of practice.

Misawa (2009) cited Namie and Namie (2003), Olweus (1978, 1993), and Randall (1997, 2001) and wrote, "Scholars, researchers, and practitioners in social sciences have confirmed that bullying is an international phenomenon that exists in many settings including K-12 schooling during childhood and the workplace during adulthood" (p.1). Johnson-Bailey (2001, 2015) and Misawa & Johnson-Bailey (2024) wrote about the significant impact of incivility and aggressive bullying using examples that spanned over twenty years and involved faculty and students.

The effects of institutional abuse in higher education for faculty, staff, and students can cause emotional, psychological, spiritual, financial, and physiological repercussions and long-lasting consequences to the overall mental and physical health of an individual. Institutional abuse like emotional abuse is subtle. Yet, both forms of abuse are real and exist embedded within the very culture of which they reside, perpetuated by structural and hierarchical barriers.

Trauma-Informed Practice in Adult Learning

Trauma-informed educators recognize that students' actions are a direct result of their life experiences. When students act out or disengage, a trauma-informed professor will not ask, 'What is wrong with you?' but rather, 'What happened to you? (Huang et al., 2014). All students face challenges as they transition into college, but for a student with a history of trauma or abuse, normal college challenges can be more difficult. This section provides a brief summary of the overlapping implications of trauma, feminism, and intersectionality, along with the impact of trauma on adult learners and in the field of adult education.

Trauma

Trauma is defined as any experience in which a person's internal resources are not adequate to cope with external stressors (Hoch et al., 2015; Weber et al., 2024). Over the past thirty years, trauma research continues to indicate the effects of trauma from a cultural, societal, and global

perspective. In the United States, the landmark longitudinal study on Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs) published in the *American Journal of Preventive Medicine* in 1998 supports the effects of childhood trauma and abuse over time throughout one's life both physically and emotionally. As the number of traumatic childhood events increases, so does the risk for serious health problems in adulthood (Felitti, 2002). Adults who experienced trauma as children are: fifteen times more likely to attempt suicide; four times more likely to become an alcoholic; three times more likely to use antidepressant medication; and three times more likely to experience depression (Davidson, 2017). Bremness and Polzin (2014) stated that in recent years, some mental health professionals and policymakers have worked towards a new diagnosis of 'developmental trauma,' which describes individuals whose history of trauma causes persistent and pervasive emotional and physiological dysregulation. Postsecondary education implications have been linked to many difficulties a learner may face both in the present and over time.

Feminism

In considering the various ways in which abuse is represented in the literature, it is significant and relevant to better understand the historical and chronological perspective of feminist work that goes back to the 1960s and 1970s with the rise of second-wave feminism in America. The vast body of abuse literature grew simultaneously over the decades alongside the rise of feminism and feminist theory. Overall, across history and throughout time the rights of women have long been held in direct relationship to the dominant ideology in place politically, societally, and culturally within the context of women's lives. The rights of women today continue to be influenced by the power structures that exist in relational, work, and academic settings across every culture. Strides and historical gains made for women's rights also brought many challenges that continue to exist for women especially around the issue of abuse. What we currently know about abuse remains riddled with misinformation, stigma, silence, shame, and fear.

A very brief synopsis of the historical context and backdrop of nearly two hundred years of feminism in the United States helps to situate education and specifically adult learning within the body of literature around feminism and feminist theory. Feminism is defined as a "diverse body of theoretical work" and "a social and political movement" (Barker & Jane, 2016, p. 638). Barker and Jane wrote, "Feminism aims to examine the position of women in society and to further their interests" (p. 638). In the United States, the voices of women politically around issues of equality dates to 1923 with the National Women's political party and suffragist Alice Paul (Barker & Jane). In the 1960s and 1970s, landmark political, legislative, and societal decisions around feminism and education were implemented. Title IX of the *Education Amendments of 1972* became law, the term "sexual harassment" was used in 1973, the *Women's Educational Equity Act* (WEEA) was enacted in 1974, and the first "Take Back the Night (TBTN)" march was held in October 1975 in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania (Coe & Sandberg, 2019; Sandler, 2007; Valentin, 1997). TBTN marches occur globally to protest against gender violence toward women in spaces assumed to be safe (Coe & Sandberg, 2019). These events illustrate a few examples of the many that have taken place across the decades to raise awareness around the rights of women and the abuse of women.

Dialectics about women and education in the twenty-first century using a comparative education and feminist theory perspective provide us with insight into the ongoing challenges women face (Torres et al., 2022). In this edited book, we consider the many systemic and interconnected ways in which women's lives interface within the context of family,

community, and society, along with educational and individual goals and pursuits (Stromquist, 2022, Chapter 7). Oftentimes, across cultures, the overt or covert message regarding the education of girls and women may be different from what the individual wants. This may be due to patriarchal values, rules, norms, and beliefs. Education, philosophically speaking, is a liberating idea. Yet, for many women globally today, their personal and educational choices may be limited or restricted based on the culture in which they live within. Feminist pedagogy is egalitarian, community based, and aimed at changing conceptual frameworks (Shrewsbury, 1987). Feminist pedagogy respects situated knowledge and each person's experience and expertise, along with regard for multiculturalism and diverse experiences and cultures (Shrewsbury).

Significant achievements historically for women in general that rattled the status quo may have also meant that an individual woman experienced a heightened level of abuse in her place of work, in academia, and in interpersonal and intimate partner relationships. "Intimate partner violence against women is a global public health problem with many short-term and long-term effects on the physical and mental health of women and their children" (Sardinha et al., 2022, p. 803). In the United States, nearly half of all women experience psychological aggression by an intimate partner in their lifetime (McNeil, 2024; McLeod & Ozturk, 2024). Every day, globally, women may carry histories of abuse with them into academic classrooms and environments.

Intersectionality

Intersectionality emerged from the seminal work of Kimberlé Crenshaw (1991, 2013). Social and cultural explications arose from Crenshaw coining the word in a lawsuit. Crenshaw's work is frequently cited as the beginning of the concept of intersectionality. Crenshaw's groundbreaking work emerged from black feminism and bridges intersectionality as a form of critical inquiry. Through Crenshaw's work in 1991, focusing on the experience of black females in academia and in society at large, the concept of intersectionality became more accepted in academia. Features of her work include that she "places herself within her narrative" (Collins & Bilge, 2016, p. 82). Collins and Bilge wrote that "experience and embodied knowledge are valorized, as is the theme of responsibility and accountability that accompanies such knowledge" (p. 82). Another important feature of Crenshaw's work includes how in assessing the needs of women, and in analysis of their needs, one cannot simply look at only one aspect. Collins and Bilge wrote of her work, "Crenshaw's innovation lies in building her argument from the ground up from the experiences of women of color and then showing how multiple systems of power are inseparable in the ways they impact their lives" (p. 82). Two other features include a perspective in which social justice and "relationality" (p. 83), which focuses on the essential aspect of interconnectedness between people, and the importance of understanding the dynamics of the relationships in which, in this case, women intersect with others.

Feminist theory and intersectionality, as a framework, can be used as a critical lens in which oppressed and marginalized male and female adult student learner populations, in the United States and internationally, who share a history of abuse of any form, can join against inequity and social injustice in pursuing educational and personal goals. Creating inclusive learning environments in Adult Education with feminist theory as a foundation and acknowledging multicultural concerns helps provide important insight, awareness, and intentionality for educators (Tisdell, 1995).

Adult Education

We have much to learn from the rich work in the field of Adult Education of several noteworthy and influential researchers, including Kimberlé Crenshaw (1991, 2013); the work of Vanessa Sheared, Juanita Johnson-Bailey, and colleagues, as well as authors whose chapters appear within this important book such as Doris Flowers and Mitsunori Misawa in the first edition of *The Handbook of Race and Adult Education: A Resource for Dialogue on Racism* (2010). Others include Ronald M. Cervero and Arthur L. Wilson (2001) in *Power in Practice: Adult Education and the Struggle for Knowledge and Power in Society*; and Jack Mezirow (1978, 1997, 2000). Whether listed here or not, scholars each illuminate the intersections of power, privilege, and feminist theory within the fields of Adult Learning and Adult Education.

The Impact of Trauma

The effects of trauma can block a student's ability to learn. Visible indicators might include that a student has difficulty focusing or missing class. They may experience challenges with emotional regulation, display anger, or seem anxious about tests and deadlines. A student could seem withdrawn, demonstrate poor boundaries, or disclose current or past unhealthy relationships. This list is not exhaustive. Many effects of trauma for an adult learner are expressed as psychological manifestations suffered silently, passively, and invisibly. Examples could include witnessing a student's lack of confidence, negative self-talk, second-guessing, a poor sense of self, a lack of positive self-esteem, indecision, and trouble completing assignments, programs, and degrees.

Boyraz et al., (2013) stated that trauma-exposed African American female students are more likely to leave college before the end of their second year. Student groups at elevated risk include veterans, current and former foster youth, indigenous peoples, refugee students, LGBTQ+ students, and nontraditional adult learners (Davidson, 2017).

Subjectivity, Italian Dual Citizenship, and the *Cabrini* Movie

In the movie *Cabrini* set in 1889, an Italian immigrant woman comes to America with a fierce passion for helping marginalized children, victims of societal and familial neglect and abuse. Charged with a seemingly impossible task, she perseveres through each obstacle. Mother Cabrini faced many challenges and injustices. She experienced emotional, psychological, and institutional abuse, even if that specific language was not articulated or known at the time. The inspiration of Mother Cabrini's story is how she overcame and transformed not only her life, but the lives of many. It is through her vision and transformative mark on the world that a new trajectory was created. Mother Cabrini stood up to misogyny, prejudice, rigid ideology, and harsh institutional policy meant to stop her, yet she kept going, persisted, never gave up hope, and realized her own power through voice when others tried to silence, cripple, and shut down the efforts of what she and others worked hard to accomplish.

For me, the *Cabrini* movie was a true example of what an empowered sense of self looks like rising up through ashes of defeat. I know first-hand because I am a victim of emotional, psychological, and institutional abuse. The metaphor of ashes represents any student who has ever struggled. It represents the survivor of any form of abuse who stays enrolled despite what "they" (hierarchies and institutions) say, what they are told by others (that they will not succeed), and despite data, gatekeepers, or any other arbitrary reason as to why the thing one is there to do (graduate) may not be attained. For an adult learner with a history of emotional,

psychological, or any other form of abuse, physical and psychological safety are key to one's ability to learn, grow, succeed, and thrive. Transformative change is a process. Achievement is possible. Degrees in higher education are earned, yet the path to completion can be riddled with obstacle upon obstacle. Emotional, psychological, and institutional abuse are subtle, yet they exist. They are embedded within the culture and fabric of society. Mother Cabrini's legacy continues to inspire growth, leadership, and advocacy. She reminds each of us to remember or find what it is we know for sure, who we are, and what we stand for. She compels us to be authentic, kind, and true to our own beliefs. Her message challenges us to stand up for those less fortunate, for the young, the elderly, the mentally ill, and the marginalized person of any generation, population, or of any society whose needs are compromised by poverty, violence, or oppression.

Each of my paternal and maternal Sicilian Italian grandparents immigrated to the United States in the early 1900's. The *Cabrini* movie was set in 1889, which intersects a time in history when many immigrants came to America with the dream of a better life only to find injustice, prejudice, and impoverished ways of living. When we share aspects of our stories with others, whatever language we use, choose not to use, or do not even yet realize the words to use, we give people glimpses into who we are and what we have been through. Ancestral and intergenerational trauma and abuse exist and impact our lives in ways we cannot always clearly see. A better understanding around patterns and themes of abuse in families, in interpersonal relationships, and in institutions over time can help us gain insight, act, reconcile, heal, transform, and break free from the bondage of abuse. Seeking dual citizenship for me is both a legacy gift for my children and future generations, as well as a deeply personal and necessary connection and part of my own healing journey.

Future Implications

Future implications include recognizing college and campus-level strategies to mitigate the negative effects of trauma on an adult learner's educational trajectory. This means training faculty and staff in trauma-informed practices and pedagogy. Another strategy is to develop culturally sensitive awareness programs for administrators, higher education professionals, and faculty, and requiring attendance as an essential preventative method. Professional development will help challenge people to be more intentional around important and relevant issues and challenges in higher education. By creating spaces in which psychological safety is paramount and by treating each adult learner with dignity and respect, successful gains can be made at all levels. Furthermore, by reducing punitive, antiquated, and outdated measures both completion and satisfaction can be maintained. Support and appropriate referrals can be made with awareness, integrity, respect, and knowledge if a student needs additional support through the college or within the community. This may be through advising, tutoring, counseling, or any other college or community specialty resource. Many well-known organizations and entities within communities, nations, and globally provide crisis-call-lines, resources, and support for struggling students. Through faculty and peer support, higher education professionals can move this needle forward to de-stigmatize the negative effects of trauma on an adult learner's educational journey.

Conclusion

The actions one takes as a student, professor, or administrator can make a difference. Advocating for victims of abuse of any form may change the trajectory of someone's life.

In conclusion, no matter the color of skin, one's gender, sexuality, age, disability, or any other factor, who we are and where we come from matters. Our stories matter. Getting real for an adult learner is being safe enough to be who we are, where we are. Trauma-informed pedagogy allows a student to show up as they are in an environment of acceptance. Learning cannot occur in unsafe spaces. Adult educators can make a difference.

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