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Front Pages

Athens Journal of Education

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ATINER is an Athens-based World Association of Academics and Researchers based in Athens. ATINER is an independent and non-profit Association with a Mission to become a forum where Academics and Researchers from all over the world can meet in Athens, exchange ideas on their research and discuss future developments in their disciplines, as well as engage with professionals from other fields. Athens was chosen because of its long history of academic gatherings, which go back thousands of years to Plato's Academy and Aristotle's Lyceum. Both these historic places are within walking distance from ATINER's downtown offices. Since antiquity, Athens was an open city. In the words of Pericles, Athens"…is open to the world, we never expel a foreigner from learning or seeing". ("Pericles' Funeral Oration", in Thucydides, The History of the Peloponnesian War). It is ATINER's mission to revive the glory of Ancient Athens by inviting the World Academic Community to the city, to learn from each other in an environment of freedom and respect for other people's opinions and beliefs. After all, the free expression of one's opinion formed the basis for the development of democracy, and Athens was its cradle. As it turned out, the Golden Age of Athens was in fact, the Golden Age of the Western Civilization. Education and (Re)searching for the 'truth' are the pillars of any free (democratic) society. This is the reason why Education and Research are the two core words in ATINER's name.

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The ***Athens Journal of Education (AJE)*** is an Open Access quarterly double-blind peer reviewed journal and considers papers from all areas of history. Many of the papers published in this journal have been presented at the various conferences sponsored by the Education Unit of the Athens Institute for Education and Research (ATINER). All papers are subject to ATINER's Publication Ethical Policy and Statement.

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Athens Journal of Education
Editorial and Reviewers' Board

President's Message

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The current issue is the first of the ninth volume of the *Athens Journal of Education (AJE), published by the Education Unit of ATINER.*

Gregory T. Papanikos
President
ATINER

Athens Institute for Education and Research

A World Association of Academics and Researchers

24th Annual International Conference on Education
16-19 May 2022, Athens, Greece

The Education Unit of ATINER organizes its **24th Annual International Conference on Education, 16-19 May 2022, Athens, Greece** sponsored by the Athens Journal of Education. The aim of the conference is to bring together scholars and students of education and other related disciplines. You may participate as stream leader, presenter of one paper, chair a session or observer. Papers (in English) from all areas of education are welcome. Please submit a proposal using the form available (https://www.atiner.gr/2022/FORM-EDU.doc).

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- **Dr. John Spiridakis**, Co-Editor, Athens Journal of Education & Professor, St. John University, USA.
- **Dr. Alexander Makedon**, Head, Education Unit, ATINER & Independent Scholar (Retired Full Professor, Chicago State University, USA).

Important Dates

- Abstract Submission: **24 January 2022**
- Acceptance of Abstract: 4 Weeks after Submission
- Submission of Paper: **18 April 2022**

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- Athens Sightseeing: Old and New-An Educational Urban Walk
- Social Dinner
- Mycenae Visit
- Exploration of the Aegean Islands
- Delphi Visit
- Ancient Corinth and Cape Sounion

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The Education Unit of ATINER is organizing the **6th Annual International Symposium on "Higher Education in a Global World", 4-7 July 2022, Athens, Greece** sponsored by the Athens Journal of Education. The aim of the symposium is to examine educational developments throughout the world in universities, polytechnics, colleges, and vocational and education institutions. Academics and researchers from all areas of education are welcomed. You may participate as stream organizer, presenter of one paper, chair a session or observer. Please submit a proposal using the form available (https://www.atiner.gr/2022/FORM-COLEDU.doc).

Important Dates

- Abstract Submission: **6 December 2021**
- Acceptance of Abstract: 4 Weeks after Submission
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- **Dr. David Philip Wick**, Director, Arts, Humanities and Education Division, ATINER & Professor of History, Gordon College, USA.
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- **Dr. George Priovolos**, Director, Center for Small and Medium-Sized Enterprises (CSME) & Professor, Iona College, USA.

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Athens Journal of Education - Volume 9, Issue 1, February 2022 – Pages 9-22

A University Literacy Festival: The Impact of Connecting Children's Authors with Students, Teachers, and Librarians from Title I Schools

By Cynthia Dawn Martelli[*]

A literacy festival is one of the most effective ways to promote reading and fosters the idea that books make a difference, especially to under-supported students. This paper is based on a research study that focused on how a university literacy festival supported engagement and increased reading attitudes and habits for students of Title I schools. It also explores a longitudinal study that analyzed a university's literacy festival and its impact on students, librarians, teachers, children's authors, teacher candidates, and librarians from Title I schools in southwest Florida. The findings of this study suggest that a university literacy festival helps connect children with books, which can help promote a lifelong love of reading and writing. A university literacy festival featuring a variety of diverse authors presenting interactive workshops showcasing their literary craft enabled students from Title I schools to engage with the authors and to see themselves as writers and encouraged them to explore a university in their own backyard. This university literacy festival made a positive impact in the area of engagement in reading and found an increase in reading from students from Title I schools that attended the event.

Keywords: literacy festival, children's authors, Title I students, teacher candidates, reading

The Impact of a University Literacy Festival on Title I School Partners

Research shows that the highest achieving students are those who devote leisure time to reading, even when the school day and year are only mid-length and homework is not excessive. Recently, the largest-ever international study of reading found that the single most important predictor of academic success is the amount of time children spend reading books, more important even than economic or social status. And one of the few predictors of high achievement in math and science is the amount of time children devote to pleasure reading (Atwell, 2007).

Experts endorse that when children become good readers early in their schooling, they are more likely to become better readers and learners throughout their school years and beyond (Graves, 1994). Under-achieving students from a low socioeconomic status often fall behind their peers and continue to struggle to catch up with their peers academically. This achievement gap extends throughout their schooling. Thus, students low in literacy achievement often experience increased social and behavior problems and are likely to be retained; and students who are at risk for reading failure are often remediated in the lower grades in order to strengthen their literacy skills by third grade (Martella, Martella, & Przychozin,

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2009). Students lack an essential tool for learning if they cannot read which will eventually lead to a shortage of job opportunities (Martella, Martella, & Przychozin, 2009). Researchers agree that there is a positive relationship between students with low socioeconomic backgrounds and low academic achievement (Oxley, 2008; Tonn, 2007). The ambition of Title I was to boost local states and school districts by designating resources to targeted groups in order to escalate the level and quality of services administered to these specific students (Odden, Goetz, & Picus, 2008). It takes a village to raise a literate child. Families can make a difference. Teachers can make a difference. Community programs can make a difference. Parents, teachers, caregivers, and members of the community are all part of the village that can help support children in learning to read.

A University Literacy Festival

A literacy festival is one of the most effective ways to celebrate literacy; and it cultivates the idea that reading books makes a difference, especially to students in Title I schools. A literacy festival featuring a variety of diverse authors presenting hands-on workshops showcasing their literary craft enables students from Title I schools to engage with the authors and to see themselves as writers and illustrators. Teacher candidates engaged in delivering literacy lessons can motivate students from diverse backgrounds to develop an excitement for reading and enhance their self-efficacy and desire to become life-long readers, ideally benefitting both the community and the teacher candidate.

This paper will explore at how a university's literacy festival impacted participating students from surrounding Title I schools and how it impacted teacher candidates. It will describe the implementation of an effective community partnership that provided teacher candidates with the opportunity to apply best practices in literacy instruction with students from diverse needs and backgrounds.

Community Outreach

The vision of a university literacy festival was devised from a desire to excite and incite a love for reading in students from Title 1 schools and to provide teacher candidates with the opportunity to implement best practices in literacy instruction with students from diverse needs and backgrounds. Five districts surrounding a state university had schools designated as Title 1 schools. A committee consisting of five teacher educators, one staff member, and several teacher candidate representatives from the university's College of Education (COE) rallied together to establish an annual COE Literacy Festival. Responsibilities of the committee involved communicating with the five local districts, attending continuous meetings throughout the school year, establishing a date for the literacy festival, attaining funding, researching local and national children's literature authors to invite, organizing the schedule and activities, traveling to numerous Title I schools to deliver books to children attending the literacy festival, and visiting with the

participating students and teachers to familiarize them with each participating author. Each year, the COE Literacy Festival Committee provides a free book from one of the featured children's authors to students from the surrounding Title I schools attending the festival. By the fourth year, the festival featured 17 children's and young adult authors and provided a free book to approximately 2,275 students attending Title I schools.

Diversity in Children's Books

The immediate task of the committee was to research a variety of children's literature authors who focused their work on diversity in order provide a venue that presented authors relevant to the invited community. Children's books are like mirrors where children can reflect on their own lives and they are also windows where children can learn about the lives of others (Persaud, 2013). Children's literature is now approximately twice as diverse as it was in 2012 according to the University of Wisconsin-Madison's Cooperative Children's Book Center (CCBC) (Colyard, 2016). By centralizing on diverse children's literature, authors would allow students from Title I schools in the local five districts to see themselves reflected in stories and also learn about other cultures. Books containing diverse casts of characters that emphasized empathy, fairness, and empowerment through words and pictures were reviewed.

Field Experience

Field experiences through service learning are a means through which teacher candidates can apply their literacy intervention knowledge, teaching skill, and principles of differentiated instruction with diverse learners. Throughout this process, teacher candidates are encouraged to think critically about how they can have a positive impact on students of diversity in their community. In addition, they are encouraged to reflect on the impact of that experience, not only in terms of the P12 students who are the recipients of that service, but also how the experience transformed them as a learner. Previous studies on service learning have used teacher candidates' self- reflections to show positive correlations between the use of service-learning and candidates' acquisition of academic knowledge and learning (Cohen & Kinsey, 1994; Eyler, Giles, & Gray, 1999; Gray, Ondaatje, Fricker, & Geschwind, 2000; McKenna & Rizzo, 1999). Research also clearly demonstrated that service-learning had a strong effect on teacher candidates' self-esteem, confidence in social skills, increased sense of social responsibility, and sense of connectedness to their community (Eyler, Giles, & Gray, 1999). Eyler, Giles, and Gray (1999) found that the quality of the service-learning placement, structured reflection opportunities, and the intensity and duration of the community service component could affect student outcomes. An effective service learning opportunity must not only meet the needs of the teacher candidates, but it must also meet the needs of the community.

The College of Education Literacy Festival

The annual COE Literacy Festival is located on the center library lawn of the university. Each student from a Title I school in the five area counties that participated in the COE Literacy Festival received a free book from a featured children's author prior to their arrival on campus. This allows time for COE teacher candidates to visit schools to integrate the books across the disciplines, time for students to read the books, and time to study the authors and their literary crafts. The festival was located on the library lawn in the center of the university campus. Tables surrounded the area for author book signings where each student had the opportunity to have their book signed by the corresponding author. Nearby buildings were utilized for author interactive sessions. A pavilion offered an outdoor space for a storyteller performer. In order to fulfill their field experience requirements, the College of Education teacher candidates had designated areas around the library lawn to deliver their read-alouds and literacy activities as well as STREAM activities with small groups of students from Title I schools throughout the day. A digital literacy session was also available for students to attend.

Service to the Community

The university's COE Literacy Festival focused on diversity in children's literature. The central target population was a diverse group of students from Title 1 schools in five local districts, in conjunction with opening the literacy festival to the community. Several teacher educators from the COE Literacy Festival Committee delivered books to each designated Title I school two months before the event. Teacher educators and the College of Education teacher candidates had the unique opportunity to reach out to students by visiting selected classrooms to inform students of the visiting children's literature authors. These classrooms perused the authors' websites, book trailers, author interviews, and other published books from the invited authors. Several teachers conducted read-alouds from the authors' literature books that were delivered to their students. Other teachers utilized paired readings of the authors' books, and other teachers committed time to their students to read the books independently while following up with small group and whole class discussions.

During the festival, students and teachers from the selected Title I schools participated in authors' workshops and book signings. The workshops were engaging and interactive with the authors sharing their literary craft and their own life experiences that became inspirations for their stories. Teacher candidates were given time before and after the students arrived to visit with the authors, ask questions, and gain insight into the art of writing and illustrating children's books.

Service to the Teacher Candidate

The COE Literacy Festival provided an exclusive opportunity for over 120 College of Education literacy students to participate in a service-learning field experience. Service-learning field experience revolves around experiential education where learning occurs through action and reflection as students seek to accomplish authentic objectives for the community and involves a deeper understanding of essential life skills (Wolpert-Gawron, 2016). This experience required candidates to interact with students from Title I schools by engaging them in read-alouds with hands-on, meaningful literacy activities. The purpose of the read-aloud with inclusive literacy activities was to prompt teacher candidates to select high quality children's books, create an opportunity for teacher candidates to make connections between literature and engaging students with a text, and give teacher candidates ownership and control over literacy activities. They were required to develop appropriate strategies to extend the book chosen for their read-aloud and to encourage students to think critically. The goal of the festival was to connect the teacher candidates and the community and to make the literacy world accessible to everyone by celebrating the importance of reading.

In order to accomplish this goal, candidates were required to provide quality activities that would promote and encourage lifelong reading and build continuing partnerships with local districts and community. The objective for each teacher candidate was to choose diverse books to read aloud and to encourage and motivate children to love literature. The teacher candidates worked in groups of three to create and deliver a read-aloud lesson. Every group researched and chose a children's book to read aloud, developed a detailed plan on how they would introduce and read the book, such as what questions they would ask before, during, and after reading, and constructed comprehensive literacies activities that would extend the book and motivate students. Their study of children's literature involved critical literacy and analysis of texts that encompassed cultured uses of language and literary techniques used by authors to capture the human experience. Analyzing text from differing viewpoints, the teacher candidates utilized inclusive literacy strategies including prediction, clarifying, drawing inferences, and visualizing. Teacher candidates were required to have students question and examine story structure leading to discussions revolving around author's purpose, identifying the central issue, and analyzing characters' emotional responses and viewpoints in an effort for students to inquire into questions involving purpose and meaning in their own lives. After delivering the lesson at this literacy festival, the teacher candidates wrote a reflection on their experience, concentrating specifically on their impact on students from Title I schools.

On the day of the COE Literacy Festival, a group of teacher candidates from the Honors Program shadowed the participating children's literature authors during their interactive workshops and book signings. This opportunity gave these future teachers insight into the tools and techniques of the authors' language and storytelling used to craft their books.

The College of Education teacher candidates are central to the university's partnerships within the community. This service-learning field experience presented

opportunities for teacher candidates to combine classroom pedagogy with community action. Teacher candidates were able to embed abstract classroom concepts into concrete form in order to increase students' critical thinking and engagement in reading. There was not only a service provided to the community, but academic learning was strengthened in the teacher candidates' learning; and civic and social responsibility for the community was advanced.

Methods and/or Techniques

A longitudinal research study was conducted regarding perceptions of a university literacy festival from participating children's authors, librarians, teachers, teacher candidates, and selected focus students throughout the semester. This inquiry was framed as a longitudinal qualitative case study covering four annual literacy festivals, examining the efficacy of a university's literacy festival in supporting engagement in reading and increased reading attitudes and habits for students in Title I schools. The research questions were:

> In what ways does a university's literacy festival support engagement in reading and increase reading attitudes and habits for students in Title I schools?
> What are the perceived benefits of a university's literacy festival for COE teacher candidates, librarians, teachers, and students from Title I schools?
> In what ways are the authors affected by a university's literacy festival?

Data Sources

Data included electronic and hard copy survey responses from open-ended questions (n=5) and included six informal interviews, eight video interviews, and 14 quick-writes conducted with authors, librarians, teachers, teacher candidates and selected focus groups of students throughout four years. The data were analyzed for themes and clusters of meaning to capture the essence of the participants' experiences. Data analysis of participants' statements, as well as emerging themes were analyzed by highlighting significant statements from participants, and valuing each response; these statements were then organized into clusters of meaning or themes (Creswell, 2013). Data were coded using and inductive process beginning with open codes which were then put into themes and categories that became broader through analysis (Creswell, 2013). Data were reduced through iterative rounds of examination in which codes were grouped into categories and then into themes.

Librarians

Librarians in the schools that participated in the COE Literacy Festival noted that circulation numbers were quite low and that the libraries were rarely used to find books to read for pleasure prior to the delivery of books from author's

participating in the literacy festival. In addition to teacher educators and the College of Education teacher candidates visiting classrooms to deliver books and promote the authors participating in the literacy festival, the librarians from Title I schools met with classrooms scheduled to attend the COE Literacy Festival to further study the authors and their writing process. They read aloud passages from the authors' books to engage students, displayed books that were available from the authors in the schools' libraries, and made them available for students to check out. Three librarians showcased the visiting authors through displays featuring photographs and interesting facts on bookshelves located in the libraries. Most librarians made sure the books published from the authors participating in the festival were located in plain view for students to find easily when entering the library. One librarian even held a book club after school for students interested in discussing the books they were reading for the COE Literacy Festival. She expressed her joy over the students attending the book club and shared that excitement about the books was contagious. Overall, the librarians expressed that there was an increase in books checked out from both the participating authors' books as well as other books during the months that led up to the literacy festival. They also shared that there was even a "buzz" or excitement in the schools about meeting the authors of the books they were reading.

Teachers

The majority of teachers from the Title I schools who attended the literacy festival stated that they spent time with their students reading the authors' books and designing higher-level, critical thinking strategies. They also reported that they spent time studying how authors use tools and techniques of language and storytelling to craft a piece of writing with narrative elements and literary devices. One teacher emphasized that her students' discussions not only focused around tolerance but also broadened to respecting and understanding all of the different cultures in their community. Another teacher confessed that after witnessing her own students remarkably engaged in the diverse children's books given to her class for the COE Literacy Festival, she took a second look at her own classroom library and realized that she needed to include many more books that reflected and honored the lives of her students.

Several teachers surveyed mentioned how the read-alouds built on important foundational skills by introducing vocabulary, providing a model of fluency and expressive reading, and helped students recognize what reading for pleasure was all about. These teachers expressed the desire to include more read-alouds in their own classrooms to not only support the development of reading and writing skills but to also build on their knowledge about the world and their place in it. Teachers also mentioned their gratitude toward the authors offering continuous interactions with their students through social media in the form of blogs, Skype, Facebook, Twitter, writing clubs, and other online sources. Through the process of engaging with the children's literature authors, all teachers agreed that their students came to see themselves as writers and expressed a desire to share their thoughts with others

with great enthusiasm. This enthusiasm has been shown to foster a lifetime of reading (Clark & Douglas, 2011).

Authors

Children's and middle school authors were selected based on their books where strong, diverse characters would give the opportunity for students from Title I schools to see themselves and their culture. Each author was video-interviewed to share the impact their books have on students of Title I schools and the benefits of participating in the COE Literacy Festival. Three authors describe their experience.

Sharon Flake, author of *Unstoppable Octobia May* and *The Skin I'm In*, described that most of her books revolve around life in the inner city since she, herself, grew up in the inner city (Flake, 2015; 2018). It is her home and what she knows. Sharon feels as though people who live in the inner city are not fully understood or appreciated. She wants her readers to know that you don't always know someone until you are willing to get in the skin they are in. However, she stresses that every story is worth telling and hearing, and that every person has a voice.

Kentrell Martin, author of *Shelly Adventures* books, wishes to help embrace the gap between the deaf and the hearing world. He feels the best people to reach are children so as they grow older they are the generation that can help start be a part of that change. David and Marni Martinez write a series books titled *Signamalz* that teaches sign language to children. Their focus is to help children increase their communication with deaf hearing students. The three authors agree that if students are able to communicate better with each other that they would discover more commonalities than differences.

Sherri Winston is the author of *President of the Whole Sixth Grade*, *The Kayla Chronicles*, and *The Sweetest Sound* (Winston, 2016; 2009; 2018). She describes the benefits of participating in the COE Literacy Festival. Sherri expresses that not only do students from Title I schools get to visit and talk to authors, they also have the opportunity to place their feet on a college campus. She knows from growing up in a neighborhood where 95% of children thought that going to college was like going to mars; it just wasn't done. Exploring a college campus throughout the COE Literacy Festival makes the students see that college is real and it is attainable.

College of Education Teacher Candidates

The purpose of this community partnership for the teacher candidates was to select high-quality children's books, create an opportunity for them to make connections between literature and student engagement with a text, and provide them with ownership and control over literacy activities and encourage them to develop appropriate strategies to extend the book for elementary students to think critically. This unique service-learning field experience granted the university's

College of Education teacher candidates the opportunity to administer best teaching practices in literacy instruction with students from diverse needs and backgrounds while serving the needs of their community. Through read-alouds with inclusive literacy activities and hearing about the authors' real-life experiences in their stories and writings, students from Title I schools gained a deeper appreciation of who they are and who the people are around them.

Analysis of reflections from teacher candidates revealed that most of the candidates self-identified as being more knowledgeable about students from Title I schools, felt more self-confident in the areas of positively contributing to the needs of the community, and expressed more excitement about teaching because of their experiences interacting with these students from diverse backgrounds. One teacher candidate shared the following:

> I enjoyed this experience because I had the opportunity to talk to one of the authors about her writing and what inspires her to write. It was great to hear how she is inspired by her dog and draws on her life experiences for her books. I think the most memorable part of this experience was the lengthy discussion I had with one of the fifth-grade teachers. She was talking to me about the daily challenges that her students carry with them, from difficult lives at home. They have a washer and dryer at the school so that the children can have clean clothing. She was going to be visiting a student in the hospital later that day. This boy's parents had neglected to take their son for medical services for sickle-cell anemia, arranged at no cost, even after their daughter had died from the blood disorder…She described the dual role she plays most days—not just as a teacher, but a parent as well. She was incredible, and I made sure to tell her! The most important lesson I learned from this experience is that being welcoming, comforting, and accepting makes such a difference. It is what gives us the opportunity to connect with students. They are willing to listen and engage when you make the effort to ask and not to just tell. It was a pleasure to work with my group members, and we worked well as a team. Sharing the experience with my peers allowed us to provide each other with support and feedback!

The teacher candidates collaborated, incorporating successful strategies for teaching reading, and discovered the importance of reading for enjoyment and learning while delivering read-alouds and interacting with students from Title I schools. The read-alouds with inclusive literacy activities centered around encouraging students to reflect on their own individual cultures and histories, their backgrounds, and their values in hopes that they would begin to broaden their perspective and recognize diversity in backgrounds and beliefs. In another example, a teacher candidate voiced her opinion:

> At the literacy festival, I felt this energy that is so characteristic of kids. The enthusiasm they had because they were discovering new things at every corner changed the air of the place very quickly. One of the teachers even said to me that her students had become really excited from the moment they had seen the entrance of the university… Even when this was my first time reading aloud, I understood the importance of having experience in the field from the beginning. I was not perfect by any means, and as I look back, I find many things that I need to improve, but this is a necessary step that I need to take so that I can become more competent as a teacher.

The teacher candidates recognized that choosing authentic children's books was a powerful means to help children understand their homes, communities, and the world. They stated that knowing their community was of the utmost importance to constructing inclusive, multicultural activities that reflected the backgrounds and experiences of the students participating in the COE Literacy Festival. The targeted goal was to allow teacher candidates to critically think about and analyze information while becoming actively involved in the learning process. Some teacher candidates needed to modify some teaching techniques in order to increase the success and effectiveness of their activities to meet the needs of their students. In general, teacher candidates stated that they constructed open-ended questions to foster a feeling of emotional safety by respecting every student's opinion and encouraging all students to be respectful of one another.

Students from Title I Schools

At the COE Literacy Festival, students of Title I schools had the opportunity to listen to children's literature authors read aloud their books, as well as observe the College of Education teacher candidates implement read-alouds with literacy activities at a university campus. Students enthusiastically expressed their own life experiences and soon came to see themselves as writers and readers through the interactions with the children's literature authors and the College of Education teacher candidates. One student expressed:

> My mom goes to this university, but I did not know this is what it looked like! I am so proud of her! I need to find my author to sign my book. This is the first book I ever read on my own! It is like he grew up in my town! I have so many questions to ask him!

The students were excited by the opportunity to meet authors through book signings and workshops and shared that the experience made the authors themselves accessible and real to them. They expressed that during the author's workshops and book signings, the authors became relevant and were less intimidated by the reading and writing process. They felt that they were able to discover the ideas behind books and could identify with the authors' stories of struggles. They were enlightened to the joys of writing and publishing. The students discovered that authors were ordinary people, that writing was rarely easy, and that the only thing stopping them from writing was perseverance. A student in middle school voiced:

> Our author worked with us on our own stories today! She told me that I have a good story for others to hear and learn from. I am excited to share about the story of my brother and am amazed that I can help people just by them reading my story.

Challenges

Even though the literacy festival was a one-day event, the preparation was continuous throughout the year and involved invitations of authors and schools, scheduling, buying and delivering books to students, school visits to the local districts from our COE students and faculty in order to promote literacy through the authors' books and websites, and preparation of COE students in creating and delivering read-aloud lessons with activities and ongoing research. Two internal grants and an outside sponsor were obtained from the university in order to provide books and cover the cost of authors' honorariums.

The reflections provided insight into the effectiveness of literacy festival to both the teacher candidates and the community, and also offered insight into how the service-learning field experience could be improved. As a result, schedules for teacher candidates' arrival times will be adjusted to anticipate late bus arrivals and campus logistics.

Conclusions

Literacy is the foundation of an effective society and a university's literacy festival can support engagement and increase reading attitudes and habits for students of Title I schools. A literacy festival is one of the most effective ways to promote reading and fosters the idea that books make a difference, especially to under-supported students. Students from Title 1 schools are typically students that are low-achieving, come from the communities highest-poverty schools, are of limited English proficiency, are migratory, and most often are young children in need of reading assistance (U.S. Department of Education, 2004).

The goal of the COE Literacy Festival was to invite diverse children's literature authors that would create self-worth within students and allow them to connect with themselves and their culture through literature on a deeper level. The librarians of the participating schools took advantage of the opportunity to entice students to the library through the author displays, easy access to authors' books, read-alouds, and an after-school book club. Such hype helped create a buzz among the students, creating more traffic in the libraries; consequently, increasing the circulation of books.

The findings of this study suggest that a university literacy festival helps connect children with books, which can help promote a lifelong love of reading and writing. In addition to the children's literature authors' workshops and book signings at the COE Literacy Festival, students had the opportunity to visit numerous read-aloud and literacy activities implemented by the teacher candidates. This gave the teachers of Title I schools the opportunity to observe the importance of read-alouds with inclusive literacy strategies and motivated them to implement them in their own classrooms.

This university literacy festival made a positive impact in the area of book promotion and engagement in reading and found an increase in reading from students from Title I schools that attended the event. Working with the community

to create a literacy festival can help connect children with books which can help promote a lifelong love of reading and writing. Perceptions from teacher candidates indicated that the COE Literacy Festival made them feel as though they made a worthwhile contribution to the community. Teacher candidates learned to work with classmates, share ideas, and teach together as they planned lessons as part of a team. They indicated through their reflections that they enjoyed working with diverse students and that the experience was helpful as they prepared for their teaching career. The teacher educators and teacher candidates quickly discovered that the more they familiarized themselves with the community and the students that were attending, the deeper, more meaningful, and relevant their experience were.

As a university seeks to prepare educators to positively impact their community, teacher candidates must participate in that community. Participation in effective service-learning field experiences can ensure that candidates learn the needs, challenges, and opportunities of working in settings with students from diverse backgrounds. To prepare future teachers to mature into educators who can effectively engage and positively affect the world, they need to be given the opportunity to take risks, to understand the needs of the community, and how to effectively meet those needs in order to improve the quality of life in the community. A literacy festival can address and meet those needs. It takes a village of parents, teachers, caregivers, and members of the community to help support children in learning to read. It takes a village to ignite that passion of reading for a lifetime.

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On how RE Teachers Address the Sometimes Conflicting Tasks of Conveying Fundamental Values and Facilitating Critical Thinking

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Teachers in the non-confessional Swedish subject religious education have conflicting responsibilities to convey values and facilitate critical thinking. The research regarding these responsibilities has often been considered a theoretical problem and the discussion has concerned theoretical solutions. However, the problem is not only theoretical. It is in fact also a practical problem that many teachers frequently encounter. The overall aim of this paper is thus to draw attention to these conflicting responsibilities as a practical problem that teachers face and are expected to solve in their pedagogical practices. In line with this aim, a number of qualitative research interviews were conducted with experienced religious education teachers, who are considered to have a particular responsibility for moral education in the Swedish school system. The purpose of the interviews was to investigate how they relate to their sometimes conflicting responsibilities and consequently make an empirically informed contribution to the debate. This is an important task since there are no official guidelines on how teachers are to balance these responsibilities in their pedagogical practices.

Keywords: moral education, paradox of moral education, religious education, controversial issues, ethics.

Introduction

A recurring idea, among practitioners and researchers, is that "teaching is an activity in which moral issues arise inevitably" (O'Hear, 1998, p. 14; see also: Hansen, 2001; Bullough, 2011; Campbell, 2013). Some, like Jackson, Boostrom and Hansen (1993), have even stated that "all that can be seen and heard in classrooms" (p. 43) can be of moral significance, including "events, actions and even aspects of the physical environment" (p. 2). Yet, they often seem to be divided on how teachers ought to treat ideals, norms and values in their pedagogical practices.

The educational philosopher Peters (1998) has articulated what can be interpreted as one reason for the disagreements concerning moral education as follows: "On the one hand there is an emphasis on habit, tradition and being properly brought up; on the other hand there is an emphasis on intellectual training, and on the development of critical thought and choice" (p. 27). This indicates that teachers are expected to balance different roles, as conveyers of values and facilitators of critical thinking, with conflicting educational aims: that the pupils should become eligible democratic citizens and independent rational

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individuals. At the same time teachers should avoid being authoritarian or indoctrinating children. Moreover, there is no prevailing consensus concerning if any normative theory is correct and in that case which it would be (O'Hear, 1998, p. 15; Hand, 2014, p. 521). Thus, moral and ethics education can be considered controversial issues, as Hirst and White (1998) put it, not only because they concern "contested areas in philosophy" but also because of continuing "disagreement over their possible aims" and "the considerable debate over these" (p. 2).

The conflicting responsibilities to convey values and facilitate critical thinking has often been considered a theoretical problem and the discussion has concerned theoretical solutions (e.g., Peters, 1998, pp. 38-39; Gardener, 1981, p. 65; Gardener, 1985; O'Hear, 1998). However, the problem is not only theoretical. As will be elaborated below, it is in fact a real practical problem that many teachers frequently encounter. The overall aim of this paper is thus to draw attention to the conflicting responsibilities as a practical problem that teachers face and are expected to solve in their pedagogical practices. In line with this aim, a number of qualitative research interviews were conducted with experienced religious education (RE) teachers, who are considered to have a particular responsibility for moral education in the Swedish school system (Almén, Furenhed, Hartman, & Skogar 2000; Hartman, 2008; Larsson, 2009; Franck & Löfstedt, 2015)[1]. The purpose of the interviews was to investigate how they relate to their conflicting responsibilities and consequently make an empirically informed contribution to the debate. This is an important task since there are no official guidelines on how teachers are to balance these responsibilities in their pedagogical practices.

The Paradox of Moral Education

The conflicting responsibilities teachers frequently face, of conveying values and facilitating critical thinking, is one of several related problems that educational philosophers sometimes refer to as *the paradox of moral education* (see for example, Gardener, 1981, p. 65; Aristotle, 1977, p. 635; Aristotle, 1982, p. 629-835; Taylor, 1982, p. 1; Kristjánsson, 2006, p. 102; Curren, 2014, p. 485). Influential educational philosophers have related to these problems in several different ways. Some have focused on the psychological aspect of the paradox and discussed how it is possible to develop individuals to behave rationally from an age where they are incapable to do that (Peters, 1998, p. 32). Others have focused on the moral aspect of the paradox, considering the conflicting responsibilities, which is the point of departure for this study (O'Hear, 1998, p. 15). There are several recurring perspectives in the literature on how to solve the paradox which, in this context, can be divided in three broad approaches to moral education.

(1) Some argue that teachers should lead by example and thereby help their pupils to form good habits and develop desirable character traits e.g., "integrity, patience, tolerance, honesty, courtesy, reliability, considerateness, [and] good will"

[1]In the Swedish school system, religious education is a non-confessional subject (SNAE, 2011).

(Carr, 1983, p. 48). This is often combined with an emphasis on the ability to respond emotionally to others as a part of a social group which is characteristic of a character-based approach (see for example, Aristotle, 1982, pp. 111-115; Kristjánsson, 2006, p. 104; Curren, 2010, p. 488; Carr, 2015, p. 430, p. 444). Instead of considering moral education only as an exercise of rational thinking to reach justified decisions, where it is hard to establish if and how they are translated into action, teachers should concentrate on their pupils' moral growth and personal maturity (see Carr, 1983, pp. 45-50; Carr, 1996, p. 355; Carr, 2007, pp. 369-373)[2].

(2) Others claim that teachers should challenge their pupils with moral dilemmas on a level above their ability and thereby contribute to their capacity to reason and develop cognitively (Kohlberg, 1966, p. 24). Another alternative is, for instance, that the teacher asks the pupils questions and follows up their responses, in order to unveil the principles on which they base their judgements (Surprenant, 2010, p. 170). This is often combined with an emphasis on the capability to think rationally in order to become autonomous individuals, which is characteristic of a reason-based approach (Kohlberg, 1966, p. 17; Surprenant, 2010, p. 172). Instead of considering moral education as habituation, which is regarded as ineffective and involves a risk of indoctrination, teachers should concentrate on pupils rational thinking in order to facilitate their cognitive development into autonomous adults (Kohlberg, 1966, pp. 3, 14; see also Surprenant, 2010, pp. 169-174).

(3) Yet others argue that the division between habit and rational thinking has been overemphasized in the current debate. According to this view it may even be necessary to form habits (e.g., of giving reasons) in order to intellectually understand how and why it is desirable to develop certain character traits, which is characteristic of an integrated approach of moral education (see for example, Aristotle, 1982, pp. 75-79; Peters, 1998, pp. 34-37; Carr & Steutel, 1999, p. 249; Kristjánsson, 2006, p. 120; Curren, 2014, p. 496; Carr, 2015, p. 444; Kristjánsson, 2015, pp. 90-103). Some take the argument even one step further and suggest that it is possible to use art or literature in order to develop habits of thought, as for instance an attention to others as human beings, which can evoke compassion or sympathy that contributes to our moral awareness and autonomy (O'Hear, 1998, pp. 22-26; see also Murdoch, 2001, pp. 84-85; Nussbaum, 1992, p. 84). In other words, teachers should concentrate on the pupils' habituation in a social community in order to facilitate individuation, autonomy and critical thinking.

A short presentation of previous research inevitably leaves out some details, complexities and variations. However, these approaches to moral education represent various interpretations of teachers' responsibilities which can contribute to competing solutions of the paradox of moral education. What most of the alternatives have in common is that they, as Peters (1998) put it, try to "resolve the theoretical paradox of moral education in a theoretical manner" (p. 39). This is however only one part of the problem. According to the Swedish Education Act (2010:800, 4 §) and the Curriculum for the Upper Secondary School in Sweden (SNAE, 2013), all teachers in the Swedish education system are expected to

[2]Proponents of this view often use a combination of arguments in order to solve the paradox of moral education and can show tendencies towards an integrated or eclectic approach to moral education.

convey a set of fundamental values, in order to form the pupils into democratic citizens: "Each and everyone working in the school should… encourage respect for the intrinsic value of each person and the environment we all share. […] In accordance with the ethics borne by Christian tradition and Western humanism, this is to be achieved by nurturing in the individual, a sense of justice, generosity, tolerance and responsibility" (p. 4). In addition to this, RE teachers have a responsibility to contribute to the pupils' ability to "use ethical concepts, ethical theories and models" and facilitate "critical thinking" (SNAE, 2011, p. 137). This makes the paradox of moral education into a practical problem that teachers face. An overview of previous research can, which we will see later, have heuristic value when analysing an empirical material (see for example, Haydon 2010, p. 174)[3].

Methodology

In order to investigate how RE teachers relate to the conflicting responsibilities to convey a set of fundamental values and contribute to the pupils' abilities to critically examine ideals, norms and values, a series of qualitative research interviews were conducted. The participants were seven licenced RE teachers with 9–32 years of experience in the profession (Teacher 1–7). The teachers who took part in the interviews were briefed about the general purpose of the study and invited to participate voluntarily under the condition that they could discontinue at any time. They were informed, verbally and in writing, that their answers would be anonymized, treated as confidential, and used for research purposes only. During the study no personal data were stored and no questions of a sensitive character were posed, e.g., concerning political, philosophical or religious conviction. The interviews were carried out at the schools where the teachers work and at two occasions at Umeå University. In this way the study was designed to ensure compliance to the general research ethical principles of informed consent, anonymity, confidentiality and precautious use of collected information (Swedish Research Council, 2017). The project was approved by the Swedish Ethical Review Authority.

The interviews were conducted using a protocol with open-ended questions on three overarching themes of how the RE teachers: (1) convey ideals, norms and values to their pupils, (2) contribute to their development of critical thinking and (3) handle situations in which these responsibilities conflict with each other. In addition to these themes supplementary questions were asked in order to get fuller descriptions of how the RE teachers relate to the responsibilities and they were encouraged to illustrate with examples from their pedagogical practices (see Yin, 1994; Kvale, 2007; Bryman, 2008). All of the interviews were audio-recorded and

[3]Some researchers even acknowledge the difficulty of using one of these perspectives to understand the complexities of moral life and propose an eclectic approach to moral education where elements from several different theories are allowed to coexist (see Haydon, 2010, p. 186; Peters, 1998, p. 37).

transcribed in order to enable further analysis and serve as a background to our upcoming discussion (see Kvale, 2007, pp. 92-97).

In this investigation the different approaches to moral education, which were introduced in the background, are used as analytical tools in order to categorize how the RE teachers relate to the sometimes conflicting responsibilities to mediate fundamental values and contribute to the pupils' abilities to critically examine ideals, norms and values (see Yin, 1994, p. 103). The intention is to apply the model in a context-sensitive manner to give a fair representation of the answers from the interviews. At the same time, it is vital to be open to alternative interpretations of the material, if that proves to be necessary. It is also important to emphasize that the distinctions between different ways of relating to the normative dimensions of teaching are not used in order to determine a correct position. The purpose of this study is rather to give an empirically informed contribution to this ongoing debate.

How RE Teachers Balance the Conflicting Responsibilities

Analyses of the interviews with the teachers, on how they relate to the conflicting responsibilities to convey and critically examine values, reveal a shared understanding of the subject religious education. All of the teachers who participated in the study expressed that ideals, norms, and values are essential to the study of religion. Yet, there are differences in how the teachers relate to these in their pedagogical practices:

> That aspect, tolerance, is what led me to education… to be able to work for a better society where everyone has equal value. This is also a reason why I chose to become a RE teacher, because it is so apparent, it becomes clear within this context [that everyone is not included or considered to have the same value]. (Teacher 4)

> It is the character of the subject… We have to assess everything critically… I want to reach a point where they [the pupils] think for themselves. I cannot tell them what is right or wrong, which opinion to have, or what to think. (Teacher 2)

> I would say that, the subject religious education, is about the function of ideals, norms and values in society. I consider morality, ethics, and fundamental values as the core element of religious education. It is what religion actually is all about. (Teacher 5)

One interpretation of these statements is that some teachers emphasize the importance of conveying a set of democratic values to their pupils. Others focus on developing their ability to think critically about ideals, norms, and values. Still others may try to make some form of combination of both as a part of their pedagogical practices. This pattern becomes even more evident in a continued analysis of the empirical material, as we will see, where the participants tend to embrace different approaches to moral education. It is important to note that these teachers' ways of balancing their roles, as conveyers of value and facilitators of

critical thinking, reflect what previously was labelled character-based, reason-based, and integrative approaches to moral education, respectively.

Teachers with a Character-Based Approach to Moral Education

Some of the teachers who participated in the study emphasize the importance of leading by example in order to convey certain values to the pupils. One teacher notes, for instance, that she wants the pupils to "respect other people's faiths… and values" and that "tolerance and respect have to be interwoven as an integrated part of the education" (Teacher 4). Another teacher expresses that "my main task, considering the cultural norms and values, is to convey the golden rule, to do unto others as you would have them do unto you" (Teacher 7). Still another teacher elaborates on a similar point:

> I want to convey that we live in a society that rests on a set of common values. These are the values we have agreed upon and that does not mean that everybody agrees with them… I am an important role model, as a grownup, in this regard… to show the pupils how to act to one another in order to make a group or a society work. (Teacher 6)

What the teachers seem to express, is a wish to contribute to their pupils' sense of the values stated in the curriculum, as a part of the process to foster democratic citizens. This is similar to what previously has been labelled a character-based approach to moral education.

The teachers who emphasize the importance of conveying fundamental values also express that they deliberately try to support their pupils in developing an understanding of themselves as a part of a social, cultural and historical context (Teacher 4, Teacher 6). "It is all about understanding what kind of world this is… where we come from and why we behave as we do. It is about understanding oneself… [in order to] understand others…" (Teacher 6). An important objective of moral education is therefore to give the pupils an opportunity to gain critical awareness of their own values, from a national and international perspective, to be able to understand other people and respond to them with empathy or sympathy in a society characterized by increased diversity (Teacher 4, Teacher 6).

The teachers who embrace this approach to moral education do not consider the responsibilities to convey and critically examine values to conflict with each other in the education. In the interviews they give isolated examples of pupils who express sceptical or extreme points of view and question the fundamental values of the curriculum. One teacher describes an encounter with a sceptical pupil. "I was … working in a project last year about human rights… [One of the pupils] was critical to us addressing this kind of question at all… and to the school system as such" (Teacher 6). Another teacher elaborates on a similar incident: "Of course, it is not amusing, when you have just come back from a visit to Auschwitz, to meet a pupil who questions whether it is possible to burn that many people in an oven" (Teacher 4).

It is illustrative that these examples represent occasions when pupils have questioned the values that are stated in the curriculum and are supposed to be

conveyed in the education. It is clear that the teachers consider these events as exceptions and to critically assess such values is not something which is imbedded in their function as RE teachers. An interesting feature is that the teachers who emphasize the importance of conveying fundamental values share a scepticism of the analytical tools provided by ethical theory. One of the teachers describes ethical theory as "a little bit rigid" (Teacher 4) and another as "static and hard for the pupils to understand" (Teacher 6). It is possible to interpret the teachers' interest to lead by example, convey values and facilitate the pupils' self-understanding in a social, cultural and historical context, as an expression of a character-based approach to moral education.

Teachers with a Reason-Based Approach to Moral Education

Other teachers who participated in the study emphasize the pupils' ability to think critically, make independent judgements, and justify them to others as an important point of departure for moral education. One of the teachers expresses that the abilities "to question sources" and "view things from different perspectives" are most important in a society characterized by information technology and multiculturalism (Teacher 2). Another teacher stresses that it is important that pupils not only express their own opinions but are aware of "when they are challenging norms" and are capable of "providing reasons for their positions" (Teacher 3). This is similar to what previously has been labelled a reason-based approach to moral education.

One of the teachers describes how he uses examples of conflicting rights, to challenge the pupils, as an integrated part of religious education (Teacher 3). This also provides an opportunity to critically assess, for instance, the religious use of the veil in relation to personal integrity and freedom of religion:

> The assignments I have constructed, at the moment, are focused on rights. The purpose of my teaching is that they [the pupils] shall understand that… [rights] are supposed to protect the weak and vulnerable [in society]. That the ones who cannot make their voices heard themselves, can be heard through the human rights. This is something which have to be considered when reflecting on, for instance, the rights of the child or parent in relation to a given religious activity… or ethical considerations in general. (Teacher 3)

In this case, the teacher explains how he uses examples, which involves conflicting rights, to challenge the pupils to think critically, make their own judgements, and justify them to others, as a part of the pedagogical practice.

In order to be able to critically assess dilemmas of conflicting rights and responsibilities the pupils need to be familiar with certain analytical frameworks provided by ethical theory. It is not, according to this teacher, necessary to use classical distinctions of deontology, consequentialism and virtue ethics, but some basic notions are needed to characterize various arguments or positions (Teacher 3). This enables the pupils to become aware of several perspectives of responsibilities and rights and that "one person can use arguments from different traditions" (Teacher 3). It is important that the analysis results in a "critical assessment" and

an "autonomous decision" where the pupils are able to justify their conclusions (Teacher 3). Hence, the teacher challenges the pupils with dilemmas in order to facilitate their cognitive development into autonomous responsible adults, which is possible to interpret as an expression of a reason-based approach to moral education.

Teachers with an Integrated Approach to Moral Education

Yet other teachers seem to dissolve a strict division between conveying and critically examining norms and values as they describe their pedagogical practice. As noted above, these teachers consider it necessary to form habits in order to intellectually understand how and why it is desirable to develop certain character traits. This is similar to what previously has been labelled an integrated approach to moral education.

One of the teachers describe how he deliberately use art to raise existential questions regarding the human condition as an introduction to a conversation about the values prevalent in the cultural context and the values that unite all peoples and cultures:

> I introduce the course with Sally Mann's pictures of decaying human bodies during the first lesson. How do we, actually, view our existence? This is why death, as a theme, is always present as the basis of the course whether the pupils perceive it or not. In this individualist society everything is motivated in terms of its contribution to maximizing potential and status in existing hierarchies. Even if much is said about equality and power, there is basically an idea of maximizing the level of consumption, whether it is travel, or cars, or anything, really. Then it feels good to have virtue ethics… someone who reminds us of that there are things to work on. There is a humility to that. (Teacher 1)

The use of art is a way of letting go of one's self-centredness and develop a deeper understanding of other people and their points of view, which is necessary in order to think ethically (see for example, Murdoch, 2001, pp. 84-86; O'Hear, 1998, p. 24). Another teacher notes that discussions of well-chosen dilemmas, which relate to the pupils' everyday lives, can have a similar function (Teacher 5). They can contribute to recognizing that many dilemmas are a part of "the same underlying problem… which we need to address and to which religious education can contribute to a somewhat conscious ethical analysis" (Teacher 5). It is a way to start examining which values are prevalent in society and support the pupils to gain a critical understanding of themselves and their social, cultural and historical context. This will, in turn, pave way for questions of what really matters in life. For these particular teachers, this is considered as an expression for how they focus on "solidarity" (Teacher 5), "reciprocity" and "a sense of justice and empathy" as a part of "the normative guidelines" which "unite all religions" (Teacher 1, Teacher 5).

The approach, which these teacher express in their answers, does not exclude an introduction of ethical theories considered as analytical tools. One teacher explains how he tries to teach the pupils normative ethical theories and their

respective focus on character, actions and consequences (Teacher 1). Another teacher emphasizes that normative ethical theories can provide analytical tools which can be helpful to identify different lines of argument (Teacher 5). At the same time, it is important not to use theories in order to endorse in "intellectual games" but rather to understand what other people think is right (Teacher 5). It is possible to interpret this way to treat moral issues together with the pupils as an inclusive perspective; in this case, characterized by an attention to others as human beings which can evoke compassion or sympathy that contributes to our moral awareness and autonomy.

Discussion

In the introduction it was pointed out that teachers have conflicting responsibilities, to convey values and facilitate critical thinking, which has often been considered a theoretical problem and the discussion has concerned theoretical solutions (e.g., Peters, 1998, pp. 38-39; Gardener, 1981; Gardener, 1985; O'Hear, 1998). The overall aim of this paper has been to draw attention to the conflicting responsibilities as a practical problem that teachers face and are expected to solve in their pedagogical practices and consequently make an empirically informed contribution to this debate.

The results indicate that the RE teachers who participated in the study made different judgements on how to balance their roles, as conveyers of values *and* facilitators of critical thinking, with the corresponding conflicting educational aims, that the pupils should become eligible democratic citizens *and* independent rational individuals. It is important to emphasize that even if all teachers expressed that moral education is an essential part of the subject religious education, they described their priorities in different ways. An interpretation of the results is that the teachers preferred different solutions to the problem depending on what they regarded to be the principal aim of moral education in a way that reflects the philosophical debate, and their respective answers can accordingly be labelled character-based, reason-based, and integrative approaches to moral education.

In the Swedish school system, however, RE teachers have been considered to have a special responsibility for moral education, including conveying values and facilitating critical thinking (SNAE, 2011). Their priorities are not only an expression of individual preferences but have to be put in relation to the regulatory documents of the school system as such. The task of fostering democratic citizens is, for instance, stated in the Swedish Education Act (2010:800, 4 §) and further elaborated in the Curriculum for the upper secondary school under the heading "fundamental values" (SNAE, 2013, p. 4). It is only in the syllabus for RE that the task to facilitate the ability to "use ethical concepts, ethical theories and models" as well as exercise "critical thinking" is introduced (SNAE, 2011, p. 137).

If the regulatory documents are interpreted as a hierarchy, the Education Act takes precedence over the Curriculum for the upper secondary school and the syllabus for religious education, which means that the teachers' primary responsibility is to convey a set of democratic values. This seems to be the position

of the teachers in this study that choose to embrace a character-based approach to moral education. They express an interest to lead by example, convey values, and facilitate the pupils' self-understanding in a social, cultural and historical context. An interpretation would be that these teachers emphasize the task of conveying values at the expense of a critical assessment of ideals, norms and values.

The teachers in this study who choose to embrace a reason-based approach to moral education was of another opinion and articulated that they wanted to focus on facilitating critical examination of ideals, norms and values. From this point of view, the special responsibility RE teachers have for moral education in the Swedish school system, is stated in the syllabus as facilitating the pupils' ability to "use ethical concepts, ethical theories and models" as well as exercise "critical thinking". The teachers express that they wanted to challenge the pupils with dilemmas and aimed to assess everything critically in order to enable their development into autonomous and responsible adults. An interpretation would be that these teachers emphasize the task of critical assessment at the expense of conveying ideals, norms and values.

The teachers in this study who choose to embrace an integrated approach to moral education articulated a more pronounced ambition to balance the tasks to convey values and facilitate critical thinking in their pedagogical practices. An interpretation is that the teachers' use of art and authentic examples enables the pupils to let go of their self-centredness and develop a deeper understanding of themselves and other people in a social, historical and cultural context. It is important to convey certain values, e.g., "solidarity", "reciprocity" and "a feeling of justice and empathy", in order to be able to critically assess different kinds of secular and religious normative guidelines. In this way they explicitly try to balance the sometimes conflicting tasks of conveying and critically assessing values.

The different approaches to moral education provide important tools to interpret how teachers choose to manage the conflicting responsibilities, to convey values and to facilitate critical thinking, in their pedagogical practices. As we have seen, there are reasons to embrace any of these approaches to moral education, as each of them are compatible with various interpretations of the conflicting responsibilities, which are stated in the regulatory documents. A somewhat simplified description would be that the character based and reason based approach solves the paradox of moral education by emphasizing either the responsibility to convey values or the responsibility to facilitate critical thinking. The integrated approach is the only of these alternatives that provides a more pronounced way to address the difficulties of balancing both of these responsibilities. By addressing the paradox of moral education as a practical problem that teachers face and are expected to solve in their pedagogical practices we want to emphasize the urgency of this issue. Since there are no official guidelines of how to interpret which of these responsibilities should be given priority in any specific situation, it is important to raise the awareness of this problem.

As we have seen throughout this paper it is not obvious how to relate to the conflicting responsibilities of conveying values and facilitating critical thinking. Nevertheless, two main alternatives come to mind: either that the fundamental

values stated in the curriculum are discharged from any assessment, or to trust that these values can withstand thorough critical examination. Since the fundamental values of the curriculum are contingent and subject to political decisions, moral education can appear to be authoritarian and a source of indoctrination, in an educational system. Therefore, it is important that an educational system, built on a set of democratic values, can and will be subject to critical assessment. In this context, we believe that it is important that a critical examination is based on an understanding of ideals, norms and values and performed with appropriate analytical tools. If teachers let their pupils exercise critical thinking, they may develop a deeper understanding of the fundamental values, which can influence their convictions. Of the alternatives that have been subject of this study, the integrative approach to moral education seems to be the most apt candidate. As RE teachers have been considered to have a special responsibility for moral education in the Swedish school system, it seems to be of particular importance that they not only convey a set of democratic values but also fulfil the task of facilitating critical thinking and trust that the values hold – or otherwise endorse work for change within that framework.

Conclusion

In the beginning of this paper moral education was presented as an example of a controversial issue which has caused extensive debate in a contested area of philosophy (see Hirst & White, 1998, p. 2). This study indicates that the RE teachers who participated were balancing their roles, as conveyers of value and facilitators of critical thinking, in a way that reflects the theoretical debate. Their answers can be categorized as character-based, reason-based, and integrative approaches to moral education. This points towards the conclusion that moral education also can be considered as a controversial issue in a more practical sense. This is something which has not been accounted for in the previous debate. In this study we have argued for a practical solution of how to balance the conflicting responsibilities, and hence of the paradox of moral education in that respect.

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Being a Dyslectic in Norwegian Secondary School

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Dyslexia is a common learning difficulty. A The purpose of this study is to explore the experiences of young people with dyslexia in secondary school in a Norwegian context and provide insight that might be used to support the students. The research question for the study is as follows: What experiences do dyslectic students have in secondary school regarding their dyslexia? A phenomenological approach was adopted to explore dyslectic students' experiences. Purposive sampling was used to identify 4 young people who met the chosen criteria. The data-gathering tool was individual semi-structured interviews. The data were analysed through a thematic step-by-step analysis process. Four themes with several subthemes concerning the experiences of young people diagnosed with dyslexia emerged. Theme 1: Personal coping strategies related to schoolwork. Theme 2: Foreign language torment. Theme 3: Emotional impact. Theme 4: Struggling with educational support. A main finding of this study is the significance of teacher competence for students with dyslexia. The study has identified the need for teachers to understand the students' learning difficulty, provide alternative tasks and have competence in how to use software teaching aids to support pupils with dyslexia.

Keywords: adaptive teaching, dyslectic students, dyslexia, phenomenology, secondary education

Introduction

In Norway nearly all children aged 6-16 attend municipal public schools. Less than 4 per cent of pupils are enrolled in a private school. The compulsory education includes a primary level (grades 1-7, age 6 to 12) and a lower secondary level (grades 8-10, age 13 to 16). The Norwegian national curriculum emphasizes two central principles. One of them is about inclusion building based on the Salamanca Statement, which expresses that all pupils regardless of disabilities or learning difficulties are to have inclusive education to secure equal educational rights (UNESCO, 1994). All children shall attend their local school and be a member of an ordinary class. The other significant principle is about adaptive teaching. Teaching shall be individually adapted, which includes, if necessary, special education. Norwegian pupils are only supposed to receive special education when they do not benefit from the ordinary teaching. Special education is mostly a part time activity, and mainstreaming is the ideal (Haug, 2020). Sometimes different learning difficulties, behaviour problems or other challenges are detected and become so extensive that the pupils do not benefit from the ordinary teaching. In such cases the school psychological service carries out tests and analysis and writes an expert report about the pupil in question. It is based on this report the

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local school authorities make a formal individual decision concerning whether a pupil shall receive special education in any form and/or be provided different kinds of support and assistance.

Reading difficulties are among the most common learning difficulties that might lead to extra support in school. Proficiency in reading is a fundamental skill in today's society. Learning to read is one of the key outcomes of the first years in school. Children who have difficulties with reading begin to experience various failures early in their education, and if no support is provided, they might enter a downward spiral that leads to low educational attainment and subsequently poor employment prospects. There are different causes for reading difficulties such as, for example, a lack of schooling, poor teacher competence, mental or hearing impairment, and a series of other factors. One specific reading difficulty is dyslexia.

The aim of the current study is to explore the experiences of young people with dyslexia in secondary school in a Norwegian context via a phenomenological study that provides insight that might be used to support the students. The research question of the study is the following: What experiences do dyslectic students in secondary school have with regard to their dyslexia?

Literature Review

Dyslexia occurs worldwide irrespective of culture, gender or nationality. There is no universally agreed definition of dyslexia, and this makes it difficult to determine its true prevalence. However, the World Health Organization (WHO) considers dyslexia a developmental learning disorder with impairment in reading characterised by significant and persistent difficulties in learning academic skills related to reading, such as word reading accuracy, reading fluency, and reading comprehension. The WHO points out that dyslectic individuals' performance in reading is markedly below expectations for their chronological age and level of intellectual functioning. Moreover, this is not due to an intellectual development disorder, sensory impairment (vision or hearing), neurological disorder, lack of available education, lack of proficiency in the language of academic instruction, or psychosocial adversity (WHO, 2018).

The term dyslexia thus describes a learning difficulty that is characterized by difficulties in accurate word recognition, spelling and decoding abilities (Reid, 2011). The two main types of reading difficulty are problems with word-level decoding and problems with reading comprehension. Some individuals experience both (Hulme & Snowling, 2016). Common observable symptoms of dyslexia are poor reading fluency and spelling. Since there is no universally accepted definition of dyslexia that is precisely formulated and operationalised, the prevalence of dyslexia is difficult to establish (Elliott & Grigorenko, 2014). It is best conceptualised as occurring in terms of a continuum rather than as a distinct category of learning difficulties. Reading difficulties tend to be continuously distributed in the population (Fletcher, Lyon, Fuchs, & Barnes, 2019). According to Hulme and Snowling (2016), the criteria used for diagnosis are to some extent arbitrary, just as those for obesity or hypertension. This requires placing a cut point on a continuous

distribution to determine the presence of a condition. Where the cut point is placed can affect prevalence estimates (Wagner et al., 2020). The prevalence depends upon the severity or cut-off used for identification. When searching for prevalence of dyslexia, rates ranging from less than 5% to 20% are found. A common criterion for diagnosing dyslexia is a reading accuracy greater than 1.5 SD (standard deviation) below the mean, which results in roughly 7% of the population being dyslectic (Hulme & Snowling, 2016; Peterson & Pennington, 2012; Snowling & Melby-Lervåg, 2016).

Dyslexia runs in families. There is a heightened prevalence of dyslexia in children with a dyslectic parent, with some 44% developing dyslexia (Snowling & Melby-Lervåg, 2016). Nevertheless, genes act through the environment. Hulme and Snowling (2016) point out that parents with dyslexia not only share genes with their offspring but may also plausibly provide a different home literacy environment compared to that found in homes where parents do not experience literacy difficulties. Similarly, children who are poor readers are less likely to seek out opportunities for reading than good readers. Low levels of exposure to books and reading practice will, in turn, compromise reading development (Hulme & Snowling, 2016).

Although genes increase the probability of dyslexia, several studies have shown that early educational interventions and training are effective (Hulme & Melby-Lervåg, 2015). Oral language weaknesses, which are precursors of dyslexia, can be observed in the preschool period (Hulme & Snowling, 2016), and screening for language difficulties at school entry might identify children who are at risk. Research into methods that improve the symptoms associated with dyslexia has shown the positive impact of interventions on dyslectic children (Duff & Clarke, 2011). According to Torgesen (2002), there are some key elements in successful reading intervention for struggling readers. Intervention should be explicit, meaning skills taught directly, which more intensely implies that increased learning opportunities be provided, preferably in smaller teaching groups. Additionally, there is a need for support both academically, via scaffolded learning, and emotionally. Evidence also suggests that interventions should supplement and not replace general classroom literacy instruction (Brooks, 2013; Duff & Clarke, 2011). In an extended study of teachers in UK, Knight (2018) found that teachers had limited insight into dyslexia, as they held a just basic understanding of the learning difficulty based on the behavioural issues associated with it. White, Mather, and Kirkpatrick (2020) also concluded that the success of students with dyslexia is dependent upon the knowledge and skills of the school practitioners responsible for their academic programmes.

Numerous studies of children and young people with reading difficulties show that they often experience stressful situations and failures that lead to negative emotions and doubt of their own ability to learn, which in turn affects their motivation and self-efficacy (e.g., Alexander-Passe, 2008; Kim & Lorsbach, 2005; Ridscale, 2005; Skaalvik, 2004).

Methodology

A phenomenological approach was adopted for this study to explore the dyslectic students' experiences. Phenomenological approaches are used to understand phenomena from the perspective of those who experience the phenomena, with understanding achieved primarily through interpersonal interviews. The aim of a phenomenological study is to describe the common meaning of lived experiences for several individuals. The data collected can describe the shared meaning of the experience from several individuals' perspectives in order to present commonalities. It does not aim for generalisability but to shed light upon the world as experienced by the individuals studied (Creswell & Poth, 2018).

The participants in an in-depth phenomenological study usually are quite few. Dukes (1984) recommends between three and ten. In the current study purposive sampling was used to identify four young people who met the following criteria: students in secondary school diagnosed with dyslexia by the school psychological service and thereby given access to support and provided with extra teaching aids. Furthermore, they should have insight into their learning difficulty and no further problems in school subjects. The students were recruited from two Norwegian secondary schools. The headmasters decided on potential participants through enquiries with the teaching staff. The researchers thereafter contacted the parents by phone to inform about the project. The parents were positive and gave permission to ask their children if they wanted to participate in an interview. The final sample consisted of three girls and one boy aged 14-16 years. Three of the pupils that were interviewed had a parent with dyslexia. Some also had siblings with this learning difficulty. Information on the four research participants is presented in Table 1.

Table 1. Participant Characteristics

Participant	Gender	Age	Grade	Grade at diagnosis
P1	Female	15	Grade 9	Grade 7
P2	Male	14	Grade 8	Grade 2
P3	Female	16	Grade 10	Grade 10
P4	Female	15	Grade 9	Grade 6

The data-gathering tool was individual semi-structured interviews. The interview-guide contained relevant topics about subjects, the learning environment, motivation, relations, support, digital software, etc. Using this partly structured topics list, the students were encouraged to elaborate on their experiences. The interviews were conducted with a format similar to a conversation, and the participants were invited to reflect on situations and examples raised both by themselves and the researchers. Thus, it was possible to follow topical trajectories in the conversation that strayed from the guide and allow the participants to express their views in their own terms. This approach encouraged the participants to reflect on their own experiences while permitting the researchers to gain in-depth knowledge of the students' lived experience of dyslexia. The interviewer encouraged the students to express their in-depth experiences with questions such

as the following: "Can you describe that?" "How did you feel then?" "Can you tell me more," and "Could you give an example?" All interviews were digitally recorded and transcribed verbatim including expressions of laughter, sighs, and silence. Each interview lasted between 30 and 40 minutes.

While all phenomenological analysis involves reflection, different variants privilege either the use of systematic procedures or the spontaneous emergence of creative intuition (e.g., Giorgio, 2009; Van Manen, 2014). In this study the data were analysed using a modified version of Hycner's step-by-step explicitation process (Groenewald, 2004). The first step was to listen to the recordings and read the transcripts of each interview carefully to become familiar with the words of the student in order to develop a holistic impression. Thereafter a line-by-line analysis was used to find units of meaning from each interview. Then these units of meaning were grouped together into clusters of themes. Finally, data were categorised into themes and subthemes. Several analysis sessions were conducted, and the meaning was interpreted by asking what the themes revealed about the nature of the students' experience. Modifications were made in the structure of themes and subthemes, through examining similarities and differences, and thereby the final structure of four themes was determined. The data analysis process was characterised by an openness and sensitivity to the text and a movement between the whole and the parts (Dahlberg, Dahlberg, & Nyström, 2008; Van Manen, 1997).

This study was approved by the Norwegian Social Science Data Services. Both the parents of the four participants and the students themselves provided written informed consent prior to participation in the study and were informed that they could withdraw from the study at any time. Confidentiality of data was described, and anonymity was ensured in all phases of the study.

Results

Through the thorough analysis, four themes with several subthemes concerning the experiences of young people in secondary school diagnosed with dyslexia emerged. These themes and subthemes are presented in Table 2.

Table 2. Summary of Themes and Subthemes

Themes	Subthemes
Theme 1: Personal coping strategies related to schoolwork	• Family help with homework • Listening carefully to teachers • "Keeping your head down"
Theme 2: Foreign language torment	• Dreading the lessons • Writing down how words are pronounced • Watching English films
Theme 3: Emotional impact	• Disclosure • Self-consciousness and distress
Theme 4: Struggling with educational support	• Computers and software available • Ambivalence to teaching aids • Teachers' awareness and competence

Personal Coping Strategies with Schoolwork

The sub-themes family help with homework, listening carefully to teachers, and "keeping your head down" illustrate how the students cope with their schoolwork. All of them found that the dyslexia affected their schoolwork. They experienced that problems with reading, spelling, and writing had a considerable effect on their comprehension of tasks and their progress both at school and when it came to homework.

It was evident that the four young people had in different ways developed their own personal strategies for coping with how their learning difficulties affected their schoolwork. They described their coping strategies and how these were used to manage their schoolwork in one way or another.

One of the participants had difficulties reading texts. She had access to audiobooks in different subjects, but she disliked listening to them because she found them so monotonous and tedious. Her solution was the following:

> "When it comes to homework, daddy reads and explains for me how the tasks are to be done. And when we are going to have tests in geography or history, he reads the text pages for me. Even if I send a message on SMS or Messenger, I want daddy to check the spelling."

One of the other students had another strategy. He had a strong auditive memory and therefore listened carefully to the teachers during the lessons.

> "I understand and remember things I hear. When I concentrate and listen to what the teachers say, I do not have to read so many texts myself. I learn by listening."

Avoidance was used as a strategy to reduce immediate problems. The participants described different ways of "keeping your head down". One of these strategies was to "pretend to listen" or to "pretend to do the given tasks". The reasons why they pretended was that it was difficult to concentrate over time and tasks often involved texts that had to be read. In line with this pretending was the strategy of dodging tasks and homework. They often felt reluctant when it came to asking for help. It was an uncomfortable feeling to be the one that had problems and needed help. To avoid this, one strategy was not to do the work and thus not have to ask for help.

Foreign Language Torment

The sub-themes dreading the lessons, writing down how words are pronounced, and watching English films are expressions of struggling with foreign languages. Common for the Norwegian students with dyslexia was trouble related to learning a foreign language. In Norway it is mandatory for children to start learning English in the 2nd grade, and from the 8th grade they can choose to learn an additional foreign language. All four participants in the study therefore had to learn English. In addition to English one of them had chosen French as well.

Generally, they found the foreign languages challenging and stressful. The trouble they pointed to was that the words in English are written so differently from how they are pronounced, and since they had difficulty reading and writing Norwegian words, a foreign language felt impossible.

> "I'm dreading the English lessons. I hate it because I never know when I have to say anything in English. And when I have to write English…. When I get English exercises back from the teacher, my text is underlined everywhere to show what is wrong. But I do not know what is wrong!"

One of the other students had a different experience. He had what he characterised as "a dyslexia-friendly" teacher in English. This teacher produced easier texts and tasks for him.

Another experience was that developing a special personal coping learning strategy for English was helpful: "I think about what Norwegian words the foreign words resemble. It is easier to remember the words that way. Then I write the words down in the way they are pronounced. Like this I can speak the language, but I cannot spell it".

Watching English films was pointed out by the students as a way of learning English. In Norway, foreign language films are provided with subtexts in Norwegian. Since these students were not able to read the subtexts, watching English films was considered a useful and pleasant exercise.

Emotional Impact

Disclosure, self-consciousness, and distress are subthemes illustrating the emotional impact dyslexia had on the students. Disclosure or non-disclosure of their learning difficulties was an issue for the four young people in this study. None of them denied the fact that they had dyslexia. On the other hand, they were not overly open about it. They had some degree of discomfort in disclosing their disability to friends and classmates. One participant had friends both in class and outside school that knew she had dyslexia. She was, however, eager to conceal the diagnosis and was content that she did not think all the classmates knew that she was dyslectic, "I try not to think so much about dyslexia, really!"

In line with the issue of disclosure was the feeling of self-consciousness about their dyslexia, and inadequacy they experienced when compared with their schoolmates. One of them expressed her struggle in this way:

> "I think it is hard to be a dyslectic. I wish I was equal to my classmates and could be as clever in English as they are. But I can't! In school I am quiet, a bit self-conscious. I don't like to speak out or say anything at all in class. I never raise my hand to say something. Outside school in leisure time, on the other hand, I am quite chatty and vivacious."

Not all of them experienced negative feelings and stress to the same degree. One student felt that the dyslexia did not affect him much emotionally: "I think it's quite OK actually." Another participant felt that sharing the misery of dyslexia was

a comfort and expressed that: "I feel better about the dyslexia now, because my best friend was diagnosed with it recently. Now we both know how the other one feels. That is so good!"

Struggling with Educational Support

The sub-themes, computers, and software available, ambivalence to teaching aids, and teacher's awareness and competence are all elements in the students' struggle with educational support. As a part of the schools' adaptive teaching, the four dyslectic students were equipped with a computer and a number of educational software programs developed to help them read, write and understand. However, a common experience among the students was that they did not make very much use of this equipment for different reasons. One of them wanted to use programs that corrected her spelling (named Lingdys and Lingright). "I need help to learn to use them. The teachers don't have any knowledge about how to do it, therefore I can't do it. I'd like to have some help!" Another experience was expressed like this:

> "They are not good at dyslexia in my school. They try, but the teachers need to go to a course or something. They don't even find audible textbooks for me. My parents use to help me. My mum has tried to find a course about Lingdys and Lingright. But these courses are arranged far from where we live."

The participant who was diagnosed in the 2nd grade had, on the other hand, made use of these programs for several years and found them very useful. He and his family had found out how they could be used. His experience was that schoolwork was simplified by such teaching aids:

> "Things go so much better when I use such programs. In maths for example there are many tasks where you must read a text to grasp what the mathematical problem is. For me this reading takes much longer time than doing the maths, and often I misread and don't understand the problem. The program reads the text for me, and I can concentrate on the maths."

Another of the participants did not use her computer. She preferred to write by hand "because then no red lines emerge under the misspelled words. It is so discouraging to see all the mistakes I do". Several statements from the students underlined the fact that using audiobooks, software programs and other teaching aids that the other students did not use made them stand out as different from the others. They preferred to mask their dyslexia. One example of this concerns the student who had an agreement with her teachers to receive a handout before the lessons when the teaching involved texts and a certain amount of reading or writing. The teachers mostly forgot to give her this handout, and "I dislike reminding them. Instead, I try to write or read what I am able to do".

Discussion

This study of young people with dyslexia aimed to shed light on their experiences as students in secondary school in Norway. Several important themes were identified: the students had developed different coping strategies, they had problems with foreign languages, the dyslexia had an emotional impact on them, and they struggled in different ways with educational support related to their dyslexia. Feelings of distress and lack of confidence due to their reading and writing difficulties were common experiences. These difficulties not only affected their work with the school subjects and tasks, but also their self-confidence in relation to their ability to learn and interact with other young people.

Many of the strategies and emotions described by the students diagnosed with dyslexia could also be relevant for students without this specific learning difficulty. This includes the coping strategies related to "keeping your head down" when it comes to listening to the teaching or skipping tasks and homework. Moreover, some of the emotions described in this study are common to teenagers regardless of dyslexia. To feel insecure, wanting to fit in and be like the others is part of being a teenager. For young people with dyslexia, however, they have a diagnosis that can make these feelings even stronger. The results of this study indicate that the participants experienced dyslexia as a defining aspect of them in different ways.

The study shows that access to educational support was mostly helpful, but it was both scarce and contributed to their feelings of differentness and distress. As shown in Table 1, one of the students was diagnosed early, with the others much later. This person had learned to use compensatory teaching aids early and made good use of them. It was his family who helped him, however. The other students felt more uncomfortable and did not have the same skills when it came to using computers and software. Given that dyslexia can be observed in early childhood (Hulme & Snowling, 2016), it is important that children are diagnosed early. Then appropriate teaching aids can be provided, teaching adapted, and educational support and interventions developed (Haug, 2020; Torgesen, 2002). The student who was diagnosed at an early age had best use of compensatory teaching aids. This is in line with research evidence shown by Hulme and Melby-Lervåg (2015) that educational interventions are more effective when they are introduced at an early stage.

A main finding in this study is the significance of teacher competence for students with dyslexia. The study has identified the need for teachers to understand the students' learning difficulty, provide alternative tasks and have competence in how to use software teaching aids to support pupils with dyslexia. Dyslexia is a common learning difficulty that is probably found in every class. Therefore, teachers need knowledge and training concerning how to facilitate learning for pupils with dyslexia. The young people in our study often missed adequate support and adaptive teaching. Research evidence points to the importance of supplemental interventions where explicit skills are taught directly to dyslectic pupils, preferably in smaller groups (Brooks, 2013; Torgesen, 2002).

Since dyslexia affects a significant part of the population, openness about this learning difficulty is also important to reduce young people's distress over their problems. In Norway, the Prime Minister, Erna Solberg, has set an example by being straightforward about her dyslexia.

Limitations of the Study

There are some limitations of this study. The main limitation is the sample. The study reports findings from a small group. The four participants attended two different schools. These schools, however, were situated in the same city in the same municipality. It might have strengthened the study if the sample had consisted of more participants from other schools and geographical areas. In addition, studies based on self-report from participants are subjective. There might be tendencies towards selective sharing of experiences, where some unpleasant or pleasant thoughts, situations and experiences are expanded on or kept back (Morris & Turnbull, 2006). Although the sample size was small, these findings can inform teachers, schools and municipalities and prompt thought about how it feels for teenagers to be dyslectic and how they might be supported. Furthermore, the results of the study show the need for more research on educational support for children and young people with dyslexia.

Conclusions

The current study shows that being dyslectic was challenging in many ways for the students. Two factors seem to be of special importance when it comes to educational support for dyslectic students. The first is the significance of getting an early diagnosis so that relevant support might be provided at an early stage. The other factor is the necessity of teacher competence. To secure adaptive teaching, teachers need to have knowledge about dyslexia, what interventions that are helpful, and how to use supplementary teaching aids. In line with Knight (2018) we will point out that good quality teacher training is essential so that teachers have a comprehensive understanding of the multi-layered aspects of dyslexia and proficiency in teaching dyslectic children and young people. That might be obtained through both pre-service and in-service teacher training.

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Designing Online Learning Environment: ICT Tools and Teaching Strategies

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The authors analyze the capabilities of Information and Communication Technologies (ICT) and e-learning tools applied in the educational process through all levels of Higher Education in Russia: Bachelor's/Master's Degree Programmes and Professional Training. The article is based on the data obtained during the study organized at Sevastopol State University, Lomonosov Moscow State University Branch in Sevastopol, V.I. Vernadsky Crimean Federal University, Institute of Foreign Languages (Simferopol) and S.I. Georgievsky Medical Academy in 2019. The participants of the research were undergraduate students, educators and applicants of further Professional Training programmes. The research aimed at the analysis of ICT and e-learning tools used to design online learning environment at university. The study included a survey to identify e-learning tools applied by students and professors in educational process. The authors also specify blended learning peculiarities in Higher Education. The results showed that ICT and e-learning tools are widely used at universities to manage educational process, establish various forms of communication and interaction, to conduct an assessment and evaluate progress, to organize team projects in blended learning. ICT and online educational services are also applied to develop students' language and professional skills.

Keywords: online learning, e-learning tools, blended learning, teaching strategies, autonomy.

Introduction

Higher Education is aimed at preparing highly skilled professionals needed in various spheres for economic growth and prosperity. It has been also associated with conducting research and designing innovations. Over the past 20 years, Higher Education in Russia and other countries has changed greatly. The factors affecting this transformation include various political, social, and cultural processes (e.g., globalization, states' partnership and collaboration, cross-cultural communication, increased migration, business, and academic mobility, etc.).

Besides, the 21st century is considered to be the period of great technological advance or digital age. World Wide Web and numerous evolving digital technologies have formed a new paradigm of Higher Education and Professional Training in Russia and other parts of the world.

First of all, the technologies and digitalization have influenced the way young students perceive and process information, their interaction patterns in the educational process, and day-to-day communication. Young people are also called now "Generation Z", "Digital Natives", "Internet Generation", "Home Landers",

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etc. (Nikonov & Shamis, 2016; Picciano, 2009; Picciano, 2017). We cannot ignore the importance of technologies in their life.

Secondly, the modern educational system is focused on lifelong learning priority. Online learning facilities offer various opportunities to get new knowledge and develop students' skills through engagement and interaction in new learning environments. The implementation of the "open education" concept has changed the way learners may acquire, share, and consolidate knowledge, having practically unlimited access to high-quality education and learning materials. Thus, the simple transfer of knowledge is not so relevant in digital environment as the development of students' creative potential, professional skills and competencies with the potential of technologies and face-to-face communication. So, facilitative interaction is regarded as the primary trend in Higher Education.

These factors explain the popularity of e-learning associated with the widespread use of Information and Communication Technologies (ICT) and other technologies for distance education.

As a result, various e-learning tools, blended learning models and techniques are being incorporated officially into the system of educational institutions of Russia at various levels, including Higher Education and additional Professional Training (Garant Company Legal Information System, 2008). Regarding Russian educational reforms, modern e-learning is one of the means to increase the motivation of students, quality of education, and the effectiveness of Professional Training.

The use of ICT and other e-learning tools stimulates the design of new flexible learning environment for interaction of students and educators offering possibilities for the productive educational process.

Literature Review

Online learning has been introduced into the system of Higher Education all over the world to make it open, user-friendly, and attractive for students and their learning needs. Moreover, according to UNESCO Guide for Policy Makers in Developing Countries, "online and blended education, in general, are seen by governments as a new and flexible way to educate at large scale whilst not increasing costs significantly (sometimes even increasing the quality of education whilst keeping total costs the same)" (Jansen & Schuwer, 2016).

In Russian Federation the requirements of New Federal State Educational Standards of Higher Education 3++ and laws underline the importance of e-learning implementation through all stages of Higher Education: Bachelor's Degree Programme, Master's Degree Programmes, Postgraduate Studies and Professional Training (Federal State Educational Standards of Higher Education, 2019). Thus, researchers and educators integrate digital technologies to assist in teaching and learning process and to design online learning environment at Russian universities. It also leads to the necessity of developing new skills and professional competencies for graduates.

According to 21st Century Skills Framework, the most important skills for students are Life and Career Skills, Learning and Innovation skills and Information, Media and Technology Skills (P21, 2019). Moreover, autonomy and digital literacy are mentioned in the requirements of Federal State Educational Standards of Higher Education 3++ and in the description of universal and general professional competences and outcomes that Bachelors of various majors acquire while studying at University (Federal State Educational Standards of Higher Education, 2019).

Besides, the online learning environment and innovative pedagogical approaches stimulate students' engagement and the personalization of the educational process. By integrating digital technologies and e-learning tools students may choose or design their personal learning trajectories according to their needs and requirements. They may manage their learning process and track academic performance.

One of the most popular learning formats in the system of Higher Education nowadays is blended learning. Blended learning is a key strategy of the 21st century. UNESCO Guide states that by integrating online and face-to-face approaches, blended learning provides learners with both flexibility and support (Jansen & Schuwer, 2016).

Basically, the term "blended learning" is associated with the application of ICT, e-learning tools, and distance learning educational technologies mixed with traditional forms of face-to-face communication (Caner, 2012; Dziuban et al., 2018; Graham, 2013; Picciano, 2009; Picciano, 2017). It is also often regarded as any method of delivery that combines the technology.

Hrastinski (2019) states in his study that blended learning means: "…essentially all types of education that include some aspect of face-to-face learning, and online learning is described as blended learning in the literature" (Hrastinski, 2019). At the same time some researchers consider blended learning as a new educational approach merging educator's practices with online learning (Voronin, Egorova, & Khotuleva, 2019). Thus, there is still definitional ambiguity. The researchers underline, that blended learning is also used to describe other blends, such as combining different instructional methods, pedagogical approaches, and technologies, although these blends are not aligned with influential blended learning definitions (Hrastinski, 2019; Graham, 2013). There are a lot of studies analyzing the evolution of the term and various models of blending in modern educational process (Caner, 2012; Dziuban et al., 2018).

As a rule, students have the opportunity in blended learning to work in the classroom both in collaboration and individually. They are offered face-to-face contact with lecturers and other students; individual work is mostly organized autonomously using ICT and e-learning tools integrated into flexible forms of distant and online learning facilities. This format complies with the shift to networking activities and transforming centralized learning patterns.

In the given study we keep to the meaning of blended learning in High School as integrating e-learning tools and ICT into the traditional educational process and teaching approaches.

Blended learning is relevant in the modern Higher Education System of Russia due to the changes in curriculum structure, syllabus, and load scheduling peculiarities of educational Institutions. Nowadays approximately more than half of students' working-time is autonomous work (Vystropova, 2016). Blended learning focuses on the importance of fostering students' critical thinking and autonomy through constant consolidation of basic knowledge and further skills development in online environment. ICT and other online learning facilities are assisting tools for increasing productivity and efficient solutions for various pedagogical tasks and teaching problems. ICT and other popular components of online learning constitute the structure of new learning environment in the system of Higher Education.

Furthermore, the popularity and quality of worldwide academic mobility as part of Higher Education and Professional Training is also closely connected with the development of modern digital educational environment. Russian universities design their own educational platforms of distant learning and online resources but use the products of other providers in blended learning models' design. For example, various online courses are integrated into the process of Academic and Professional Training at Russian Universities[4]. There are numerous collaborative partnerships' projects among universities to support, test, or improve educational process and quality of Professional Training. Students are offered to enroll in a course provided by any other educational institution or platform to get the credit. It consolidates their knowledge and helps to develop new vision and autonomy. This approach has been in high demand during the COVID-19 pandemic and lockdown in Russia.

It should be noticed, that the National Educational Platform of the Russian Federation "Open Education"[5] is widely used in the system of Russian Higher Education. It comprises more than 685 officially certified online courses designed by famous professors of Russia for students of various training programs and majors. The project was developed by the Association of "National Platform of Open Education" established by leading Universities of Russia: Lomonosov Moscow State University, Peter the Great St. Petersburg Polytechnic University, Saint Petersburg University, NUST MISIS, Higher School of Economics, MIPT, Ural Federal University, ITMO University. The courses are free of charge and comply with the requirements of the Federal State Educational Standards of Russia with the possibility of official certification (National Platform of Open Education, 2020).

[4]e.g., Massive Open Online Courses (MOOC) on such platforms: www.universarium.org, www.lektorium.tv, www.openedu.ru, www.postnauka.ru, www.coursera.org, www.futurelearn.com, www.edx.org, www.stepik.org, www.khanacademy.org, www.udemy.com, www.udacity.com, etc.
[5]www.openedu.ru.

Problem Statement

Modern teaching at Crimean universities can be characterized as a transitional period in the digitalization of Russian society (Garant Company Legal Information System, 2018). Nowadays e-learning tools and ICT provide a smooth educational process through all levels of Higher Education: Bachelor's/Master's Degree Programmes and courses of additional Professional Training.

Foreign language is a core discipline in Higher Education of Russia. With the transition to blended learning system in the 21st Century Language class, we need to consider the peculiarities of new online interaction in modern educational process. Among significant methodological issues for professors are the adoption of new interaction patterns, techniques for developing learners' autonomy and collaboration skills, organizing assessment, and designing new teaching approaches in an online environment.

As it has been already mentioned, The Partnership for 21st Century Skills was established by the National Education Association (NEA) in 2002 and the "Framework for 21st Century Learning" was developed. Among 18 skills, as essential themes for learning in the 21st century, "Four Cs" (i.e., Critical Thinking, Communication, Collaboration, Creativity) and Innovation were highlighted (Council of Europe, 2018). Teaching foreign languages at university is aimed at the development of these skills as well.

Besides, the CEFR introduces the concept of "Mediation". Mediation language activities, (re)processing an existing text, occupy an important place in the normal linguistic functioning of our societies. When the students use a language, several activities are involved; mediation combines reception, production, and interaction. They try not only to deliver a message but rather to develop an idea through what is often called "languaging" (talking the idea through and hence articulating the thoughts) or to facilitate understanding and communication (PowerSchool, 2016). We should point out, that mediation is connected with the development of new ways of communication and interaction in an online environment.

The aim of the research is to explore and analyze popular ICT and e-learning tools, applied for implementing a number of pedagogical tasks in blended learning, and to design flexible learning environment. The study also focuses on the ways of developing students' language and communication skills, autonomy and collaboration skills with the help of ICT and other e-learning tools in Higher Education. The research reveals peculiarities of blended learning issues integrated into the system of Higher Education (on the example of Bachelor's/Master's Degree Programmes and Professional Training at the Crimean universities). Moreover, concerning new teaching strategies design, the authors describe changes in approaches to teaching foreign languages and Academic English at university, because Languages and their aspects are essential components of Professional Training in online learning.

Materials and Methods

The study is based on the results of an empirical study devoted to the analysis of ICT and e-learning tools used to organize educational process and to design flexible online learning environment at universities. It also comprises the results of conducted survey offered at Lomonosov Moscow State University Branch in Sevastopol, Sevastopol State University, V.I. Vernadsky Crimean Federal University, Institute of Foreign Languages (Simferopol) and S.I. Georgievsky Medical Academy.

The purpose of the survey was to find out the examples of e-learning tools and ICT used by students and professors to solve specific tasks in educational process. These results and participants' feedback are taken into consideration while designing a blended learning model and to test the format of new interaction patterns, developing innovative teaching strategies for online learning at universities respectively.

The study also involved interviewing students of Bachelor's and Master's Degree Programmes at Simferopol universities to identify their initial level of ICT awareness. ICT and e-learning tools were also widely applied in various programmes of additional Professional Training. The article presents the results of delivering two courses on professional development with the use of ICT: "Professional Training Modernization Strategy" at V.I. Vernadsky Crimean Federal University and "First Crimean Winter MOOC School" at Lomonosov Moscow State University Branch in Sevastopol. "First Crimean Winter MOOC School" for Russian Educators was offered by the Center of Online Learning Competencies "Lomonosov" in January-February, 2019. The participants from numerous Russian Universities and educational institutions were taught to use new educational technologies of distant learning and applied e-learning tools for team project management and collaboration in online environment.

Results

The design of a flexible online learning environment in Higher Education is challenging due to numerous factors. The process should take into account various theoretical and practical issues. This paper is mostly focused on the study of ICT and e-learning tools that are used in blended learning at Russian Universities.

In our opinion, the efficiency of training in the system of Higher Education can be achieved relying on the fusion of traditional teaching methods with new approaches through integrating ICT and e-learning tools on regular basis.

Online learning environment may include many components to organize remote educational process (e.g., Learning Management Systems (LMS), Learning Content Management Systems (LCMS), social networks and social media sites, online courses from leading MOOC platforms and providers, specific ICT and other e-learning tools).

Basically, online learning in Higher Education of Russia is implemented via Learning Management Systems (LMS) or Learning Content Management Systems

(LCMS). Among popular solutions are Moodle, Blackboard, Teachbase, Mirapolis, Canvas, etc. For example, Sevastopol State University and Lomonosov Moscow State University Branch in Sevastopol have developed Moodle projects to manage the educational process in distant learning format: to deliver courses, share learning materials, communicate and track students' progress. The platforms[6] comprise professors' learning/testing materials and courses that students may address to while preparing for classes individually. Moodle, and other LMS help to develop students' autonomy, self-discipline, time-management and other professional skills. LMS Moodle is also a bright example of an online learning tool used to organize learner-centered teaching in High School. But there are a lot of other additional ICT tools that may be used to increase students' productivity and allow professors to concentrate on giving feedback and mentoring with students.

Online learning is regarded nowadays as a new way of interaction in the educational process. Communication and sharing of information are organized with the help of ICT and popular e-learning tools. ICT, in terms of Computer Science, are digital technologies that allow you to create, save, distribute, transmit information, or provide services. In our research, under the term ICT we understand the set of methods, processes, software, and hardware, integrated to collect, process, store, distribute and present data or information by the participants through communication. ICT and e-learning tools are widely used in the online learning environment to communicate, get immediate feedback, track progress and academic performance, provide visualization of materials, share information, present data, for simulation, and to organize experiments and team projects. So, ICT and e-learning tools offer students and professors a wide range of flexible communication and interaction patterns, management and assessment opportunities in blended learning as shown in Table 1.

Table 1. The Use of ICT to Organize the Educational Process in Online Learning Environment

Educational Process				
Communication	**Information sharing (search, processing, storage, presentation)**	**Interaction patterns**	**Management**	**Assessment**
Mobile phones, e-mail, web conferencing services, messengers, social networks, LMS, forums.	Search engines, web sites (including online encyclopedias, databases, dictionaries), mass media and educational resources; various software and applications for data processing and presentation, editing tools; cloud storage technologies.	Tools for individual and team collaboration, group projects, Realtime visualization tools (online whiteboards).	LMS, educational and project management platforms, task and organizing apps, smart daily planning software.	LMS, online tests and quiz-making services, MOOCs, etc.

[6]https://testmoodle.sevsu.ru/, https://distant.msu.ru/ and https://distant.sev.msu.ru/.

The next important issues associated with the design of a productive online learning environment in Higher Education are educational content and new teaching strategies. Since 2005 the authors have taught on most programs and modules that the English Language Section has offered (Samoylenko, 2018). This also includes directing Masters' Courses at Sevastopol State University for several years, preparing students and educators for TKT exams and organizing continuing professional development activities. During Ph.D. studies at the University, we developed an interest in the interplay between ideas of language, identification practices, and contextualized intercultural communication aimed at the building of academic and digital literacy.

It is now generally accepted that English is used in teaching and learning in Higher Education throughout the world. The researchers consider English not only as of the core discipline in the curriculum but an efficient tool in the professional training of students in online learning environment.

According to Jenkins (2017), a Professor of Global English at the University of Southampton, language and intercultural communication skills are considered to be primary skills in our globalized world. Crystal (2006), a British linguist and academic, states that English is the language of the Internet and technologies as well. So, we may claim, that English is the language of intercultural communication in the online environment

Besides, Mauranen (2015) at the University of Helsinki studies English as a Lingua Franca in Academic Corpus (ELFA). English is also widely-spread in professional and academic online communication. That is why, it should be considered an important component of intensive professional training in Higher Education and online learning collaboration. Nowadays there are numerous scientific databases, digital libraries, and other resources for academics with their adopted rules and requirements (Scopus, Web of Science, Springer, Chicago, IEEE Xplore, etc.). Scientists analyze the manner and style of researchers' writing in English presenting their works online. Submitting papers written in English requires a clear vision, proper training, and experience.

The concept of English for Academic Purposes (EAP) has been the major trigger for the changes in English as a Foreign Language (EFL) program at Sevastopol State University. By the end of the Master's course, students must be able to read and analyze the contents of scientific publications, organize their own research, make presentations of research results, prepare articles, reports, summaries, reviews, and projects using the appropriate logical structure and ICT tools.

Therefore, we need to teach students of Bachelor's/Master's and Postgraduate programs the aspects of English academic discourse and communication issues through the use of ICT in online environment. The skills are developed nowadays using ICT and e-learning tools to build students' professional competences. In this context, the term "digital literacy" encompasses not only the skills of software and technologies implementation but mastering approaches and mechanisms of information processing and online communication in English and native language.

There is an abundance of ICT and e-learning tools that can be used in teaching and assessing the development of students' language skills online and offline:

listening, reading, speaking, and writing. They may be integrated into the project of online learning environment design. From our experience, we suggest the following sources and tools shown in Table 2.

Table 2. ICT and E-Learning Tools Used by the Authors to Develop Language Skills in Blended Learning

Listening	**Reading**	**Speaking**	**Writing**
Podcast hosting sites: Busssprout, Captivate, Simplecast, Podbean, Transistor, BBC podcasts, ELT podcast.	*Mass media resources, online newspapers and journals*: AdForum, BBC, CNN, Journalism.org.	*Web conferencing services and messengers*: Skype, Zoom, Proficonf, GoToMeeting, Discord, ICQ, etc.	*Blogging platforms*; Blogger, WordPress, Tumbir, Squarespace, Ghost, etc.
Video-sharing platforms and hosting services: YouTube, Vimeo, Tune, VBOX7.	*Online encyclopedias and dictionaries*: Wiki, Encyclopedia Britannica, Columbia, Merriam-Webster Dictionary.	*Learning software and applications to make recording*: Vocaroo, VoiceThread, MailVu, Voxopop.	*Collaborative online whiteboards*: Miro, Linoit, Stormboard, AWW, Tricider, Wallwisher, Conceptboard, Padlet, etc.
Educational resources: Ted-Ed, ESl Cyber Listening Lab, listenaminute.com, elllo.org.	*Educational resources*: Breakingnewsenglish.com, Tween Tribune, Dogo News, National Geographic, Science News for Students, etc.	*Screencasts, slides and videomaking and editing software*: Bandicam, Windows Movie Maker, Camtasia Studio, etc.	*Social networks*: Twitter, Instagram, Facebook.

In order to identify initial ICT awareness of students of Bachelor's programme and to test their skills' level, the authors conducted a survey in the beginning of the study. The students of V.I. Vernadsky Crimean Federal University and S.I. Georgievsky Medical Academy took part in the research. The first question was: "Do you apply Information and Communication Technologies preparing your homework?" The affirmative answer was given by 77.5% of students, the negative answer was marked by 22.5% of respondents. The students were also asked to specify the ICT products they apply in learning process, their choices are displayed in Table 3.

Table 3. The Results of ICT Types' Survey Used by the Students at V.I. Vernadsky Crimean Federal State University and S.I. Georgievsky Medical Academy

ICT Tools	**The Number of Students (%)**
Electronic textbooks and manuals; digital encyclopedias and reference books.	67.5
Open education resources online.	55
DVDs and CDS with paintings/pictures, images and other data.	2.5
Video and audio facilities, etc.	7.5

Students, who gave negative answers, were also asked to give the reason why they ignored ICT in their training. The most common reasons were: a sufficient amount of information is still available offline or in printed sources; the lecturers mostly cover main issues of the topic during face-to-face meetings; for some students the book is more convenient to use Table 4 presents popular software used by student while learning foreign languages at university.

Table 4. The Examples of ICT Applied by the Students to Prepare for Language Classes at V.I. Vernadsky Crimean Federal State University and S.I. Georgievsky Medical Academy

ICT Tool		**The Number of Students (%)**
Popular Software to prepare presentations, essays, reports, projects and other types of home assignments	Microsoft Word	77.5
	Microsoft Power Point	50
	Microsoft Excel	22.5
	Microsoft Office Publisher	22.5
	Microsoft Media Player	10
	CorelDraw	5
	Photoshop	7.5
	Visio	2.5
	other	10
Online whiteboards for individual and team projects	Tricider	20
	Wallwisher	5
	other	5
Audio recording software programmes to prepare for speaking or presentations	Vocaroo	22.5
	VoiceThread	17.5
	Voxopop	0
	myBrainShark	10
	other	15

Moreover, ICT and e-learning tools can be applied to develop students' autonomy and skills of teamwork and collaboration including time-management, task priorities, planning, self-discipline, and flexibility (e.g., various collaborative presentation and documents editing tools, smart daily planning, task and organizing apps, mind mapping services and applications, cloud storage, CRM or Customer Relationship Management and other project management platforms, etc.). These examples of ICT may be incorporated or used as additional components in the design of an online learning environment.

The research under review comprises the results of ICT types used in the teaching and assessment of both undergraduate students and participants of further Professional Training programs (Samoylenko, 2018). Let's analyze the cases of additional professional training programs with ICT and e-learning tools organized in 2019. The participants enrolled in the professional development program "Professional Training Modernization Strategy" were taught to apply ICT and other e-learning tools as part of integrating creative approaches to problem-solving tasks in the educational process. After mastering the course, the trainees had to design their own individual programs of additional professional training based on the skills and knowledge obtained. The course participants were offered to prepare for meetings autonomously or being engaged in teamwork. The assignments

included such activities as collecting data and information processing, preparing reports, case-study assignments, brainstorming procedures, making portfolio using various ICT. The task formats were aimed at the development of professional and digital skills needed for collaborative learning and team project management.

Another example of an additional professional training program realized partially in the online learning environment is the "First Crimean Winter MOOC School" for Russian Educators. It was organized at Lomonosov Moscow State University Branch in Sevastopol in January–February, 2019. Over 100 participants from numerous Russian Universities and educational institutions were taught to apply digital learning technologies in developing and presenting team projects. The aim of the programmes was to teach users to integrate ICT and new approaches in their day-to-day work, curriculum design and framework for blended learning at universities. The projects covered various methodology issues (e.g., blended learning models overview; the specifics of new curriculum and syllabus formats; the peculiarities of creating, delivering, and promoting online courses; university branding strategies, etc.).

The training program was designed as a blended learning model itself, including MOOC elements (theory part), face-to-face meetings, project management, and teamwork sessions (practical assignment). The course was offered by the Center of Online Learning Competencies "Lomonosov". The learning materials were placed at https://lms.profedu.online/ and delivered in a MOOC format. The enrolled users studied lectures, discussed questions, and issues through course forum and chat room. Much attention was paid to problem-solving activities. While creating and presenting team projects the participants applied various online tools and ICT for team collaboration to discuss ideas, prepare, deliver, and present materials of the projects that are bright examples of organizing teamwork at distance. The projects were presented online, so all registered users could follow the procedure and give their immediate feedback. This interaction pattern proved its feasibility and efficiency. The course contained stages of peer-to-peer evaluation as well. The program was designed to develop vital professional competences and digital literacy. Moreover, the proposed format supports the priority of the "Four Cs" development (i.e., Communication, Critical Thinking, Creativity and Collaboration) through all stages of Higher Education and further Professional Training.

Table 5 presents the examples of ICT and team collaboration tools used by the participants of professional development programs reviewed.

Table 5. ICT and E-Learning Tools Used for Team Project Collaboration in Additional Professional Training Programmes

Team Project Management in Education	
Information processing	**Communication**
Information search and data collection: WWW, scientific databases and online libraries, mass media resources	*Synchronous: group* messengers (WhatsApp, Viber, Telegram, Skype), web conferencing services (Zoom, BigBlueButton, etc.), chats, forums.
Sorting data: Microsoft Office, etc.	
Data analysis: Microsoft Office and other software packages (Excel, Visio).	*Asynchronous:* e-mail services, social networks (Facebook, Twitter, Instagram), file-sharing technologies (OneDrive, Dropbox, Google

Presentation of the results and materials: Microsoft Office (Word, Visio, Power Point), Adobe Photoshop, CorelDraw, Mind Mapping services, movie making and editing programmes.	Drive, etc.), collaborative document editing tools (Google Forms), document management systems.

Taking into account the results of the study, the following conclusions can be made: the level of modern students' ICT skills can be assessed as a "confident user". The application of ICT is widely-spread through all levels of professional training in Higher Education: Bachelor's/Master's programmes and additional professional development courses that is supported by state policy of Russia. The universities of the Russian Federation take efforts to design their online learning environment, taking into account learners' needs, the requirements of Federal State Educational Standards of Higher Education, and the worldwide experience of blended learning. Sevastopol and Crimean Universities adopt Moodle projects combined with various additional ICT, e-learning tools, MOOCs and other resources to design flexible online learning environment that would meet the needs of professors and students.

ICT and other digital educational tools and services are applied to organize and manage the educational process in blended learning (i.e., to maintain communication and interaction, to share information, to track progress, and organize assessment and peer-to-peer review). These tools are also applied to develop the Language skills of students while learning foreign languages in blended learning model. ICT and e-learning facilities are used by professors to evaluate listening, reading, speaking, and writing skills at the university. Moreover, they are efficient tools for project management, teamwork, and collaborative learning.

At the same time, the professors are currently being faced with methodological limitations and a shortage of support in online learning. The results of the research may be used to design new teaching approaches and methodological recommendations to organize efficient interaction in online learning. The outcomes of the study can be also applied for designing syllabus and various online courses for undergraduates (e.g. MOOC "Foreign Language for Academic and Scientific Purposes") or additional online Professional Training programmes.

Conclusion

The research has been aimed at the analysis of ICT and e-learning tools applied by the students and professors at Crimean Universities in blended learning (i.e., face-to-face meetings mixed with online instruction and ICT use for educational needs). The results are taken into consideration to develop innovative teaching strategies and approaches to support the educational process online in the system of Higher Education and massive transition to blended learning in Russia due to Covid-19.

Designing a flexible and reliable online learning environment is quite challenging. It requires both technical skills (digital literacy fundamentals) and

methodological assistance. First of all, to organize educational process online students and professors must have equipment or devices (personal computers, a tablet, a smartphone, or any other type of mobile gadget) with a broadband internet connection.

Secondly, you have to know the basics of digital literacy and develop your skills in ICT needed to make or deliver courses through LMS or popular MOOC platforms. To organize successful online interaction there must be developed university platforms with approved free access to online learning materials and tools (e.g., Moodle or other channels of online communication, such as communities in social networks or groups in messengers). At the same time, we must follow laws and regulations on the use of materials from the WWW and protect the rights of intellectual property.

Moreover, the design of new teaching strategies in online learning environment is of primary concern. The proper balance between online and face-to-face components in blended learning at the university is required. Ways of students' engagement and their motivation are also important. Online learning is also based on students' autonomy and individual work. That is why, the professors must provide precise but at the same time extensive instructions for learning and assessment procedures. Clear delivery of cognitive tasks, detailed algorithm, and instructions are necessary for students' awareness of the educational process in blended learning. The professors must present the course structure overview, discuss assessment forms, types of tests and criteria, set deadlines in advance to eliminate difficulties and to achieve success in online learning. Methodological support and consultation by professors are key issues in blended learning implementation at universities. ICT and other e-learning tools maintain communication and interaction patterns, support interactive learning where immediate feedback matters. ICT tools are focused on principles of practice-oriented learning in Higher Education. Digital learning technologies can be used effectively as additional tools to consolidate or test students' knowledge and develop crucial skills within new online learning environment.

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Teacher Preparation Process in the United States of America

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The purpose of this research was to reveal in-class communication practices used in the courses in the teacher preparation programs of the USA depending on classroom observations. Qualitative research method was used in the research. The researcher collected the data through direct participatory and unstructured observation. The researcher made observations in three different classes during the spring semester of 2017-2018 academic year. The study group of the observations was composed of three faculty members and the teacher candidates who were their students. According to research findings, positive faculty member behaviors were; not standing at the same point in the classroom, making eye contact with the students, etc., whereas negative faculty member behaviors were; speaking fast, not calling the students with their names, etc. Positive teacher candidate behaviors were; asking permission to speak by raising up a finger, taking notes in the lesson, etc., whereas negative teacher candidate behaviors were; texting friends during the lesson, sleeping in the lesson, coming to class late, etc. In order to train qualified teachers and make the outcomes of the lessons acquired by teacher candidates, the faculty members should enhance their teaching competencies in accordance with the changing conditions.

Keywords: teacher preparation, in-class communication, teacher candidates, learning process

Introduction

The most important elements of education systems in faculties of education are teacher candidates, faculty members and instructional programs. Among these elements, those that will make a change in behavior in themselves are teacher candidates. The faculty member should take into account the principle of education according to the student while planning, implementing and evaluating the course. The faculty member is supposed to put the activities that will make teacher candidates acquire the outcomes of the education program into practice. Considering the countries developed in education, it can be seen that they manage their human resources very well (Arabacı, 2011). One of the most important factors affecting human resources management is the learning and teaching process. Only if individuals can receive qualified education in this process, they can be brought up as productive, qualified and self-confident individuals that can think multi-dimensionally (Elitok Kesici & Çavuş, 2019). The efficiency of the learning and teaching process can be possible through effective communication.

In-class implementations of teacher preparation programs are essential for

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student success (Visser, Coenders, Terlouw, & Pieters, 2010). The faculty member should know the objectives of the program very well, effectively get the subject including these objectives acquired to his students, and plan, implement and evaluate the learning and teaching process influentially as the places where the behaviors that education means to achieve are aimed to be achieved at schools are classrooms (Başar, 2016). Besides, the faculty member should keep in mind the readiness levels of teacher candidates. Therefore, they will be able to serve the interests, needs and expectations of the individuals. Furthermore, there is a high relationship between the quality of the faculty member and student success (Opfer & Pedder, 2011). The need for in-service training for teachers arises as a result of the inability to train qualified teachers. Providing in-service training at work causes various material or moral losses. The fact that teacher candidates are trained qualified can reduce the need for in-service training that they have at the beginning of their duties. By determining the positive and negative behaviors of the faculty members and teacher candidates in in-class communication, the current situation stemming from the communication in the learning and teaching process will be specified and thus, the findings obtained will be a source in coming up with solutions regarding the process.

Success in education depends primarily on the fact that the teacher is trained well (Akpınar, Turan, & Tekataş, 2004). For this reason, preparing a qualified teacher is essential for the development of the country (Külekçe & Bulut, 2010). When it comes to teacher preparation, pre-service trainings usually come to mind. Teacher candidates should be provided with the necessary professional skills and such practices as the purpose, principle, method, process, test and assessment, and guidance of the approach they will implement should be taught them well (Güneş, 2016). That is why, there is a general tendency in most countries towards extending the pre-service training period of teachers (Ministere Education Nationale, 2012). Through effective teacher preparation via pre-service and in-service trainings, the cooperation with parents, informing students and the support of school administrations, the negative effects of undesired student behaviors on teachers' classroom management can be reduced. Just as much responsibility falls on teachers in the classroom, the attitudes and behaviors of the students affect the education and instruction environment in the classroom and therefore, the classroom management success of teachers (Can & Baksi, 2014). In this research, not only the positive and negative behaviors of the faculty members but also the positive and negative behaviors of teacher candidates were determined.

It is expected that teachers are trained well, they constantly update their knowledge and skills, observe their students' learning stages, focus more on useful and logical practices, and use various evaluation techniques (Barnier, 2005). A country's social and economic development and the quality of its education are the issues often associated with the studies conducted. The importance of a teacher preparation system that meets these needs is recognized by many countries when it comes to both sustainable development and qualified education. Teacher preparation programs that will enable teachers to be trained in accordance with the changing education systems should be reviewed (Sözen & Çabuk, 2013). In this study, it was aimed to reveal what the in-class communication practices in the

teaching and learning processes were by observing the classes in a leading faculty of education at one of the world's prominent universities. Therefore, the implementations of leading faculties can shed light on the learning and teaching process of less developed faculties.

21st century competencies can be analyzed in three dimensions as "information", "communication", and "ethics and social impact" (OECD, 2009). In order to be able to raise the individual needed by the society, the faculty members and teacher candidates must have these competencies. So as to be able to overcome in-class communication problems, it is necessary to analyze first what these problems are, provide appropriate learning environments, and make the modern classroom management approach dominant (Sirkeci, 2010). It is also stated that in increasing the performance of higher education, it is necessary for the faculty members at universities to make contributions as well as the students (Kunter & Baumert, 2006). Considering this requirement, both the faculty members and teacher candidates were observed in this study.

Verbal and non-verbal communication is the most frequently used teaching method by the faculty members when conveying their message to students. For this reason, it is necessary for the communication skills of the faculty members to be well-developed. Only the faculty members with well-developed in-class communication skills can make the meanings common with the teacher candidates. Therefore, they can make the teacher candidates acquire the knowledge, skills and attitude required by the course. Through communication, which is the basis of the formation of a healthy society, individuals can not only understand each other but also produce democratic solutions to their problems without tensions and conflicts (Akbaşlı, 2015; Nartgün, 2014). The fact that verbal and non-verbal communication used in the school and classroom environment is effective and healthy enables students to improve their skills regarding autonomous thinking and expression. Effective communication also enables creativity, the emergence of different thoughts, and the acquisition of rich experiences in individuals' relationships with each other (Tomul, 2016). Having undergraduate education within an effective communication environment will positively influence teacher candidates to be a good teacher. Thus, teacher candidates will be able to use positive communication skills in their classrooms when they start their careers as teachers.

It is thought that in-depth analysis of the positive and negative behaviors exhibited will be rewarding in improving all kinds of communication environments at the university level and providing a more effective learning and teaching environment, and in filling the gap in the literature.

Purpose

The purpose of this research was to reveal in-class communication practices used in the courses in the teacher preparation programs of the United States of America depending on classroom observations.

Methodology

Research Design

In this study, qualitative research design was used with the aim of being able to understand the learning and teaching process experiences of the faculty members and teacher candidates and examine their in-class practices in depth and in a detailed manner (Creswell, 2009; Patton, 2002; Yıldırım, 1999), and the research question was analyzed without using standardized tools (Johnson & Christensen, 2012). Qualitative methods are based on text data and imaginary data, and they have unique steps and different patterns in data analysis (Creswell, 2016). Case study pattern was used in order to understand the behaviors of the faculty members and teacher candidates in the learning and teaching process. Case study, which is one of qualitative research models, is considered a distinguishing approach used to seek answers for scientific questions (Büyüköztürk et al., 2018). Case studies aim to make deeper descriptions, create patterns and make comments with logical inferences on a thematic basis (Paker, 2015). It is a research method that is used to understand, define and describe the reasons, causes and consequences of current cases when there is no control of the researcher on the variables (Yin, 2014). In case study, it is possible to describe and examine a research topic whose boundaries are pre-determined, in a detailed manner and in its actual environment (Birinci, Kılıçer, Ünlüer, & Kabakçı, 2009). The case to be chosen as a research topic can be a class, school and community. The case may also be a process involving the implementation steps such as an undergraduate instructional program (Creswell, 2012). Therefore, in this research design, it was aimed to analyze the case in its own environment, in its own flow in detail and describe it thoroughly. In this regard, observational case study approach was used in the research (Büyüköztürk et al., 2018). There was no intervention of the researcher in the process, environment and the event. Considering the complexity and diversity of educational environments and educational objectives, case studies conducted with different purposes are deemed valuable data sources for researchers (Ozan Leylum, Odabaşı, & Kabakçı Yurdakul, 2017). Case study is a method in which a case is examined in depth (Shuttleworth, 2008). The main data collection tools for case study are interview and observation techniques (Zainal, 2007). In this study, the data was collected through observation technique.

Data Collection

The data was collected through direct participatory and unstructured observation. Unstructured observation is a type of observation that gives the observer freedom to collect and record information without structuring before the observation. These can be in the form of taking notes and keeping a diary. It requires the observer to undertake the tasks of synthesizing, abstracting and organizing information. In participatory observation approach, the observer makes observations without any external influence (Büyüköztürk et al., 2018). In this research, the observations were made by the researcher in three different classes in

a faculty of education in the United States of America during the spring semester of 2017-2018 academic year. The researcher sat on an armrest chair on the back row in the classroom and tried to take notes of everything without influencing any of the things happening in the classroom. At the end of each observation, the observation records were reviewed by the researcher and they were completed if there was any lacking information. Moreover, the observations made on that day were transcribed into word program on the computer on the same day. The reason for this day-to-day computer transcription is the effort to minimize data loss. In transcribing the data day by day, the researcher can remember a situation (s)he observed during the observations and write it more detailed, which, in turn, prevents data loss.

The observations were carried out for 2 months in three different 4th grades of the faculty of education at a university in the United States of America. The observations started on 05 February 2018 and ended on 12 April 2018. Each lecture lasted for 1 hour and 15 minutes. Every week, a total of 7.5 hours of in-class observations were made. In total, the researcher made 60 hours of observation, 30 hours per month, in 3 different classes. The classes observed were; psychological counseling and guidance teaching class, primary school teaching class, and social studies teaching class. 17 lectures were observed in social studies teaching class and primary school teaching class, while 14 lectures were observed in psychological counseling and guidance teaching class. The observations in social studies and primary school teaching classes lasted 8.5 weeks, whereas in in psychological counseling and guidance teaching class, the observations lasted 7 weeks. In this class, the observation period was shorter because the teacher held exams from time to time. A total of 115 pages of data were collected from the observations in 3 classes. At the time of the observations, each situation was recorded and then, the data was aimed to be determined by content analysis. For the data obtained from the observations, content analysis and descriptive statistics were used together. Content analysis is a scientific approach that allows verbal, written and other materials to be examined objectively and systematically (Tavşancıl & Aslan, 2001). Content analysis requires an in-depth analysis of the data collected and allows to reveal the previously unclear themes and dimensions (Can & Baksi, 2014). Through content analysis, the beliefs, attitudes, values and thoughts of people or groups can be revealed (Stemler, 2000).

Data Analysis

Descriptive survey, which is one of the qualitative research methods, was used in the research. Data texts were read several times and then coding was formed after making evaluations via line-by-line reading technique. The concepts used while creating the codes were formed by taking the data obtained from the observations, the purpose of the research and related literature into consideration. After the coding process, the codes created were combined together and their common points were determined. Therefore, the themes forming the outlines of the research findings were identified and content analysis was performed. After the

content analysis, descriptive analyses were performed on these texts and the data was presented to the reader.

Study Group

The study group of the study was formed by purposeful sampling method. Purposeful sampling method is useful for exploring and explaining the phenomena and events as it examines a situation in depth (Merriam, 2013; Yıldırım & Şimşek, 2018). The researcher forms purposeful sampling in order to make an in-depth examination of the research, select the situations containing rich information for the depth of the research and learn quite a lot of things about the issues of central importance in accordance with the purpose of the research (Patton, 2017).

The first of the classes in which the observations were made was social studies teaching, while the second was psychological counseling and guidance teaching, and the third was primary school teaching. The observations were made at the 4th grades of these three classes. The group observed was the 3 faculty members and the students in the classes of these faculty members. The faculty member of social studies teaching class was an assistant professor. The faculty members of the other two classes were teaching assistants, both of whom continued their doctoral education.

Validity and Reliability

Validity is namely the fact that the findings obtained from the research are actually related to what they appear to be or not. Reliability is the fact that the measurement made is consistent or stable (Robson, 2015). Karasar (2018) defined validity and reliability as "Validity is the degree to which the thing to be measured has been measured. Reliability is the stability between the independent measurements of the same thing". Presenting the findings obtained from the observations made directly increased the reliability and validity of the research.

Furthermore, in order for the data obtained to be better understood, the data were presented in tables where necessary. In this respect, the study is a descriptive research due to the fact that it aims to reveal the present situation as it is.

The observations lasted eight weeks. The researcher kept the duration of the observations long. The reason for this was to try to ensure that students and the teacher considered the researcher as if she were a member of the class. This precaution is necessary so as to be able to capture the natural atmosphere of the class and minimize artificial behaviors, which, in turn, positively affects the validity and reliability of the research. Teachers agreed to make observations in their classrooms. Therefore, the research attached importance to the principle of volunteering.

The Characteristics of the Classes Observed

There are a total of 12 teacher candidates in the Social Studies Teaching class. 11 of them are female and 1 of them is male. All the students in this class are

white. The class is quite spacious. The floors are covered with carpets. The chairs and tables are ergonomic. These chairs and tables are foldable and they can be dragged. They have wheels under them. 3 walls of the class are covered with white boards. The other wall is thoroughly covered with maps. These maps are World Map and the Map of the USA. There is also a material room in this class. The classroom has a projector, a computer and an opaque projector.

From time to time, the teacher goes into the material room and brings the necessary materials for the lecture. The students sit around the tables in groups of 6, 4 and 2 persons. The students have always sat in the same place for 8 weeks. The seating arrangement is as 3 groups around 3 tables. The faculty member of this class was a 40-year-old female assistant professor.

There are 21 teacher candidates in the Primary School Teaching class. 20 of them are female and 1 of them is male. All students in this class are white. The class is a medium-size class. The floors are covered with ceramics. The class has armrest chairs. Each student sits individually. Only one wall of the class has a regular-size whiteboard. The classroom has a projector, a computer and an opaque projector. The paint of the class is not in a very good condition and it can be seen that some of the paint is worn-out. The class sits in a u-layout all the time. The faculty member of this class was a 35-year-old female instructor who continued her PhD education.

There are 21 teacher candidates in the Psychological Counseling and Guidance Teaching class. 15 of them are female and 6 of them are male. There is an Afro-American schoolgirl in this class. There are armrest chairs more than necessary in this class. Some of them are stacked on the bottom of the walls, while some others are in the middle of the class and empty. They create a chaotic environment in the class. Other characteristics of this class are the same as the primary school teaching class. The classroom has a projector, a computer and an opaque projector. The paint of the class is not in a very good condition and it can be seen that some of the paint is worn-out. The class sits in a u-layout all the time. The faculty member of this class was a 38-year-old female instructor who continued her PhD education.

Results

In this section, the findings regarding the purpose of this research, which was to reveal in-class communication practices used in the courses in the teacher preparation programs of the United States of America depending on classroom observations, were given. The themes and categories obtained as a result of the analysis of the research data is given in Table 1.

Table 1. The Themes and Categories regarding the Characteristics of in-class Communication

Themes	**Categories**
Faculty Member Behaviors	Positive Faculty Member Behaviors
	Negative Faculty Member Behaviors
Teacher Candidate Behaviors	Positive Teacher Candidate Behaviors
	Negative Teacher Candidate Behaviors

In Table 1, the characteristics of in-class communication were gathered under two themes in accordance with the findings obtained as a result of the observations. These themes were; faculty member behaviors and teacher candidate behaviors. Under each theme, the findings regarding the positive and negative sides of each theme were presented as categories.

Faculty Member Behaviors

Positive Faculty Member Behaviors. Teaching in the middle of the class by getting closer to the students and sometimes getting away from them, letting the student who wants to speak by raising hand, having a sufficient, impressive and lively tone of voice, dividing the students into groups of four, smiling to the class, teaching with laughter and answering the students cheerfully, giving examples from childhood and family, making eye contact with all of the students, awakening the classroom speaking very silently by shouting, saying hello to the class with a strong tone of voice by repeating what the students say, bringing pens and chocolate candies to the students as Valentine's Day gifts and letting the students who would like to take them, using body language effectively by doing as if she is holding something in her hands, confirming what the students say, answering the students' questions, giving an example of anger with strange sounds and mimics, giving homework to students, pretending to sing in the lesson, instructing the students during the lesson, asking questions to the class by stopping the video and making explanations, teaching by snapping her fingers, guiding the students that they can also go out of the class during the lesson for group work, making the students join the lesson by asking them questions, going next to the students working outside the class, teaching by stretching words and lowering or raising her voice, teaching the subject by constantly waving his hands, saying "Federaliiiiissmmm" by lowering and raising her voice and stretching the word a little, speaking as if telling a story by lowering her voice, using her body language effectively and teaching as if showing off, going next to the groups and listening to them while group studies are going on, drawing attention to the important points of the lesson, telling the important source about the lesson, turning on music in the lesson, always coming into the class five minutes before the lesson, wandering in the classroom occasionally, using her hands, gestures and facial expressions, using her tone of voice effectively, calling the students by their names, using a name tag and making each student use one at the beginning of the year, taking notes while teacher candidates are making presentations and contributing to the presentations verbally, teaching the lesson by making jokes, giving examples about the subject, saying "welcome to the lesson", asking how the students have spent their weekends, thanking the students, visiting all the groups during the group works, apologizing to the students, listening to the student presentations, teaching by imitating her parents, making good wishes, reminding the weekend activity, making additional explanations following what the students say, writing the agenda on the board, answering those who have questions, making the students take notes in the lesson, collecting and evaluating these notes after each lesson, bringing these notes into the next lesson and giving them to the students, turning

down half of the light during the presentations, apologizing for being just a few minutes late, giving advices to the students for their studies, giving feedback to the students, giving advices to the students for their final reports and giving examples, giving examples from her mother's class, telling the students the topic of next week at the end of the lesson, saying hello and entering the classroom with joy, speaking by snapping her fingers, asking the groups to talk to each other about how they have spent their holidays, tell a memory with her mother, asking the students to shut down their computers while a teacher candidate is making a presentation, asking the students to read a script she has given, give examples from herself, her husband and friends, making funny additions by lowering and raising her tone of voice, finishing the lesson by reflecting the subject of next week on the wall, asking the students how they are, shouting 8 times as "children cannot be sold" by hitting the table by hand, teaching the lesson in the garden by using the drama method (the teacher was wearing a t-shirt writing "teachers cannot be wimps"), making explanations before the acts begin.

Negative Faculty Member Behaviors. Teaching the lesson in front of the board, sitting on the chair in the lesson and dealing with the documents, teaching the lesson by reading from the article, teaching mostly by looking at only a student, teaching the lesson with hands in her pockets, teaching sometimes by sitting on the chair, stretching her body, moving her shoulders and head from left to right, leaving her mouth open for a long time and then, shirring her lips like a child, describing by rubbing her feet on the floor, sometimes teaching with the same tone of voice, drinking cola, tea and water in the classroom, spending the lesson time with the same students, using sounds like "uff, yaa, ıhh", not turning on the lights even though the classroom is dark, looking at the photos of the students in the computer so as to remember the names of the students, speaking fast, shaking her head strangely, teaching by opening her eyes more than usual, showing more interest to a specific student (such as the favorite of the teacher), giving candies to the students but not having enough candies for all the students, asking the students to turn on the light after the lesson is over (to take a photo) though it is dark all the lesson, looking at her phone, never guiding the students in group work, teaching by looking at the same group of students (this group is always more interested in the lesson), making weird movements, confusing the 4 year old and the 4th grade in the drama script during the lesson.

Teacher Candidate Behaviors

Positive Teacher Candidate Behaviors. Asking to speak as a student by raising a finger, introducing a book in the classroom, smiling sincerely to the teacher, speaking without looking at the presentation, using hands effectively, waiting quietly until the teacher comes, taking notes as students, taking a photo of what is written on the board, thanking the class after the presentation finishes, teaching the lesson by heart, listening to the lecture, wearing a special necklace for the presentation, participating more actively as a specific group in the class, asking the teacher to speak, introducing an activity about a person with leukemia by a

female student and making volunteer students fill in a form and giving a separate paper to those who want to make a donation.

Negative Teacher Candidate Behaviors. Teaching the lesson in front of the board and not making much eye contact with the class while making the presentation, only walking from left to right in front of the board in a straight line, yawning in the lesson, eat something in class during the lesson, texting friends on the Internet or on the phone, not being willing to participate in the group work, always giving examples in the class by the same female student, never speaking and sharing her views as a female student in group work, surfing on Facebook account, looking at the fashion pages on the Internet, talking among themselves off the lesson, always joining the lesson by the same students, sitting in the same place every lesson, coming to class late, chewing gum, sitting by leaning back on the chair in the classroom, wasting time in the lesson, leaving the class while the lesson is going on and then coming back later in the class, not listening to the lesson, making a loud noise in the class, sleeping as students in the lesson, teaching by reading from the presentation on the wall, yawning before the presentation, being interested in the lesson by as much as two students, presenting by reading from the computer, speaking fast, with a low and the same tone of voice while making the presentation, writing of a student that next week is the death week (I guess the student writes this because of being given a lot of homework for next week), leaving the class by a student without saying anything to the teacher.

Discussion

In the research, it was found that the faculty members exhibited such positive behaviors as using their verbal and non-verbal communication skills very well, being cheerful in the classroom, guiding all the groups during group work, calling the students with their names, thanking to the students, apologizing to them when necessary, etc. Communication is an interaction process among individuals, clusters and societies that enables the mutual transmission of thoughts, wishes and emotions through such symbols as words, texts, images and hand gestures. In the light of the findings obtained from the research, it could be said that faculty members could provide this interaction in their communication skills. The century that we are in requires not only communication but also quality and effective communication (Kaya, Sungurtekin, & Deniz, 2017). For this reason, the fact that the faculty members exhibit these positive communication skills may serve to develop positive characteristics in teacher candidates who are the teachers of the future. It was also determined that student participation, group interaction, teacher guidance, student evaluations, teaching evaluation and feedback, which were present in the measurement tools, were aiming to determine the teaching competencies (Doğanay & Yeşilpınar Uyar, 2020). Some of these features were also found in the in-class observations made.

Contemporary teaching directs students to thinking and questioning (Kozanitis, 2005). Faculty members fulfill these duties by making teacher candidates effective and directing them. Communicating effectively requires taking appropriate tools, the use of a correct language and all other aspects within the context into consideration (OECD, 2009). The fact that verbal and non-verbal communication skills of the faculty members were developed could be interpreted as that they could establish effective communication skills in terms of language. It was revealed that in addition to the personal characteristics of the faculty members, the way they behave to their students was also important in the teaching process (Boysen, Richmond, & Gurung, 2015). The ways of behavior can also have influence on individuals' self-efficacy and their academic achievement.

It was also revealed in the research that the faculty members exhibited some negative behaviors such as speaking fast and with the same tone of voice, their hands in their pockets, in a dark classroom and always by making eye contact with the same students, etc. Avoiding talking too fast in communication leaves a good impression; nobody wants to listen to someone speaking really fast (Özdemir, 2020). In another study, it was concluded that more than half of the faculty members were not at an adequate level in terms of their "communication" skills. The professional qualifications that should be present in the faculty members are noted to be such qualifications as communicating effectively, managing the classroom very well, using time effectively, evaluating the learning and guiding (Aydın, 2015). In order for teachers to establish a positive relationship with other individuals and especially students, they should be able to perceive themselves and see the reactions of students together with their own behaviors (Çalışkan & Yeşil, 2005). In other words, the faculty members should be able to analyze the effects of these behaviors on teacher candidates by realizing the positive and negative behaviors they exhibit. As a result of analyzing the data obtained in a descriptive research conducted with the participation of 458 students, it was concluded that the faculty members had effective communication skills which were to be improved, though. Besides, a positive and significant relationship was found between the communication skills of the faculty members and their instructional skills (Yılmaz, Yoncalık & Çimen, 2010). In another research, it was pointed out that the faculty members had deficiencies in listening, diction, using gestures and mimics (Bayram, Göker, Sarıkaya, & Kumandaş Öztürk, 2018).

In the research, it was also found that the teacher candidates exhibited such positive behaviors as asking to speak by raising their fingers, joining the lesson effectively, using non-verbal communication effectively, waiting quietly until the teacher comes, taking notes in the lesson and listening to the lesson; whereas they exhibited such negative behaviors as speaking quietly and with the same tone of voice, always teaching in the front of the board, not having too much eye contact with the class, texting friends on the Internet or on the phone, etc. In the light of the findings obtained, it could be said that although the teacher candidates had positive behaviors, it was necessary to improve these behaviors. In order to increase the frequency of positive behaviors, classroom settings should be arranged in accordance with the interests, needs and expectations of teacher candidates. Instructional processes should stimulate and support thinking (Boysen, Richmond,

& Gurung, 2015), and it is a necessity to improve the faculty members accordingly. In another research carried out, it was determined that there were negative observations regarding speech fluency, tone of voice, using clear expressions, emphasis, and diction sub-dimensions of verbal communication in terms of teacher candidates (Ay, 2015). The teacher should be aware of the behaviors that involve negative but not intentional and malicious attitudes, and those that are damaging and repetitive. It is necessary to carefully monitor the real intention and post-behavioral expectation of the student exhibiting an undesired behavior that may be associated with this behavior (Sarıtaş, 2006). In order to provide adequate teaching, student participation, group interaction, teacher guidance, student evaluations, teaching evaluation and feedback are required (Catano & Harvey, 2011). These skills should also be developed in teacher candidates.

It was also revealed in the research that negative teacher candidate behaviors were quantitatively higher than positive teacher candidate behaviors. New attitudes and behaviors are produced at school as well as the attitudes and behaviors determined by the communication environment within the school. This production also requires that the communication between the teacher and the student is healthy (Bayram, Göker, Sarıkaya, & Kumandaş Öztürk, 2018).

In the light of the findings obtained, it could be also said that the quality of the communication within the classroom affects both teacher candidates and faculty members. The communication and interaction order performed within the classroom environment requires being able to look at the class as a whole group. It is an obligation to establish effective communication between the faculty member and the student in the learning and teaching process. Effective teachers are also those who establish effective communication (Bayram, Göker, Sarıkaya, & Kumandaş Öztürk, 2018). In a research conducted with teachers, it was revealed that the teachers thought the education they received in their undergraduate education was insufficient for improving their in-class communication skills (Can & Baksi, 2014). For this reason, the communication skills of the faculty members working in the faculties of education are of great importance in determining the quality of the education provided (Bayram, Göker, Sarıkaya, & Kumandaş Öztürk, 2018). Being able to look at the class as a whole group will enable the individuals in the group to see that they are there for a common purpose. In this case, it can serve to attain positive acquisitions in cooperation and coordination. The teachers stated that the positive attitudes and behaviors of the students had positive effects on the teachers' classroom management success. The teachers also emphasized that the negative behaviors exhibited by the students within the classroom caused the teachers to exhibit negative attitudes towards the class (Can & Baksi, 2014).

Conclusions and Suggestions

As a result of the findings obtained from the research, positive faculty member behaviors were; saying "welcome" to the students at the beginning of the lesson, teaching by walking around in the classroom, enabling the students to actively participate in the lesson, using their verbal and non-verbal communication

skills very well, being cheerful in the classroom, giving examples from their own lives, using eye contact effectively in the classroom, assigning homework to the students and making them take notes, guiding the students whenever needed, guiding all the groups during group work, coming into the classroom 5 minutes before the lesson, using music in the lesson, calling the students with their names, using their tone of voice effectively, using name tags at the beginning of the year, thanking to the students, apologizing to them when necessary, giving feedback and suggestions to the students.

The results obtained regarding negative faculty member behaviors were; teaching by standing or sitting in a fixed place in the classroom, by speaking fast and with the same tone of voice, their hands in their pockets, in a dark classroom and always by making eye contact with the same students, drinking cola, tea and water in the classroom. Based on the findings obtained from the research, it is deemed necessary to improve the verbal and non-verbal communication skills of the faculty members. In the present study, it was found that the number of positive behaviors exhibited by the teaching staff was higher than the negative ones. This finding can be considered a positive conclusion. On the other hand, it is an undeniable fact that the negative effects of the negative behaviors observed will also be negative, and thus, there is a need to transform these negative behaviors into positive ones.

As a result of the research, positive teacher candidate behaviors were; asking to speak by raising their fingers, joining the lesson effectively, using non-verbal communication effectively, waiting quietly until the teacher comes, taking notes in the lesson and listening to the lesson, whereas negative teacher candidate behaviors were; speaking fast while making the presentation, speaking quietly and with the same tone of voice, always teaching in the front of the board, not having too much eye contact with the class, yawning in the lesson, eating something in class during the lesson, texting friends on the Internet or on the phone, surfing on Facebook account, talking among themselves off the lesson, always joining the lesson by the same students, sitting in the same place every lesson, coming to class late, chewing gum, sitting by leaning back on the chair in the classroom, wasting time in the lesson, leaving the class while the lesson is going on, not listening to the lesson, making a loud noise in the class, and sleeping in the lesson.

It was remarkable to reveal as a result of the research that negative teacher candidate behaviors were quantitatively higher than positive teacher candidate behaviors. Therefore, necessary measures should be taken so as to produce positive new behaviors within the classroom.

Based on the research, it could be seen that the number of positive faculty member behaviors was higher than the number of positive teacher candidate behaviors, whereas the number of negative teacher candidate behaviors was higher than the number of negative faculty member behaviors. Therefore, it can be said that there is a necessary to decrease the number of negative teacher candidate behaviors. Further qualitative and quantitative research can also be carried out analyzing the behaviors of faculty members and teacher candidates at each grade level.

It can also be said that the quality of the communication within the classroom affects both teacher candidates and faculty members. Therefore, it is a necessity to improve the quality of classroom environments. For this reason, trainings can be provided for the faculty members focusing on how they can improve their communication skills and how they can make teacher candidates acquire these skills. In this regard, it is required that the courses involving classroom management skills should be applied courses. Furthermore, the dimensions like teaching competencies, effective presentation, student-centered teaching, and effective communication should also be taken into consideration in the programs preparing faculty members and teacher candidates.

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Mathematical Language of Students with Learning Disabilities in the Context of Length

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Mathematics is language dependent. Part of learning mathematics is learning the mathematical language. Learning disabilities are defined as disorders that are related to listening, thinking, speaking, writing, and reading that are seen in the processes of understanding or using a verbal or written language. In this context, the present study aimed to reveal the understanding and usage of the mathematical language of students with learning disabilities in the context of the concept of length. This study was conducted as a case study. The participants of the study were 4th grade and 5th grade students with learning disabilities. Data collection was conducted through semi-structured clinical interviews during a teaching experiment based on the concept of length and analysed using the content analysis method. According to the findings, the students with learning disabilities had a different and limited understanding, as well as usage of various mathematical terms including length, height, perimeter, half and centimetre.

Keywords: mathematical language, learning disabilities, length concept, mathematics education, special education

Introduction

Mathematics is known as a universal language and in practice, even though mathematics is believed to be independent of language, mathematics is very much language dependent (Kim, Ferrini-Mundy, & Sfard, 2012). Mathematics uses its own code and symbol systems that facilitate the transmission of ideas in a clear and precise way to formulate its own concepts and development (Sastre, D'Andrea, Villacampa, & Navarro, 2013). Learning mathematics means to learn the use of these systems, in other words, the language (Schleppegrell, 2007). Thus, the language affects learning mathematics (Kim, Ferrini-Mundy, & Sfard, 2012; Muzvehe & Capraro, 2012). As a matter of fact, Peng et al. (2020) found a moderate correlation between mathematics and language in their meta-analysis of 344 studies. Mathematical proficiency and language ability equally affect students' numerical abilities (Prince & Frith, 2020). As a matter of fact, even daily language skills affect mathematics learning. Abedi and Lord (2001) showed that students learning the language contained in mathematics tests were less successful than students fluent in that particular language. Similarly, a study by Seethaler, Fuchs, Star, and Bryant (2011) showed that students with stronger language skills benefited more from teaching and were more successful in problem-solving strategies than their peers with weaker language skills. Language processes have often been underestimated in teaching mathematics. However, if these processes

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are not organized carefully, various problems can arise (Morin & Franks, 2009). The predictive role of language acquisition in mathematics achievement in pre-school and primary school has been proven by recent studies (Purpura, Day, Napoli, & Hart, 2017; Vanluydt, Supply, Verschaffel, & Van Dooren, 2021). For example, the connections that students make between language and written symbols can differ from those made by adults (Muzvehe & Capraro, 2012). Vygotsky (1934/1986) stated that children used words in the same sense as adults could not be claimed (cited in Raiker, 2002). Shaftel, Belton-Kocher, Glasnapp, and Poggio (2006) supported this view, and according to their study conducted with 4th, 7th and 10th grade students they found that the 4th grade students were more affected by the complex language in verbal problems than the other students. They attributed this result to the less sophisticated verbal language skills of the 4th grade students. There is also powerful evidence that mathematical and language learning disorders are often (30-70%) seen together in individuals (Willcutt et al., 2013). Children with developmental language disorder underperformed consistently than their peers with typical development in arithmetic and story problem tasks. These children underperformed, especially in tasks with higher verbal demands (Cross, Joanisse, & Archibald, 2019). On the other side, students with learning disabilities have difficulty in distinguishing the sounds of spoken language and the three components of the language, namely form, content and usage (Schoenbrodt, Kumin, & Sloan 1997). One of the reasons students with learning disabilities might be having difficulty learning mathematics could be related to understanding and using mathematical language. Similarly, Butterworth, and Laurillard (2010) attributed the difficulties that students with learning disabilities experienced in learning arithmetic to their poor language skills. Additionally, Andersson (2010) found that reading and understanding language could affect improvement in arithmetic. The difficulties that students with learning disabilities experienced in problem solving were also attributed to the fact that problem solving requires language skills (Namkung & Peng, 2018, p. 38).

Miller and Mercer (1997) determined that language is a necessity in systematizing the use and recall of mathematical facts, rules and many steps in arithmetic and problem solving. Different learning domains of mathematics generally have their own vocabulary (Harmon, Hedrick, & Wood, 2005). For this reason, the literature indicates that the role of mathematical language in certain and different domains should be investigated (Purpura, Logan, Hassinger-Das, & Napoli, 2017). Besides, the studies conducted with students with learning disabilities in the literature recommend to concentrate on the learning measurement with students with learning disabilities to improve their language and communication competence (Cawley, Foley, & Hayes, 2009). The domain of measurement, that is the starting point of the development of geometry (Zacharos, 2006), forms the basis of quantitative reasoning, which includes relationships between ratio, proportion and variables, in addition to being significant for daily life skills. As the first concept encountered by students regarding measurement, the concept of length is very significant for students in terms of comprehending higher-level concepts such as area and volume and forming a basis for them. The measurement of length, which has a universal characteristic, is unique among spatial measurements (Van

den Heuvel-Panhuizen & Elia, 2011). On the other hand, Smith and Heddens (1964) argue that mathematics is a special type of language with which spatial ideas are transmitted, mathematics is a visual language. In this case, the concept of length, which is at the center of spatial measurements (Smith et al., 2008), is one of the most suitable contexts for the examination of students' mathematical knowledge. Besides, when previous studies on learning disabilities are examined, this can be said that the existing studies focused on the cognitive functions and arithmetic skills of students with learning disabilities and that there are a limited number of studies on the other areas of mathematics. Particularly in the domain of measurement, there are few studies examining the developmental features of students with learning disabilities (Cawley, Foley, & Hayes, 2009). In the literature on learning disabilities, previous studies conducted in the domain of measurement were carried out only towards the concepts of perimeter and area. The aforementioned studies focused merely on calculation instead of the conceptual features of area and perimeter calculation. Therefore, this is thought that the present study, which examines the comprehension and use of the mathematical language by students with learning disabilities in the context of length, will provide a viewpoint regarding the students' perception of length. Accordingly, the present study aimed to reveal students with learning disabilities' understanding and usage of mathematical language in terms of the concept of length. The research problem of this study is how students with learning disabilities understand and use the mathematical terms of the concept of length.

Literature Review

Concept of Length

The distance between the starting and end points of a linear object, and the distance between the start and end points of a non-linear object when made linear is the length of that object (adapted from Argün, Arıkan, Bulut, & Halıcıoğlu, 2014, p. 543). Length is a comparable or quantifiable (measurable) feature that involves the volume of the object in the one-dimensional space between its start and end points (Szilagyi, Clements, & Sarama, 2013). Due to the fact that the concept of length is used in daily life with the same meaning, length is regarded to be more advantageous compared to the concepts of area and volume (Zacharos, 2006). Thus, there are studies in the literature that examine the representations and measurement units used by the public in daily life regarding the concept of length (e.g. Saraswathi, 1989).

Traditional measurement teaching aims to provide students with computational competence and teach them formulas for length, area and volume measurement (Nitabach & Lehrer, 1996). The latest curriculum (e.g., Van de Walle, Karp, & Bay-Williams, 2010, p. 369) suggests a grading system in which students compare lengths, make measurements with non-standard units, combine the use of manipulative standard units and make measurements with a ruler (Clements, 1999). Studies in the literature have started to emphasize the necessity of

developing conceptual building blocks that channel meaningful estimation and measurement, and providing students with the conceptual insights underlying measurement instead of merely teaching them the use of rulers, standard units and the conversion of units (Stephan & Clements, 2003; Smith, van den Heuvel-Panhuizen, & Teppo, 2011). Instead of questions such as "How many sticks does the length of this pen correspond to?", indirect comparison activities such as "Is the door wide enough for the table to pass through?", which will develop students' mental features involving transitivity and accumulation of distances, should be implemented (Kamii, 2006). As argued in the literature, unit features should be verbally discussed in the classroom environment (Barrett & Clements, 2003). In this context, the ability of students to comprehend and use terms related to the concept of length comes into prominence. For example, in terms of length, students are expected to be familiarized with terms such as width, height, depth, perimeter, thickness, and distance as the various representations of the concept (Outhred, Mitchelmore, McPhail, & Gould, 2003). Students should be able to recognize these representations on objects and understand their use in length measurement. In a sense, this is possible by the correct comprehension and implementation of the terms related to length.

Mathematical Language

There are several difficulties in creating a detailed description and definition of mathematical language and its content (Morgan, 1998). For a certain period of time, mathematical language has been approached as a model that people have to adhere to and characteristic features of this language have been determined as syntax, semantics and vocabulary. Recently, not only the syntax, semantics and vocabulary of this language, but also important features of language related to its use have been taken into consideration by studies conducted on the language of mathematics (Morgan et al., 2005). The meanings, purposes and functions of the words, sentences and texts may change according to the situations and practices (Moschkovich, 2007; Rowland, 1995). Not only "words" but also the cultural practices that involve mathematics and the language used in communication are of importance (Sarama & Clements, 2009). Thus, mathematical language includes more than a customized vocabulary (Morgan, 2005) but also language systems including written and spoken (verbal) language, symbolic notations, visual representations and even gestures and mimics (Morgan et al., 2005).

Language is important in learning mathematics. For example, language is necessary for a systematic understanding of numbers (Wiese, 2003). Similarly, the development of spatial concepts is affected by language (Bowerman, 1996). In their study examining proportional reasoning skills, Dooren Vanluydt, Supply, Verschaffel, and Van Dooren (2021) demonstrated that the relevant mathematical vocabulary in the first year of primary school predicted the skills in the second year. Muzvehe and Capraro (2012) state that the language used by students, provides insight into their implicit perception of concepts. For example, spatial language is based on pre-developed spatial concepts (Bowerman, 1996; Regier & Carlson, 2002). Since there are many terms of which children in particular have

limited understanding, paying attention to language is important. Language supports mathematical thinking and learning mathematics, however, language does not explain them on its own (Sarama & Clements, 2009). Nevertheless, the fact should not be forgotten that language can influence thought (Vygotsky, 1934/ 1986). Similarly, the early storytelling skills of pre-school children predict their mathematical skills after two years (O'Neill, Pearce, & Pick, 2004). Purpura, Day, Napoli, and Hart (2017) found that even in a preschool school year, poor performance in mathematical language assessment in autumn was an overwhelming predictor of low math skills in spring.

Learning Disabilities

In Individuals with Disabilities Education Act of 2004[7] learning disability is defined as:

> "a disorder that can manifest itself in an imperfect ability to listen, think, speak, read, write, spell, or to do mathematical calculations or in one or more of the basic psychological processes involved in understanding or using a spoken or written language."

In some studies, cases such as experiencing difficulties in certain learning areas compared to others despite appearing to be capable, variability in performance and a contradiction between success levels in different areas were used to describe students with learning disabilities (Lewis, 2014). American Psychiatric Association (APA, 2013) defines learning disabilities as the performance of a student "persistently and consistently" failing to reach the expected level. In the literature, learning disabilities in general are defined as biological, behavioral conditions that are yet to have a formal universal definition (Mazzocco, 2007). Learning disabilities were also defined as the demonstration of unexpected, typical learning failure with uncertain reasons (Fusch, Mock, Morgan, & Young, 2003). As stated, learning disabilities can affect academic fields that include reading, writing, areas of mathematics and language (Kavale & Forness, 2012). While the reasons behind learning disabilities are unknown, multiple potential causes are emphasized rather than a single cause (Namkung & Peng, 2018). Andersson and Östergren (2012) state that there can be no single central cause of learning disabilities and that multiple deficiencies can lead to learning disabilities. For example, learning disabilities may be accompanied by sensory impairment, mental retardation and social and emotional disturbances or outside factors such as cultural differences and inadequate or improper education, however, learning disabilities is not a direct cause of these factors (NJCLD, 1988, p. 67). Individuals with learning disabilities form a heterogeneous group and they may experience difficulties in reading, mathematics, language or oral language (Namkung & Peng, 2018; Pierangelo & Giuliani, 2006). Based on the interactions and observations with students with learning disabilities, misspelling or incorrect copying of numbers, difficulty with

[7]Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act, 2004, Pub. L. No. 108-446, 118 Stat. 37. https://sites.ed.gov/idea/.

mathematical step sequences, difficulty in naming terms or operations, misinterpretation and incorrect conversion of mathematical contexts into mathematical symbols, incorrect use of arithmetical signs or numerical symbols and incorrect calculations can be listed as the observable features of the said students (Sullivan, 2005). As understood from the definitions and literature, although the main difficulties in mathematics for students having learning disabilities are in the forefront of number knowledge, counting, arithmetic operations and fluency in calculation, the link between mathematics development and language should not be forgotten. As seen in the literature that students with both reading and mathematics difficulties have more difficulty in mathematics than those with only mathematics difficulties (Andersson, 2010; Jordan & Hanich, 2000). Thomas, Van Garderen, Scheuermann, and Lee (2015) reported that students with learning disabilities may have difficulty in grasping the meaning of words, mathematical meanings of words, semantic structure of mathematical language, mathematical terms, and in particular terminology with multiple meanings. In this context, students with learning disabilities' understanding and usage of mathematical terms of the concept of length, is worth to be researched.

Turkish Education System and Learning Disability

The basic organization of the centrally managed Turkish education system is the Ministry of National Education (MNE) in Turkey. MNE is responsible for planning, implementing, controlling education and training services (Binbasioglu, 1995). At the age of 5-6, children start formal education. In 1983, "Children in Need of Special Education Law" entered into force, and in 2000 the Ministry of Education Special Education Services Regulations issued and learning disabilities have been described. For diagnosis, learning disabilities are generally tried to be determined based on intelligence tests such as the Wechsler Intelligence Scale for Children-Revised (WISC-R). In Turkey, a student with learning disability needs to go through medical examination and educational diagnosis stages in order to be diagnosed and to benefit from special education services. After the medical diagnosis, the student should be subjected to educational evaluation and diagnosis in the local Counselling and Research Centres (CRC) (Görgün, 2018, p. 63). At this point, the student's teacher or family should initiate this process.

Schools and institutions made mainstreaming practices for the education of students who need special education in Turkey are located. These schools and institutions create an Individualized Education Program Development Unit and develop and implement an individualized education program for students who need special education (MNE, 2006, art. 72). Therefore, the teaching to which individuals in need of special education will be subjected is prepared by the student's teachers through a unit established by the school. In inclusive classes in special education, the majority of the student population consists of students with learning disabilities (MNE, 2010).

Methodology

Research Design

This qualitative study that was part of a doctoral dissertation that aimed to construct the learning trajectories based on the concept of length of students with learning disabilities was conducted as a case study (Stake, 1995; Yin, 2013). The mathematical language of students having learning disabilities was examined without any intervention in the study (Stake, 1995; Yin, 2013). The case of the study was two Turkish students with learning disabilities, one of which was a 4^{th} grade student and the other of which was a 5^{th} grade student. The students with learning disabilities' understanding and usage of the mathematical language, was the unit of analysis.

Participants

The purposeful sampling strategies-criterion sampling and convenience sampling methods were conducted for determining participants (Patton, 2005). The inclusion criteria of the study were as follows: voluntary participation, students who were recognized by the local CRC as having learning disabilities, who do not have any other accompanying disabilities and who are in the 4^{th} and 5^{th} (MNE, 2013; 2018). Within this context, two students, one female and one male one, were selected. The names were given pseudonyms, Mert for the male and Eda for the female. Mert was 9 years old and a student in the 4^{th} grade, while Eda was 10 years old and a student in the 5^{th} grade.

Data Collection

The data was collected through semi-structured clinical interviews conducted twice a week over 32-36 individual teaching sessions during a teaching experiment based on the length concept performed over a period of four months. The data of the study were recorded in video and audio. Additionally, the field notes that are taken by the researcher and worksheets of students were utilized as the document data. The audio recordings were used to listen to the parts that could not be heard in the video recordings and to back up the data as a separate source.

Students' knowledge regarding the terms of mathematics, what they understood from these terms and how they used them were examined in the interviews. For this purpose, they were firstly asked to define the concept of length and the different terms or representations of length such as unit, meter, and centimetre. Then, activities that encouraged the students to use the words in context were carried out. These activities helped to reveal the students' understanding and usage of the words. As an example of the interview questions and activities, the students were asked "What do you understand from the word *width*?" Then, they were presented with various shapes and objects and asked to group the wide ones together and the narrow ones together. They were then asked to explain how they grouped the objects and on what they based their decisions on. The students were

also made to watch a cartoon about width and narrowness and then discuss it. Then they were indirectly asked questions to make them explain the mathematical terms.

The fact that the students were active in the teaching experiment increased the communication based on the mathematics between the student and researcher and allowed many conversations in different contexts. The activities designed for teaching the length concept allowed the students' language use to be examined in depth and in terms of all the terms of the concept and its different contexts. However, in this study, while the students' understanding and usage of mathematical language was investigated without any intervention, their mathematical language improvement was not. In addition, the focus was on the students with learning disabilities' verbal language rather than written texts.

Data Analysis

Data analysis was conducted through the content analysis method. The video recordings were watched, transcribed verbatim and read several times. The documents of activities and the field notes were analysed simultaneously with the transcriptions for the support in identifying the patterns. The students' expressions were examined in depth, their understanding and usage of mathematical language in terms of length was coded and the patterns between the codes were investigated. Thus, the data triangulation provided the trustworthiness of the study (Patton, 2005). The codes were the meanings the students' attributed to certain terms. Thus, the contexts in which they used the mathematical terms and words were analysed, and in this way, their understanding and usage of the terms were uncovered. Data analysis was performed by microanalysis, in which each successive teaching session is analyzed separately for each student (Barrett et al., 2012). Firstly, student behaviors for each activity were described in detail. Patterns regarding the terms used by the students were revealed with a detailed analysis of these descriptions. The schemes including the students' mental relations network connecting concepts and processes were examined and their comprehension of the terms they used was revealed.

In the present study, an expert and a second coder were referred to for the reliability of the data analysis (Miles & Huberman, 1994). 10% of the data was presented to a research associate with a doctorate degree in mathematics education and coded. The second coder is a mathematics educator who specializes in students who need special education. The agreement between the researcher and the second coder was calculated with Kendall's coefficient of concordance. The coefficient of concordance was calculated as above 0.85 and a high agreement was found between the coders (Abdi, 2007).

Findings

The students' understanding and usage of the words and terms related to mathematical language were discussed within the context of the concept of length, different representations of length, direct and indirect comparisons, expressing

measurement results and unit concept categories. The categories obtained and student language usage and understanding of each category are summarized in Table 1. In the ongoing headings, the findings in the table are detailed.

Table 1. The Findings Belonging to Students' Mathematical Language

Categories	**Students' Mathematical Language according to Categories**
Length	- Defining with *Length* (is one of the dimensions of a 3-dimensional object, while the others are width and height) (Both students) - Defining with being too long (Both students) - Aware of the situations in which the distance between certain points was the length of the object (Both students)
Different Representations of Length	- Using the concept of width instead of area or volume (Eda) - Defining width, perimeter and area in terms of each other (Mert) - Explaining thickness as "being rough, being puffy" (Mert)
Direct and Indirect Comparing	- Using the word flat to express linearity (Both students) - Describing comparing by using expressions such as "this is big" or "this is small" (Both students)
The Concept of Unit and Expressing Measurement Results	- Writing the term centimetre as "centi meter" (Eda) - Non-awareness about that centimetre is a name given to a certain length. (the length of 1 cm was "the length of a line" (Eda) - Thinking that centimetre is a name given to equal parts rather than the name of a standard unit rather than that centimetre is a name of a certain length (Eda) - Expressing a measurement result using only the number of units like "5" (Eda) - Expressing the measurement in the unit that was used to measure the object (for example, expressing "3 pencil" instead of "3 cm" (Mert)
Usage of Other Mathematical Terms	- Pronunciation the word "completely (tamamen in Turkish)" as "wholetely (tümamen in Turkish)" (Eda) - Referring to any part of an object as half- Non-awareness about the expressions of "half" and "one half" as two equal parts of an object (Eda)

Length Concept

When Eda and Mert were prompted to define the concept of length, their responses were simply "*Length*[8]". Therefore, the students defined the term length with the length attribute and focused only on the representation of length.

Researcher (R): What comes to mind when I say length?
Eda (E): *Length*
or
R: What is length?
M: *Length.*

Mert exemplified the term as "the *length* of a human being". The students' focus on only *length* representation of the term length may be related to the fact that they frequently encounter this usage of the term in their daily life and that the term *length* is often used instead of length in daily life (Güven & Argün, 2018). However, when students were asked to explain the concept once more, they

[8]*Length* is one of the dimensions of a 3-dimensional object, while the others are width and height.

focused on the root of words and associated nouns with adjectives in the context of length. For example, Eda thought that the term length (uzunluk in Turkish) described the situation of being long (uzun in Turkish). In Turkish, length is uzunluk, and long is uzun (See Table 2). And morphologically, uzun is the root of the word uzunluk:

R: So, what do you think length is?
E: Length is something that is too long.
R: Anything else?
E: That's it.
R: So, if an object or shape is too long, then we're talking "length"?
E: Yes.

Mert was asked by drawing a shorter line:

R: So, what do we call this?
M: That's shortness.

Therefore, the students described that length is as a term used to describe being long and shortness as a term to describe being short. As the students thought that length described the state of being long, they felt the need to call a shorter length as shortness. In this context, the students are thought to be associated the roots of the terms with their actual meanings. The students can be thought to overgeneralize this conception by associating width (genişlik in Turkish) as being wide (geniş in Turkish) and height (yükseklik in Turkish) as being high (yüksek in Turkish) because of the structure of the Turkish language. In Turkish, these terms have same roots and the spellings are the same. English and Turkish equivalents of the mathematical terms for the different representation of length are exemplified in Table 2. Table 2 can be expanded with other length attributes. In this context, the realizing that the concept of length is independent of being long or short, as rather than 'expressing' long or short, and that the length is a feature that can be quantified is important for students.

Table 2. English and Turkish Equivalents of the Mathematical Terms for the Different Representation of Length

Mathematical Terms for The Different Representation of Length	
In English	**In Turkish**
Length & long	Uzunluk & uzun
Height & high	Yükseklik & yüksek
Thickness & thick	Kalınlık & kalın
Depth & deep	Derinlik & derin
Width & wide	Genişlik & geniş

In terms of the concept of distance, Mert was aware of this concept. For example, when talking about a nonlinear object:

R: Yes. I'm not saying the length of this object is from here (starting point) to here (ending point). Because it's different.

M: It's the distance.

Additionally, Mert was asked about the distance between two people on an activity sheet and correctly determined it. Eda said "length is actually distance" about the relationship between length and distance. Then, the following dialogue took place:

R: Can we say that the length of an object is the distance between the endpoints of it?
E: Yes.
R: So, what do you understand from the term distance?
E: The end point and the starting point. It's something like, being far.

Eda tried to explain distance by emphasizing the state of two points being far away from each other.

R: […] For example, this pencil […] Between the endpoints?
E: Distance.
R: Can we call this distance as the length?
E: Yes.
R: But can we say that this is not linear? Can we say that the length of a nonlinear object is the distance between its endpoints?
E: No.
R: Why?
E: Because it's non-linear. I mean we have not made the object linear yet.
R: You're right, we have not made the curve linear yet [a curve and a line aligned with the endpoints of the curve are drawn]. Look this (linear curve) started here and ended here. Can we say that this is the length [by showing the distance between them]?
E: No.
R: Why not?
E: Because we only did this from here, but the curve will be much longer when we make the object linear.

As can be seen, Eda was able to compare the length of the nonlinear object and the linear object in the light of her understanding that the length was a quantitative additive. She was aware of the situations in which the distance between certain points was the length of the object. She knows the difference between the distance between two points and the length of the object. Eda recognized when the distance between two points referred to length and when the distance did not. Therefore, as observed, her understanding and usage of the term distance was sufficient.

Different Representations of Length

The students' understanding and usage of different representations of length such as height, width, thickness, thinness, narrowness and perimeter was investigated. Mert, the 4^{th} grade student, was less aware about the meaning of these terms than Eda, the 5^{th} grade student. Although Eda was aware that the other

representations were related to length, she could not make sense of the term width. For example, Eda showed the width of the room by raising her hand and saying "This is its width", thus using the concept of width instead of area or volume. Mert, on the other hand, defined the concepts of width, perimeter and area in terms of each other.

R: What is width?
M: The area is wide and not narrow.
R: [A sheet is displayed] What is the width of this?
M: Perimeter [draws curves on paper]

When asked "Why the area?", Mert replied "Because the surrounding, area is the surrounding, environment" and when asked "What is perimeter?" he replied "Perimeter is the environment". Therefore, Mert defined the concepts of width, perimeter and area in terms of each other. As seen, Mert associated area and perimeter by using the concept of environment. However, Mert directly stated that width was an area saying "The width of the room is its area". He made definitions including "width is area", "area is environment" and "environment is perimeter". However, he did not use these terms in a mathematical sense. He explained perimeter as an area, region or "The things we see in nature". This might be because of the science lessons he receives at school or daily language. As a matter of fact, when Mert was asked "What is area?", he replied "The surrounding" or the next lesson:

R: What do you mean by region?
M: The sum of the distances we walk around.
R: Region is something else. You should not call region for the distances. What you mean is something different. [A planar region is drawn and smeared] This is a region. Is that what you mean by region?
M: No, the surrounding. Not the region, the surrounding.
R: For example, what do you mean by perimeter? Please show me on this. Which lengths do we add up?
M: The places we visited (Figure 1a).

Figure 1. Examining the Concept of Region with Mert

(a) (b) (c)

Source: Güven, 2018.

R: For example, I am an ant, I'm walking around (inside of the region). What do you understand when you say perimeter?
M: I understand the outside, I understand the point [points to the edges (Figure 1b)]

As seen in the dialogue given above, the student used the terms area and region as he constructed them in his own mind without being aware of their mathematical meanings. Although he expressed area as "the surrounding", he actually meant the length. Therefore, understanding that the same language is spoken with the student is important. According to Mert the concept of thickness was not a representation of length as he explained thickness as "being rough, being puffy". Mert was of the opinion that thickness was used for the thicker one, this is consistent with him associating length (uzunluk) with being long (uzun). Mert was influenced by daily language and the structure of words in understanding and using different representations of the length such as height, depth, and thickness.

Direct and Indirect Comparing

In order to examine the meaning and usage of the words, the students were asked to compare the lengths of various objects both directly and indirectly. The students should have used the word linear in these comparisons, however they used the word flat to express linearity. The term linear is more appropriate when describing length, whereas the term flat is used to characterize a surface. This usage of the students was thought to be due to the effect of daily usage and that the term flat is an alternative to the term linear in the Turkish language. As a matter of fact, when Mert and Eda used the term flat, they meant one dimension, not a surface. However, Eda described the term linear as being flat and often used the term with the phrase "going straight". For example, after the first sentence of the activity was read the following dialogue took place:

R: The table legs are linear. What do you think this means?
E: … means they’re straight.

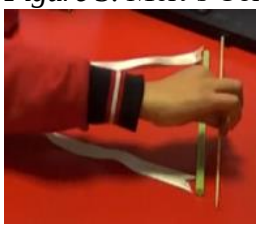
Therefore, Eda intuitively conceived the concept of linearity. Eda correctly selected the linear object in the images given in the activity. When asked to describe non-linear objects, she said "Curling like this" and showed the examples in Figure 2.

Figure 2. Examples of Non-Linear Objects by Eda

Source: Güven, 2018.

Mert used the term flat with a line: "Because as flat as a line shows this". When the students talked about the length of objects, they used expressions such as "this is big" or "this is small". For example, as seen in Figure 3, Mert took a stick and compared the length of the pipette and the ribbon with stick.

Figure 3. Mert's Comparison of the Lengths of the Ribbon and Pipette



Source: Güven, 2018.

> M: That's how we place thick and measure ribbon. That's how we measure how big this is.

Similarly, Eda said "A ruler, then there was something else used to measure big things?" referring to the meter as a measuring instrument. Accordingly, students compared the objects in terms of their length by using the words big and small.

The Act of Measuring

The students' understanding and usage of measurement action terms was examined under the categories of measurement result, unit concept and other terms used.

The Concept of Unit and Expressing Measurement Results. For the concept of unit, Eda wrote the term centimetre as "centimeter". In this case, the probability of the inability to distinguish meters and centimetres may increase. According to Eda, the length of 1 cm was "the length of a line". The length of her forefinger was 5 cm and the length of her arm was 10 cm, thus, Eda could not construct a mental image regarding how long one centimetre was. This may be an example of how language affects understanding (Buss & Spencer, 2014; Sarama & Clements, 2009). However, when expressing the measurement results, Eda did not refer to the unit used (expressing a measurement result using only the number of units like "5"), while Mert expressed the measurement in the unit that was used to measure the object (for example, expressing "3 pencil" instead of "3 cm"). Another example is the dialogue that took place regarding Figure 4.

Figure 4. Length Measurement with Triangular Blocks Carried out by Mert

Source: Güven, 2018.

> R: What is the length of this orange bar?
> M: Each of them makes something ... one, two, three, four, five.
> R: Five what?
> M: Five centimetres

For example, Mert said "2 cm" for a length of 2 millimeters. Immediately after, he was asked to measure a length of 2 cm and again said 2 cm for its length. Unlike Mert, Eda did not use the term centimetre even in her measurements with a ruler were in centimetres. When Eda was asked to estimate a length of 1 or 2 cm, she said "1 line". In an equal partitioning activity, the name Eda assigned to each equal part was "1 cm". In the clinical interviews, Eda tended to express the measurement results only by the number of units instead of using the unit name. For example, she said "14" as a result of a measurement. When asked "What is 14?" She said "Well, 14… might mean… length" or "14 measurements". However, similar to Mert, Eda's centimetre schema did not contain the knowledge that centimetre was a name of a certain length and she did not have a mental image of how long a centimetre was. Eda had the knowledge that centimetre was a name given to equal parts rather than the name of a standard unit. This situation was thought to result from the students' understanding of a unit, lack of sufficient knowledge about the function of a unit and the centimetres in the measurement action. The students were not aware that centimetre was a name given to a certain length. Therefore, this can be said that students' understanding of the unit affected how they expressed measurement results and thus their usage of mathematical language.

Usage of Other Mathematical Terms

For the unit concept, Eda wrote the term centimetre as "centi meter". In this case the students' understanding and usage of various mathematical terms emerged while carrying out measurements and expressing the measurement results. For example, Eda's pronunciation of various words was different. For example, she pronounced the word "completely (tamamen in Turkish)" as "wholetely (tümamen in Turkish)". Additionally, the words half and one half are often used in the iteration of units, in expressing measurement results and equal partitioning activities. When Eda was asked to show half of a length, she showed a completely different length (Figure 5). This was first thought to be the result of Eda's conception of equal partitioning or division action. In other words, Eda was thought to have difficulty in partitioning a whole into two equal parts, or divide the number of units into two.

Figure 5. Eda Shows Half of the Bar

Source: Güven, 2018.

R: Where exactly is half of this bar?
E: A place here (Figure 5).

Soon after, Eda was asked to divide the same length into two, which she did so correctly. Therefore, after sufficient examination, this was decided that she did not perceive the expressions of "half" and "one half" as two equal parts of an object. Eda referred to any part of an object as half (because Eda's representations were not consistent in itself).

Results and Discussion

The concept of length is important as the terms of this concept are used in the same sense in daily life as they are in mathematics. Szilagyi, Clements, and Sarama (2013) drew attention to the use of language when learning about length. For example, they stated that the term long is used for linear objects, which limits the understanding of the term. Similarly, Güven and Argün (2018) emphasized that the language used in daily life is important for primary school students having learning disabilities in understanding the length. Feza-Piyose (2012) discussed students' mother tongue as a psychological tool that enriches the mathematics learning and is especially important in conceptualizing length. Similarly, D'Amore and Fandiño Pinilla (2006) state that the difficulties, experienced by students regarding the relationship between perimeter and area, are also based on the linguistic development of the subject.

In the present study, students having learning disabilities' understanding and usage of mathematical language in the context of the concept of length, which is an important concept for the daily life of the students, was investigated. As stated in the literature that students with learning disabilities have difficulties in learning and using mathematics (Andersson, 2010; Jordan & Hanich, 2000; Thomas, Van Garderen, Scheuermann, & Lee, 2015). Considering the difficulties students with learning disabilities also have in learning verbal and written language, one of the difficulties they may experience in learning and using mathematics could be due related to the mathematical language. This language is important for understanding the world, arranging thoughts and expressing oneself. The present study contributed to the literature by providing an understanding into the mathematical language of students with learning disabilities. Similarly, Sarama et al. (2011) stated that word development was important for students to construct a higher-level understanding of length. As seen in the present study, the students having learning disabilities may have difficulties in understanding and using mathematical language and that they either use their own terms like Eda, or use mathematical terms without awareness like Mert. Mert's understanding and usage of the terms region, area, wideness, Eda's usage of the expressions half and one half and the usage of centimetres by both students were different from what is known and these results were new for the literature. Additionally, the findings were consistent with the view of Vygotsky (1934/1986) who stated that children use words in the same sense as adults cannot be claimed (cited in Raiker, 2002).

Eda and Mert, both of them defined length using the *length* representation of the word. This is the same misconception regarding students having learning disabilities reported by the study of Güven and Argün (2018). This misconception

may be caused by daily life and the usage of daily language. The fact that the concept of width is defined by the Turkish Language Association (TLA) as "the antonym of *length*, length" is the display of the interchangeable use of *length* and length. Considering the interchangeable use of the words "linear" and "flat" in Turkish, this can be said that these uses in daily life also support the idea of Sarama and Clements (2009) that some languages make mathematics easier while some make mathematics harder. As a matter of fact, misconceptions can arise from both the classroom and the physical and social world in which the learner interacts (Smith III, DiSessa, & Roschelle, 1994). According to Clements and Sarama (2014), some learning domains are more affected by cultural and social experiences. Therefore, one of these learning domains is thought to be length. When pre-school students aged 5 and 6 were asked to exemplify measuring with real-life photographs, the fact that the characteristic most commonly observed by the children was comparison was found (MacDonald, 2012). The language used in these actions will undoubtedly contain the terms "length, height, higher, wider, long, short". Considering that students with learning disabilities experience difficulties in verbal-linguistic perception, this is foreseeable that they can adopt various uses of these terms due to the fact that they interpret their experiences in school differently, and that these different uses can affect their daily lives negatively.

Mert was thought to be influenced by daily language and the structure of words in understanding and using different representations of length such as depth, height and thickness. The students may think that distance means to be far away, height means to be high and length means to be long. These ideas may arise from the fact that the students did not have sufficient knowledge of the concepts, but also from the fact that the mathematical language to which these terms belong leads them to think in this way. For the Turkish version of these terms, the students could have been affected by the roots of the words (e.g., yükseklik and yüksek). Similarly, as reported in other studies that students could be affected by daily language and mathematical language itself (Feza-Piyose, 2012; Sarama et al., 2011). However, there are no other comprehension examples in the literature where for example height was associated with being high were found except for students with learning disabilities (e.g., Güven & Argün, 2018). At the same time, as observed that Eda's pronunciation and her verbal comprehension was different. The students' understanding and usage of centimetres were also remarkable in terms of their differences. Therefore, whether these differences were due to the students' learning disabilities or not should be examined. Keijzer and Terwel (2004) observed that one student called Shirley, who had a low achievement level in math, called each part "quarter" or "piece" when naming fraction parts. This is similar to Eda's usage of the terms half and one half for all the parts in the activity of partitioning. Shirley was found to continuously use non-formal fraction names for a long time and this took a long time for her to use formal language (Keijzer & Terwel, 2004). Nonetheless, in the present study, Mert insisted throughout the teaching experiment to include the expression "centimetre" next to each measurement result. Hence, to change the schemes that the students constructed in their minds was difficult. If Shirley had no learning disabilities, when the findings

of this study and the present study are examined, this can be said that students having learning disabilities and low level achievers could have similar characteristics in terms of language comprehension. In addition, although Mert and Eda had a different understanding and usage of centimetres, they were both different from the appropriate use, and the reason for this could be that both students were unaware that a centimetre is a quantitatively certain length. In this context, the students' understanding regarding the unit concept affected their language use. Consequently, as claimed in the literature, understanding affects language use as much as language use affects understanding (Buss & Spencer, 2014). For example, plural structures such as "pens" or quantifiers such as "some" and "all" establish a framework for the development of quantitative thoughts (Carey, 2004). Bowerman (1996) also states that the semantic organization of language influences the development of spatial concepts in students. On the other hand, students' uses regarding centimeter measurement may have multiple causes. For example, the usage can be interpreted as a vocabulary-related problem experienced by students in expressing measurement results. In other respects, the usage can be explained by the students returning to their previous schemes. Additionally, the reason may be that students have overgeneralized cm due to the fact that cm is the most emphasized unit in teaching the concept of length or the measurements made with different units or lengths are briefly mentioned and the measurements made with cm are more common. At the same time, after the action of equal-partitioning was emphasized, Eda called each equal part a cm measurement. Eda performed equal-partitioning using the iteration of units and length measurement. Therefore, she may have called these parts "1 cm" using the same scheme. Additionally, to consider cm as a name that should only be added to the measurement result may be wrong. That is because cm may be more than a name for students; cm can also be the name of each unit used. The fact that Eda called each equal part 1 cm in the equal-partitioning may be an indicator of this.

As a limitation of the study, identified students with learning disabilities' understanding and usage of mathematical language is specific for Turkish language. At the same time, the findings are limited to the activities chosen or designed by the researchers and the communication established. Considering that length is a concept that can be affected by cultural experiences, it can be thought that the results obtained in the study are also limited by the individual, environmental and socio-cultural factors of the participant students. In this context, the importance of these factors should be considered in utilizing the findings of the present study.

Conclusions

Effective communication is achieved through the consistent transmission of the message between the sender and the recipient (Schoenbrodt et al., 1997). As determined that the students were affected by the language used, being sure that the terms and the language have the same meaning for the students is important. In other words, in addition to making sure that students understand the language

used, to understand the language used by them is necessary. In the study, the students with learning disabilities used words without being aware of the mathematical meanings and the differences in these usages were important as they indicated that the language used by the students should be understood and that the terms should not be left only in verbal-linguistic form. To accept that their world is different and to listen to them in different ways is necessary; for learning and understanding the thoughts of students (Greig, Taylor, & MacKay, 2007). Even though students learned the terminology, they were distant from the conceptual understanding of length. Students' knowledge of the terminology should not remain in verbal-linguistic form, but be internalized and moved to the upper form. In this case, to reveal what students understand conceptually from this terminology is important. The fact that the term of length has the same using in daily life may be an advantage of length according to area and volume characteristics (Zacharos, 2006). However, this should be remembered that there is a possibility that the term length can be misused in daily life or can be misunderstood by students with learning disabilities who have difficulty in verbal-linguistic processes. Additionally, as observed in the study, the students stated "This is big, this is small" when talking about the length of objects. Using only attribute-specific words, such as long, short, longer, shorter, in the case of length is important, because the words large and small can also be used for other attributes of objects. While this usage may be a sign that the student recognizes the quality; the usage by the teacher will help the student to recognize the quality and distinguish the quality from other qualities. Based on the mutual interaction between understanding and language, to better learn the concept of length, this is important for the students to realize that centimetre is a name given to a certain length. To realize that different length terms such as height, length and width are the measurable features of objects rather than expressing being long, shortness or another state is also important for the students. Short objects should be included as a length example during the first introduction of the concept. In addition, to make sure that even a simple word such as "half" or "completely" is understood correctly by the students with learning disabilities during the interactions is worth to remember. Additionally, as observed in the definition of length by TLA (2011) as the longest edge of the object, students may associate the concept with being long due to its usage in daily life and word stem (TLA, 2011). Similarly, as stated by Szilagyi, Clements, & Sarama (2013) that the perception of the word "long" is limited as the word is used to describe linear objects. Therefore, to give examples of length that also include short objects in the initial introduction of the concept of length may be helpful. According to Barrett and Clements (2003), measurement takes its meaning from the real objects comparison. Students' schematics of measuring length become more sophisticated when comparisons are based on real life situations (Barrett & Clements, 2003). In this context, to be combined with real-life situations and discussed clearly in order to enable students with learning disabilities to structure them correctly may be beneficial for mathematical terms. Only after understanding the concept of length can students justify its representations as units of length, and correctly structure and utilize the terms related to length.

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Case Report: The impact of Online Forum Use on Student Retention in a Level 1 Distance Learning Module

By Jessica Pinchbeck[*] & Caroline Heaney[±]

The importance of making online and distance education successful has been dramatically prioritized due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Student retention is a key performance indicator in online higher education. Evidence suggests that within online distance education the key to retaining students is to encourage an engaging and supportive online community. Online asynchronous forums are one method that has been employed to promote such engagement. This study investigated the relationship between online forum activity and student retention amongst 21 tutor groups on an Open University Level 1 module. It found that the volume of tutor group forum activity had a significant association with student retention ($p<0.05$ two-tailed, Pearson $r=0.53$), with student contributions having a greater impact on retention ($p<0.01$ two-tailed, Pearson $r=0.628$) than tutor contributions. Although tutor contributions did not appear to impact student retention directly the number of tutor and student posts were highly correlated ($p<0.001$, two tailed, Pearson $r=0.86$). Results indicate that asynchronous forums can be an effective tool in promoting student retention in an online distance learning environment. Important factors that impact on student retention within the educational medium of asynchronous forums are evidenced. The implications of these findings for educators are discussed.

Keywords: distance learning, student retention, forum participation, online learning community.

Introduction

One consequence of the recent COVID-19 pandemic has been that many universities across the world have had to develop and implement online teaching provision. Consequently, understanding how to best ensure the success of Higher Education students studying within online teaching environments has assumed a greater importance across the university sector worldwide. A commonly used measure of how successful a course or module has been is student retention i.e. the number of students who successful complete a module. This is particularly important in the context of online higher education, where the number of students who fail to complete is significantly higher than found in traditional university settings (Woodley & Simpson, 2014). Although many factors influence these phenomena, the use and nature of student online forums has been suggested as significant (e.g., Khalil & Ebner, 2014). Asynchronous forums, where posts can be entered by individuals at any time, have become the most widely used (De Lima, Gerosa, Conte, & Netto, 2019) and for this reason this paper explores the role of online asynchronous forums in student retention.

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The context of this research is a level 1 sport and fitness module at The Open University in the United Kingdom (U.K.). The Open University is the largest university in Europe with approximately 173,927 students and a network of more than 5,000 tutors (The Open University, 2018a). Students, both within the UK and overseas, study at a distance through the provision of access to a distinct form of distance learning known as "supported open learning" that aims to offer flexibility, inclusivity, support and social opportunities with no formal entry requirements for the majority of modules (The Open University, 2018b). This approach incorporates teaching strategies including online tutorials and activities, printed materials, one to one student support sessions, forum discussions, a range of online support tools as well as online assignment submissions and feedback.

The type of study experience offered by The Open University has increased in popularity (Yuan & Kim, 2014), firstly because of its purported benefits, and secondly because of the increased need for online education. This increased demand for online education has risen to meet student's needs for flexible study schedules and provide opportunities to study that would not typically be available (Parsad & Lewis, 2008). Distance learning has many benefits for the learner in terms of accessibility of information and the speed at which questions can be answered; however, it has its problems and often poses challenges to retention (Sánchez-Elvira Paniagua & Simpson, 2018). For example, distance learners can encounter potential barriers such as physical separation, feelings of isolation, lack of support and feeling disconnected (Angelino, Williams, & Natvig, 2007). Difficulty can arise in forming and maintaining relationships between tutor and student and also between students, and it is this lack of interaction that has been linked to dropout (Yuan & Kim, 2014). Without a community, such as that generated in a typical face to face university, students can often experience isolation when studying online (Lee & Choi, 2011). To counteract this problem educators strive to develop an "online learning community" whereby learners interact with one another to achieve the shared learning outcomes of the module in addition to feeling connected and providing support for one another (Anderson, 2004). A variety of tools can be employed to develop an online learning community and asynchronous discussion, using forums, is one of the mechanisms. In the age of social media research reports that forums remain a popular choice by students to support learning and increase knowledge and understanding (Dommett, 2019). The nature of asynchronous forums supports the flexible learning approach of the Open University because students can contribute to them at any time, typically within the current week of study. In addition to their flexibility, for individuals who are quiet, shy or more reflective and like to take their time before they respond, forums can alleviate concerns and encourage greater participation than a face to face oral situation (Hew, 2015; Yuan & Kim, 2014).

The Open University use forums for two main purposes; to provide students with a feeling of studying with others and reduce isolation, and to achieve specific learning outcomes (Thorpe & Norwood, 2013). Research suggests that for forums to be effective it is imperative that the aims of the forum are established and conveyed at the beginning of the module, to ensure both tutors and students understand what is expected of them (Thorpe & Norwood, 2013; Nandi, Hamilton,

& Harland, 2012). In a study interviewing Open University students regarding their experience of using online forum communication Kear (2010) reported that a *social presence* was a key factor in student experience. Social presence is defined as "the need for users to feel connected with each other and to perceive each other as real people" (Kear 2010, p. 1). She found that experiencing low social presence could be a particular problem within asynchronous forums (Kear, 2010).

Students felt one of the ways to improve social presence was to increase the use of their online profiles to know each other better (Kear, Chetwynd, & Jefferis, 2014). Other researchers have also cited social presence as an important element of successful online learning (e.g., Wei & Chen, 2012; Yuan & Kim, 2014). Forums have been identified as a potential method to enhance social presence, with peer interaction having the greatest influence (Garrison & Cleveland-Innes, 2004); however, the role of the tutor must not be underplayed as both social and cognitive presence (the process by which individuals learn through educationally driven engagement with peers) must be integrated through teaching presence to create an effective online learning community (Garrison & Cleveland-Innes, 2005). For example, Rovai (2007, p. 77) suggests that tutors "need to provide discussion forums for socio-emotional discussions that have the goal of nurturing a strong sense of community within the course as well as group discussion forums for content-and task-oriented discussions that centre on authentic topics". This highlights the link between a sense of community and curriculum design.

In a review of asynchronous online discussion Hammond (2005) notes curriculum design as key to facilitating group cohesion and participant engagement, and that learning activities should be scheduled to allow time for reflection and be realistic in terms of student workload. Hammond (2005) recommends that online discussions are of most value to topics requiring conceptual understanding rather than learning skills or techniques. Participation in online forums can also contribute to student assessment; however, Oliver and Shaw (2003) found that whilst this increased participation students were often "playing the game", and interaction was "superficial".

Whilst the success of a forum relies heavily upon curriculum design and the way it is used within a module, Angelino, Williams and Natvig (2007) also recommend more informal chats with "spontaneous interactions" helping to build positive relationships and learning communities. Peer interaction is a crucial element of developing such communities and research by Dommett (2019) indicated that students used the forum to predominantly engage with their peers in module related discussion to support knowledge and understanding. Some studies have even reported that input from other students to be more important than input from staff (e.g., Kear, 2002). For students' success it is a combination of, and balance between, student-centred and tutor-centred discussion that has been identified as most advantageous (Nandi, Hamilton, & Harland, 2012). Tutors play a central role in the success of a forum; if tutors do not engage in their forum then it is unlikely that their students will (Thorpe & Norwood, 2013); however, over domination by a tutor can also discourage student participation (Rovai, 2007). The ability to moderate a forum effectively is an important skill and consequently all Open University tutors engage with mandatory forum moderation training.

The Open University uses threaded forums where the students can either post a response to an existing thread or create a new discussion thread (Gao, Zhang, & Franklin, 2013). The structure of the forum and the way in which information is presented is also important, as often the asynchronous nature of forum discussions can cause lengthy and multiple threads of messages, leaving the student to sort through irrelevant postings (Vonderwell & Zachariah, 2005). Further potential problems include delayed, negative or irrelevant feedback from peers and tutors which can reduce student motivation to interact (Abawajy, 2012). Rovai (2007) argues that these weaknesses can be reduced and even eradicated by a skilful moderating tutor, stressing that tutors must create a safe learning environment where all members of the learning community feel valued to achieve equitable and effective discourse. The way a tutor supports and promotes interaction can influence student motivation to engage with others (Cho & Kim, 2013) and determine the direction and boundaries for discussion (Nandi, Hamilton, & Harland, 2012); however, studies investigating the value of online communities show mixed results and LaPointe and Reisetter (2008) reported that while some students considered an online community beneficial to their learning others considered such online communication with their peers as "superfluous" and "inconvenient". In an investigation of level 1 Open University students Simons, Beaumont and Holland (2018) found that some students studied "pragmatically" and did not engage with the forum, citing a lack of time and the number of postings as too onerous to manage, whereas other students found the forums a valuable source of peer and tutor support. Therefore, in modules where tutor group forum participation is beneficial but not compulsory, regardless of tutor skill not all learners choose interaction and some would rather study independently (Anderson, Huttenlocher, Kleinberg, & Leskovec, 2014).

In summary, the research discussed suggests that asynchronous discussion tools such as forums have a place within online distance education to both reduce student isolation and where appropriate to support students to achieve certain learning outcomes, both with the aim of aiding student retention. For these objectives to be reached students and tutors need to be clear from the outset on how and when to use such tools. The tutor must also be skilful in their moderation to develop social presence and offer the right level of support and guidance to students within their group; however, such tools are not without their problems, with a range of additional factors (e.g., a few students monopolising the forum, students posting insensitively etc.) influencing their effectiveness. Furthermore, whilst the potential benefits of engagement with asynchronous forums have been clearly elucidated, the relationship between asynchronous forum engagement and retention remains relatively unexamined at scale, with contradictory findings (Hughes & Price, 2019).

The purpose of this study was to establish if a relationship exists between the volume of asynchronous forum activity and student retention, using the case study of a level 1 Open University distance learning module. The hypotheses investigated are stated below.

Hypotheses

A. There will be a positive relationship between the total number of combined student and tutor posts on the forum and student retention.
B. There will be a positive relationship between the number of tutor posts on the forum and student retention.
C. There will be a positive relationship between the number of student posts on the forum and student retention.
D. There will be a positive relationship between the number of tutor posts on the forum and the number of student posts.

Methods

Participants

The participants were all tutors and students from one presentation of an Open University level 1 sport and fitness module. Participants consisted of 493 students randomly allocated to 21 tutor groups (a group of 16–26 students allocated one tutor), with 17 tutors (4 tutors had two groups). Students are allocated equally to each tutor; however excess numbers are allocated according to contractual obligations of each tutor.

The module examined in this paper provided each tutor group with its own forum (tutor group forum, TGF) which opens on the first day of the module and is only available to the tutor and the students in each group. These tutor group forums aim to provide peer and tutor support, reduce student isolation, and provide a platform for students to engage in subject discussion to support the achievement of learning outcomes. Activities within the module materials direct students to the forum and invite them to post their opinions/thoughts on module relevant topics, as well as making an introductory post in the first week of study which contributes five percent of marks towards their first assignment.

The module, reflective of the Open University's policy of open access, typically attracts extremely diverse groups of students in terms of experiences and backgrounds, which contributes richness to discussions (Heaney & Walker, 2012). It is clearly stated within the module learning materials that the TGF is the main form of communication between students, and between the students and the tutor (although alternative methods of communication are used when and where appropriate). Although TGFs are the primary mechanism of communication with the tutor and fellow students for this module, engagement in the TGF was not compulsory to pass the module. Even though the introductory post contributed marks to the first assignment the student was still able to pass this without making a forum contribution. The level of forum moderation expected from tutors is clearly communicated and all tutors attend moderation training in the first year of their appointment. Tutors were required to check their forums regularly (at least twice in the week and once at weekends); however, most tutors subscribe to their

forums (which send email notification of new posts) to ensure responses are issued promptly.

Measures

Student retention was measured for each tutor group by the number of students who submitted the final assessment divided by the number of students registered at the start of the module (including those who submitted and failed).

Tutor group forum activity was measured by the total number of posts made over the duration of the presentation. These data were then further divided into the number of tutor posts and the number of student posts, the number of tutor-initiated discussion threads, the longest discussion thread in each forum and the number of discussion threads comprising one single post.

Procedure

Data were collected at the end of a full presentation of the module and involved the collation of data relating to the volume of posts and student retention. The total number of posts on each TGF for one complete presentation of the module (from October to June) was calculated. These were then divided into the total number of tutor and student posts, tutor-initiated posts, the longest threads and the number of single post discussion threads. Retention figures for each of the 21 tutor groups within the module were also recorded with the initial measure taken at the beginning of the module in October and the second measure of those submitting their final assessment in June. Where a tutor had more than one group these were investigated as two different data sets.

To investigate the relationship between TGF posts and retention a series of Pearson product moment correlations were undertaken. The first compared the total number of TGF posts and tutor group retention figures (hypothesis A), the second compared the number of tutor posts on the TGF and the tutor group retention figures (hypothesis B), the third compared the number of student posts on the TGF and the tutor group retention figures (hypothesis C) and the final comparison looked at the number of tutor posts on the TGF and the number of student posts (hypothesis D).

Results

Table 1 shows the retention figure, total number of TGF posts, number of tutor posts, student posts, and tutor-initiated threads (with the percentage figures also provided), as well as the longest thread and the number of threads with just one post, for each tutor group. Two forums accumulated over 300 posts, although the student and tutor contributions of each of these two groups varied. The tutor group with the highest retention at 90% had only 20% tutor input with the majority of contributions (80%) and initiated threads (66%) from students. The group with the lowest retention had a very low tutor input (3%), with only one thread initiated

by the tutor, and only 58 student posts. The introductory posts at the beginning of the module, which counted 5% towards the first assessment, were the longest thread for each group with the exception of group B, whose longest thread discussed extensions of the final assessment, and group K, where the longest thread related to referencing.

Figure 1 illustrates the relationship between TGF posts and retention for each tutor group. The information relating to the number of tutor-initiated discussion threads, the longest discussion thread in each forum and the number of discussion threads comprising one single post provides further context to each TGF.

A Pearson product moment correlation was undertaken to establish the strength of association between tutor group retention and tutor group forum activity (hypothesis A). There was a significant relationship between total number of tutor group forum posts (student and tutor posts) and tutor group retention ($p<0.05$ two-tailed, Pearson $r=0.53$) as shown in Figure 1.

Figure 1. Retention and the Number of Tutor Group Forum Posts

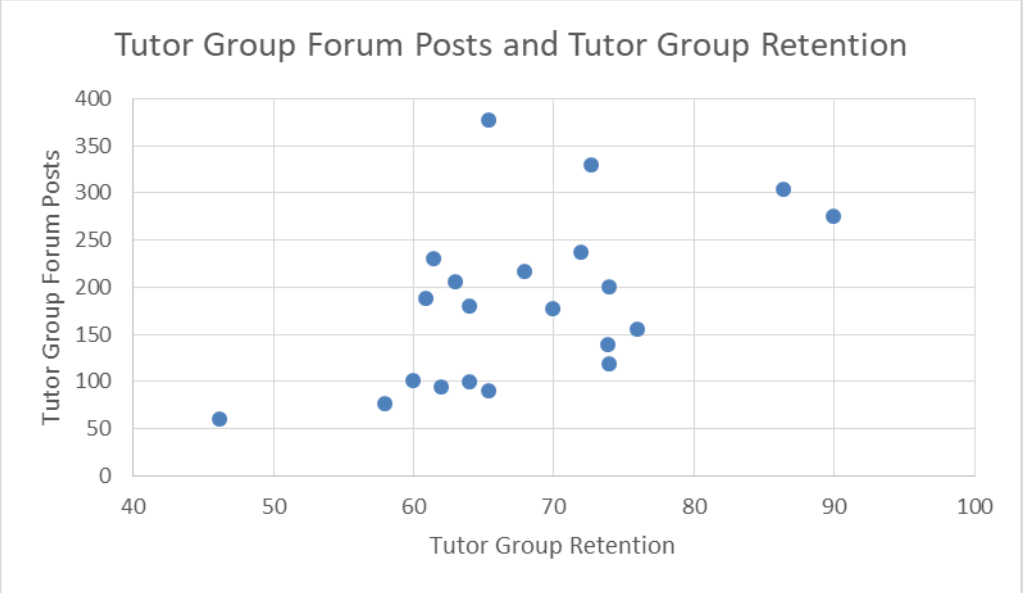


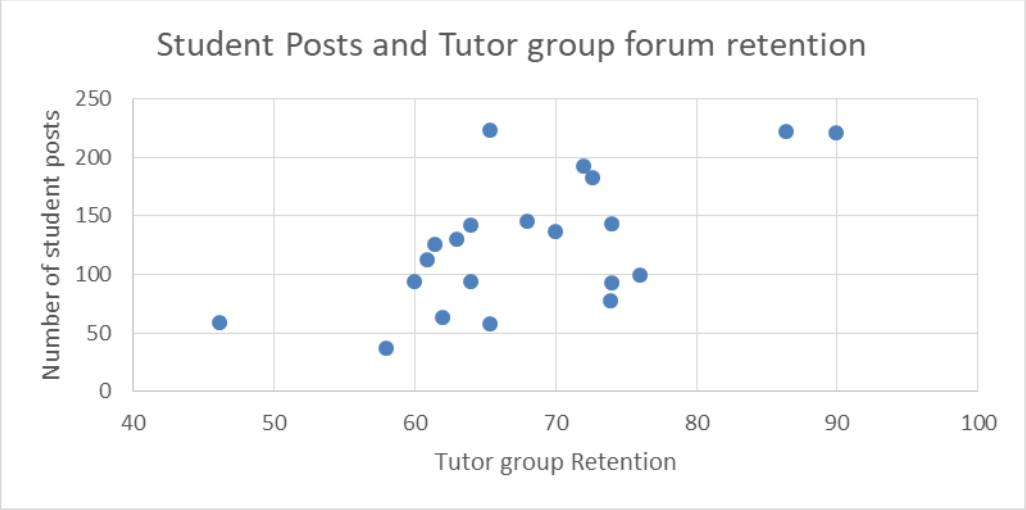
Table 1. Data by Tutor Group

Group	Tutor group retention (%)	Total number of TGF posts for presentation	Total number of tutor posts (% of total posts)	Total number of student posts (% of total posts)	Total number of threads	Number of tutor initiated threads (% of total threads)	Longest thread	Number of threads with only 1 post (% of total threads)
A	90	274	54 (20%)	220 (80%)	67	23 (34%)	19	19 (28%)
B	86	303	82 (27%)	221 (73%)	95	12 (13%)	22*	43 (45%)
C	76	155	56 (36%)	99 (64%)	59	22 (37%)	29	25 (42%)
D	74	200	57 (29%)	143 (71%)	60	16 (27%)	34	20 (33%)
E	74	118	26 (22%)	92 (78%)	26	14 (54%)	31	15 (58%)
F	74	138	61 (44%)	77 (56%)	37	23 (62%)	32	22 (59%)
G	73	329	147 (45%)	182 (55%)	71	20 (28%)	28	9 (13%)
H	72	236	44 (19%)	192 (81%)	41	9 (22%)	28	8 (20%)
I	70	176	40 (23%)	136 (77%)	58	22 (38%)	17	28 (48%)
J	68	216	71 (33%)	145 (67%)	37	15 (41%)	56	8 (22%)
K	65	376	154 (41%)	222 (59%)	70	29 (41%)	34*	15 (43%)
L	65	89	32 (36%)	57 (64%)	51	17 (33%)	11	35 (69%)
M	64	180	39 (22%)	141 (78%)	50	19 (38%)	38	28 (56%)
N	64	99	6 (6%)	93 (94%)	18	5 (28%)	22	4 (22%)
O	63	205	76 (37%)	129 (63%)	55	22 (40%)	33	21 (38%)
P	62	94	31 (33%)	63 (67%)	48	21 (44%)	22	32 (67%)
Q	62	230	105 (46%)	125 (54%)	35	26 (74%)	36	10 (29%)
R	61	187	75 (40%)	112 (60%)	40	21 (53%)	64	13 (33%)
S	60	101	8 (8%)	93 (92%)	43	7 (16%)	18	27 (63%)
T	58	76	39 (51%)	37 (49%)	25	17 (68%)	36	16 (64%)
U	46	60	2 (3%)	58 (97%)	15	1 (7%)	25	9 (60%)

NB: *the longest thread in these groups was not the introductory thread.

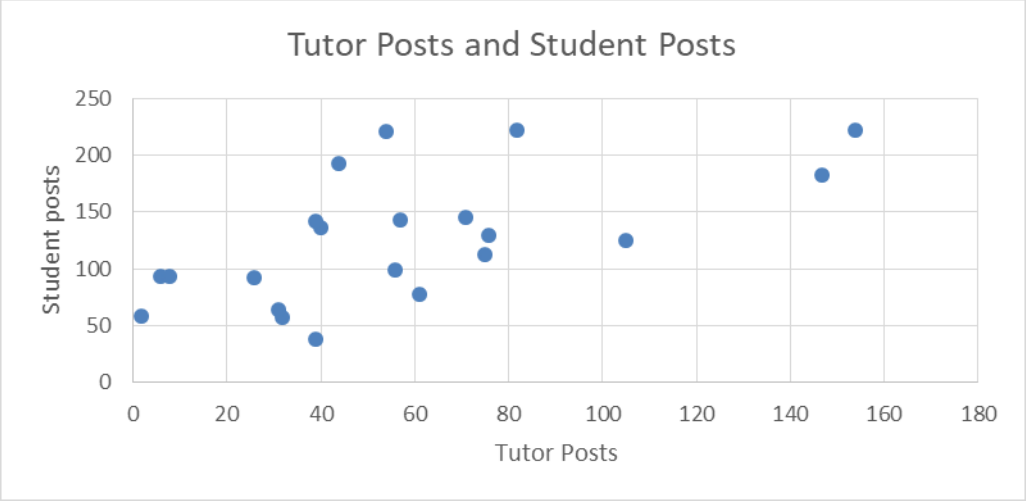
There was not a significant relationship between student retention and the number of tutor posts; however, a strong (Evans, 1996) and significant relationship existed between the total number of student posts and student retention ($p<0.01$ two-tailed, Pearson $r=0.628$). This relationship is illustrated in Figure 2.

Figure 2. Tutor Group Retention and Student Posts



Although there was not a significant relationship between the number of tutor posts and student retention, there was some evidence to suggest an indirect influence. A strong and significant relationship existed between the number of tutor posts and the number of student posts ($p<0.001$, two tailed, Pearson $r=0.86$) as shown in Figure 3.

Figure 3. Tutor Posts and Student Posts



Discussion

Retention is an important outcome measure of effective teaching and learning in undergraduate education. The purpose of this study was to investigate the potential link between TGF activity and retention to inform future practice and curriculum design.

Total Tutor Group Posts and Student Retention

The results show that a significant relationship exists between the number of TGF posts (by students and tutors) and student retention ($p<0.05$ two-tailed, Pearson $r=0.53$). This indicates that the overall level of forum activity is an important factor for understanding student retention issues; however, within this context, it is the number of posts by students which is significant ($p<0.01$ two-tailed, Pearson $r=0.628$), and not the number of posts made by tutors. The findings imply that tutor posts may have an indirect influence, as a strong and significant relationship existed between the number of tutor posts and the number of student posts ($p<0.001$, two tailed, Pearson $r=0.86$).

The data provide support for hypothesis A showing a significant relationship between TGF posts and retention. For example, the least active TGF (a total number of 60 posts) had the lowest retention at 46% (see Table 1). In this instance, the tutor only initiated one discussion thread and commented on another, suggesting that they had not engaged with this communication tool. The students within this group did engage with the compulsory element at the start of the module which gained 25 posts, and initiated 14 further discussion threads, 9 of which did not gain any response. It is possible that tutors used other forms of communication individually with students; however, the tutor guidance for this module stipulates that the TGF is the main form of communication with students. Further to this all five tutor groups where the total number of TGF forum posts for each group was less than 100 had retention figures of 65% or less, falling in the lower half of the module's retention by tutor group. The figures imply that lower student retention may have been influenced by lower levels of TGF activity. In contrast the two tutor groups with the highest retention (90% and 86%) both had very active TGFs with 274 and 303 posts respectively. Yet, the group with the highest number of posts (376) did not have the highest retention (65%), which suggests a more intricate relationship than simply more posts equals better retention. For example, the nature of the posts and their content, the number of individual students posting, the timeliness of posts and the interaction between posts are all factors that may influence the effectiveness of forum communication and ultimately impact retention.

According to Thorpe and Norwood (2013) TGFs help reduce isolation, and so in this instance students within the groups showing lower participation may have experienced feelings of isolation, a factor known to contribute to withdrawal (Angelino, Williams, & Natvig, 2007); however, although activities in the module materials direct students to the TGF at various stages to discuss key issues they are not compulsory to pass the module, and therefore as reported by Simons,

Beaumont and Holland (2018) students short of time may choose not to engage in these tasks, without being at risk of withdrawal. Unsurprisingly the compulsory introductory post leads to an extremely high volume of forum posts within the first two weeks of the module, and for all but two tutor groups this was the longest discussion thread. This reinforces the view that communicative activities should be compulsory rather than optional to increase uptake, although as Oliver and Shaw (2003) advise, engagement does not necessarily lead to interaction, and in this instance introductory posts could be simply a way to "play the game" and gain marks for assessment.

Tutor and Student Contributions to TGF Activity and Retention

The number of posts by students showed a significant relationship to retention ($p<0.01$ two-tailed, Pearson $r=0.628$), supporting hypothesis C, but not the number of posts made by tutors, rejecting hypothesis B. A strong and significant relationship existed between the number of tutor posts and the number of student posts ($p<0.001$, two tailed, Pearson $r=0.86$), supporting hypothesis D, which suggests an indirect relationship between tutor posts and student retention. For example, a tutor who is active on the forum encourages greater engagement from their students, and increased student forum activity has a significant relationship to retention; however, the three groups with the highest retention had relatively lower percentages of tutor-initiated discussion threads, which could be indicative of more confident, autonomous learners.

These data support Kear's (2002) research where students reported input from other students to be more important to them than input from staff; however, with such a strong correlation between student and tutor contributions the tutor role may have greater significance than these statistics suggest. For example, if we investigate individual TGF data further, Table 1 shows that the top 5 tutor groups in terms of retention had tutors that posted moderately on their TGFs, ranging from 26–82 posts, with percentage contributions of 20%–36%. The 5 tutors with lowest retention posted 2–105 posts with percentage contributions of 3%–51%, thus showing a wider range of variation. The tutor making the highest number of posts (154, 41% of the total TGF posts), did not achieve the highest retention, with a tutor group retention figure of 65%. The tutor with the lowest number of posts, with only 2 posts, had the lowest retention of 46%, supporting research by Yuan and Kim (2014) that lack of interaction may lead to dropout. These figures suggest an intricate relationship between tutor and student contributions to tutor group forums, implying that there may be an optimal level of TGF activity that is engaging, but not too time consuming and demanding for those involved, and further investigation is needed to potentially identify optimal levels of tutor involvement. In addition, the skill of the tutor in moderating the TGF in terms of organisation and structure (Vonderwell and Zachariah, 2005) and students feeling valued and safe (Rovai, 2007) must also be taken into account rather than a sole focus on volume of posts. The findings of the current study would appear to support those of Nandi, Hamilton and Harland (2012) who concluded that a

combination of student-centred and tutor-centred discussion elicits the most positive outcome.

Implications for Practice and Future Study

Whilst this study has provided an insight into the links between TGF engagement and student retention for Open University sport and fitness Level 1 students it does have some limitations. One of the main limitations of this study is that the content of forum posts was not qualitatively analysed. This would be useful to further explore Rovai's (2007) suggestion that skilful moderation and the quality of tutor posts is as important as quantity. In addition, further investigation is needed to include more detailed analysis of student contributions. For example, whether it is the same students who do not engage with the forum that fail to complete the module. Other limitations include not collecting data on how many students posted rather than just the number of posts and an exploration of how the retention of those students who didn't post at all compared to those who did. In addition, only looking at data from one presentation may not account for variations in student behaviour from one year to the next.

There are many factors such as the timing of responses to posts in each forum and the contribution of postings across the spread of the tutor group that would benefit from further exploration. In addition, passive readers who engage with the forum but do not post were included in this study but not categorised. These students form an important demographic as they are still considered to be engaging with the forum and benefitting from doing so. Future qualitative studies would gain from exploring tutor and student perspectives to give richer data to support quantitative data and the fact that retention is influenced by many factors, not just forum engagement (although it may be a good indicator). Studies comparing more than one presentation, involving the same tutors, would also prove useful in evaluating consistency of student TGF use.

It is important to note that TGFs are only one component of the module with factors such as tutor feedback, module resources and materials, tuition and assessment design potentially also contributing to retention. Additionally, the complex nature of open access distance university students are unaccounted for, with withdrawal often linked to personal circumstances. It is therefore difficult to imply a direct causal relationship between TGF engagement and student retention; however, it may be that lack of engagement with the forum could be indicative of a lack of engagement with the module more generally (both student and tutor) and so TGF use could be a useful indicator to tutors of any "at risk" students. Data presented in this study suggests that effective moderation of TGFs to aid the retention of students involves moderate tutor involvement to encourage student engagement. In fact, the study would propose an optimal level of tutor involvement whereby too few posts by the tutor can cause lack of student engagement and poor retention, and excessive tutor posts can fail to lead to greater retention; however, further study is recommended to compare TGF activity with other activity such as assessment grades, accessing online materials, and attendance at online tutorials.

Conclusion

This study provides support for a positive relationship between TGF activity and student retention on a Level 1 module at The Open University. As such care should be taken to encourage both tutor and student engagement with module forums to create an online learning community to reduce student isolation and potentially aid retention. Although retention is multi-faceted, with many factors beyond the TGF influencing retention, it seems that the tutor is key in influencing student engagement with forums. The findings reveal a strong positive relationship between the number of student and tutor posts, suggesting that that if tutors engage then students will too; however, the impact of tutor posts is overshadowed by the stronger positive relationship found between the volume of student posts and student retention. This indicates that the level of student engagement within asynchronous forums is an important factor for educators to note when seeking to develop successful online learning experiences.

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Incorporating Movie Clips to Validate Learning: A Students' Assessment

By Esha Sekhri[*]

The use of movie-based educational interventions has been widely used in the pedagogy of psychology. Wherein most of the researchers have included full-length movies in their teaching followed by students' comments of its effectiveness; the current research was carried out to examine if or not students will be able to find relevant clips from the list of movies provided and incorporate those in their group workshops after being exposed to the theoretical knowledge in their lecture class. To gauge how the participants received it and what suggestions do they have to offer for the improvement of this innovative exercise an anonymous survey and a semi open-ended interview was used. The research was conducted in three trimesters of academic years 2018 and 2019. On analysis of the raw data, it was found that the students rated the assignment favorably and reported that movie clips helped them understand the course material better and enabled them to apply psychological concepts to real-life situations. The findings suggest that movie clips can facilitate the learning process and can prove to be an efficacious tool to validate students' learning.

Keywords: education, movie-clips based learning, introduction to psychology, undergraduate elective course, validation of student learning

Introduction

"A unique property of film is its ability to make one see and grasp things which only the cinema is privileged to communicate" (Kracauer, 1973).

Cinema is well-known for its persuasiveness that can effortlessly hold its audiences' attention for longer periods (Hinde, Smith, & Gilchrist, 2018). Research suggests that people in the USA spend 4 hours and 46 minutes watching film and TV every day (Fottrell, 2018), with worldwide cinema box office revenues at the US $41.1 billion (Motion Picture Association of America - MPAA, 2019).

Beyond the classroom walls, students absorb massive volumes of information from feature films, a lot of which depicts psychological themes and undertones. They do this without really appreciating the underlying meaning of what is being viewed. By bringing movie-based learning to the classroom, educators can bridge the gap between ignorant out-of-school experiences and refined understanding of the deeper psychological issues portrayed in the movies. Thus, using movies in the classroom to understand pedagogy of psychology is an important research topic.

A comprehensive review of film studies literature suggests that the unique features of film make it an uncommonly powerful teaching tool (Champoux, 1999).

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Salomon (1979) found that individuals learn, new, novel and abstract concepts more easily when presented with both verbal and visual form. Movie learning scenarios present valuable opportunities for better identification and understanding of psychological issues. Movies encompass complex processes like symbolic representation (Sharma, Sharma, & Ghai, 2013). The visual representation and interplay of emotions depicted in the movies provide firsthand perspective to its viewers. Thus, utilizing these in understanding intricate psychological concepts is expected to promote learning.

Film is not only most popular art form but also has tremendous pedagogical utility which ensures student engagement and motivation. Many theorists argue that films bring vivacity to courses (Wedding, Wongpakaran, & Wongpakaran, 2017) and claim that films should be made an essential component of any curriculum. Owing to its usefulness and effectiveness, movies are being used by various researchers in their respective fields from the late 1970s. However, a surge of research publications was noticed in the late 1990s and since then, numerous articles containing critiques of films and creative ideas for incorporating films into classrooms have been published, for example, publications exist on educational use of movies in Counselor Education (Higgins & Dermer, 2001; Holloway, Oxford, & Wilzeck, 2016), History (Marcus, 2005), Law (Anderson, 1992), English as Second/Foreign Language (Bazilewich, 2009; Ekahitanond, 2011; Xhemaili, 2013), Medicine (Crellin & Briones, 1995), Management education (Champoux, 1999), Sociology (Moskovich & Sharf, 2012), Psychiatry (Sharma, Sharma, & Ghai, 2013; Graf et al., 2014) and Psychology (Anderson, 1992; Badura, 2002; Bolt, 1976; Boyatzis, 1994; Dorris, 1978; Hauenstein & Riddle, 2003; Lafferty, 2013; Paddock, Terranova, & Giles, 2001; Petkari, 2017; Roskos-Ewoldsen & Roskos-Ewoldsen, 2001; Searight & Saunders, 2014; Smithikrai, 2016; Wedding, Wongpakaran, & Wongpakaran, 2017).

Literature Review

Discussions supporting Incorporating Movies in Pedagogy

All the afore stated, and numerous other researches reiterate and reinforce the benefits of incorporating movies into pedagogy which include, but are not limited to, making course topics immediate, relevant, and concrete (Kinney, 1975; Moskovich & Sharf, 2012; Nissim-Sabat, 1979); presenting behavior with such great intricacy and detailing that is not possible with other modes of instruction (Bolt, 1976). When coupled with deliberations and discussions, movies are found to encourage students' direct engagement with psychological concerns, which are integral in refining their critical thinking skills (Costin, 1982). Cowen (1984) stated that visual media make concepts more accessible to individuals than text media and help with later recall. Anderson (1992) indicated that movies improve analytical and perspective-taking skills. Roskos-Ewoldsen and Roskos-Ewoldsen (2001) argued that video clips heighten understanding and application of concepts, these also make concepts seem more realistic and class more enjoyable.

Christopher, Walter, Marek, and Loenig (2004) suggested that movies offer greater understanding and application of concepts, make understanding easier than a textbook alone can do, and is a good supplement to lecturing. Furthermore, Morze (2008) suggested that movies enhance comprehension for refining critical thought and aid learners in examining new perspectives. Russell and Waters (2010) submitted that films bring people closer to people, events, and issues that they are studying. Films also enhance learners' learning experience and stimulate active participation (Ruusunen, 2011).

Sharma, Sharma, and Ghai (2013), in their paper, contended that using movies as a teaching tool create emotionally meaningful experiences that make far lasting impressions and are viewed as enjoyable and valuable by the students when compared to any other mode of presentation. Additionally, learning through aesthetics, which includes movies, stimulate learner reflection (Blasco et al., 2015).

Several researches have also hinted that movies support increased student involvement, motivation, engagement and learning (Holloway, Oxford, & Wilczek, 2016; Kadivar et al., 2018). Another significant benefit of blending movies in the teaching-learning process, as professed by Smithikrai (2016), was that movies tap both affective and cognitive experiences of learners. The researcher further concluded that teaching with movies promote positive characteristics and behaviors. Wedding, Wongpakaran, and Wongpakaran (2017) in their research ingeminated that through the subtleties of editing and juxtaposition of sound and image, a good film can provide first-hand perspective, which is not easily imparted by lectures or textbooks. Last but not the least, movies have proven effectual in aiding recall of course content and exposure of students to authentic and realistic scenarios (Green, n.d.).

Research Questions

On a thorough reading of over 60 research papers and articles, following gaps were identified by the researcher – almost all the researches have exclusively focused on students majoring in psychology; the author of the current paper couldn't spot even a single study that was conducted on students taking psychology as an elective zero-level course. Furthermore, of all the explored researches none but one was carried out in the middle-eastern part of the world. Additionally, most of the researchers and educators have used full-length movies to critique either the psychological content of the movie or the exercise of movie viewing in general; effectiveness of using movie clips remains briefly addressed in the literature. Finally, almost every researcher has integrated movies in his/her teaching and has then studied its effect on students' enthusiasm, attitude or interest towards the exercise. In the current research, the students take the front seat and after being exposed to the contents of the chapter in the lecture they are expected to watch the movie from the listed movies and then find, edit and discuss the clips that are relevant to and cohesive with the contents taught in the class. In other words, movie clips were used as an instrument to validate students' learning and

understanding of lecture contents. Based on above gaps, following research questions were formulated.

1. Will the students be able to critically analyze the movie and bring relevant clips from it to be discussed in their group workshops?
2. What do students think about the effectiveness of movie-clips based workshops as a tool to analyze psychological concepts?
3. What additional recommendations, comments or feedback do students have for improving the said assignment?

Methodology

Sample

The present research study was carried out in the Middle Eastern campus of a Western University, in a zero-level foundation course entitled Introduction to Psychology, in the fall trimester of 2018 and spring and summer trimesters of the year 2019.

A typical tutorial class for this course constitutes a heterogeneous population with mixed demographics, talents and learning backgrounds. All the tutorials are capped at 25 students per section. The total sample was distributed in 14 sections, of which the author of the study taught eight sections. All in all, the research sample comprised of 193 students of which 104 were male students and 89 females. The average age of the participants was 21.2 years. None of the students had previously received any specific instructions/training in using or critiquing Hollywood movie clips, although they had some exposure to educational videos, which were used by the course instructors in the same or other subjects.

In each tutorial, one group comprising 3-4 students were asked to present a 40-45 minutes group workshop on a chosen topic. Since, without proper guidance students might choose movies that may not offer optimal material for this assignment, hence, they were asked to pick one movie from the list provided by the course instructors (Please refer to Appendix I for the list of topics and movies provided). The students were further asked to present the contents and concepts of the chosen topic using the clips from that particular movie.

Each class section followed the same schedule. The presenters used movie clips as one of the teaching assistant forms along with other tools like PowerPoint presentations, explanation, discussions, activities and quizzes etc. The presenters announced the topic and movie to be discussed a week prior to their workshop and the remaining students (audiences) were encouraged to view the movie for a better understanding of the workshop. Presenters were asked to view, assess, edit and discuss the clips as a part of their learning experience. Presenters were also encouraged to review research papers written and published on the chosen movie. This exercise helped them understand and analyze the movie from a psychological perspective. Prior to discussion of movie clips, presenters provided a brief narrative of the broader topic along with a gist of the movie indicating the protagonist, main

characters, plot and the storyline. Next, the presenters highlighted the underlying concepts that would be discussed using movie clips. The students were given free hand to use either inductive or deductive approach in explaining the concepts to their audiences. That is, they could either first show the movie clip and then explain the concept depicted or they could do the explanation first and then show relevant clips and ask the audiences to identify the phenomenon/idea depicted in the clip. The workshop was followed by an open class discussion involving the whole class. At the end of the workshop the students, both presenters and non-presenters, were encouraged to give their visceral critique of the movie clips and exercise.

After explaining the aim of the study to the participants and after obtaining verbal consent from them, students were asked to evaluate the assignment in terms of its effectiveness, novelty, being enjoyable, ease of understanding, application of concepts and its potency in stimulating class discussions.

Since, no single instrument can guarantee the complete truth (Hourigan, Leavy, & Carroll, 2016) hence, a parallel convergent mixed-method approach was adopted i.e. the data was collected both quantitatively (using questionnaires) and qualitatively (using interviews) to determine the effectiveness of said assignment.

Instruments

Questionnaire

A student feedback questionnaire was administered at the end of the course to explore how students received this innovative movie clips based workshop, what did they think of its effectiveness and, whether or not this was helpful in understanding various psychological concepts. For this, an anonymous survey of students enrolled in author's tutorials (N=193) was done. The questionnaire asked six nominal and 21 ordinal questions to be answered on a four-point Likert scale. Four-point scale was chosen as by removing the midpoint option one is minimizing respondents' attempts to "please the interviewer or appear helpful or not be seen to give what they perceive to be a socially unacceptable answer" (Garland, 1991).

The core areas covered in the tool encapsulated items pertaining prior presentation, during presentation, post presentation and suggestions for improvement (Please refer to Appendix II for the questionnaire). Seven experts including two educationists, three psychologists and two language experts were asked to evaluate the content validity of the items on the questionnaire. Alongside 15 students, who had already taken the course in earlier semesters, also assessed the validity of the questionnaire. All the experts and students were asked to point out any items or words that they found ambiguous or had difficulty understanding. Their collective feedback was used to modify the items. The questionnaire's reliability was ascertained using Cronbach's alpha, which turned out to be fairly high (0.87), establishing the homogeneity of the test. The collected data was further analyzed using Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) 24.0 software.

Interviews

The qualitative data for the current research was obtained using the semi-structured interviews. A total of 54 students participated voluntarily in the informal interview. The interview form consisted of three questions and was aimed to probe deeper into students' attitudes and feelings with regards to movie-clips based workshops. Additional suggestions for improving the assignment were also sought. Each interview lasted for about 15 minutes. All the interviews were audio recorded and were transcribed later.

Students' Evaluation of the Assignment

Review of Survey Findings

Quantitative method was used to analyze the responses obtained on the survey questionnaire. At this point, negative items were scored in the reverse order. To analyze the data obtained on the questionnaire SPSS 24.0 was utilized. This software provided information in the form of frequency distribution and percentages. The results obtained from the questionnaire show that in general most of the students (86.4-92%) found movie-clips based workshops more enjoyable, useful and interesting. A fairly high percentage of partakers (76.4%) affirmed that using movie clips was a novel way in delivering group workshops. A similarly high percentage of participants (88.2%) stated that movie clips enhanced their understanding of concepts and enabled them to cognize difficult theoretical concepts in more realistic ways (82%). Significantly large percentage (70.2%) of participants strongly agreed/agreed that they felt more confident when talking about the movies. One reason for this could be that films have become a part and parcel of everyone's life and when one talks about movies, he/she feels more assured about it. A lion's share (73.2%) believed that movies are a good means to get young people enthusiastic about their subject and/or topic. Major chunk of the undergraduates (65.8%) averred that they enjoyed other groups' workshop. There was a little decline in the results in this question as compared to all other items on the questionnaire because not all audiences watched the movies prior to the group workshop, which marred their interest in other groups' workshop. 68% participants strongly agreed/agreed that having movie-clips based workshop helped in stimulating class discussions and almost similar percentage (71.5%) established that they were asked invigorating questions about their workshops. When asked whether they would recommend the use of movie clips in future use and in other courses, a high proportion – 78.2% and 75.6% respectively – provided affirmative responses.

Furthermore, a lion's share of the participants (93.2%) established that using movie clips was a wonderful tool for teaching and learning of psychology and its concepts. On an equal footing, 87.8% of the students believed that movie-clips based workshops are better than lecture style workshops. When enquired about learning the course contents using movie-based workshops, 85.4% of the

participants indicated that this mode of delivery minimized rote-memorization substantially. Several students (77.4%) avowed that they became more interested in their psychology class because it included an assessment containing movies.

On the negative items in the questionnaire, a steep decline was noticed in the affirmative responses. A marginal part (19.7%) of the research partakers found fetching relevant clips from the movie arduous. Likewise, miniscule portion (16.4%) of the participants believed that weighting for the said assignment was too much. A similar proportion of members (18.3%) believed that working on group workshops using movie clips was more time consuming than other assignments. Finally, almost one-third (33%) of the students believed that full-length movies should be used in the classroom over short clips. Although it seems like a fairly high percentage, but it is worth noting that these responses came from those participants who didn't watch the movie beforehand and hence wanted lecture timings to be devoted to viewing the movie.

The last item was intended to capture the overall emotion of the activity and it was found that major chunk of the participants (89.1%) established that the said assignment was the highlight of their Introduction to Psychology course.

Conclusively, the survey data clearly indicated that students enjoyed all aspects of this novel assignment. Although all other assignments provide a brief glimpse into psychology, they fall short of creating the actual climate that enhances students' comprehension of the subject (Higgins & Dermer, 2001). Movies provide an opportunity to observe body language, facial expressions, interactions between the characters and even the social environment in which the interactions take place. Consequently, they fill the void that remains in using one-dimensional sources of information like written examinations, essays, reflective pieces, posters, presentations etc.

Review of Findings for the Interview

The most emergent theme while analyzing interviews was that movie clips based group workshop was an interesting, innovative and inspirational exercise as can be seen from the following testimonies,

> "It was really interesting, the things that I learnt in the lecture, I am seeing them live in the film. I could constantly reflect on what I was seeing."

Another comment included,

> "when you hear the word movie, first thing that pops in your head is fun or a reward or leisure time activity … little did I know that these can be exceptionally valuable in understanding academic content as well ... a very innovative approach, I must admit!"

Many participants, through their testaments, averred that the current project contributed largely to deep learning and understanding of psychological concepts; a comment that highlights this emotion includes,

> "I am not someone who can rote memorize stuff, I need to understand and apply what I have received in lectures … movies have done just that … they contributed to my deeper learning as opposed to the superficial learning, which normally doesn't happen in a zero-level course".

The connection that got established between theoretical knowledge received in lectures and real life examples displayed in movies was highly appreciated by all the participants, for example, a member of the group who presented on the topic of 'psychological disorders' stated,

> "Film offered a unique opportunity to seek realistic manifestations of a person suffering from schizophrenia. I also got to know how films can, (sometimes) offer an inaccurate portrayal of a mental disorder…"

Another student commented on clarity and true-to-life experiences rendered by movies and how these helped in making psychological ideas more tangible

> "movie clips based workshops helped me academically, it simplified the content, made it more concrete and made concepts and long theories more realistic."

Yet another participant, who was interning in a Multinational Company, drew parallels between case studies and movies,

> "I have worked on several projects involving case studies … films, are a visual representation of those case studies and hence, are more appealing, evocative and enthralling. I'll ask my reporting manager to inculcate movie clips in our training sessions as well."

The role of movies in providing firsthand view was also highlighted in a few testimonies,

> "I liked learning through movies… movie doesn't teach you like a book… you can actually see it happening, you get a glimpse of what it is to live with amnesia (for instance) … it provides you with first hand perspective of people's lives and their stories."

Another student expressed a similar sentiment,

> "as an engineer, I don't have any examples or experiences to draw while understanding a few psychological concepts like disorders or therapies or even certain theories … movies filled that void … films made me a critical analyzer of psychological concepts."

Another student commented on the familiarity and attention-binding capacity of the movies,

> "Films are well-known, attention-capturing medium … no one needs to be coaxed into watching movies, you know … so when I heard that we will be using movies in

> the course, it increased my motivation for attending the class … and as expected, my 13-weeks experience has been so rewarding."

An undergraduate mentioned how (before watching the film),

> "some of the notions and theories had been vague, it seemed like a lot of content to be memorized for a zero-level course, but after viewing the movie, everything fell into place … it seemed like all the dots, that I thought could never be connected, got connected."

Another star student (whose group got the highest marks in the said assignment in Spring semester of 2019) highlighted the importance of discussions that followed the group workshop,

> "the best thing about this workshop was the discussions that followed it … it not just stimulated me or other high achievers, but even got the less participating ones talking. The clarity achieved by discussions added more to my knowledge repertoire. I would love to see and be a part of such workshops in my other subjects as well."

One student highlighted the emotions evoked by movies over a regular activity-based workshop,

> "films strike a chord, these evoke emotions and make you feel a connection with the character being portrayed, as if he was portraying the journey of your life … and when such a connection is made, study becomes a story … a story you can relate to … a story that you don't need to memorize."

Another student built her argument on the learning style, she claimed,

> "I am a visual learner, I learn better when I see things over just reading from the book … including movies in our course was such a brilliant idea ... I am sure many students would have benefitted from this exercise."

The same student further proposed the idea of having a library of movies and movie clips,

> "we must build a library of movie clips relating to the course contents so that all visual learners, like myself, can benefit from it."

The flexibility of anytime anywhere viewing was also highlighted by one of the participants,

> "when you (the instructor) first announced that group workshops are going to be movie clips based, I thought we will have to watch the movie in the lectures and then bring the relevant clips to the tutorial classes … but the flexibility conferred by this style of workshop was amazing … I could pause, play, pause as and when required…"

Similar opinion was seconded by another member of the same group,

> "At first I thought, we will be able to find only 5-6 relevant clips but when we watched the movie, it seemed like every other scene is related to the contents taught in the class. We revisited the full-length movie three times and we dipped in and out several times before we were able to carefully scrutinize at least 17 clips that could put our message across."

One student mentioned that the idea of having a movie clips based workshop seemed childish at first,

> "at first it seemed impractical … nobody likes change, there is always some resistance because of unfamiliarity … I mean, it's a completely different way of thinking … how can someone teach using movie clips, you cannot expect everyone would have seen the movie beforehand and expecting the presenters to give an overall view in five minutes also seemed lame … but everyone got so fascinated by the idea of movie that almost everyone seemed to have enjoyed this activity thoroughly."

When asked about additional recommendations, comments or feedback for improving the assignment, most of the students avowed that the exercise needs no alteration and that it is highly effective in terms of the objectives it aims to accomplish. However, a handful of students provided suggestions for making the assignment more effectual and successful. Samples include:

> "It would be better if you use the similar strategy in our lecture classes as well … movies evoke discussion … it can be a pleasant break from the lecture format."

> "I know it can be a time constraint but it would be better if we could be made to see full-length movies in lecture class or a separate two-hour class. This way each and every one would have participated and benefited from the discussions that happen in the tutorials."

> "I feel we must also be asked to submit a report containing an overall critique of the movie, owing to time constraints, the presenters (sometimes) are not able to show all the clips that they have identified … like we identified more than twenty clips in 'The curious case of Benjamin Button' but were able to show only 12 of them … had we been given more time or additional assignment like a report or essay, we would have showcased our hard work in its totality."

A similar sentiment was expressed by another student,

> "I feel we should give at least 35% weighting to this assignment – 20% for the group workshop and remaining 15% to the group report that the presenters should be asked to submit – we'll benefit more from this exercise if it accompanies a report submission as well."

Another important suggestion highlighted was the provision of list of recommended readings,

> "The obligation to read scholarly research articles and incorporating the findings in the workshop is really good, though it would have been better if you (the instructor)

provided the recommended reading list … that would have made the work lighter and concentrated."

Discussion

The objective of this study was to validate students' learning of psychological concepts using Hollywood movie-clips based workshops. To this aim three research questions were formulated. The following discussion considers each in turn. First of all, nearly all the groups did a marvelous job at analyzing the movie and bringing subsequent clips from it to be discussed in the class. This research question was majorly answered using researcher's observation and assessment of students' workshops along with the feedback interviews of the participants. All but one of the groups brought more than 8 clips that were highly relevant to and cohesive with the contents taught in the lecture. Many groups thought that the time limit imposed on them was the major drawback of this assignment as they had identified more clips to illustrate the concepts than they could actually show in the class. Students also highlighted the importance of proper guidance that was provided to them in the beginning of the semester. They averred that some handholding was required for this exercise, as they had never done such an assignment before. Clarity of instructions is critical for students' performance when trying a new assessment. Sowell (2017) has precisely captured this sentiment when he claimed that instruction giving has a direct effect on learning; a lesson or activity becomes chaotic and fails when students do not understand what they are supposed to do.

The second question was explored using both an anonymous survey as well as a semi-open ended interview. The participants were asked to share their thoughts about the effectiveness of innovative movie-clips based group workshops in comprehending and analyzing psychological concepts. The results obtained from quantitative data indicated that participants thoroughly enjoyed this useful, interesting, avant-garde and spellbinding activity. These findings are in line with Wiertelak (2002) and Wedding, Wongpakaran, and Wongpakaran (2017). Furthermore, the findings of this study reveal that using movies to understand psychology has solid advantages including enhanced understanding of psychological concepts, presenting abstract ideas concretely and in a more realistic way, and facilitating class discussions. This is in agreement with a number of studies (for example, Boyatzis, 1994; Christopher, Walter, Marek, & Loenig, 2004; Conner, 1996; Davidson, 1990; Kinney, 1975; Moskovich & Sharf, 2012; Nissim-Sabat, 1979). Reflections after the workshop promoted discussions, which in turn furthered learners' critical thinking skills, this finding supports the conclusions established by Costin (1982). A highly affirmative response on recommendation of the activity for future use in same as well as other courses insinuate that partakers found it to be a highly rewarding and stimulating experience. This is consistent with what has been found in the previous studies including Bluestone (2000) and Ruusunen (2011).

The qualitative results established by the informal interview harmonized with the results obtained on the quantitative spectrum of the current research study.

Many students voiced their opinions, thoughts and feelings on the effectiveness, usefulness as well on the ways of improving the said assignment. The most common reactions among the students after their workshop were that it was a fun, motivating and attention-grabbing assignment. A similar pattern of results was obtained in Gee and Dyck (1998), Kirsh (1998), Sharma, Sharma, and Ghai (2013) and Shin (2017). The connection that got established between the four walls of the lecture theatre and the world outside it was deeply appreciated by all the participants. A similar conclusion was reached by Hyler and Moore (1996) and Davis (2000) who asserted that movies aid the application of concepts from the coursework to real life.

The pedagogical gains in having movie-clips based workshops was seen both on individual and group levels. On individual level, it fostered reflection, created emotionally meaningful experiences, evoked emotions and promoted deep learning over superficial rote learning; on group level a collective team effort was observed. Other researchers like Sharma, Sharma, and Ghai (2013), Blasco et al. (2015) and Tan (2018) support such observations. Realization of reflective skills and other higher order skills require hands-on experience and in-depth discussions, both of which were vital components of this exercise. One of the most repeated sentiments was that such a task is highly beneficial in understanding academic content. This finding is consistent with what has been found in previous studies like Salomon (1979) and Cowen (1984).

Last but not the least, when enquired about the suggestions and recommendations to improve the assignment, some students averred that the activity could be made more relevant if similar strategy be used in lecture classes as well. Their line of thinking was that more exposure would lead to better outcomes and viewing a role-model incorporating similar strategy in her teaching would proffer more clarity to use clips judiciously. A further novel finding of this research was students' opinion on submission of report alongside the group workshop. Participants believed that owing to time barriers they were not able to showcase their efforts in entirety and hence, if they were asked to submit a written report, the assignment would have been better justified. In line with this proposal, the students demanded the weighting of the assignment to be increased from 20% to at least 35%. They felt that finding scholarly articles for an assignment worth 20% for a zero-level course was a lot of work to do and that the provision of list of recommended readings from the instructors would have made their work lighter, easier and more fun.

All in all, the present study provided fresh evidence that using films in psychology courses, and specifically in introductory psychology course, can promote active learning; minimize rote learning and; encourage high level of involvement.

Limitations and Recommendations for Future Research

Every study, no matter how well it is conducted and constructed, has certain limitations (Simon & Goes, 2013). The primary limitation to the generalization of the results obtained in the current paper is its sample size. The study was conducted in one of the western universities in United Arab Emirates with the students who opted Introduction to Psychology as their elective course. Future researchers can further the findings of this research by conducting it on students enrolled in another universities across the country. A comparative study within various elective courses viz. sociology and philosophy can also be done.

Additionally, the time frame in which the researcher conducted the study was very limited. The investigator could not investigate how much this intervention can aid the retention of content and topics in long run. To see the said effects, further research can be done on the same sample after an interval of six months to one year. Another limitation of this research is its design, which used only survey and interviews to gauge the effectiveness of the intervention. A fully experimental pretest post-test design would be more powerful to test the efficacy and success of the assignment. Another area worth investigating is the comparison of grades obtained in the movie-clips based workshops with the performance on other oral and written assignments. This will provide a better insight of the usefulness of movies to teach and learn psychological concepts. Last and the final proposal for future inquiry came directly from students' interview where they recommended the submission of reflective and/or informative report to showcase their efforts in totality.

Conclusion

Through an analysis of questionnaire and interview responses, the current study, has provided converging evidence that the use of movie clips adds value to the process of learning of psychological concepts and creates motivation in the learning environment. Based on the results of the study, it can be safely concluded that using movie clips in group workshops stimulates class discussions, generates student interest and has a noteworthy effect on their understanding and retention of psychological concepts. Students' evaluations of the assignment provided a clear indication that this assignment was well received by them and they want it to be replicated in the pedagogy of other modules and courses as well. Conclusively, through the current research paper the researcher strongly advocates the use of movie clips to validate students' learning.

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Appendix 1.

Workshop Topics and Suggested Movies

Group Workshop Topics	Suggested Movies
Consciousness (Altered state: Usage of drugs)	Limitless (Dixon, Kroopf, Kavanaugh, & Burger, 2011); Lucy (Besson-Silla & Besson, 2014)
Learning	Tarzan (Arnold, Lima, & Buck, 1999); Chappie (Blomkamp, Blomkamp, & Kinberg, 2015)
Memory and Forgetting	The Bourne Identity (Liman, Crowley, Gladstein, & Liman, 2002) Memento (Todd, Todd, & Nolan, 2000); Before I go to sleep (Lerner et al., 2014)
Development across Lifespan	The curious case of Benjamin Button (Chaffin, Kennedy, Marshall, & Fincher, 2008); Boyhood (Linklater et al., 2014)
Motivation + Stress and Health	The pursuit of happyness (Smith et al., 2006); 127 hours (Boyle, Colson, Smithson, & Boyle, 2010); The social network (Rudin et al., 2010)
Social Psychology	The Stanford prison experiment (Emery et al., 2015); The breakfast club (Tanen, Hughes, & Hughes, 1985); 12 Angry men (Fonda, Rose, & Lumet, 1957); Stand by me (Evans, Gideon, Scheinman, & Reiner, 1986)
Personality Theories	Goodwill Hunting (Bender & Van Sant, 1997); Ordinary people (Schwary & Redford, 1980); Spellbound (Selznick & Hitchcock, 1945)
Psychological Disorders	A beautiful mind (Grazer, Howard, & Howard, 2001); Fight club (Linson, Chaffin, Bell, & Fincher, 1999); Split (Shyamalan, Blum, Bienstock, & Shyamalan, 2016)

Appendix 2

Questionnaire for Students

The purpose of the survey is to gather information concerning your opinion regarding the effectiveness of movie clips based workshops. Choose the best-suited option among Strongly Agree, Agree, Disagree and Strongly Disagree. There are no right or wrong answers. It should take about 10 minutes to complete the survey. All responses are kept confidential. Please return the survey sheet to the instructor once you are finished answering.

Full Name of the Participant: _____
Sex: ☐ Male ☐ Female
Age (in years): _____
Major Area of Study: _____
University level: ☐ Freshman ☐ Sophomore ☐ Junior ☐ Senior
Prior experience with teaching with movie clips: _____

S. No.	Statement	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
1.	Using movies to learn psychological concepts is a useful way of learning					
2.	Using movie clips is a novel way to deliver/ conduct group workshops					
3.	Using movie clips enhanced my understanding of the concepts					
4.	Using movie clips helped me to understand the theoretical psychological concepts in a more realistic way					
5.	Working on using movie clips for workshop was more time consuming than other assignments					
6.	Finding relevant clips from the chosen movie was a difficult task					
7.	Film is a means of getting young people enthusiastic about their subject					
8.	I am more confident when talking about the films					

9.	I enjoyed other groups' movie clips based workshop					
10.	I was asked stimulating questions about my workshop					
11.	Using movie clips helped in stimulating class discussions					
12.	I would recommend the use of movie clips for future use in the course					
13.	I think movies should be used as a pedagogical tool in other courses too					
14.	The weighting of 20% for a movie clips based workshop was too much					
15.	Using movie clips as a teaching and learning assistant for this course was enjoyable					
16.	Movies can be a wonderful tool for teaching and learning psychology					
17.	Movie clips based workshop is preferable to normal activity-based workshop					
18.	Movie clips based workshop helped minimize rote memorization					
19.	It is advisable to use full-length movies in class over short clips from the movies					
20.	I became more interested in psychology class because it included assessment containing movies.					
21.	The movie clips based workshops was the highlight of my Introduction to Psychology course					

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"Our Organization Deals with People, not with Products": Perceptions of School Organizational Patterns

By Tamar Chen-Levi[*] & Yaffa Buskila[+]

This article is part of a wide-scope research examining teachers' perceptions regarding the organizational profile of their school. Research participants were asked about nine parameters that outline the school's organizational structure (Chen-Levi, 2019). Main research questions were: How do the three different groups of position-holders in the school- administrative staff, homeroom teachers, and subject-matter teachers – perceive the organizational profile of their school? What is the importance of each parameter that comprises a school's organizational profile? A loglinear analysis was performed to test whether the three groups differed in the way they related to these parameters. Differences or similarities in the faculty's perception of the school will have implications on the staff's internal cohesion, quality of its communication and staff members' motivation to contribute to change-related tasks that require a long-term view. Analysis of teachers' responses produced a picture according to which the criteria they regard as central to the school's organizational structure are: curriculum content and teaching methods, as well as innovation and changes in the organization. These areas are cornerstones in education. They stressed the need to expose students to a rich and varied education, challenging and encouraging curiosity in many disciplines by means of creative tools and constant innovation.

Keywords: organizational profile, school structure, teachers' perceptions, bureaucratic-hierarchical approach, systemic approach.

Introduction

Literature on organizational structures presents several theories for understanding them, beginning with the structural theory that regards the organization as a complex and sophisticated social machine, through newer approaches which perceive it as an open system, constantly learning and developing through interaction with its environment, feeding from it and contributing to it (Chen-Levi, 2016; Goldspink & Kay, 2003; Levin & Schrum, 2013; Shaked & Schechter, 2013; Senge, 2006).

Theoretical approaches employed to understand organizations appear to prove that they usually possess several common traits: constant production of desired products in order to procure the essential resources to perpetuate the organization's existence and functioning; systematic work distribution, where every individual in the organization is delegated a set of actions that combine into one well-defined role; activation of coordination processes and control mechanisms in order to achieve maximal efficacy under the existing conditions, and institutionalization of

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organizational processes; behaviors and interactions between components within the organization as well as between it and its outside environment, and more. The differing extents to which these traits exist in each organization enable us to describe and characterize each organization's unique profile and distinguish it from other social frameworks (Chen-Levi, 2019).

Despite their common characteristics, organizations can differ from each other dramatically in their conduct as well as in the manner in which they attempt to achieve their goals. A school is an organization characterized by pedagogical work and by the unique interrelation between its components (Chen-Levi, 2019). In order to understand its functioning, it is essential to understand its various sub-components, and the interaction between them. Whether a school's structure is bureaucratic-hierarchical or systemic is of utmost significance, thus this may even be deemed its central characteristic. This article attempts to assess perceptions of schools' organizational structures by school faculty and to understand the organizational processes occurring in them (Chen-Levi, 2016; 2019).

Criteria for Assessing a School's Organizational Profile

Seven of the nine criteria for assessing a school's organizational model were set by Sharan and Shachar (1990) based on a distinction made by Janowitz (1969) between two organizational models: the specialization model and the aggregation model. The specialization model is characterized by seeing the organization as a construct composed of various parts, each possessing its own distinct specialization and clear professional division. For example, teaching methods, school procedures, and school programs fall into this model. This approach is typical of organizations tending toward the bureaucratic-hierarchical model, whereas the aggregation model is based on a holistic approach toward the organization and the entirety of its components, and is more characteristic of a systems thinking model organization.

Based on Janowitz's model, criteria for assessing school functionality have been created, and then updated for schools' changing reality. These include the various aspects of school organization: complexity of staff organization, delegation of authority, curriculum content flexibility, teacher compartmentalization, flexibility during teaching, relating to change, and agreement regarding the school's policies and ideology. Each of these factors is rated on a ten-degree scale ranging from bureaucratic-hierarchical model characteristics on one end to systemic model characterizations on the other. In order to better differentiate the two models, we will illustrate how each of the above-specified areas is expressed in the bureaucratic-hierarchical model compared to how it is expressed in the systemic one. In a later research, two additional criteria were added: information overload and time pressure (Chen-Levi, 2019). These criteria emanated from a wide variety of research literature (Chajut & Algom, 2003; Eppler & Mengis, 2004; Jett & George, 2003; Kock, 2000; Santavirta, Solovieva & Theorell, 2007; Sutcliffe & Weick, 2008). These criteria present a broad picture of a school's organizational patterns and form its organizational profile.

The extent to which each of the nine criteria is present was graded on a scale from 1-5, from the bureaucratic-hierarchical model (1) to the systemic model (5).

1. Complexity of staff organization: the existence of a network of teams serving as the basis for creating a multidisciplinary curriculum
2. Delegation of authority: this area is an indication of structural and functional decentralization. Authority delegation allows for identifying problems and solving them, as well as for professional enrichment, mutual support and greater involvement on teachers' part.
3. Flexibility regarding curriculum: planning the curriculum, i.e. the choice and organization of meaningful study areas, constitutes the core of pedagogical activity within a school. It includes defining strategies and educational goals, as well as reflecting the school's educational approach.
4. Teacher compartmentalization into their subject-matter area: the idea of cooperation among teachers and between disciplines reveals the type of connections existing within a school. The establishment of teacher teams for interdisciplinary learning defines the school's approach to compartmentalization vs. holism.
5. Flexibility in teaching/learning times: the perception of time and the manner in which it can best be used stem from a school's ideology and organizational patterns.
6. Relating to change as an all-encompassing institutional process: the view of change as applying to the entire institution indicates that the latter is able to cope more efficiently with pedagogical and technological innovations. The participation of all school staff members in the innovation process indicates its systemic organizational structure.
7. Agreement and clarity concerning the school's policy and ideology: defining a uniform approach concerning the school's ideology, policies, and professional outlook among management and teachers is a principle of organization and personal relationships in all ranks of the organizational structure. A school's ideology and policies contribute to coordination and interaction between all of its subsystems (Borgatti & Foster, 2003; Daft, 1998; Whyte & Ellis, 2004; Wohlstetter, Malloy, Chau & Polhemus, 2003).
8. Time pressure: the need to cope with many tasks and goals within limited time may cause a discrepancy between the system's demands and teachers' ability to fulfill them. As a result, the sense of time pressure among faculty members increases, and performance quality may drop at times. Conversely, a low level of time pressure may attest to an organizational structure that enhances participation and encourages communication and distribution of tasks.
9. Coping with information: school faculty are exposed to large amounts of information throughout their work routine, such as curricula, changing regulations, new teaching methods, internal school information, staff meetings and PTA meetings'. Due to this abundance of information, very little sorting of information that enters the school is actually done, which

may cause a feeling of overload that could damage the management of the system and its subsystems.

Diagnosing a school's organizational structure on a scale ranging from bureaucratic-hierarchical to systemic is of great importance, since it allows for describing and understanding the sum total of interpersonal, professional, and group processes occurring in the school, as well as the mode of staff organization and work methods.

However, even after these nine criteria are examined, the question arises whether the staff sees itself as being responsible for each of these criteria in equal measure. For instance, do they perceive the extent of flexibility in teaching times as being as much their responsibility as is the extent of authority delegation? If certain areas are perceived as being outside the realm of teachers' responsibility, or as being dictated from above (for instance by the Education Ministry), this may affect their assessment of the school's organizational profile.

It is important to remember that there are additional factors affecting the perception of a school's organizational profile. The purpose of this paper is to explain the possible effects of parameters such as role (principal/vice principal/ coordinator/teacher etc.) and educational framework (elementary, middle and high school) on staff members' perception of the organization.

Therefore, this research attempts to answer the question: how do the different categories of school faculty perceive these nine parameters? As mentioned above, the method chosen to seek the answer to this question is a qualitative one. Another question explored here is whether the groups differ in their manner of relating to these criteria, which is examined via a loglinear analysis. This analysis presents a complete picture drawn from the experiences and perception of school faculty members.

The present research hypothesis states that the differences or similarities between the various school staff members' perceptions will have implications on the staff's internal cohesion, on the quality of communication between its members, on their motivation to contribute to change-related tasks requiring long-term vision, and on their readiness to commit and take responsibility.

Method

The research method chosen for this study is qualitative and criterion-focused. It was constructed out of combination of six methodologies, which reflect slightly different approaches (Shakedi, 2011). This methodology is somewhat more identified with the post-positivist approach than with other research strategies. Our preference for a criterion-focused method resulted from the scope of this research, the specific teacher populations examined in it, and its being part of a larger, mixed-method research.

This methodology[9] is different from the interpretive or narrative type. It stresses analytical research abilities over intuitive ones, meaning that the research is conducted with close attention to external criteria (theories, principles, categories) from beginning to end (Shakedi, 2011).

Though the criteria-guided principles underlying the methodology are closer to the positivist approaches of the traditional quantitative research, it (including all of its components) belongs to the area of qualitative research. In fact, the mere choice of words and language as a means of conducting and setting research criteria is a deviation from the absolute positivist research approach. Therefore, despite being presented alongside a quantitative research, it presents a verbal-descriptive picture speaking for itself. Some call this the "positivist-qualitative" research (Guba & Lincoln, 2005: 191-215). This paper's criteria-driven methodology is based on the literature review presented at the beginning of this paper, forming the theoretical background for this research. The questions the teachers were asked are descriptive and directly related to theoretical criteria, allowing for a clear and focused picture.

Participants

The research population included administrative teams[10], homeroom teachers, and subject-matter teachers in elementary and high schools in the Jewish public and public-religious school systems.

Participants consisted of 539 teachers – 486 female and 53 males, teaching in elementary and high schools. 189 were members of administrative staff, 165 were homeroom teachers, and 185 were subject-matter teachers; 66% of teachers had a BA and 34% had an MA or a higher degree. The number of teachers with 1-10 years' seniority in teaching was similar to the number with 11-20 years' seniority; a slightly lower number had 21-31 years' seniority, and a small percentage (7.1%) had teaching seniority of over 31 years.

The research included 38 schools – 21 elementary schools (55.3%) and 17 high schools (44.7%). The schools were chosen randomly and had the following geographical distribution: 23 schools (60.52%) in the central district, 9 schools (23.68%) in the Tel Aviv district, 3 schools (7.89%) in the southern district, 2 schools (5.26%) in the Jerusalem district, and one school (2.63%) in the northern district.

[9]As aforementioned, the current study is a part of a larger research project examining differences among principals' and teachers' perceptions of information overload and time pressure in schools with different organizational structures (Chen-Levi, 2019).

[2']Administrative team' implies principals, assistant principals, counselors and pedagogical advisors.

Study Process

A sample of 99 teachers from the main research pool answered the open questions. These teachers were asked to explain in writing what each of the nine parameters meant to them. They were also requested to provide an example from their personal experience in school. The nine parameters the teachers were asked to refer to were: 1. Complexity of staff organization 2. Delegation of authority in the school 3. Extent of flexibility regarding curricular material 4. Extent of subject-matter teacher compartmentalization 5. Flexibility in teaching/learning times 6. Extent of relating to change as an all-institutional process 7. Extent of agreement and clarity concerning the school's policy and ideology 8. Time pressure and 9. Dealing with information in the school. The total of teachers' statements was derived from their responses about different realms of their work and the way their school is run. A corpus of responses was created for the purpose of content analysis.

Results

Teachers' responses were classified into a detailed schema which included a distinction between two general categories of statements concerning school organizational structures: the nature of teamwork, authority delegation ladder, types of teaching methods and curriculum, innovation and change, and feelings of overload in coping with information. The second part of the qualitative analysis constructed a corpus of teacher statements that served to form a loglinear analysis which facilitated the analysis of variable interactions with an ANOVA.

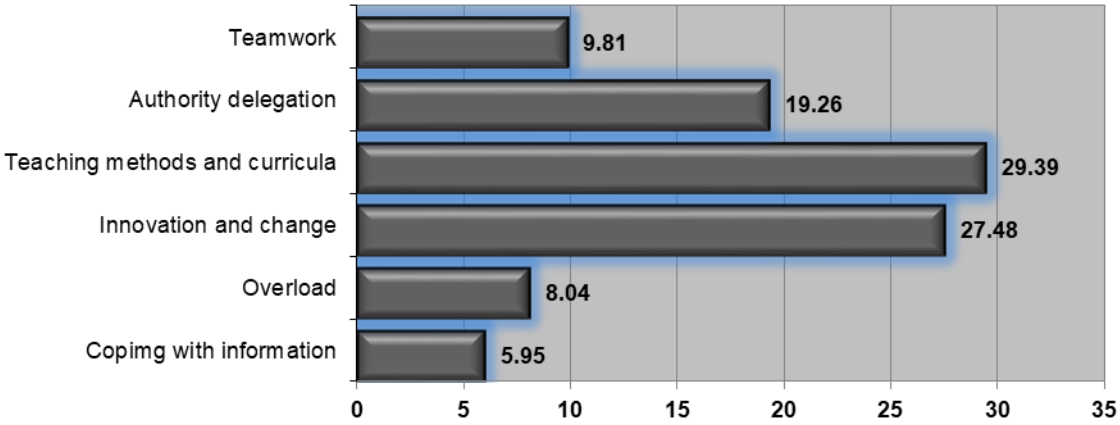
The general categories were designed according to their contents: **the nature of teamwork** (team composition, roles and responsibilities, perception of teamwork within the school), **authority delegation ladder** (administrative team's areas of authority, centralization of authority by the principal, teacher subordination- role flexibility, loneliness on the job, authority delegation), **type of teaching methods and curricula** (permanent curriculum, set schedule, flexible or changing schedule, flexibility and accommodation in teaching and learning, subject integration, subject separation, teacher cooperation), **innovation and change** (cooperation in setting goals and policies, teachers' resistance to change, feeling of alienation and distance among teachers, striving for cooperative work, lack of implementation of ideas and decisions, lack of cooperative brainstorming and action, ambiguous school goals and policies), and **feelings of overload** and **coping with excessive information** (suitability of information to role-holders, information filtering and classification by the administrative team, reactions to new information).

The classification system was such that each category was given a number (nature of teamwork = 1,000; delegation of authority = 2,000; type of teaching methods and curriculum = 3,000; innovation and change = 4,000 overload = 5,000; coping with information = 6,000), and the subcategories were decimally numbered. For example, team composition = 1,100, team responsibilities = 1,200

and so on. The classification of statements by category was done according to the nature of the statement. Classification into categories was done twice, at different times, in order to reach high agreement ratios.

A total of 1630 statements were classified. Image 1 shows the percentage distribution of all teachers' statements (1630) concerning school organization according to the above six categories.

Image 1. Distribution of Statements concerning school Organizational Structure by the Six Categories



Loglinear Analysis Results

The responses concerning schools' organizational patterns were sorted into three groups according to the responder's position: administrative staff member, homeroom teacher, or subject-matter teacher. Table 1 presents the frequency distribution of the three groups in the total parameter of perception of school organizational model, as well as the six statement categories.

The data was analyzed using a loglinear model in accordance with Schoonen and de Glopper's (1996) research, which is a method of analyzing categorical variables similar to the ANOVA. Like the ANOVA, this analysis allows for determining the interaction between two or more variables and the size of several distinct parameters. In the statement analysis there were 18 cells created from the tested variables: position (3) x categories (6). The position variable served as the independent variable and the categories served as dependent or explained variables.

Since the division into groups by role is not equal in size, the main effect may be an artificial. To avoid this, the frequencies were adjusted to suit a standard group size. The smaller group size was ($n_1=n_2=n_3=29$). The frequency of statements of the larger groups was therefore proportionally decreased[11]. If an effect is found among the groups, it will therefore be interpreted as a real result of a difference in statements by job different role-holders.

[11]Proportion calculation 29/35=0.83.

Table1. Frequency Distribution of the Six Categories according to the Three Roles of School Staff

The categories derived from statement analysis		Administrative staff *(n=35)*	Homeroom teachers (n=35)	Subject-matter teachers (n=29	Total (n=99)
Nature of teamwork	N	74 (61)	51 (42)	35	160 (138)
	%	11.1	8.8	9.2	9.81
Authority delegation ladder	N	111 (92)	112 (93)	91	314 (276)
	%	16.6	19.3	23.9	19.26
Nature of curriculum and teaching method	N	194 (161)	175 (145)	110	479 (416)
	%	29.0	30.1	28.9	29.39
Organizational innovation and change	N	193 (160)	171 (142)	84	448 (386)
	%	28.9	29.4	22.0	27.48
Sensation of overload	N	51 (42)	45 (37)	35	131 (141)
	%	7.6	7.7	9.2	8.04
Coping with information	N	45 (37)	26 (22)	26	97 (85)
	%	6.7	4.6	6.8	5.95
Absolute total	N	668 (533)	580 (481)	381	1629 (1415)
	%	100	100	100	100

Note: the numbers in parentheses express the frequency of perceptions after adjusting for a standard group size. Calculated relativity 29/35=.83

The analysis was carried out via a saturated model that contained four parameters: the constant term; two variables for "role" and "different categories", and a parameter for the interaction between these variables. The model allows for a reliable description of the variables being studied. All observed statement frequencies can be described with a constant (C): a main effect to the role variable (R); type of category (P); and an interaction effect between the variables (RxP). This interaction is especially interesting since it corresponds to the question "is there a difference in the frequency of statements in the different categories between school faculty members fulfilling different roles". The existence of an interaction between the "role" variable and the categories indicates that different role-holders produced different amounts of statements in categories concerning the school's organizational model.

Parameters R and P fit the following questions, respectively:

1. Do teachers in different roles differ in the frequency of statements they make concerning the school's organizational model?
2. Do the various categories differ in frequency?

The effect size can be expressed in standardized values (Z). An effect with absolute corrected values higher than 1.96 is considered significantly different ($p<0.05$). Frequencies higher than expected are predicted by positive values; frequencies lower than predicted are expressed by negative values; a lack of effect is expressed by the value 0 or by values close to 0. Table 2 presents the standardized values (Z) for the main effects, and the interaction effect of the two values.

Table 2. Standardized Values (Z) for the Main Effects and for the Interaction Effect Roles x Perception Category

Effect type	Parameter	Estimate	Std. Err.	Z
Role x Category	Administrative staff x teamwork	.12	.10	1.29
	Administrative staff x authority	-.19	.08	-2.28*
	Administrative staff x curriculum contents and teaching methods	-.02	.07	-.035
	Administrative staff x change and innovation	.07	.07	.95
	Administrative staff x overload	-.08	.11	-.73
	Administrative staff x coping with information	.1	.09	1.11
	Homeroom teachers x teamwork	-.04	.11	-.40
	Homeroom teachers x authority	.03	.08	.36
	Homeroom teachers x curriculum content and teaching methods	.08	.07	1.04
	Homeroom teachers x change and innovation	.15	.07	2.16*
	Homeroom teachers x overload	-.00	.12	-.04
	Homeroom teacher x coping with information	-.22	.09	2.44*
	Subject-matter teachers x teamwork	-.08	.10	-.08
	Subject-matter teachers x authority	.16	.08	2.0*

	Subject-matter teachers x curriculum content and teaching methods	-.06	.07	-.86
	Subject-matter teachers x change and innovation	-.22	.07	3.24**
	Subject-matter teachers x overload	.08	.11	.73
	Subject-matter teachers x coping with information	.12	.09	1.33
Role	Administrative team members	.19	.04	4.30***
	Homeroom teachers	-.02	.05	-.40
	Subject-matter teachers	-.17	.04	4.25***
Category types	Teamwork	-.37	.08	4.70***
	Delegation of authority	.35	.06	5.98***
	Curriculum content and teaching methods	.75	.05	14.46***
	Organizational innovation and change	.65	.05	12.06***
	Feeling of overload	-.53	.08	-6.43***
	Coping with information	-.85	.05	-17.0***

* p< .05, ***p<.001

Note: the minus [-] sign expresses frequencies that were lower than predicted in the mean

The data in table 2 shows that in the standardized values (Z) the size of the role effect (R) is 4.30 for administrative staff, -0.40 for homeroom teachers and -4.25 for subject-matter teachers. The main significant effect of R for the administrative staff and subject-matter teachers indicates that there is a statistically significant difference in the frequency of statements uttered by the different role-holders. This means that the frequency of statements about the organizational nature of the school among administrative staff is higher than the mean. In contrast, among subject-matter teachers the frequency is significantly lower than the mean. The frequency of statements of administrative staff was 553 in adjusted values, whereas the frequency of statements among subject-matter teachers was 381.

However, no significant difference was found between the frequency of statements about the organizational nature of the school made by homeroom teachers (481 in adjusted standardized values) and the frequency of those made by administrative staff and subject-matter teachers.

The main effect on category type (P) indicates that statements from different categories appear in different frequencies. In the three categories: authority delegation ladder, curriculum content and teaching methods, and organizational change and innovation, the effect of P was significantly positive (range: 5.98-12.06). In the three categories: teamwork, feeling of overload, and coping with information, however, P was found to be negative (range: -4.70-(-17.0)). That is, in the three categories: authority delegation ladder, curriculum content and teaching methods, and organizational change and innovation, the frequency of

statements was above the mean, and in the three categories: teamwork, feeling of overload, and coping with information, it was lower than the mean (image 1).

It may be interesting to note the differences between the three role groups and their statements. This can be demonstrated in the size of the effects shown in table 3. It shows a clear interaction between administrative staff x authority delegation ladder (Z=2.28), homeroom teachers x organizational change and innovation (Z=2.06), homeroom teachers x coping with information (Z=2.44), subject matter teachers x authority delegation ladder (Z=2.0), and subject-matter teachers x organizational change and innovation (Z=3.14).

The findings mean that among administrative staff there is a low frequency of statements concerning authority and its delegation, whereas among subject-matter teachers there is a high frequency of statements on that topic[12], which means that administrative teams focus less on the authority delegated to them on their job, whereas subject-matter teachers are more occupied with it.

Additionally, findings show that among homeroom teachers and subject-matter teachers there is a high frequency of statements concerning innovation and change, as well as coping with information. This indicates that subject-matter and homeroom teachers attribute importance to innovation and change that impact them directly, and homeroom teachers also attribute importance to coping with information.

To summarize, the findings of the loglinear analysis point to the possibility of distinguishing between the three groups of school role-holders according to the three categories: authority delegation, organizational change and innovation, and coping with information.

Discussion

The second part of this article is based on teachers' responses to questions concerning various aspects of school organization. The content analysis illuminated some of the hidden connections that have not been exposed in previous research. The qualitative part is intended to examine the informal and unwritten norms created by the interactions of the different groups that constitute the school organization (Oplatka, 2017).

Organization of Teamwork

Teachers' responses indicate that there were differences in their perceptions of teamwork at the school. Administrative staff had the largest number of statements concerning teamwork within the school, but their treatment of the subject was mostly on a very superficial level, sometimes sounding more like slogans. Their statements tended to be theoretical rather than providing actual descriptions of teamwork in the school, for example; *"our organization is one that deals with*

[12]The number of cases in a cell is compared to the expected number of cases in a cell based only on the frequency of the line and the column independently.

people, not with products", or *"our school always strives to achieve excellence"*. Their descriptions of the school's organization lacked personal expression, and their statements described an overview of school reality rather than an insider's view, for example: *"the school's aspiration is teamwork, work in sub-groups, and cooperation among all faculty and staff members"*.

A possible explanation for administrators' view of teamwork can be found in Glicksman's (2008) research, stating that the school's administration is the spotlight and compass that is supposed to illuminate the entire school's path. Thus, the administrative staff must possess a vision that can guide all school processes. Shachar (2007) adds that the school's administrative staff members usually determine its social and educational policies, and as a result see themselves responsible for setting goals and leading change and innovation. All these have a direct effect on their very broad, general views. Perhaps these statements also stem from the administration's constant need to market the school, and marketing is often based on clichés and slogans.

In contrast, the homeroom teachers spoke of teamwork from a more personal, subjective viewpoint. The homeroom teacher is expected to possess a broad organizational view; he/she shapes students' personalities, tends to their varied needs and is supposed to help their values grow along with their knowledge, while also keeping in touch with parents. Homeroom teachers' statements about teamwork indicated that it is an integral part of their work routine. They evaluated teamwork from their personal experience and from an insider's point of view. Their answers refer, for instance, to methods of performing teamwork*: "First the teachers work in small teams and then in larger committees until they reach a final decision"*. Or, for another example, they provide assessments of the teamwork in their school: *"there is a lot of cooperation between teams, and decisions are often reached by teams on a class-wide level"*.

Homeroom teachers also note the connection between teamwork and high motivation: *"motivation in our school is high, we select the relevant educational information in teams"*, and the implications of teamwork on other aspects of work in school, such as responsibility and authority delegation, are described*: "I think it's important to hear teachers' opinions and share responsibility"*, as well as *"every staff member has the right to make decisions about his/her main occupation in school"*.

Finally, homeroom teachers also pointed to the benefits of teamwork. *"When we work in teams, we have a free hand and the principal is willing to listen to us"*. They spoke of the conditions facilitating productive teamwork, such as cohesiveness, group size, and well-defined responsibilities. Thus it is possible to find statements concerning teachers' cohesiveness such as *"I expect teachers to work in more cohesive teams";* statements about team size such as *"the teams in the school are very large and it's not easy to work this way"*; and statements about the importance of firmly establishing teamwork as a feature of the school system: *"the team meets once a week to discuss details, receive updates and learn"*.

To summarize, homeroom teachers' discussion of teamwork was personal, and stemmed from their work in the field. They expressed difficulties, described instances of success, and pondered ideas on ways to make teamwork more fruitful

and contribute to teachers' feelings of empowerment and belonging*: "the teams in school work efficiently and advance toward desired results"*, and *"the school tends to rely on the teams to make wise, correct decisions that are beneficial both to the school and to the students, and advance its goals"*.

The subject-matter teachers had the lowest number of statements concerning teamwork. This can be explained by their specific placement in the hierarchy of the school and the perception of their role in the organization: subject-matter teachers teach a specific subject in different classes, are not expected to make decisions concerning school policy, and are not committed to homeroom hours and to social activities in the classes they teach. It is plausible that the character of subject-matter teachers' role minimizes expectations as far as their participation in shaping the school's organizational or social policy.

However, the subject-matter teachers' answers indicated the need for more participation on their part as well as a clearer policy in this regard: *"there's a middling organization of teams to make decisions in the school; in some areas it exists and in some it doesn't"*, and also: *"in terms of the narrow division, the English staff works well, but on the broad organizational level the school is lacking"*.

Subject-matter teachers seemed to regard teamwork as an important tool for solving problems encountered in their work: *"once a week there is a class-wide meeting to solve problems"*, and *"teamwork is for resolving problems and addressing issues"*.

Hierarchy and Authority Delegation in School

The administrative staff spoke of a clear need for more control and order in the school system. They viewed the school as a hierarchical organization, with clearly-defined realms of authority and subordination: *"teachers don't have full autonomy, there's a hierarchy of principal, then administrative staff, then teachers"*. Thus, the feeling conveyed to teachers is that *"every teacher knows what is expected of him/her",* as well as *"every meeting is summarized and the protocol is given to the principal"*, and *"the principal has to be notified of every move that is being led by a staff member"*. Their reference to this issue was direct, for instance: *"in our school the administrative staff delegates authority in certain cases"*, or *"there is almost no delegation of authority in our school"*.

It seems that the rigidity displayed by administrative staff members concerning the issue of authority and its delegation stems from their need for order and control within the organization, as well as from their reporting duty: *"previously changes in school were made by the staff, however, this year any changes are made by the principal and vice principal only"*; "*most decisions and authority are in the principal's hands"*.

However, when it comes to a teacher's authority within his/her own class, the picture is completely different; *"A teacher is the authority within his/her class, both as homeroom teacher or subject-matter teacher"*. As stated above, there is a marked difference between the responsibilities and authority of administrative

team members, who have to lead the school in a general way, managing the staff and making policy decisions, and the authority of teachers who are subordinate to the administration on the one hand, and enjoy authority in their own classrooms on the other.

Another finding was that many of the homeroom teachers and subject-matter teachers referred to feelings of loneliness and confusion within the organization. Statements such as *"I often feel like one teacher facing one class and one counselor"* and not like a teacher within a whole school organization or *"every subject-matter teacher or homeroom teacher deals alone with problems that occur in class"*. There are also expressions of alienation: *"I don't take part in making decisions but have to act according to them"*, and even lack of motivation: *"I feel like I can't be independent in my decisions and have to report every decision I make, which is demotivating, tiring"*.

As seen in the context of the administrative staff, responses show that there is a clear difference between a teacher's place in his/her class and his/her place in the school as a whole. *"I have no independence in certain areas; I do have total independence in my area of teaching – i.e. as far as what to teach when, and the like"*, or *"regarding any decisions concerning the class, the teacher is a small principal"*. However, the system provides a different perspective: *"in school-wide decisions the administration sets the tone"*, or *"on the educational level, the authority is more in the hands of the school"* and *"in general things like procedures or tasks they don't listen to what I have to say, they just give me instructions"*.

From the administrative staffs' and homeroom teachers' responses an additional concept surfaces, though it was not explored in this research; that is the concept of 'the teacher from the organizational perspective', dealing with the contradiction between a teacher's place in his/her class and his/her place in the school organization. Most importantly, this is expressed by the teacher's familiarity with the processes to which he/she is obligated as an only teacher in a classroom, vis-à-vis the processes to which he/she is obligated as a member of an organization and a team. This area is worthy of further study aiming to explore the teacher's multi-level commitment in the organizational context.

Among subject-matter teachers the feelings of subordination and loneliness are greater than by homeroom teachers. Their responses show that the built-in contradiction in their role within the organization might even exacerbate these feelings. *"There is no delegation of authority, the principal is the one who decides"*, or *"there is no freedom of action for teachers"* are some of the responses given. *"The discrepancy between their role as teacher and their organizational status is greater. "I am a subject-matter teacher; I work independently without anyone interfering in my professional judgment"*. Therefore, their feeling of loneliness is also greater than that of homeroom teachers; *"every teacher works alone in class, that's how it goes"*.

Both homeroom and subject-matter teachers referred to the connection between authority delegation and responsibility. They testify that an organization where authority is delegated inspires a greater sense of responsibility and cooperation; *"there is an atmosphere that encourages taking responsibility in the school"* and *"the school respects teachers' ability to make decisions"*.

Curriculum, Teaching Methods and Schedule

The administrative staff referred extensively to the importance of a set schedule*: "in our school the schedule, teaching hours and classrooms are set in advance for the entire school year"*. There was an assertion that *"if you need to switch the place or time of a lesson, that will require complex coordination"*.

Many statements referred to the need for order and organization in the school as a condition for its improvement. *"The schedule is uniform and organized"* and *"the schedule is preset"*, and for this reason *"every teacher knows when and where he/she has to teach so that no time is wasted"*.

Additionally, the administrative staff referred to events and processes taking place outside the school which affect what happens inside it: "*the schedule and teaching hours are determined by guidelines from the Education Ministry, any change or flexibility in this regard involve changing a lot of other people's plans, so it's complicated*"; "*almost all of the curriculum contents are dictated by the Education Ministry*".

Another important matter arising from participants' statements is treating the classes within a school as separate units rather than as a part of a larger organization: "*teaching methods and learning pace change from one class to another*". Likewise, the reference to subjects and teaching illustrated decentralization: "*there is a clear division of teaching subjects in the school*", and "*here it's every teacher with his/her own specialty"*.

A similar approach prevailed among homeroom teachers. They claimed that "*there is no flexibility in the system*" and "*all the content is preset in a predetermined framework by the Education Ministry and by teachers of previous years*" and "*it's very clear what every teacher's specialization in, and that's what he/she teaches*".

However, homeroom teachers referred more than the other two groups to the topic flexibility in teaching, due to their type of work in the classroom. For example, "*I try to maintain constancy in the teaching units, but since the school is dynamic, I adjust myself to the changing needs*", or "*I adjust the content of what I'm teaching to the level of the class and even to the specific student, and don't just work according to the plan and deadlines of the Education Ministry for starting or finishing a topic*", and "*the range of the subject studied is dictated by the actual conditions on the ground*"

Homeroom teachers have more control over the teaching methods administered in their class. They said that "*in school the curriculum contents are studied according to each student's ability and progress*" and "*flexibility is a necessity and improves students' learning in accordance with their needs*".

Also, homeroom teachers referred to interdisciplinary learning in school as a necessity stemming from the structure of the curriculum. "*The various subjects sometimes converge so that the distinction between them is not clear-cut*", or "*the separation between subjects is pretty clear but there are still some overlaps, so there is actually no total separation*"

Both homeroom and subject-matter teachers described the school system as stiff and rigid. "*There is almost no flexibility as far as schedule*", and "*there's a lot of rigidity in the system, it's static*".

While among homeroom teachers there were some references to flexibility and to adapting the curriculum to students' needs, among subject-matter teachers most statements indicated a rigid distinction between the subjects. "*There is no subjects*", and as a result "*it's each to his/her own subject*" and *"we are all subordinate work in teams, contents do not overlap*", or "*there is no connection between to the preset program*".

Organizational Change and Innovation

The administrative staff referred on the one hand to general statements such as "*change is a way of life in school*" and "*we have the ability to change and impact*" as well as "*our school always welcomes teachers' innovation*"; on the other hand, they also referred to the many difficulties involved in implementing changes in the school, such as motivating all teachers to participate: "*It's impossible to implement change without partners*", and "*implementing change in a school is a process, and there has to be some openness to it on the part of the teachers*".

They also spoke of the difficulty in maintaining change over time, and in implementing changes and new decisions in school. "*Even though the teams are aware that their work has to be examined based on the school's goals, they don't always work accordingly*" and "*even if a change is implemented in the school, it doesn't affect everyone*".

Another difficulty that administrative staff members tend to express pertains to including everyone in the school in order to create a sense of belonging, especially among subject-matter teachers. "*There is a desire to and get subject-matter teachers to participate, but there are curriculum limitations*", and "*ideally we'd like to involve the subject-matter teachers in study tasks and interdisciplinary programs, but in reality, they aren't at school every day so it's difficult to coordinate*". Another statement was "*the subject-matter teachers are barely interested in what's being taught in other classes*".

Another aspect that is referred to is finding the correct balance between the amount of changes that a school incorporates and the amount of change that its teachers can actually assimilate. "*Innovation is very important but there has to be a limit*", they say, as well as "*the principal wants to apply changes and innovations. Some of them are implemented and some are not*" because "*change and innovation do happen in our school but are not assimilated by the entire staff*".

Finally, the administrative staff also said that "*you have to dedicate time to the school and its goals"*, and "*hopefully the change will be assimilated by all the teachers*", since "*change refreshes the staff and adds new strength*".

Somewhat like the administrative staff, homeroom teachers too raised problems regarding the implementation of changes within the school. They noted that "*there is no set time in the schedule when we sit down to re-examine our*

goals". They also said that "*there is no constant teamwork, thus we lack the benefit of exchanging ideas*".

Another point raised by the homeroom teachers was their objection to change and innovation. "*We object to changes in the school despite the fact that they advance the faculty and students*" and "*changes in the school cause a lack of clarity and confusion about what is going on in the school*".

Some utterances pertained to homeroom teachers' sensations of alienation from the school system. "*I don't feel like a partner of other teachers", or "there is no motivation to meet with other teachers very often*". There was also a feeling of lack of participation in policy-making: "*many times there is a feeling that the principal made a decision based on external causes and that despite the feeling they try to give us in the school, the teachers were not really involved in reaching that decision*", or "*during teacher meetings teachers do not get a chance to express their opinions*". They also noted the need for positive role modeling: "*the principal does not really stress implementing decisions, so neither do the teachers, and that way the whole proposed change just totally disappears"*.

To summarize, it seems that homeroom teachers raise difficulties mainly in two areas: one involves the cohesiveness of school faculty, and the other – a feeling of participation and partnership. "*There is a lack of cooperation in school when it comes to making changes*", they state, adding that "*there's teamwork for decision-making, but in the end you feel like you're one teacher in front of your one class*" as well as "*sometimes I'm not informed of a change and don't participate in it because I just didn't know about it*"; or "*there are difficulties in creating productive contacts with other teachers*". Finally, it seems that homeroom teachers attribute success in implementing changes within the school to the quality of relationships between faculty members as well as to the extent of cooperation and cohesiveness among them.

A similar mood can be sensed also among subject-matter teachers, together with statements that praise change in schools. "*The school doesn't vegetate; every so often there is a meeting to plan out school goals*," and "*the school is always looking to innovate in various areas, and upgrade itself*". Many statements were made about difficulties experienced in these processes: *"the faculty needs time to cope with changes*" and "*we got used to working in a certain way and when a new way is introduced it brings about confusion*".

Additionally, many statements mentioned the contribution of staff dynamics to the success of implementing changes in school. "*It's necessary to improve the team dynamics*" or "*we don't always sit together to solve problems, we do that only rarely*" and "*there is a school policy, but agreement is not always reached among the teachers as to implementing it, and there's not always clarity on this subject*".

To summarize, the three groups stated that without understanding, and common learning of the processes in school it will be difficult, or even almost impossible, to accept and preserve change and innovation over time. That is because, as they said "*if there is no cooperation and harmony among the staff*", *"…no clear agreement about school policy*" and "*there is nothing in school that requires the cooperation of teachers teaching various subject-matter*" – then

"*there is a discussion from time to time, but it is not thorough, and we are left with questions*". As a result, "*it is difficult to accept changes because of the difficulty in accepting new ways to work and this is despite the fact that the administration constantly strives to innovate and progress*".

Feelings of Time Pressure and Workload in School

The administrative staff referred in their answers to the importance of good teamwork, sharing the burden, and high motivation to decrease stress and workload; "*in a good team where the workload is shared, the stress and feeling of being overwhelmed by the overload is eased*". However, the content analysis also revealed that administrative staff experience a very significant feeling of pressure and overload in their jobs. "*Work at school is often done under time pressure*" and "*there is a large number of tasks in addition to the routine management that must be done*". The administrative staff expressed a great deal of empathy regarding the stress and work overload experienced by teachers. "*Teachers do express discontent due to the task load" and "Some of the teachers carry too heavy a burden*", they said. Trying to explain the situation they added: "*this means there's a problem bridging between the system's demands from teachers and their ability to carry out all these tasks*".

Administrative staff referred to ways of reducing the feeling of stress and overload among the school faculty. For example, they suggested "*working in small teams to lessen the burden*" and indicated that productive activity creates high motivation, pointing out that "*there is a high level of motivation among the teachers in the school*".

In contrast, it appeared that teachers – both homeroom and subject-matter teachers – have made peace with the necessity to live with stress and its implications as a part of their job. "*Teachers have many tasks, so there's a gap between the requirements and the ability to carry them out*". The feelings of overload and stress are connected to the feeling of loneliness on the job, of which teachers said "*we are required to carry out many tasks alone*". As a consequence, they said, *"there is a feeling of discontent among the staff due to the task overload and the shortage of time*".

Coping with Information

Coping with information was the issue least referred to by all three groups, despite the fact that the amount of information surrounding us is a powerful and useful phenomenon (Taghreed, 2007). One of the ways to explain this is that both the school and the teachers do not truly know how to cope with information effectively. There is no institutionalized, systemic organization, nor a set of procedures that govern the way in which information enters schools. As a result, no implementation or processing of information in the organization occurs, and

this does not come up in meetings and discussions, thus it is not often referred to by teachers.

The administrative staff's reference to information was, first and foremost, recognizing its importance to the school: "*I always welcome new information and am open to innovation. That's also the source of my high motivation to do my job*". However, along with this recognition there came a sense of flooding and concern as to the implications of information overload on the teachers: "*sometimes there's a feeling of flooding and overload of new information*", or *"a mass of information is streaming into teachers' hands, causing stress and fear*" and also *"most of the incoming information causes a feeling of flooding, confusion and stress*".

Additionally, of the total sum of responses, there were many references from the administrative staff to dealing with filtering and sorting information. *"There is a sorting of information in school according to one's role"* and *"the information is streamed according to teachers' fields of interest"*; *"the difference between teachers' interests and their ability to cope with information is taken into consideration"; "the school filters the information and takes whatever is needed and fitting"*; *"our school chooses the information and adapts it to the individual's position as well as to the entire organization"*.

The homeroom and subject-matter teachers referred in their answers mainly to the fact that there is a sense of flooding. *"The school is exposed to so much information from all directions"*; *"the school is exposed to new information about teaching methods, curriculum contents, management methods and so on"*. Furthermore, *"there is no explanation of the new information coming into the school"*; *"there is no reference to new information*"; *"there is no common processing of information"*; *"there is no processing of information on the staff level"*. Therefore *"teachers find it hard to understand the right place for new information in school"* and *"it's hard for us to cope with information we don't understand"*.

Another issue that came up among homeroom teachers was that *"it is not always possible to contain all the information and always discuss it in workgroups"* and for that reason *"the information gets put away in a locker and stays there"*.

All three groups appeared to comment on the necessity of new information for the vitality of the educational organization, but at the same time they explained its improper management as a cause of dismay. *"The new information allows innovation but it sometimes causes confusion and stress"*, *therefore "there is sometimes objection to and rejection of new information among teachers"*. However, all groups agreed that a filtering and sorting process is necessary: *"there is sorting of information, but there is so much coming in…"*.

To summarize, school staff members report the massive information overload they experience as part of their job. Since in most cases no system is in place to cope with the information, the overload becomes private instead of remaining organizational. Taghreed (2007) claims that exposure to a great deal of information contributes to "information exhaustion syndrome", explaining that "if we cannot find a way to join together the many information streams, we might drown in them".

Many staff members understand that to be successful in their jobs they require high levels of information, however, many teachers report that they suffer from a lack of free time and a feeling of overload at work. There is a feeling among teachers that the information overload is a double-edged sword: it can destroy as much as it can create and benefit. Therefore, teachers seem to learn how to filter information in an almost instinctive manner, rather than in a systematic way on the institutional level. Thus, information management is negatively affected, and essential and relevant information is sometimes not addressed, let alone internalized. Therefore, even though schools are exposed to a great deal of information, they do not acquire practical tools facilitating control of information in time and its translation into a form that may prove to be useful for the organization (Taghreed, 2007).

In summary, teachers' responses and the number of statements they made were found to be significant. The manner in which teachers chose to address specific areas and elaborate on them compared to other areas which they addressed sparsely, may attest to low importance or lack of interest. As stated, the number of responses may indicate the differential importance attributed by each of the three groups to various issues pertaining to school life.

Analyzing teachers' responses shows that the areas perceived by the three groups as central are: curriculum contents, teaching methods, organizational change and innovation. These are indeed the cornerstones of education. Teaching varied contents via creative means facilitates the acquisition of better tools for social functioning, for creating a better, more moral and more educated society. The fact that all three groups address these areas extensively in their responses proves the importance of the need to expose students entering schools to a varied and rich education capable of arousing curiosity, as well as innovating and improving constantly.

Another area that came up in the qualitative analysis was the teacher's place as a member of an organization and an organizational culture. The various expectations from the teacher as an expert in the subjects he/she instructs, and also as a member of an organization, may lead to a feeling of disconnect and isolation. Further investigation would be needed to explore the teacher's perception of his/her place within the organization, and the implications of this perception on processes the teacher may undergo, as well as his/her behavior patterns within the school.

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Omani English as a Foreign Language Teachers' Views about Participatory Professional Development

By Khadija Al Balushi[*]

This paper reports the findings of a study that develops a participatory model for TESOL teachers' continuous professional development (CPD) in Oman. This study used an action research methodology and data were collected using an online discussion group, semi-structured and focus group interviews with participant teachers. The findings indicated that the centralised top-down nature of the current CPD system seems to negatively affect the success of CPD in the in-service TESOL context in Oman. The evaluation of the participatory model of CPD adopted in this study showed that this model has a positive impact on participant teachers' CPD and three aspects of change were noticed: teachers' beliefs, their practices about CPD, and change in students (e.g., their reading habits). The data showed that the participatory model of CPD enabled teachers to make decisions regarding their CPD and encouraged them to play the role of critical reflective practitioners as well as preparing them as future transformative intellectuals.

Keywords: CPD, in-service courses, TESOL, teacher professional development, participatory professional development.

Introduction

Contemporary approaches to teacher professional development (hereafter PD) have evolved along with the paradigm shifts in teacher learning. Key shifts include a move away from transmission models of teachers' learning to more constructivist views that assume teacher-learners to be self-directed in their own professional learning and growth (Al-Balushi, 2017; Beach, 2017; Hung & Yeh, 2013). Along the same line, there is a growing awareness of the potential of teachers' collaboration to encourage their learning (Vangrieken, Meredith, Packer, & Kyndt, 2017; Al-Balushi, 2017; Reilly & Literat, 2012). However, evidence from research done in Oman showed that teachers' continuous professional development (hereafter CPD) is currently imposed on teachers through in-service education and training of teachers (hereafter INSET) courses and workshops as well as other forms of CPD. Moreover, in-service TESOL teachers showed an interest in having a more active role in participating in their CPD process (Al-Lamki, 2009; Al-Yafaee, 2004). Given this, the general aim of this study is to examine Omani in-service TESOL teachers' CPD and to improve CPD in the in-service TESOL context in Oman through introducing a participatory model of CPD in Education to a group of TESOL teachers.

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TESOL Teachers' CPD in Oman

In the Omani context, a number of Omani researchers investigated the effectiveness of the CPD programmes offered by the Ministry of Education in Oman for in-service TESOL teachers. Al-Lamki (2009) used questionnaires and semi-structured interviews to investigate the beliefs and practices related to Omani TESOL teachers CPD. The study found that the CPD system adopted by the Ministry for TESOL teachers.is an important factor affecting the effectiveness of the CPD programmes offered to those teachers. The participant teachers in this study expressed their desire in playing a more active role in their CPD process. Yet, the CPD system is planned and delivered following a top-down approach in which teachers' involvement in making decisions regarding their CPD is limited. The results showed how such mismatch may negatively affect teachers' confidence and motivation towards CPD.

A number of other studies found some challenges and/or factors affecting TESOL teachers' CPD in Oman. Teachers' understanding and application of the CPD initiatives is found to be a significant factor as found by Al-Hakamani (2011). Other factors are TESOL teachers' overload of work, lack of time and lack of courage according to Al-Balushi (2012). Furthermore, the role of teachers previously held beliefs about teaching and learning affecting their benefit from the offered CPD activities was found to be another factor (Al-Balushi 2009; Al-Lamki, 2009). As well as that, studies have shown that English teachers' training needs are not fulfilled through the structured formal INSET training programmes offered to them (Al-Balushi, 2017). This could mean that the way CPD is offered to TESOL teachers in Oman and the models of CPD used in the Omani context might not fulfill those teachers CPD needs.

Models of CPD

Ingvarson (1998) used the term model in the context of staff development to refer to a design for learning which can embody some assumptions about where knowledge comes from in relation to teaching practice, and how a teacher acquires and/or extends his/her knowledge. He thinks that CPD models are specific processes and opportunities planned to help teachers develop professionally. Both Coldwell (2017) and Fraser (2005) state that CPD involves all activities teachers are engaged in to develop professionally. It includes a wide range of both formal and informal learning experiences which can vary from personal learning such as private reading to attending courses organised by local authorities. These CPD activities have different sources such as the school itself, school networks, and other external providers like local authorities, universities, colleges and private sector providers. Those providers have used different models of CPD overtime. For instance, in England, since 1988 the major educational reform initiatives were based on a technicist view of teaching assuming that change can be "delivered" in a linear way from the "centre" to teachers to implement it in their classrooms (Dadds, 2014, p. 9). Contemporary approaches to teacher CPD have, however,

evolved along with the paradigm shifts in teacher learning from a transmission model of education that considers the role of teacher-learners are best seen as self-directed as well as social learners. Thus, more emphasis is placed on engaging teachers in inquiry-based learning activities and/or collaborative learning such as building a learning community for professional development (Peercy & Troyan, 2017).

Moreover, Sawyer (2001) determined that, over the years, the focus for PD initiatives has shifted from a deficit approach (focusing on content knowledge: use of external expertise); to a technical approach (focusing on teaching practice: school-based with outside help) to CPD (focusing on teacher professionalism and context: collaborative practice) (cited in Mushayikwa & Lubben, 2009). The CPD provision; thus, has changed from external expertise to empowerment. By empowering teachers, professional developers are encouraging them to take the initiative in identifying and acting on their own individual needs. Broadly speaking, researchers over time have proposed a variety of models of CPD. For example, Kennedy (2005) examined a range of models of CPD (totally nine models) which he categorized into three main groups based on their purposes (i.e., transmission, transitional and transformative) as represented in Table 1 below.

Table 1. Spectrum of CPD Models

Model of CPD	Purpose of model
The training model The award-bearing model The deficit model The cascade model	Transmission
The standards-based model The coaching/mentoring model The community of practice model	Transitional
The action research model The transformative model	Transformative

Increasing capacity for professional autonomy

Source: Kennedy, 2005, p. 248.

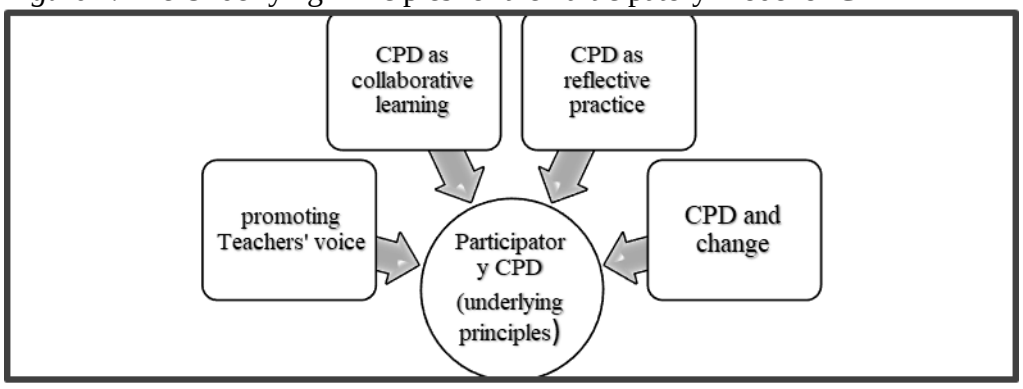
1. Transmission models include: the training model, the award-bearing model, deficit model and the cascade model. CPD models which have a transmissive purpose rely on the development of teachers through externally delivered "expert" and focus on the technical aspects of the job rather than issues related to attitudes, values and beliefs (Fraser, Kennedy, Reid, & Mckinney, 2007). This CPD type supports replication and arguably, compliance, but it does not support professional autonomy.
2. Transitional models include: standards-based models, coaching/mentoring models and a community of practice model. Within the transitional models, CPD supports either a transmissive or a transformative agenda, depending on its form and philosophy (Fraser, Kennedy, Reid, & Mckinney, 2007; Kennedy, 2005).
3. Transformative models include the action research model and transformative "internalisation of concepts; reflection; construction of new knowledge and its application in different situations; and an awareness of the professional and political context" (Fraser, Kennedy, Reid, & Mckinney, 2007, pp. 159-160). Thus, transformative CPD models have the capacity of supporting considerable

professional autonomy at both the individual and the profession wide levels. Out of the nine models suggested by Kennedy (2005) only four are applied in the Omani CPD system: the training, the cascade, the coaching/mentoring and the action research models. However, the effectiveness of these models and the impact they have on teaching and learning in Omani schools was questioned by a number of researchers (Al-Balushi, 2012; Al-Hakamani, 2011; Al-Lamki, 2009; Al-Balushi, 2009). For instance, Al-Balushi (2009) investigated the impact of an in-service training course on TESOL teachers' perceptions of and their classroom practices regarding teaching stories to young learners. The researcher found little changes in participants' perceptions and no noticeable change in their classroom practices when the course was over. Some of these studies also called for Omani teachers' active involvement in their CPD process (Al-Lamki, 2009).

A Need for a Participatory Model of CPD in Oman

Teachers' active involvement is increasingly recognized as a vital component of their CPD. However, in many EFL contexts, CPD is still largely built on the premise of knowledge consumption and knowledge transmission (Lee, 2011). This exactly applies to the Omani context where evidence from research has shown that English teachers' CPD is currently following a top-down approach (Al-Lamki, 2009). In other words, CPD is currently imposed on in-service TESOL teachers through INSET days and other forms of CPD. In response to such a gap in the EFL context generally and in Oman in particular, and also because Omani in-service TESOL teachers have showed an interest in having a more active role in their CPD process as Al-Lamki's (2009) and Al-Yafaee's (2004) studies concluded, the researcher has adopted a participatory approach to CPD in this study. This model provides a participatory learning environment that gives participants in a classroom or elsewhere the opportunity to become part of a professional community which helps them to explore abstract concepts in a non-threatening social context, and then apply them in situations that hold personal relevance (Reilly & Literat, 2012). Having said that, the participatory model of CPD designed for this study has some underpinning principles as shown in Figure 1.

Figure 1. The Underlying Principles for the Participatory Model of CPD



Source: Al Balushi, 2017.

Promoting Teachers' Voice

Teacher participation in the education policy process helps to fulfil a core principle of deliberative democracy: "The normative legitimacy of a democratic decision depends on the degree to which those affected by it have been included in the decision-making processes and have had the opportunity to influence the outcomes" (Young, 2000 in Lefstein & Perath, 2014, p. 34). This is significant because teachers are among those most responsible for carrying out the policies adopted, so their voices and their sense of ownership of policy is crucial to its effective implementation (Giroux, 2017; Bangs & Frost, 2012). Relating this discourse to teachers' CPD, teachers' ownership of the CPD process is a condition for learning and change (Witte & Jansen, 2016). Thus, there are a growing number of research studies in which teachers play an active role in developing teaching standards as part of their CPD (e.g., Oolbekkink-Marchand et al., 2017; Witte & Jansen, 2016; Lefstein & Perath, 2014). This study also focuses on promoting teachers' voices through the adoption of a participatory model of CPD. This model encourages teachers' active participation in their CPD process. For example, the design and delivery of some workshops during the action research phase of the study by themselves and the formation of a self-directed online discussion group focusing on self-selected topics. Hence, this model attempts to increase participant teachers' ownership, responsibility of their CPD and activate their voices.

CPD as Collaborative Learning

Collaboration can facilitate teachers' professional growth and development through supporting the development of teachers' skills and helping to sustain teachers' CPD in a more comprehensive manner (Kuusisaari, 2014; Day, 1999). This is because social support can help teachers to learn from one another, develop distributed expertise and support the construction of knowledge (Moran et al., 2017). Internationally, in countries such as Korea, Singapore, and Finland, teachers' professional collaboration with each other has supported teachers as they managed the challenges/complexities of teaching (Darling-Hammond, 2010). The participatory model of CPD adopted in this study focuses on professional collaboration to encourage and enhance teachers' CPD. This model is informed by the belief that learning happens through communication, social interaction, and reflection (Moran et al., 2017; Peercy & Troyan, 2017; Vygotsky, 1978). Thus, in this study, opportunities for collaborative learning were provided across a partnership between teachers, SETs, and the researcher during the three workshops and in the online discussion sessions they participated in. This approach tries to break-down the Omani traditional assumptions about the hierarchical relationships among teacher trainers, regional supervisors, and teachers/SETs candidates through INSET and structural training.

CPD as Reflective Practice

According to Schön (1987), it is important for teachers to reflect on experiences as they occur. Reflection means the process of engaging with learning and/or professional practice that provides an opportunity for the teacher to monitor, revise, critically analyse and evaluate their own practice continuously (Pollard et al., 2008). Reflection also both influences and is influenced by the processes involved in dialogical teaching and collaboration (Vrikki et al., 2017). As such, "reflection is not an end in itself, but rather a vehicle used in transforming raw experiences, which can ultimately serve the larger purpose of the moral growth of the individual and society" (Finefter-Rosenbluh, 2016, p. 2). The participatory model of CPD encourages teachers to be reflective practitioners where participants can critically reflect on their practices related to teaching and CPD, and the presentation of topics/ideas trying out such ideas at their schools and then in the online discussions were important ways in which this was achieved in this study. Such process of reflective practice supports the development and maintenance of professional expertise; thus it feeds a constructive spiral of PD and capability (Pollard et al., 2008). Given the nature of teaching, CPD and learning should never stop.

CPD and Change

Bubb and Earley (2007, p. 21) emphasise that effective CPD "is likely to consist of that which first and foremost enhances pupil outcomes, but which also helps to bring about changes in practice and improves teaching". Huberman (1995) demonstrates the cyclical nature of the change process for teachers: change in beliefs lead to change in practice that bring change in students' learning that bring further changes in practice that result in additional changes in belief and so on. The relationship between these processes is also reciprocal with change in one being contingent on changes in another (cited in Opfer, Pedder, & Lavicza, 2011). However, change does not just result from a linear process flowing from CPD activity but is also influenced by cultural, structural, and political aspects of a teacher's experiential context (Opfer, Pedder, & Lavicza, 2011). The adopted participatory model of CPD proposes change as being driven by personal beliefs, motivations, interests and social/historical contexts and processes rather than solely through rational and logical accumulation of skills and knowledge by participating in a learning activity. The model assumes that teachers bring their own beliefs, practices to their own learning or CPD experiences, and these have been taken into consideration in the workshops and online discussions. For teacher learning to occur, change may occur in beliefs, practices, and students or through any combination of these three areas of possible change.

Methodology

Ethical Considerations

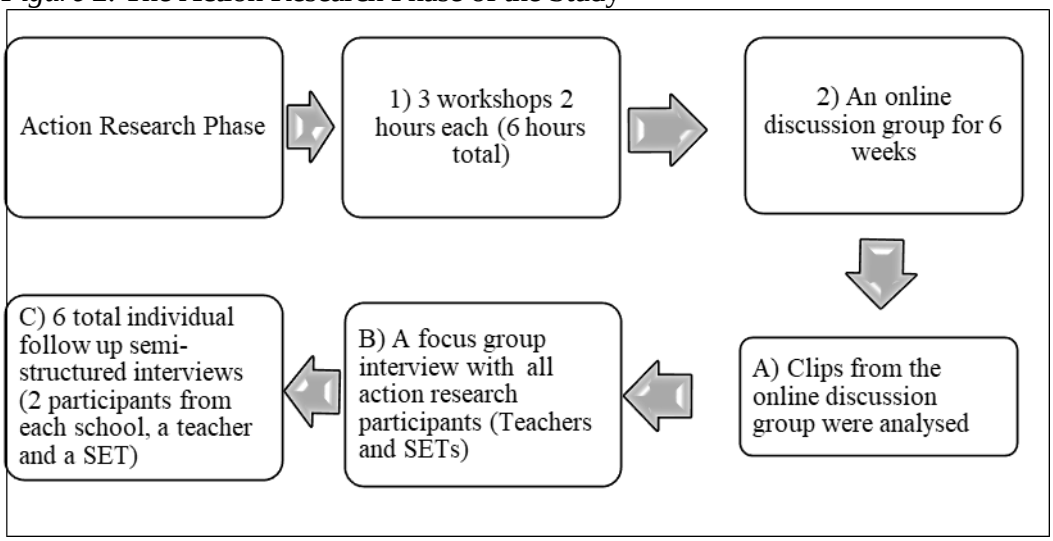
Ethical considerations are an important part of any research and several ethical issues can confront researchers (Punch, 2014). Therefore, at the beginning of this study, ethical approval was obtained from the Ministry of Education in Oman where this research was conducted to get permission for doing the study and obtain access to teachers and senior English teachers (the research participants), so to avoid any act of unethical behaviour. Moreover, assurances of confidentiality and anonymity were outlined within the framework of voluntary informed consent given to participants, and in the instructions accompanied with the interviews. Furthermore, participants' permission was granted to audio record the interviews before these went ahead. The researcher also used pseudonyms when presented the research findings in the study.

Action Research

There is an abundance of theoretical and practical literature on action research. For example, in critical action research in teacher education, Kincheloe (1991) recommended that the "critical teacher" exposes the assumptions of existing research orientations, critiques the knowledge base, and through these critiques reveals ideological effects on teachers, schools and the cultural view of education. According to Troudi (2015), in the fields of TESL and TEFL where the current study is located, Burns (1999, 2010) and Wallace (1998) offer a version of action research that is strongly aligned with the movement of teacher research and professional development (cited in Troudi, 2015). The action research adopted by the researcher in this study challenges teachers' beliefs about CPD and explores the ideological effects of the participatory model of CPD on teachers. Based on these effects, the study is aiming at a change and improvement in the CPD system in Oman through recommending this model to the Omani MOE. In order to achieve this aim, the research participants and the researcher designed and conducted three workshops and established an online discussion group; data were collected using different methods as could be seen in Figure 2.

The participants in this study were 18 in total: 15 teachers and 3 Senior English Teachers (SETs) from three schools in Oman (6 from each school). The action research included: 1) three workshops 2 hours each making a total of 6 hours; 2) an online discussion group for 6 weeks; and 3) doing a focus group interview with all research participants followed by 6 individual interviews to see participants' reaction to the participatory model of CPD.

Figure 2. The Action Research Phase of the Study



Source: Al Balushi, 2017.

Three Workshops

There were three workshops in total (2 hours each) which were carried out at one of the three schools and all participants attended the three workshops. These workshops focused on introducing participants to the participatory model of CPD. Participants actively participated in the workshops and completed all the activities. The researcher designed and delivered workshop (1), prepared the materials and delivered it. In this workshop, the researcher also asked participants to organise themselves into five different groups according to the five topics given to them for reading.

In workshop (2), participants planned about the topic they chose and agreed on the different times to present about their topic to whole group; explaining what this idea is and its importance for English teachers' CPD: Group (1) presented about activating "Practitioner-based activities" such as doing action research, reflection on teaching using journals, peer observation, team teaching. Group (2) discussed about activating "Communities of practice" in Oman between English teachers for their CPD such as online discussion groups, WhatsApp groups. Group (3) deliberated about 'Creating an intellectual atmosphere for intellectual debate' in which the idea of Omani English teachers as intellectuals was discussed and an example was given from choosing the Shura council "political representatives for different states in Oman" (an event that was taking place during the time of the workshops). Group (4) discussed about encouraging teachers to read "the centrality of reading as a culture" through which this group discussed the idea of "motivating teachers to read and making reading a daily habit for them to develop professionally". Group (5) looked at "the centrality of reading as a culture" (which focused on motivating students to read), and creating reading cultures in Omani schools. In workshop (3) each group discussed how their presented topic can be applied by English teachers in Oman, the challenges associated with it and how to overcome these challenges.

Online Discussion Group

From the research participants, a teacher initiated establishing an online discussion group **(**WhatsApp group) and wrote a monthly timetable showing who will be responsible for leading the discussion every day during the month which was agreed to be rotated. The majority of the participants participated actively in the online discussions and reflected on issues discussed in the action research workshops, what they have learnt from these workshops, the ideas they applied in reality and any questions they have. The researcher noticed that their contributions in the online group were very beneficial, so the researcher used some clips from their discussion as a data and analysed them qualitatively.

Interviews

The focus group interview was done with all 18-research participants. This was followed by 6 individual semi-structured interviews to follow up the focus group interview data and dig deeply in participants' responses to know teachers' reaction to the participatory model of CPD. The aim behind doing both semi-structured and focus-group interviews was to follow up individual participants' ideas, and dig deeply into them by investigating feelings and motives (Punch, 2014; Bell, 2010; Kvale, 2009). An interview schedule was designed with introductory comments followed by a number of questions, follow-up prompts and probes. All questions, prompts and probes sought participants' views about the participatory model of CPD adopted by the researcher. After collecting all data, it was analysed qualitatively which involves preparing and organizing the data for analysis, exploring the data then reducing it into themes through a coding process, and finally representing the data in figures, tables or a discussion (Jamieson, 2016; Creswell & Plano Clark, 2011; Creswell, 2007).

Results

Teachers' Reaction to the Model

Workshops-Positive Experience. The results of individual interviews with participating teachers indicate that participating in the workshops was a positive experience for many participants (11 out of the 15 teachers stated that). This was echoed by two third of the participants in the focus group interview where they indicated that they liked the experience of joining in the three workshops, and they felt that their awareness about the workshops content had been enlightened. By the same token, all of the SETs reacted positively to the workshops in follow-up semi-structured interviews undertaken with them. For instance, the three SETs commented that all their teachers liked the workshops and they were always talking positively about the ideas presented in these workshops. I think that the participatory nature of these workshops seems to positively affect teachers' beliefs about CPD as they participated with others to learn and be updated. In other

words, it was a participatory learning context where thinking was made visible through networking with others; learning was not an individual task for the individual mind, but an exploration within a learning community (groups of teachers working together in these workshops), which provided a rich, robust learning experience for all participants (Reilly & Literat, 2012).

In the following extract, Laila (a SET) explains how actively and collaboratively they participated in these workshops:

> "When we divided the topics in the workshops between us as groups…the first thing we did after knowing our topic is taking the reading article related to this topic, and dividing it between us as a group of teachers without differentiating between SETs and teachers (each one was responsible for reading part of the article) and I got my part like the other colleagues, each one read her part and we discussed about the whole topic and how we are going to present it to all teachers in the coming workshop, in the workshop the whole team presented our topic together where each of us talked about her bit and then we all concluded by suggesting some ways of applying this idea in our schools and with our students".

Consequently, the findings reveal that participating in the three workshops was a positive experience for the participants in that it positively affected their beliefs about the importance of CPD. The participatory nature of the workshops related to being actively involved in their learning process was valued by respondents. Such result resembles the findings of other studies (e.g., Borg & Al-Busaidi, 2012; Lee, 2011). Thus, many participants agreed that the workshops were inspiring and added a lot to them. For example, Anisa (a teacher) emphasizes:

> "Personally I liked these workshops a lot and I hope that I always join such types of workshops that are inspiring and enriches our knowledge with new ideas and information, I liked all the workshops, honestly I have now 8 years of experience of teaching and I joined many workshops but I never met such workshops, it was really inspiring for me and I loved all the ideas discussed and the online group".

Online Discussion Group-Useful Contributions. Participants were asked for their views of the overall value of the online discussion groups as well as their views on the contributions of different group members and whether these added anything to them. The results indicated that participating in the online discussion group was a useful experience for the majority of respondents and that participants' contributions in this group were also seen as useful. This is because, these contributions were based on practicing teachers' real experiences as the data shows. For example, Halima remarks:

> "(colleagues)…were contributing greatly and their ideas were really much appreciated because they were from their experience".

Moreover, all respondents agreed that the discussed issues were useful because they were of concern for everyone in the group as Huda notes:

> "…the ideas that we discussed were concerning all of us, even all teachers I think".

The data also shows that participants' contributions in this group were fruitful because they suggested practical ways that other teachers could benefit from. For example, Huda explained that she benefited from the idea of creating a reading culture that was discussed in the online discussion. As she said:

> "Ya for me they discussed how they applied creating a reading culture in their schools and I benefited from their ideas and used some of these ideas".

Lulwa further liked the discussion on student discipline, as she said:

> "…the ideas they discussed were really beneficial especially the ideas about punishing students for me was really beneficial and it added to me how others deal with the same issue".

Teachers' Learning from the Model

New Ideas from Shared Experiences. The data demonstrates that participating in the three workshops and in the online discussion group helped participants to learn new knowledge and ideas from their colleagues shared experiences. It shows that co-learning happened in these events where the participant teachers pooled their skills and knowledge, and shared them in the tasks of teaching and learning (Reilly & Literat, 2012).

For example, Badriya mentions the benefit she got from joining the workshops:

> "… I feel that others ideas enrich my knowledge and honestly this workshop added a lot to me personally and gave me new ideas".

Regarding the online discussion group, Alya referred to the benefit she took from joining this, saying:

> "Exchanging experience is very good and it shows us solutions to some problems we are facing where our colleagues in the online discussion group discussed issues that we are concerned about, also we ask them about their experience of some teaching methods they applied and felt were good..."

The above quote suggests that participants have shared experiences with each other during the online discussions and got to know some ideas from each other and that these ideas were directly related to their teaching and classroom practice.

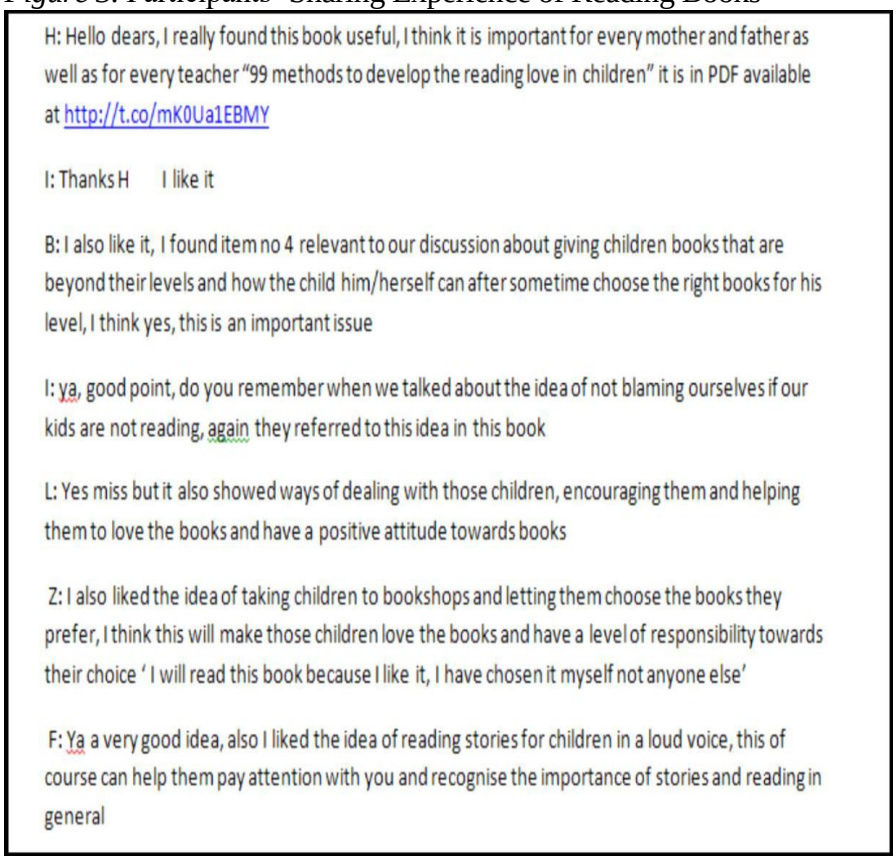
This finding corresponds with Appleby and Pilkington's (2014, p. 48) model of critical professional development which supports the role of dialogue and discourse for professional learning. In fact, the workshops and the online discussions involved dialogue with peers and groups about different aspects of teaching, learning and the professional development of teachers. Moreover, participants' reflected on these professional exchanges and experiences which possibly enabled more rigorous and focussed learning and meaning making activity to take place (Vrikki et al., 2017).

Participating in Communities of Practice. The data revealed that the participatory model of CPD has added a lot to the participants since they were joining a professional community of practice (the researcher, teachers and SETs from different schools as well as their colleagues) through which they discussed issues, shared concerns and learned from each other's' ideas and contributions. For example, Farida explains that:

> "The idea of communities of practice that we discussed in the workshops was a great idea, it showed me how easy it can be that when we face any problem we can find solutions for it by discussing and communicating with others, asking colleagues for their experiences and so on".

Moreover, Figure 3, from one of the online discussions in the group, provides an example of how Huda shared her experience of a book that she read, and how her colleagues discussed the ideas presented in the book to help children with their reading; thereby demonstrating the benefits of creating a community of practice for participants.

Figure 3. Participants' Sharing Experience of Reading Books



H: Hello dears, I really found this book useful, I think it is important for every mother and father as well as for every teacher "99 methods to develop the reading love in children" it is in PDF available at http://t.co/mK0Ua1EBMY

I: Thanks H I like it

B: I also like it, I found item no 4 relevant to our discussion about giving children books that are beyond their levels and how the child him/herself can after sometime choose the right books for his level, I think yes, this is an important issue

I: ya, good point, do you remember when we talked about the idea of not blaming ourselves if our kids are not reading, again they referred to this idea in this book

L: Yes miss but it also showed ways of dealing with those children, encouraging them and helping them to love the books and have a positive attitude towards books

Z: I also liked the idea of taking children to bookshops and letting them choose the books they prefer, I think this will make those children love the books and have a level of responsibility towards their choice ' I will read this book because I like it, I have chosen it myself not anyone else'

F: Ya a very good idea, also I liked the idea of reading stories for children in a loud voice, this of course can help them pay attention with you and recognise the importance of stories and reading in general

As could be seen in Figure 3, participants are demonstrating an online community of practice as practitioner teachers are sharing their experience of a book they read and relating this discussion to previous discussions they had about the same topic (e.g., giving children books that are beyond their level and not

blaming themselves that students are not reading….etc.). They followed up the discussion to specific ideas presented in the book they read (e.g. encouraging students to read, reading stories for children in a loud voice…etc). This is an example of a real community of practice where teachers are sharing experience and building on each other's ideas to benefit and learn from each other.

Research and Reflection Skills. The data shows that participants have gained some skills as a result of joining the participatory model of CPD. Researching is one of these skills which some participants referred to. I think that this might be the result of the awareness-raising activities that were included in the workshop about the importance of research for teachers and carrying out action research. The literature has well documented that many teachers rarely engage in research unless encouraged to do so (Borg, 2009 in Wyatt, 2011). Thus, some teachers indicated in the follow-up individual interviews that they are planning to do action research after they joined the workshops. For example, Amal illuminates that:

> "…participating in these workshops helped me get new ideas, read in some topics and remind myself of the information I already have about action research especially and how can we do action research in reality, for example, I thought of doing an action research about the challenges teachers face in shared writing lessons".

In addition, the data shows that respondents have gained some reflection skills as they reflected on the ideas they discussed in the workshops and online discussion group. This is what Schön (1987) called *reflection-on-action* which takes place after the event and is a more deliberative and conscious process. This type of reflection involves looking back at an event (in this case after joining the workshops and online discussion group) it is a form of retrospective reflection (Schön, 1987). Alya expresses that:

> "…also inside the school sometimes we reflect on the ideas we discussed in the online discussion group".

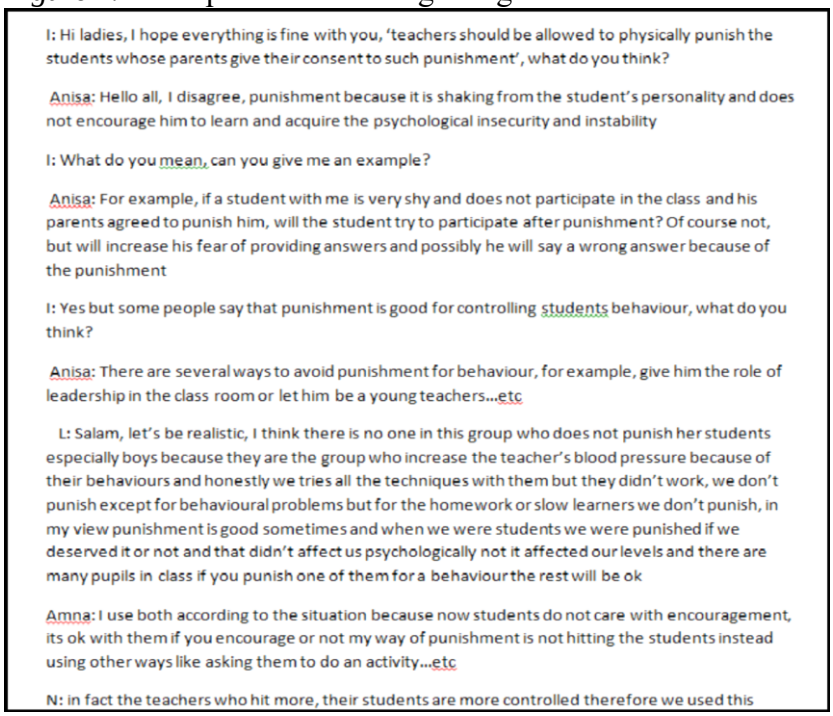
From my viewpoint, both research and reflection skills that participants stated they have gained after joining the participatory model of CPD seem to help participants to critically reflect on their practice. Through such critical reflection on practice, they should then be able not only to examine the technical aspects of their teaching, but also to look critically at issues, both within the school as a whole, and outside which might have impacts on the quality of teaching and learning in the classroom (Harrison, 2011). Therefore, these skills are crucial for teachers' CPD which can help them explore more critically the underlying assumptions in their teaching practices, then to build their understanding of teaching and learning and add to their professional knowledge (Harrison, 2011; Pollard et al., 2008).

Participating in Debates. During the second workshop which was led by the participants, one group of teachers (group 3) discussed the idea of Omani English teachers as intellectuals and the need to create an atmosphere for intellectual debate in Omani schools. Participants provided an example of that from an event that was taking place during the time of the workshops (October 2015) which was

elections for the Shura council representatives (political representatives for the different governorates in Oman). This group intelligently showed participants how teachers in Oman can participate in intellectual debates like choosing the appropriate people to be the representatives of their states at the Shura council. They added that currently many people in different states in Oman are choosing their representatives according to family relationships or to cultural and social considerations. They railed against that arguing that teachers need to have an enlightening role in this regard by discussing such issues at their schools and even taking these ideas to their society by talking to their family members and the public people about choosing the best people to be their representatives at the Shura council. They stated that through participating in such types of intellectual debates or any other educational debates teachers can learn and develop professionally.

An example of participants' engagement in educational debates was present in the online discussion strings where teachers' agreement and disagreement with each other was clearly evident. I think such types of discourse are important in that they provide teachers with the chance to organize collectively to improve the conditions under which they work (Giroux, 2013). Figure 4, from one of the online discussions, shows participants' beliefs regarding punishment.

Figure 4. Participants' Beliefs Regarding Punishment



I: Hi ladies, I hope everything is fine with you, 'teachers should be allowed to physically punish the students whose parents give their consent to such punishment', what do you think?

Anisa: Hello all, I disagree, punishment because it is shaking from the student's personality and does not encourage him to learn and acquire the psychological insecurity and instability

I: What do you mean, can you give me an example?

Anisa: For example, if a student with me is very shy and does not participate in the class and his parents agreed to punish him, will the student try to participate after punishment? Of course not, but will increase his fear of providing answers and possibly he will say a wrong answer because of the punishment

I: Yes but some people say that punishment is good for controlling students behaviour, what do you think?

Anisa: There are several ways to avoid punishment for behaviour, for example, give him the role of leadership in the class room or let him be a young teachers…etc

L: Salam, let's be realistic, I think there is no one in this group who does not punish her students especially boys because they are the group who increase the teacher's blood pressure because of their behaviours and honestly we tries all the techniques with them but they didn't work, we don't punish except for behavioural problems but for the homework or slow learners we don't punish, in my view punishment is good sometimes and when we were students we were punished if we deserved it or not and that didn't affect us psychologically not it affected our levels and there are many pupils in class if you punish one of them for a behaviour the rest will be ok

Amna: I use both according to the situation because now students do not care with encouragement, its ok with them if you encourage or not my way of punishment is not hitting the students instead using other ways like asking them to do an activity…etc

N: in fact the teachers who hit more, their students are more controlled therefore we used this

Figure 4 represents participants' ideas and beliefs about punishment of students. The debate among participants who are with or against the topic shows how each participant is trying to justify his/her idea (e.g., those who are against punishment of students show how punishment can affect students' personality negatively...etc., while those who are with punishment gives justifications for

classroom control…etc.). It seems that participating in such intellectual debates is an example of healthy discussions among teachers where they are discussing issues of concern, justifying their ideas and learning from each other's ideas and views, which can positively contribute to their professional development.

Views about Impact on Practice

Creating a Reading Culture in Omani Schools. The data from individual and focus group interviews as well as online posts shows that participants claim to have used some of the ideas from the workshops and online discussion group in practice. A key idea that almost all participants said that they used regarding developing themselves professionally is reading. Many respondents (16 out of the 18) stated that they developed a love to read after participating in the workshops. Halima, for instance, clearly states that "I also benefited from the reading, I myself started to read now after talking about it in the workshops, and I started loving to read". The majority of participants also remarked that reading has become a habit for them as Laila for example states:

> "…for ourselves now at least we specified a time for reading".

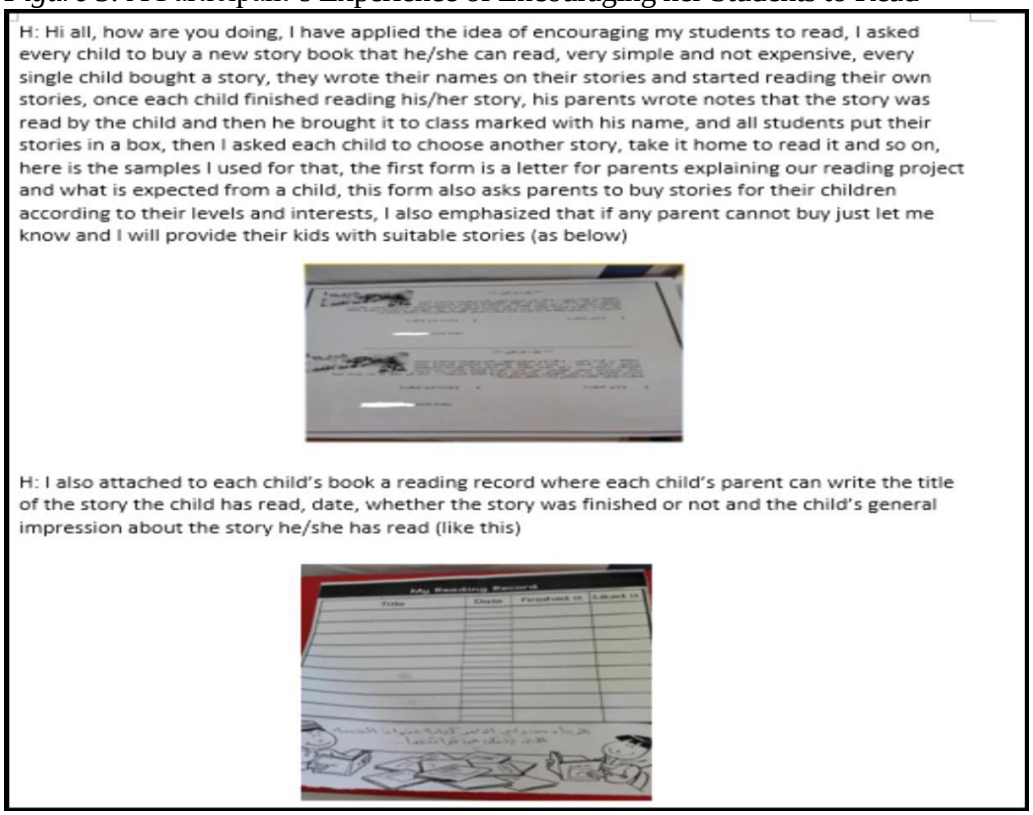
Furthermore, the data shows that respondents tried to create a reading culture in their schools by encouraging their students to read as this was repeatedly reported by some participants. Moreover, the three SETs said that the majority of their teachers have applied this idea with their students. For example, Laila (a SET) explains the process through which they applied this idea in their school:

> "we started with our students by advising them on the importance of reading, then we provided them with story books and other books to read, we also encouraged our learners to borrow books and that each child finishes reading 7 books will be rewarded".

In Figure 5 (from one of the online discussions) Huda shares with her colleagues how she used the reading idea with her pupils to encourage them to read and the process she followed regarding that.

In this example, Huda showed her colleagues the different steps she followed to create a reading culture in her classroom by encouraging her students to read (e.g., by asking each student to buy a book, keeping reading records…etc.). The specific steps that she shared with her colleagues represent how this participant teacher has benefitted from the workshops and the ideas presented in them through creating a reading culture in her classroom. This also might show how online discussion can be a good way of sharing experience, learning from each other and developing professionally, as other teachers might be benefitted from the process followed by Huda to encourage her students to read.

Figure 5. A Participant's Experience of Encouraging her Students to Read



Teachers' Views about Impact on Students. The data from the individual and focus group interviews indicates that some of the ideas presented in the workshops and in the online discussion group have positively impacted on students' attitudes towards reading. Some participants (7 in total) claimed that many students in their classes are now more eager to read. In the following quote Anisa for example confirms that:

> "some of my pupils only during this month read 18 stories and are still searching in their ipads for other stories to read instead of playing games in their ipads as they were doing before, their attitudes towards reading changed positively and now they love to read, and tomorrow I will reward my students those who read the biggest numbers of stories".

Kane and Warner (1997) stressed that the climate in which reading takes place becomes one of the most influential aspects of a child's motivation to read. There are some suggestions from the data that students' positive attitudes towards reading and the desire to read is a result of their positive reading experiences at school but more follow up research, outside the scope of this study, is needed to establish how far the participatory model has led to changes in student learning.

Constraints of the Participatory Model of CPD

The findings indicate that a number of things might prevent teachers engaging in a participatory model of CPD. These would need to be addressed if a participatory model of CPD is to be successfully introduced in Oman. The first constraint as the data has shown is time, the majority of interview respondents (16 in total) claim that they have no time for participating in such events as online group discussions and indeed not many respondents were active in these. When asked for the reasons behind that, they complained that time was a real challenge for them which stopped them from participating in some of the online discussions although they believe that if they had contributed more to discussions this would have made them more fruitful. For example, Badriya states that:

> "…usually they were discussing in times not suitable to me so I usually missed their discussions but honestly I always read what they write in that group, the different discussions and ideas before I sleep, I love to read others ideas to benefit from them even if I missed the discussion, these groups are really good but sometimes unfortunately due to some reasons not everyone can be present at the same time".

Anisa suggested that this challenge could be overcome through pre-planning on the part of participants and agreed commitment to participate between different participants. As she said:

> "The disadvantages especially for the online discussion group might be that not all can be free and online at the same time to discuss issues but by pre-planning and agreement I feel there will be no disadvantages with such ideas and models".

The second constraint as shown by the data is workload which was reported by all focus group and individual follow-up interview respondents as a key restriction impacting on their engagement with the participatory model of CPD. Some participants stated that such a participatory model adds more work and is an extra burden on teachers. Huda for example highlighted the challenge of undertaking classroom research:

> "…especially when we talk about the students reading project, you have to follow up students and even if you want to let them do it by themselves they come to you teacher I have read this and they need some attention from you and also we have to follow them from time to time which is more work added to us".

Nevertheless, the data shows that if teachers' workload is reduced then they can join the participatory model of CPD and develop professionally as Salima contends:

> "…but before applying such a strategy or others the Ministry should think seriously of reducing the workload on teachers, we want to do lots of things, we want to develop professionally, we want to change but with all the school responsibilities and home it is really difficult, I hope the Ministry will apply this participatory model but after

> reducing the workload on teachers because at the end we are human beings and we want to work and improve but also we need sometimes to have a rest".

The third constraint with the participatory model of CPD as participants noted is teachers' personality. The data indicates that some teachers are keen to develop themselves professionally while others are not. Karima (one of the SETs) gives an example in this respect from her own teachers, she articulates:

> "For example, from my school 5 teachers joined the workshops, 4 of them I can tell that really tried to benefit from the ideas presented in the workshop but 1 of them no, she only attended and she is not only like that in these workshops we did with you miss or in relation to this topic, but this is her personality".

Discussion and Recommendations

The data revealed that EFL teachers in Oman experience different CPD opportunities (e.g., INSET courses, cascading INSET, coaching and mentoring). All of these opportunities seem to be organised and/or funded by the MOE in Oman. However, findings from previous studies in Oman showed that many of these CPD opportunities failed to meet EFL teachers' needs (Al-Balushi, 2017). It seems that the MOE in Oman is not following a systematic way in collecting, analysing and assessing EFL teachers' needs in Oman in order to meet these needs. Moreover, some Omani researchers questioned the effectiveness of INSET courses in contributing to changes in EFL teachers' beliefs and/or their classroom practices (e.g. Al-Balushi, 2009; Al-Lamki, 2009). This is because most of the CPD opportunities offered to teachers follow transmission approaches/models of teachers' learning because "they seek to transmit a set of predetermined, pre-selected, and pre-sequenced bodies of knowledge" from teacher educators to teachers (Kumaravadivelu, 2012, p. 8).

In order to help teachers develop the capacity to address their classroom realities and to evolve as professionals there is a need for alternative post-transmission approaches to helping teachers learn and develop professionally. In this regard, Al-Balushi (2017) recommended that there is a real need for more dialogic and collaborative forms of CPD in Oman. Therefore, the current study adopted a participatory model of CPD and investigated its effectiveness in the Omani EFL context.

Introducing the research participants to the participatory model of CPD, the findings reveal that participants were in favour of this model. This is due to the post-transmission perspective underlying this model which seeks to restructure teachers' CPD so that it transcends the limitations of transmission models (Taylor, 2017; Kumaravadivelu, 2012).The critical participatory nature of this model also paid attention to broader historical, political, social, cultural and educational factors that impact teaching and the CPD of teachers in Oman (Moran et al., 2017). It helped participants to make decisions regarding their CPD, to play the role of reflective practitioners and possibly help them become transformative intellectuals.

Teachers as Decision Makers and Reform Agents

The findings from the current study revealed that the participatory model of CPD enabled teachers to make decisions regarding their CPD and be the "agents" of their own professional development. This is because they were involved in their CPD process and have decided by themselves the content of workshops 2 and 3. They also decided the topics they wanted to discuss in the online discussion group and led these discussions by themselves. Such findings are significant because a new discourse circulating about teacher professionalism is that of 'democratic professionalism' which seeks to "demystify professional work and build alliances between teachers and excluded constituencies of students and members of the community on whose behalf decisions have traditionally been made either by professions or by the state" (Apple, 1996 in Day & Sachs, 2004, p. 7). The core of "democratic professionalism" is the emphasis on collaboration and cooperative actions between teachers and other educational stake holders. It suggests that the teacher has a wider responsibility than the single classroom and this includes contributing to his/her school, the system in general, other students not only the ones he/she is teaching, the wider community and collective responsibilities of teachers themselves as a group and the broader profession (Brennan, 1996 in Day & Sachs, 2004).

However, teachers are often "marginalized" in the policy-making process and sufficient consultation is often absent in relation to their CPD (Wong, 1995, in Wai Yan, 2011). The effectiveness of such a kind of 'bureaucratic-managerial approach' to teacher CPD policy is under doubt (Vonk, 1991 in Wai Yan, 2011). This marginalization of teachers raises the myth of teacher professionalism, in which teachers' professional status has been neglected in the policy formulation process. In fact, nowadays educational researchers call for teachers' voice and their active participation in CPD process. For example, Bangs and Frost (2012) accentuated that it is time to consider approaches to teacher and school development that puts the teacher at the centre of the process if we want them to influence both policy and practice. This could explain participants' positive reaction to the participatory model of CPD as they felt that their voice is heard though their CPD participation. For example, Anisa states:

> "I feel I have an opinion within the community and give my justifications for my opinion … The advantages as I said are increasing teachers' self-confidence and they feel that they have a voice and their voice is heard"

Teachers as Reflective Practitioners

The findings from this study revealed that teachers have learnt some skills from being part of the participatory model of CPD. Becoming aware of the importance of researching their own practice and reflecting on what they are doing are some skills that respondents probably have gained from participating in the workshops and online discussion groups. This means that the participatory model has helped participants to critically reflect on their practice and become reflective practitioners. Yet, such practices are not well activated in the current CPD system

in Oman as some previous studies have shown. For example, Al-Zedjali (2004) investigated teachers' reflective practices and fostering professional development through post-lesson discussion. She looked at the perceptions of EFL teachers and supervisors. This study found that the concepts of reflection and teacher autonomy are encouraged in theory but they are absent in practice in Oman.

In the ELT literature, Richards and Lockhart (1996) discussed the idea of critical reflection and how it can trigger a deeper understanding of teaching because it involves examining teaching experiences as a basis for evaluation and decision making as a source for change. In other words, critical reflection involves posing questions about how and why things are the way they are, what value systems they represent, what alternatives might be available, and what the limitations are of doing things one way as opposed to another. They added that teachers who are involved in critical reflection are better able to evaluate their stages of professional growth and what aspects of their teaching they need to change. When such reflection is done routinely, it enables teachers to feel more confident in trying different options and assessing their effects on their teaching.

Throughout the action research part of this study, I think that the research participants were exposed to Richards and Lockhart's (1996) idea of critical reflection through an experiential learning cycle. This is because they discussed some issues in the three workshops and applied some of these ideas practically such as creating a reading culture in their schools among teachers and students. Participants further reflected on this in the online discussion sessions and then went back to their schools to make changes to the ways of administering such reading culture according to their colleagues' ideas in the group. Experiential learning also acknowledges that much informal learning takes place outside formal educational settings. This is true for this research participants as the results show that after participating in the three workshops and online discussion sessions, participants started initiating establishing smaller groups according to their interests/needs and working collaboratively in these groups to discuss issues of concern. For instance, grade 1 teachers created a group to reflect on ideas discussed in the workshops and online discussion sessions in relation to teaching grade 1. In this way reflective practice allowed those participant teachers to make sense of all learning opportunities available to them, both formal and informal, and to recognise and evaluate it when they talked about the benefits and constraints of the participatory model of CPD and the activities they were engaged in.

Teachers as Transformative Intellectuals

The findings show that the participatory model of CPD encouraged teachers to participate in debates and discuss the idea of preparing teachers as intellectuals in Omani schools which could possibly contribute to their CPD. This seems to be a crucial step in the Omani centralised top-down context whether regarding teachers' CPD or education in general. This is because teachers have a significant role in society and education. Teachers are one of the most significant resources a nation has for providing the values, knowledge and skills that prepare young people for productive citizenship but even more than that to give sanctuary for

their aspirations and dreams for a future of hope, dignity and justice (Giroux, 2013, p. 458).

However, in many countries including Arab countries and Oman, one of major threats facing prospective and existing teachers is the increasing adoption of corporate and instrumental ideologies which emphasise technocratic and product-oriented approaches to both teacher education and classroom pedagogy (Kershaw, 2012; Hargreaves, 2003). In this view, teaching is reduced to a set of skills and strategies and it becomes synonymous with methods or techniques. Hence, instead of learning to raise questions about the principles underlying different classroom methods, theories of education and research techniques, teachers are often preoccupied with mastering the best way to teach a given body of knowledge. Yet, this retrograde view ignores any understanding of pedagogy as a moral and political practice which can function as a deliberate attempt to influence how and what knowledge, values, and identities are produced with particular sets of classroom social relations (Giroux, 2013, p. 461).

The use of such technocratic and product-oriented approaches seems to represent forms of education that are based on the concept of "business/banking model of education" (Freire, 1970). In this view, education is seen as a process of depositing knowledge into others where knowledge is a gift bestowed by those who consider themselves knowledgeable upon those whom they consider to know nothing as Freire noted. He railed against this and argued that banking classrooms are mechanical rather than creative, and the transmission of knowledge through teacher monologues silences students' voices and discounts their personal backgrounds and experiences. As the "banking model" of education has generated and continues to generate greater and greater failure (Freire, 1998), there are more calls for post-transmission perspectives of education which anticipate teachers to play the role of transformative intellectuals who strive not only for academic advancement but also for personal transformation, both for themselves and for their learners (Kumaravadivelu, 2012).

To sum up, the findings from this study reveal that the participatory model of CPD can prepare teachers as transformative intellectuals. In the Omani context, a starting point to interrogate the social function of teachers as public and transformative intellectuals is to view schools as social, cultural, and economic sites that are inextricably tied to issues of control, power, and politics (Giroux, 2017; 2013; 1988). In other words, schools should do more than pass on a common set of knowledge and values in an objective fashion. In contrast, schools should be places that represent forms of social relations, language practices, knowledge and values that are particular selections and exclusions from the wider culture (Hargreaves, 2003; Pai, 1990). In such schools, the impact of teaching extends beyond the classroom to the community, the country and even the world.

Benefits of the Participatory Model of CPD

The current research has shown that the participatory model of CPD has benefits for teaches and the wider society in Oman. This is because there is a growing realization to make a meaningful shift in teachers' CPD from transmission

models of education that consider the role of teacher-learners as passive knowledge-absorbers to more constructivist views of education that assumes teacher-learners to be self-directed in their own professional learning and growth (Beach, 2017; Kumaravadivelu, 2012). The current study practically and actively engaged a group of EFL teachers from different schools in Oman in the participatory model of CPD. The design of this model is based on socio-constructivist paradigms of teachers' learning where teachers were constructing knowledge of their own when engaged in CPD activities that were part of the participatory model (e.g., the three workshops) and in social discourse (online-discussions) that collaboratively took place during the action research phase of the study. As an example, the online discussion group that is established as part of the participatory model of CPD for teachers is an example of a professional community of practice where participants shared ideas and learnt from each other not only for themselves but shared these ideas with their colleagues at their schools as the data earlier showed. This study further utilized the technological revolution and the new generations' love of social media through the use of online chats between participants for their PD. Hence, the study provides practical suggestions on how to form both virtual and face-to-face communities of practice in Omani schools to share ideas and learn from each other.

Conclusion

The current study investigated Omani English as a foreign language teachers' views about participatory professional development; a model developed by the researcher to involve teachers in their CPD process. The findings showed that this model has a positive impact on participant teachers' beliefs about CPD, and their CPD practices. The findings also revealed that the participatory model of CPD enabled teachers to make decisions regarding their CPD and encouraged them to play the role of critical reflective practitioners as well as preparing them as future transformative intellectuals. Therefore, the study recommends the use of such participatory professional development forms in the TESOL context in Oman to contribute to teachers' learning and development.

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