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Playful Practices With Children With Intellectual Disabilities

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Abstract

This article is aimed to promote and support the physical education teacher's community into the use of playful practices with pupils with mild intellectual disabilities (MID), as a didactic medium and a substantial educational resource of quality physical education. Firstly, it will be reviewed definitions and emergent themes on the subject shaping the theoretical framework on which this study has been built. Later, it will be presented didactic advice and guidelines for the application of playful practices, extracted from the most effective observable practices in the teaching experiences of the author in specialized education institutions with pupils with MID and supported by the scientific literature. This article reinforces the notion that playful practices provide variety to meaningful learning, have great potential as a facilitator in pedagogical processes, and can provide an appropriate educational response to pupils with intellectual disabilities. It also shows that teachers should reflect positive and reflective disposition to modifications and adaptations of the different elements involved in the playful practices according to educational objectives, but also according to the personal needs and interests of the children with MID. Considerations such as the instructions have to be modified to meet students' needs, play according to children's biological age and systematic registration and monitoring in the teaching-learning process are essential. It is recommended that teachers share their experiences in pedagogical practice to learn from our differences and strengthen our coincidences, to contribute to the still insufficient bibliography in the pedagogical practices in special education.

Keywords: play; intellectual disabilities; teaching experiences; special education needs.

1. INTRODUCTION

This article was born as a result of my initial questions, insecurities, and motivations, and from the university students and colleagues during the time I was a professor in a physical education and sport faculty in my home country (Ecuador). In each theoretical and/or practical teaching encounter related to the adapted physical education, a great motivation to work with populations with disabilities was highlighted from everyone involved. However, I have been able to experience by myself, observe and some have commented to me, that over time this enthusiasm diminishes considerably when realizing that the development of inclusive practices is very challenging especially for personal and environmental factors.

Personal factor such as the lack of practical teacher training (Shields & Synnot, 2016) and attitudes towards working with people with disabilities (Bartoňová, Kudláček, & Bressan, 2007; Meegan & MacPhail, 2006; Shields & Synnot, 2016), that can also be translated to teachers behaviors affecting the progression of positive outcomes (Fournidou, Kudlacek, & Evagellinou, 2011), are perceived as significant barriers to inclusion from the stakeholders. In addition, insufficient literature about the different elements involved in the physical education classes applicable to diverse populations and range ages is an important perceived environmental factor. All the above embraces the notion of the complex and multifactorial nature of the inclusive practices (Fournidou et al., 2011). Studies suggest that changes in negative attitudes are related to teaching experiences and training in special education (Kurniawatia, Minnaert, Mangunsong, & Ahmeda, 2012). Evidence also shows that effective support (in training and didactics) from specialists to the physical teachers may be beneficial (Fournidou et al., 2011).

Playful practices as organized activities with logical and flexible structures are an important didactic medium in physical education at all ages, and especially in young pupils. This is reflected in the Ecuadorian School Physical

Education curriculum, in which the first, of six blocks, is called “Playful practices: the games and playing” (Ecuador Ministry of Education, 2016). Framed in the right of every child to engage in play and recreational activities appropriate to their age (United Nations Children’s Fund [UNICEF], 1989) and taking into account the great potential of play as a facilitator in the teaching and learning processes in the area of physical education.

Therefore, with the desire to collaborate with the literature on this subject, bringing up different aspects with which physical education teachers face each day in class: this article is aimed to promote and support the physical education teacher’s community into the use of playful practices with pupils with MID, as a didactic medium and a substantial educational resource of quality physical education. Initially, it will be addresses key definitions and emergent themes on the subject shaping the theoretical framework on which this study has been built. Second, it will be presented didactic advice and guidelines based on the most effective observable practices in the teaching experience of the author in specialized education institutions with children MID and supported by scientific literature in the area.

1.1. Atypical development: an overview of intellectual disabilities

Each child has a unique set of characteristics and abilities that develop at their own pace. However, most children show a more or less similar pattern of development. For example, the development of sensory and motor areas of the cerebral cortex allows preschoolers to have great progress in gross motor skills such as running and jumping, although children’s skill levels differ depending on their genetics and their opportunities to learn and practice, typically motor skills development takes place in a predictable pattern (Papalia & Duskin, 2012). Nevertheless, children that do not follow that typical developmental trajectory are described to have an “atypical development”, which translates into inconsistencies in the achievement of milestones related to cognition, motor-coordination, language, social interaction, and adaptive development (Davies, Banyard, Norman, & Winder, 2010).

In the case of children with intellectual disabilities (ID), the typical developmental process may be affected by prenatal, perinatal, or postnatal causes that include genetic factors (e.g., Down syndrome, Fragile X syndrome) or environmental factors (e.g., exposure to toxic substances, nutritional deficiencies, brain radiation) (Boat & Wu, 2015), or by an interaction between the two (Davies et al., 2010). Yet, many cases are of unknown causes (Boat & Wu, 2015). This is a very heterogeneity group as a consequence of the wide range of etiologies for ID, with an estimated prevalence of the general population between 1% and 3% (Tan et al., 2016).

During the developmental period, children with ID begin to show difficulties in general mental abilities that affect their intellectual functioning (e.g., academic learning, problem-solving, abstract thinking) and deficits in adaptive functioning in daily life activities, including conceptual (e.g., reading, writing, language), social (e.g., empathy, ability to make/retain friendships) and practical domains (e.g., personal care, recreation) (American Psychiatric Association [APA], 2013). There are different severities of the diagnosis of ID depending on the extension of the compromised functioning described as mild, moderate, severe and profound. They are characterized based on the daily life skills (Diagnostic and statistical manual of mental disorders -5 [DSM-5] Criteria) and the typically standardized measure of the IQ (DSM-IV Criteria), where those with MID are able to live independently with minimum support levels and have an approximately IQ range of 50–69, up to those who have a profound ID and require complete daily support and care (24 hours per day) with an IQ <20 (Boat & Wu, 2015).

1.1.1. An approach to the population on which this study was build

Although the information presented in this article can be considered and adequate for different populations with ID and range ages, it is important to mention that it is based on the teaching experience of the author obtained while working with children with MID between 10 and 14 years.

As described in the previous section, the population with ID tends to be heterogeneous with large individual differences. Therefore, it is not surprising to think that children with different severities will react differently to the same educational practices. Likewise, as in populations with typical development, chronological age is an important demographic aspect to consider in children’s development, therefore, the pedagogical approaches and actions of teachers must be framed in the characteristics of development processes in physical, cognitive and psychosocial domains of each stage of growth.

Persons with MID represent 85% of the cases diagnosed as having an ID (APA, 2017). Children with MID might be 2 to 4 years behind in cognitive development in comparison with typically developing children, “which could

include math, language, short attention spans, memory difficulties and delays in speech development” (Watson, 2020). In the schools, children with MID are capable of learning with appropriate modifications and adaptations from the teachers in the teaching-learning process. In daily life, by learning how to perform practical life skills, they can carry out ordinary activities with minimal levels of supports (Boat & Wu, 2015).

An important aspect to consider as physical education teachers is that children with ID show motor delays in reaching motor milestones compared to children typically developed (Hogan, Rogers, & Msall, 2000; Pellegrino, 2007). They do not have any clear impairment (neurological or physical) preventing them to acquire at the same rate the typical motor patterns (Payne & Isaacs, 2012), but these delays have been evidenced in several studies (e.g., Frey & Chow, 2006; Gkotzia, Venetsanou, & Kambas, 2017; Hartman, Houwen, Scherder, & Visscher, 2010; Rintala & Loovis, 2013; Westendorp, Houwen, Hartman, & Visscher, 2011; Wuang, Wang, Huang, & Su, 2008). In addition, the literature also suggests that some children with MID may catch up to children with typical development through normal maturation and therapy (Payne, & Isaacs, 2012). Therefore, appropriate implementation of physical education programs adapted to their specificities are essential for the improvement of the motor skills (Mero, 2020).

Finally, there is great profile variability within this population due to the diverse etiologies that might show different developmental trajectories (Giaouri, Alevriadou, & Tsakiridou, 2010), which must be taken into consideration and should be studied and analyzed by each teacher. For instance, children with non-specific ID, children with other co-existing developmental disorders (e.g., autism spectrum disorder), with diagnosed congenital syndromes (e.g., Down syndrome) or with physical/sensory limitations (e.g., visual impairment). However, this article is mainly focused on experiences with children with non-specific MID and Down syndrome.

1.2. Playful practices: a substantial educational resource

Playful practices in this article refer to intervening in the physical education context through the means of play. The relevance of play has been studied from various perspectives for decades. The historian Johan Huizinga (1972), for example, designates our species as *homo ludens*, the man who plays. Huizinga mentions in his work how playing is an essential human function, highlighting the playful nature of the birth and development of our culture. Therefore, it is evident to think that play, being an inherent practice of man, is a didactic means and a substantial educational resource of the physical education classes of all ages, and especially in young pupils. However, although play can be a great facilitator in the teaching and learning processes, it should be emphasized that the essence of play does not lie in its didactic intention but rather that it constitutes an end in itself, we play because of the pleasure of playing without the necessity of extrinsic purposes (Bruner, 1986; Caillois, 1986; Cilla & Omeñaca, 2007). And in this context, it is also essential to learn how to appreciate its pedagogical value (Gruppe, 1976), such as in communication and social skills and/or for personal growth (Cilla & Omeñaca, 2007).

Huizinga (1949) defined play as “a voluntary activity or occupation executed within certain fixed limits of time and place, according to rules freely accepted but absolutely binding, having its aim in itself and accompanied by a feeling of tension, joy and the consciousness that it is “different” from “ordinary life” (p. 28). Play is a source of joy and pleasure (Cilla & Omeñaca, 2007). Studies show that “having fun” is an important factor for children with disabilities to participate, even if their performance in it is not very good, the simple fact of enjoyment is a strong motivator (Carter et al., 2014; Heah, Case, McGuire, & Law, 2007). Another facilitator for participation is the involvement of peers (Heah et al., 2007; Shields & Synnot, 2016). In this sense, being a socializer is one of the main characteristics of playing, due to favors cooperation, coexistence and teamwork (López, 2000).

Teachers must conceive play as an agent of global development (cognitive, social, affective, and motor area) and personal self-realization (Juan & Montes, 2001). The implementation of playful pedagogical practices “enables teachers to create contexts which enable them to follow children into play, co-constructing the action, possibly a narrative and resources” (Goouch, 2008, p. 95). Play, as an organized activity, with logical structure and rules, is at the same time flexible, modifiable and can be built among all the participants, provide a suitable educational response to the students with ID. This is an important point to consider since when working with children with disabilities, support, adaptations, and modifications in the educational environment by providing variety to meaningful learning and promoting the development of their potential and abilities is a prevailing need and it is also is children right (Constitution of the Republic of Ecuador, 2008; Ecuador Childhood and Adolescence Code, 2003; UNICEF, 1989).

2. PLAYFUL PRACTICES WITH CHILDREN WITH INTELLECTUAL DISABILITIES: GENERAL ADVICE AND GUIDELINES

In the following sections, didactic advice and guidelines will be provided in the teaching-learning process around three fundamental elements: the student, the teacher, and the playing.

2.1. Knowing our students is a key to success

As physical education teachers, due to our professional profile, we have a strong knowledge base in the stages of human development, which allows us to adapt the curriculum content to the chronological age of children. In addition, to work with this population we must study the ID: What does have an ID mean? What are the reasons children have this atypical development? What are the classifications and their essential characteristics? (This article gave a brief introduction in section 1.1.). You might think that it is something obvious and that it is not worth mentioning, but from my experience, you would be surprised to know the number of teachers who work with these children and have a very limited knowledge level about this matter.

Besides, we must consider the specific characteristics of the students, recognizing their prior knowledge, their learning needs, understanding their differences and their personality. I am going to refer to the last one as something very interesting happens with the playful practices. The action of playing, for being an innate activity, reveals aspects of the personality like very few other activities in physical education classes. Not for nothing in literature is recognized the contribution of play in the personality. For example, Claparède (1910) affirms that play allows to manifest the “ego” and unfolds the personality to the maximum. Chateu (1958) states the game as a school of personality, the child with development begins to experience the joy of triumph with compliance of the rules and the overcoming of difficulties. Martínez Criado (1998) stresses its importance in the process of adapting one's personality to the group.

In any case, it is unreal to think that we can find a game that adapts to all the diversity that exists in a class. However, by using our knowledge about the students in an active, critical and reflective way, we can achieve small adaptations that can be translated into major changes in our class. There is no manual that perfectly describes how a student will react to a playful practice or how she will acquire learning from it, however, there are some methods that can help us decipher it, such as a teacher's journal (see the following section). By considering these details we are able to plan games according to the pedagogical objectives, but also according to the personal needs and interests of the children. Therefore, it is important to plan a variety of games so that children can enjoy their favorites and include new games to awaken and expand interests (Sher, 2009).

2.2. A teacher's diary: detecting best practices and evaluating teaching processes

Systematic registration and monitoring help us to observe and analyze important factors that intervened in the teaching-learning process. It can be in any format in which the teacher feels comfortable with. In my case, a teacher's diary is one of the educational practices that allowed me to critically interpret the experiences lived in classes, and to organize and reconstruct my own's and children's ideas. This practice started superficially a week before starting my first job at a special school. I realized that I had no idea how the children were like, how they behaved, what they liked, what kind of class I should prepare (I wanted to dedicate the first class to games to introduce ourselves and break the ice). I was filled with anxiety although I had studied previously a lot about disability, I felt absolutely lost on the subject in real and practical life. Therefore, I decided to go to school two days before my actual first workday, I spoke with the principal and got permission to speak with the teachers so that they could introduce me to the children and talk a little about each one, and with each of them. (We have the advantage that special education schools generally do not have a very large population, which is why this type of approach is feasible). I started to write down interesting data and recommendations for teacher-student interaction and learning-teaching process that I considered appropriate

and/or that the teachers recommended. With this, little by little I realized that, although it is true, knowledge about the characteristics of your students and the best educational practices comes with time and experience in educational interaction, there are ways to do it in a more organized and systematic approach.

That specific first moment gave me an inside of what games might be appropriate for the children and also helped me a lot with my proceedings and behaviors during class, which also needs to be analyzed and prepared in advance in order to deal with possible complex situations in the best possible way and avoid unnecessary confrontations and/or negative actions. A teacher, for example, told me that when student A does not want to work, she motivates him with the characters from "*El Chavo del Ocho*" (Mexican television sitcom). She also mentioned that for student B it is difficult to participate in activities outside the classroom, and in those cases sometimes she hugs or holds the teacher's hand for long periods, covers her face and at certain times cries. If I had not had this first approach with the teacher, I would hardly have known the importance of "*El Chavo del Ocho*" for student A and possibly thought that he simply did not want to participate which is different from the fact that he did not have the appropriate motivation to do it. And for sure it would have taken me much longer to figure out why student B was crying, maybe I would have believed that she had no sympathy with my class or me, and I would not have given her the space she needed so that she gradually integrates once her initial adaptation period to group activities has been overcome, as she did that first class.

It should be noted that we must be careful with the perceptions of other teachers regarding children, as they are subjective and can guide us to create preset ideas of children that are not necessarily true. We must do it as objectively as possible and consider what really may be necessary and what can help our class. This collaboration between teachers (exchange of experiences and research), that must be carried out periodically to promote and improve the learning process, it is not new, the literature corroborates the enriching educational value of this practice (e.g., Basque, 2013; Mesa, 2011; Navarro & Hernández, 2017).

A teacher's diary is a resource for the expression and reflection of individual and group work, aimed at detecting best practices and evaluating teaching processes. It is particularly useful for self-evaluation and planning future sessions based on previous experiences. In the diary, it can be addressed general themes, such as the lack of motivation of the group to carry out a symbolic or imitation game. And also, more specific themes such as certain observed individual behaviors, thoughts, feelings and ideas shared by the children that caught your attention during class. In observed behavior patterns for example, because of the notes I realized that student C often did not want to participate in classes unless my instruction was expressed in a negative form. For example, when I gave the instruction "let's hold hands to form a circle", he simply said no. However, when afterward with a neutral tone of voice I said "well, then don't take our hands" he thought for a few seconds, and then he came to the group to take our hands. Regarding children's thoughts, for instance, it is important at the end of the game to get together and ask them about their perception of the game (e.g., was difficult to escape? was easy to remember what you had to do?), which is valuable information that should be recorded for future practices.

In summary, teachers must have the capacity to reflect, rethink and restructure their own teaching (Zeichner, 1986) according to the educational needs of children. The supports, adaptations, and modifications to the playful practices are an important point to consider when working with children with disabilities. Therefore, writing a diary can be an enriching experience in the professional training of physical education teachers since it is a resource that allows expressing different types and levels of pedagogical reflection (Jarpa, Haas, & Collao, 2017). We, teachers, have to constantly rethink ourselves.

2.3. Didactic considerations based on the characteristics of children with MID and playful practices

The selection, modification and/or elaboration of the games is a process that should not be taken lightly. Initially, all general considerations for the systematic use of games in the educational context should be made: 1) according to

their function at the specific moment of the physical education session (warm-up, main part or cool-down), 2) according to the type of game appropriate for the objectives established in our program (e.g., symbolic, sensory, traditional) and 3) according to organizational (e.g., physical space, available materials, time) and technical (e.g., control of the intensity, volume, frequency) aspects.

Due to all of the above, and especially due to the heterogeneity of this population, it is complex to label a game as "suitable" or "appropriate". Therefore, the objective of this section is not to provide a battery of games but rather to mention didactic considerations to guide the physical education teacher towards more effective practices, in accordance with the characteristics of children with MID and using the game as teaching-learning activity.

2.3.1. Play according to children's biological age

In order to successfully work in the educational context with this population, I had to dive deep into the scientific literature to understand their differences with the typically developed children in terms of biological and chronological age. Here are some results that helped me define more or less how to proceed:

Children with MID might be 2 to 4 years behind in cognitive development in comparison with typically developing children (Watson, 2020). They are also characterized by a delay in reaching motor milestones and by a deficit of sensorimotor function, therefore this affects neuro-musculoskeletal and motor systems (Hogan, Rogers, & Msall, 2000; Pellegrino, 2007). Research also shows that while it is true they may reach motor milestones later, usually it is not more delayed than the cognitive development or the speech (Kurtz, 2007). Payne and Isaacs (2012) defined motor delay as "following a normal course of motor development but at a level that is below expectations for the child's age" (p. 449). The delay in motor development increases with the chronological age in persons with ID (Zhang & Chen, 2004). For instance, a preschool child with ID, who is 1-year delayed compared to typical developmental children, might be in elementary school 2-3 years behind them and 4-5 years delayed in middle school (Payne & Isaacs, 2012). This is consistent with studies showing delays from 2 to 10 years behind their typical developed peers on measures of motor performance in persons with MID (e.g., DiRocco, Clark, & Phillips, 1987; Rarick, 1980; Rintala & Loovis, 2013; Zhang & Chen, 2004).

Related literature attributes the cognitive development of children with ID as responsible for these motor delays (Kurtz, 2007; Pellegrino, 2007). Supported by theories such as Cognitive Processing Theory, which suggests that children may present motor delays because of problems with receiving and processing necessary information for "planning, forming strategies, attention, and memory in order to carry out normal motor functioning" (Payne & Isaacs, 2012, p. 451). For example, for a child to perform an appropriate motor response, initially, she must identify and process the information in their environment and then select an appropriate movement program (Schmidt & Wrisberg, 2008). Children with ID may have problems to rapidly or properly process the environmental information and therefore may show a slow and/or wrong movement decision program for the task.

This could explain why some studies (e.g., Vuijk, Hartman, Scherder, & Visscher, 2010; Westendorp et al., 2011) showed that the motor delay is more pronounced in people that have higher severity of ID since the cognitive deficit is more pronounced as well. It could also explain how the motor delays are inclining to increase in older children and young with ID, because motor performance has a greater cognitive requirement as more speed, movement control or use of strategies (Wall, 2004). This conception is aligned with studies which support the contribution of the cognitive level to motor skills in children with different kind of atypical development, such as with attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (Klimkeit, Sheppard, Lee & Bradshaw, 2004) or with autistic spectrum disorder (Green et al., 2009). However, more research would be needed to justify this statement in children with ID (Gkotzia, Venetsanou, & Kambas, 2017).

With these antecedents, and with the experience obtained corroborating them, in my daily actions as a teacher I generally select, modify or create games that have cognitive and physical demands for children between 3-5 years younger (than 10-14 years old children with MID). Let's not forget that in the physical education classes, these children are capable of learning with appropriate modifications and adaptations from the teachers. Therefore, teachers must take the games apart and modify them until they are adapted to the characteristics of the children in their group, gradually add levels of complexity, and above all, be patient. These children will be slower but little by little it will be easier for them. The literature also suggests that some children with MID may catch up to children with typical development through normal maturation and therapy (Payne, & Isaacs, 2012), and from my experience, progress is observable (and very gratifying) in the medium and long term.

2.3.2. Recommended ratios in playful practices sessions

Differences in student-teacher ratio and the number of students per course also contribute to the degree of success in a class with playful practices.

Regarding the number of students, it must be considered that due to the characteristics of this population the class must be small enough to guarantee student learning, participation, and safety, but large enough to guarantee the execution of varied individual, group, and team games. The range of games options with a group of 6 children possibly is going to be more limited than in a group of 12. This is something that does not happen with many other physical education contents such as gymnastic practices, when we are teaching the forward roll for instance and for which having a small number of students facilitates the learning of the technique since the class can be more individualized. Also, the recommended number of students depends on the number of teachers in the class. From my experience, the most effective practices were carried out with a group between 10 - 15 children with MID and with 2 teachers (a lead-teacher and an assistant-teacher).

In addition to the obvious functions that an assistant-teacher has in the support to the lead-teacher in charge of a classroom, its importance lies in the fact that we realized that on many occasions children do not respond to games even if they understand what to do. What we discovered is that if there is an "infiltrated" player (assistant-teacher) initiating and motivating the development of the game as one more child, the students imitate this behavior and start to play spontaneously as well. After they have become familiar with the game and have passed the first stage of shyness and insecurity that a new activity could cause them, in most games it is no longer necessary to have the infiltrator.

Children usually do not lose sight of the lead-instructor "out of the game" and feel supported by the other "within it". The lead-teacher performs functions such as: explaining the game, putting the examples in the introductory part, clarifying questions, moderating and monitoring the correct execution of the game. Performing both functions simultaneously, for instance moderating the normal development of the game and at the same time being part of it, is not easy for a single person in these circumstances. Of course, this depends on the characteristics of the game (many times everyone can play together: teachers and students), and also the roles of teachers are flexible and interchangeable (if both possess more or less the same abilities and skills). Other functions of the assistant-teacher once the children are playing on their own, is to integrate those who are not participating any longer in the game for different reasons and resolve specific situations as possible disagreements between students. Children cannot be left without a leader during games, they must be observed and guided at all times. Here is the importance of the second teacher for support and solving other situations.

2.3.3. Instructions have to be modified to meet students' needs

Understanding and following instructions can be problematic for children with MID. It is not uncommon that after we explain a game that we thought was compressible for them, the children end up doing only parts of what they were supposed to do or just doing nothing. This situation should not be misinterpreted as that they did not pay enough attention or lack of motivation to participate in the activity, most likely they have not understood the game instructions.

This misinterpretation is an excellent example of how our deficiency of knowledge on ID and the scarce adaptation to our practices as teachers can be an obstacle to the meaningful participation of children with ID in physical education. The disability is a complex phenomenon that reflects the dynamic interaction between health conditions and contextual factors (personal and environmental) (World Health Organization [WHO], 2007). Among the environmental factors that restrict their participation are weak staff competencies that can affect the quality and accessibility of services (WHO, 2011), in this particular case, teachers' competencies affect the educational services.

To ensure understanding, teachers must simplify verbal language (simple and short) and accompanied it by visual demonstrations (Payne, Yan & Block, 2010). One of the biggest difficulties that my students from the physical education career had when working with this population was the mere fact of simplifying the vocabulary to facilitate the understanding of the instructions of the games. Simple modifications such as using "bend" instead of "flex" or using "sideways" instead of "laterally", words that are much more familiar to children (in the Spanish language, in the Ecuadorian context), was a challenge since this simplification was not internalized. The learning of more technical words is acquired over time and is a process that must also be incorporated into class planning. To keep the instructions simple and short, teachers often have to spend time exploring the game, breaking it down, analyzing its parts to incorporate them sequentially. For example, if we play "traffic lights", in which the children must change the motor task with each color, we could start with the instructions of one color first, then with two and finally with all three.

It is important to listen to the children, ask them and verify that they understood, they often do not express their doubts or request repetition of the instruction. It is also important during and after the explanation of the game to ask and verify if they know the meaning of certain elements that may be included. For example, if the game includes magic or a flutist, we must be sure that they know what we are talking about, we should not take any knowledge for granted unless we have already used it in a previous class. In other words, effective communication according to their knowledge. If possible, use elements that support instruction, for instance wearing a magician's hat (to demonstrate magic), or a flute (so they know or remember what a flutist does), which will be a motivating extra factor for them.

These are the moments in which teachers can be very creative. Another technique that often works is designed the tasks in the game in the form of a song, in which the lyrics are synchronized with the action, in this case, the children listen to the instructions and visualize the task repeatedly (Sher, 2009). Additionally, we can create entertaining stories or tales around a game, which will increase interest, understanding, and encourage the use of imagination.

Remember, that the success of the game is determined if the children know what to do, therefore, take your time in giving the instructions, repeat them as many times as necessary before and during the game. Constantly ask if they need clarification. At the end of the game, it is advisable to take a moment and ask them certain general and specific aspects of the game to reinforce it, such as: what magic did the magician use? why did the mice escape from the flutist? And also, we take advantage of this moment to ask about their perception of the complexity of the game: was it difficult to escape from the flutist? This is very important to consider in future sessions. Do not be surprised or discouraged if you do not get many answers initially, or none at all. Little by little the children will be participating.

Finally, it is worth mentioning that although populations with ID are very heterogeneous in terms of communicative abilities, it has been shown that some individuals with MID have communicative functions that may be considered into the typical range. In contrast, with populations with a more severe ID that tend to have significantly less developed communication skills (Schalick, Westbrook, & Young, 2012). This is important because abilities such as receptive communication, which allows individuals to understand what is being communicated to them (Schalick et al., 2012), are essential to be able to understand the game's instructions.

2.3.4. Perfect opportunity to promote social values

The teacher is the one who guides and helps students during all the stages in the realization of the games. Besides, it has the mission to promote social values and the playful practices provide fabulous opportunities to do it.

2.3.4.1. Leadership

Many playful practices allow a constant change of roles, in which the child can become the direct leader of the activity in different contexts. Taking on this new role carries responsibilities that in most cases overwhelm children.

For instance, I remember the first time we played the typical game "Simon Says", in which the teacher takes the role of "Simon" and gives instructions to the children to be followed, once the children are familiar with the game a child can take the role of "Simon". After the children participated and showed that they understood the game, I asked who wants to be Simon, without getting any answer. Therefore, I proceeded to directly ask the three children who played better, and they shyly agreed. The results were that the first did not carry out any instructions and limited himself to just be in front of the group; with the second initially the same thing happened but this time I stood next to her and gave her examples of instructions in a low voice, which the girl also repeated in an even more low voice (making it impossible for the other children to hear and perform the action). When it was the third girl turn, who came to the front very motivated, I supposed that this time it would work, however, after a few seconds without being able to say anything, she almost started crying. At that moment I also came to help her with examples of instructions with "*El Chavo del Ocho*" topic (the Mexican television sitcom), the boy C who was motivated by the sitcom was in that group, so it was not difficult to have that idea in my mind. The instructions were "Simon says to cry like the Chilindrina" and "Simon says to get angry like the Jirafales professor". With this theme, the girl changed her mood and proceeded to give the group the instructions I gave her, and two more instructions made by herself regarding the

same topic. This game that I wrongly considered simple had a not very rewarding general result, which led me to rethink how to get children to acquire and develop the necessary skills to be in front of a group leading within their possibilities, to analyze the situation from different perspectives, to provide more planning time focused on this objective, and especially taking into account this leading-factor with each game later so that the same situation is not repeated.

An important teaching consideration is to start giving them leadership roles progressively. Initially provide opportunities in which they have limited decision-making and action roles. For example, in the "traffic light" game, the child has to use the color cards if he acquires the leader role, in that case, he only has to choose between the three colors and raise the card. Unlike the "Simon Says" game, he does not have to choose an instruction on his own from the multiple possibilities, none of which is physically in front of him. The fact he does not have to remember to say or do something very specific (like repeating in each sentence "Simon says..."), nor he has to issue verbal instructions (motor/visual instructions only: raise the hand with the traffic color) decreases its complexity. Keep in mind that children's difficulties in general mental abilities are reflected in diminished cognitive capacities (APA, 2013), such as decision-making (Krahn, Hammond, & Turner, 2006) and memory (APA, 2013; Hulme & Mackenzie, 2014). It should be emphasized that verbal instruction to support the visual is important for the rest of the group, therefore in this case the teacher must act as a verbal replicator of the child's leading action.

The individuality of each child must always be considered, each child is a world with a unique set of natural abilities, therefore, not all will develop the leadership skills in the same way. Teachers must encourage their participation by providing appropriate support for their specific characteristics. For example, some children will always need the teacher at their side as support; others little by little will no longer need it and will be able to perform certain leading functions on their own. Some children will never want to lead the activity but they will be able to participate as leader's assistants (for example helping with the demonstration of the activity: jumping when Simon says to jump), the simple act of being in front of the group with this function is already progressing for this group; and others will never want to perform this role in any degree, which is fine, but teachers always have to leave the opportunity there so they can take it if they ever want to.

Developing and strengthening leadership (and the entire set of skills that come with it) should not be taken lightly as teachers are educating for life itself. We have to consider that these children will have fewer opportunities to develop leadership skills through traditional means (e.g., participation in school activities or mentoring experiences) (Pederson, 1997). Additionally, it is not unrealistic to consider that during their lives many of them will be exposed to experiences of disability oppression and resistance (Caldwell, 2010; Charlton, 2000), therefore creating a rich environment to explore their abilities and skills of leadership and empowerment could give them more confidence and self-determination to face situations of diverse nature in the future.

2.3.4.2. Teamwork

Teamwork, or also called collaborative work in the educational context, is a necessary methodological resource that promotes the acquisition of habits and social values (Campillo, 2016). This methodology is based on small groups in which everyone must work together to improve their own and others learning (Velázquez, 2010), with the particularity that the goal can only be achieved if it is achieved by all the team participants (López, Velázquez, & Monjas, 2004).

Teamwork is one of the most demanding and challenging activities for children and youth with ID, as it requires a considerable set of intellectual and adaptive functioning skills that are deficient in this population compared to the typically developing population. Johnson, Johnson, and Holubec (1999), for instance, point out that for cooperation to function and succeed, we must consider 5 elements in our classes: 1) positive interdependence (positive interdependence theory suggests that collaboration in the team is enhanced when students perceive that the contribution of each member is essential for the group to succeed (Johnson & Johnson, 2009)); 2) individual and group responsibility; 3) stimulating interaction (promoting the success of others); 4) interpersonal and team skills (e.g., knowing how to make decisions, managing conflicts, creating a trust climate, communicating); and 5) group self-evaluation (analysis of group work and how to increase group effectiveness). All this requires intellectual functions such as learning and reasoning, adaptive functions with particular emphasis in social areas such as "empathy, social judgment, communication skills, the ability follow rules" (APA, 2017) and in practical areas such as independence, teamwork responsibilities, and organizing tasks, all deficient in this population (APA, 2017). However, games provide a very good platform for cooperative learning if we take the proper considerations.

It is especially important if you are starting to work in cooperative games with this population, that games should initially require a limited number of roles, materials, and rules. Let's take for example the game "the burnt ones", in which there are two teams, one that burns and the other that escapes, and then the roles are exchanged. The objective is to "burn" the members of the opposing team with a ball (plastic) in the shortest possible time. This game has 2 basic rules for the burning group: 1) if a child has the ball, she cannot move her legs, but must pass the ball to another partner of her team and 2) someone can burn a member of the other team if she gets the ball to touch him. The escaping team also has 2 basic rules: 1) if someone is touched by the ball is burned and 2) the burned child has to leave the court. In general, we could say that the whole team has the same role to burn or escape. They all interact with the same material (the ball), and the whole team is subject to the same rules. The fact that they have only one ball and that the burning team has to depend on teammates to get closer to the members of the other (because they cannot move their legs with the ball), forces them to work cooperatively in order to achieve the objective, which denotes an interdependence in teaching resources (Johnson, Johnson & Holubec, 1999).

Gradually increasing complexity is necessary for cooperative work. In the previous example, we can first play the "burnt ones" walking and when we see that the majority have understood and played their role, we proceed to do it jogging. With the repetition of the games in several sessions, the improvement in its execution is noticeable. In our example, the inhibition ability (the fact that the ball produces an effect that inhibits the legs is complex for some children) and the effectiveness of the movement (where to locate to burn more children, how to escape so you do not get burn) is progressively improving. From my experience, children with MID between 12 and 14 years old with cooperative work experiences can satisfactorily performance the "burnt ones" game. However, the complexity level of each game is subjective and will always depend on the characteristics of the group and their experience.

If there are children who do not want to participate or who are on the playground without fulfilling their role, it is important not to exclude them from the activity. We must find alternatives so that they participate and motivate them even if their performance is not as good as their peers. Always keep in mind that what requires little effort for one child may require much more for another. For this, it is also recommended to carry out varieties of cooperative games to provide participation opportunities in different contexts and levels of complexity. Likewise, to strengthen the unity of the entire group, cooperative games that require the whole class to work for a single objective are very convenient.

It should be noted that the autonomous work of groups at these ages, without the guidance of a permanent teacher, is not recommended unless it is an advanced group with plenty of experience in cooperative work. Basically, because it often happens that the groups do not work on their own, they need constant support and motivation with the how, when and why to proceed throughout the game. This would only generate a feeling of bewilderment or boredom during the activity. The teaching action must be progressively decreasing during the cooperative games in dependency on the complexity of the game and the group characteristics.

Finally, this is an excellent opportunity to have an approach with the children and discuss important topics such as fair play, winning and losing, and control of unwanted behaviors against their peers. For this, the rules of the game must be clear and must be constantly remembered by the teachers; likewise, they must know the consequences of not complying with those rules. The talks after the execution of each cooperative game are essential so that we all carry out a self-evaluation of the results and analyze how we can improve. Congratulate those who did very well and motivate those who did not, to do better the next time. Talking about how to win and lose is part of life and we have to learn to lead with that. How living in our society requires us to be tolerant of others and to know how to recognize their virtues. That many times we must work as a team to achieve our goals. All through a friendly and simplified communication, with clear examples that they can recognize and compare. Not for nothing Johnson, Johnson and Holubec (1999) conclude that cooperative learning is not easy, it requires effort and discipline, but it is worth it.

2.3.5. Other general didactic considerations

- It is always better to start with the most elemental versions of the games to gradually increase the complexity. If a game does not work initially, re-analyze, and decompose it, there is almost always a way to adapt and/or modify it to make it suitable for the characteristics of your group. It is common for the successful execution of a game to take between 2 to 4 repetitions in different sessions depending on its complexity.
- Especially in the early stages, it is advisable to limit the number of games that determine "winners" and "losers", and gradually increase the level of competitiveness. Knowing how to win and lose is also a skill that must be acquired. Promoting a friendly environment even if a child loses is very important. A good alternative is that, for example, if the child must leave the field because he has lost, the assistant-teacher calls

him friendly with applause and keeps him company while watching and cheering on the other classmates still playing.

- The organization of the class should help the child to stay focused and attentive. Use visual cues, cards, drawings, sports materials, costumes, music or videos, everything you consider necessary and have available so that they understand the instructions of the game better and maintain their attention and motivation.
- Games can have many modifications and adaptations. However, it is important to stay consistent with the rules until the children have mastered them.
- During the game, sometimes it is convenient to separate from the group the children who did not understand the instructions. Then, we can dedicate more individual time to explain the game more carefully while observing their classmates playing as an example.
- Music and movement generate a very interesting interaction because its components (time, duration, rhythm, and compass) can be directly related to some parameters of the human motor movement, establishing parallelism between musical and movement languages (Riveiro & Schinca, 1992). This relationship can generate very stimulating teaching processes when playing games and music are together. Therefore, analyze what games could be made with music, many of them are focused on the development of creativity and free movement.
- In chase games in which the goal is to “catch” a single person, it is recommended that initially the teacher plays the role of "being caught". That's because children often do not control their emotions and strength, which is why accidents can happen. After children are familiarized with the game, learned the rules, and performed expected behaviors, teachers can proceed to choose a child for this role, preferably with a motor and cognitive development that stands out among his peers.
- Listen to their ideas, if someone wants to lead an activity motivate him to do so. Create a friendly environment so that they can show their personality without being judged and at the same time teach them to respect others at all times.
- If the children want to repeat a game because they liked it a lot, it is convenient to leave extra time in class to do it. They will know they were listened to, and it could be a reward to do another in which they might be less interested.
- Once most children have mastered a game, encourage them to play it with their peers during the recess and outside of school. Children with disabilities are less active than typically developing children. Studies suggest that they are inclined to participate more in games in solitary or with adults than with friends (Carter et al., 2014). Therefore, increasing playful practices during physical education classes can promote and encourage its use in their free time with their peers.

2.3.6. Believe in children's learning ability. Teachers' attitudes matter!

The successful structured progression of children's inclusion and positive outcomes can be affected by the teacher's attitudes (Fournidou et al., 2011). Teachers have to critically and reflectively examine their own attitudes and behaviors to detect if any has become a barrier to the participation of children, and every effort should be to understand the root of the problem and to subsequently develop strategies to reduce it. For instance, evidence shows that effective support (in training and didactics) from specialists may be beneficial (Fournidou et al., 2011). Some personal factors perceived from the students from the physical education career, and also that I experienced by myself at some point, that could contribute to the development of these negative attitudes are insecurity about the own capacities of being able to be in charge of a group with people with disabilities, lack of knowledge of the disabilities (types, severities, characteristics), how to communicate and teach appropriately and frustration of not reaching the proposed educational objectives.

3. DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS

This article was a presentation of didactic considerations and guidelines for the use of playful activities, extracted from the most effective observable practices in the teaching experiences of the author and supported by the scientific literature.

Play is an agent of global development (cognitive, social, affective, and motor area) and personal self-realization (Juan & Montes, 2001). Playful practices provide variety to meaningful learning, have great potential as a facilitator in pedagogical processes, and also, as organized activities with logical structure and rules that can be flexible, modifiable, and constructed, can provide an appropriate educational response to pupils with ID. No manual perfectly describes how students will react to a playful practice or how they will acquire learning from it, however, the didactic considerations presented in this article might help teachers to use playful practices more effectively, according to educational objectives, but also according to the personal needs and interests of the children with MID. Sometimes even small modifications can be translated into major changes in class.

In summary, the main consideration is that teachers must have the capacity to critically reflect, rethink, and restructure their own teaching (Zeichner, 1986) according to the educational needs of children. Therefore, having a positive and reflective disposition to modifications and adaptations of the different elements involved in the playful practices is essential. For inclusion to become a reality, teachers must change the culture within their physical education classes, towards an education that responds to diversity, re-examining the circumstances and experiences to which children are exposed to in schools.

This study extends the small body of bibliography in the pedagogical practices in the physical education area with populations with MID. It is recommended that teachers share their experiences in pedagogical practices to learn from our differences and strengthen our coincidences, this collaboration between teachers is a very enriching educational practice.

4. BRIEF BIOGRAPHY OF THE AUTHOR

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School Dropout In Hungary

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The theoretical background of this presentation is provided by studies on dropping out and early school leaving and it also builds on various international (Eurostat) and Hungarian data collections, presenting the Hungarian situation, trends and the individual student, organisation, school and system-level factors that influence dropping out.

According to Eurostat data, in 2002 the average rate of early leavers was higher than in Hungary, but the trend was downward, while in Hungary the first decade of the 2000s was characterised by volatility and stagnation. In the EU28 the rate of early leavers was an average of 10.8% in 2018; by contrast, in Hungary the same rate was 12.5%.

Systematic analyses addressing the dropout problem (Rumberger 2012; Lyche 2010) determine individual, family and institutional factors in the background. Witte et al. (2013) add a community factor. Analysts point out that dropping out comes at the end of a long process which is simultaneously influenced by multiple factors. Among individual factors, scholastic performance and year repetitions should be highlighted; the latter is the strongest precursor of dropping out. It is also important to note that school performance is often greatly influenced by family background factors (ethnicity, the parents' educational attainment, income, economic and cultural capital, etc.). Also, underachievement is not necessarily caused by a lack of skills but a lack of motivation and involvement, boredom or a lack of social relationships in the school. While performance is a highly sensitive indicator, countless factors can be in the background of worsening performance or underachievement. International research findings indicate that school structure seems to be the most important group of school-related factors, and there are differences in the risk of dropping out in terms of the operator responsible for the school, and in terms of the compensatory effect of the school. As regards school-related factors, teaching practices have a major impact. Other important factors include involvement in learning processes, participation, interest in learning, motivation, and a sense of belonging to a community.

The research aims to explore the learning environment in these schools and to identify risk and protective factors that may increase or decrease the chances of early school leaving. The presentation focuses on one dimension of this complex research problem, the question of responsibility taking by the school and the teachers, which is a competence field in the description of the career model of Hungarian teachers. The presentation provides an analysis of empirical research. A questionnaire-based survey was conducted in 2018 in 83 schools, with the participation of 1248 teachers and 1476 students.

Results indicate that teachers' problem sensing is proportional to the share of students at risk of dropping out in their school. Teachers believe that the school and they themselves have an important role in preventing students' dropping out. However, they consider dropping out a bigger problem in other schools than on their own and they believe that other actors (parents, society, media) are more responsible than teachers for a student's dropping out. It is also important to note that teachers consider it essential to cooperate with actors outside the school in preventing dropping out.

Keywords: dropping out, Hungarian public education, teachers' perception

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Assessing Individual Performance of Teamwork Using SPARK^{PLUS} for Civil Engineering Students

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Abstract

Individual performance of teamwork was assessed using Self and Peer Assessment Resources Kit (SPARK^{PLUS}) for Water Resources Systems Design, a 3rd year's Civil Engineering course at the University of South Australia. Each team consisted 3 to 4 students and 5 points rating scales were utilized under 9 criteria to moderate individual performance of a teamwork. Team performance was evaluated using radar diagram, whereas the individual performance was judged using rated peer factor in the SPARK^{PLUS}. It was revealed from the analysis that SPARK^{PLUS} is an effective and user-friendly web-based tool to evaluate individual performance of teamwork.

Keywords

Individual performance, teamwork, peer assessment, SPARK^{PLUS}.

1. INTRODUCTION

Teamwork is ranked as the third highest skill required by Australian employers [1]. Individual performance of a team is assessed through a series of activities including peer assessment. Asking students to assess each other about the assignment task is a common practice of group assignment in Australian universities. Peer assessment provides positive learning outcomes; it provides benefits to students on discipline-based skills and better academic performance [2]. It is a part of assessment policy in many universities including the University of South Australia to obtain individual mark by moderating the group mark, if the weight of the assessment task is equal or more than 30% of the total mark.

There is no guarantee that the peer assessment results reflect the true contributions of individuals in a group. The process of peer assessment of a course and its importance might not be fully understood by the students [3]. It could be influenced by lack of knowledge of assessors and students may feel discomfort to assess his peers [4]. Yu and Wu [5] suggested that educators may allow students to form peer assessment criteria so that the assessment process could be authentic. Development of digital technologies has led to online peer assessment for face to face courses [6]. The revised version of Self and Peer Assessment Resource Kit (SPARK) is known as SPARK^{PLUS}, which is a web-based peer assessment tool commonly used in Australian universities. This paper explains the experience of the assessment of individual performance from teamwork for Water Resources Systems Design, a 3rd year's Civil Engineering course at the University of South Australia in 2018.

METHODOLOGY

Group formation and group assignments

3 to 4 students were allowed to form a team. Total 28 groups were formed; 3 members were included in each of 15 groups and 4 members were included in each of 13 groups. Students were assigned to perform two group tasks: i) preliminary design (30% of total weight) – manual design of drainage, sewerage and water supply systems and ii) final design (50% weight) – software-based design of drainage, sewerage and water supply systems.

Peer assessment criteria

Students performed peer assessment using nine criteria under three categories. These are shown in Table 1.

Table 1. Peer assessment criteria.

| Categories | Assessment criteria |
|---------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Participation, effort and enthusiasm | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. The student participated actively in group discussions. 2. The student put in a good effort towards the group's submission. 3. The student was enthusiastic about and interested in the group's task. |
| Teamwork | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. The student worked well with the majority of team members. 2. The student was polite and listened respectfully to the contributions from other team members in discussions. 3. The student was friendly and a pleasure to work with. |
| Organization and overall contribution | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. The student completed his tasks on time. 2. The student completed the tasks to a satisfactory standard. 3. The student made a good contribution overall to the report submission. |

Peer assessment process

Students performed the peer assessment using SPARK_{PLUS}. Lecturer followed three steps, shown in Figure 1 to complete the SPARK_{PLUS} peer assessment.

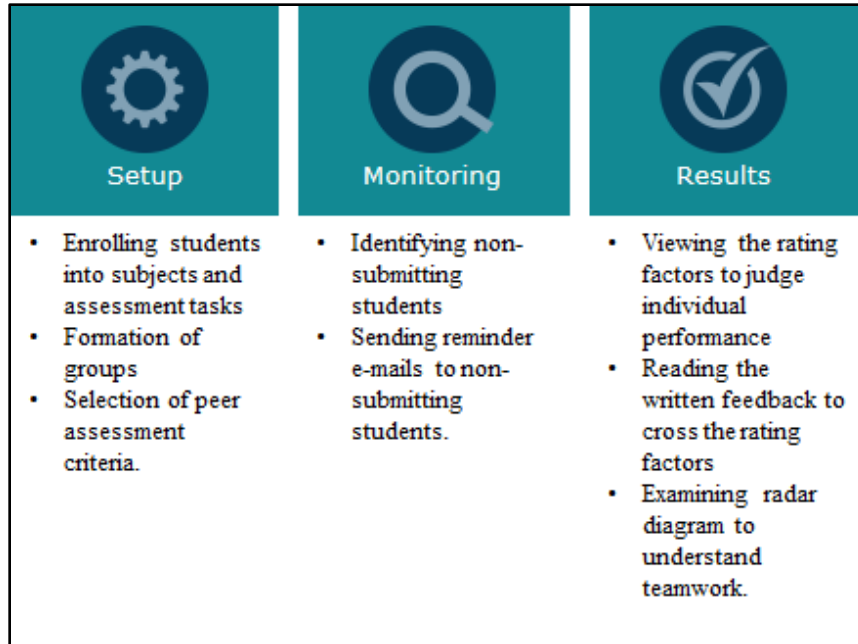


Figure 1. Peer assessment process.

2. RESULTS

The Rated Performance Factor (RPF) for majority of the students varied between 0.95 and 1.05. RPF usually indicates the relative contribution of an individual in the group. The Self and Peer Assessment Factor (SA/PA) for most of the students varied between 0.1 and 1.1. SA/PA compares individual's own rating to team members rating. RPF and SA/PA factors observed in Water Resources Systems Design course in 2018 are shown in Figure 2. Around 74% students contributed well in the team and successfully demonstrated teamwork skills in the project. It was observed from the radar diagrams that 9 teams out of 28 showed excellent teamwork, the teamwork was relatively average for 13 teams and it was relatively problematic for 6 teams. A radar diagram with excellent teamwork is shown in Figure 3.

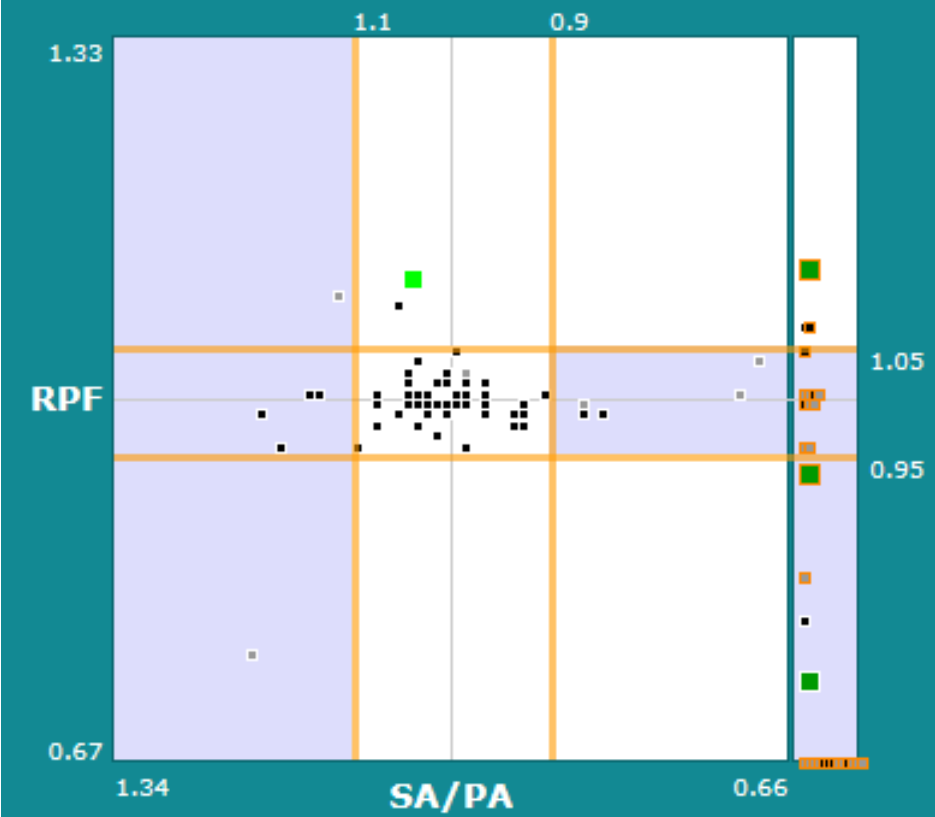


Figure 2. Overall scores of RPF and SA/PA factor.

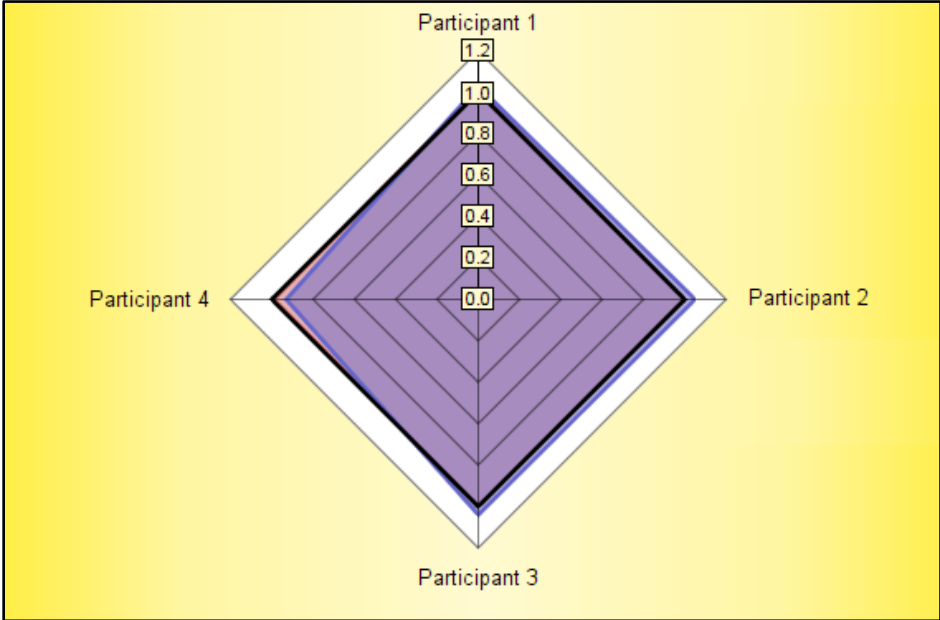


Figure 3. A radar diagram showing excellent teamwork.

3. CONCLUSIONS

RPF and SA/PA factors in the SPARK_{PLUS} were utilised to assess individual performance of a group work for Water Resources Systems Design course at the University of South Australia in 2018. Radar diagram was also examined to understand to teamwork within the group. 100% of the enrolled students were able to perform the peer assessment using SPARK_{PLUS} and the tool was user friendly for the students. SPARK_{PLUS} can be utilised to understand individual performance of group assignment in any course.

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The Prohibited Speech on the Sacred Profane in the Literature of the Arab Woman: Areej 'Assaf Damouni's Novel: Ana Istithna'... Fahdar/

I am an Exception...Beware! "as a Sample

Hanan Bishara, Dr.

Abstract

Each woman has her own creative moment and her special tendency for creativity. The woman has taken responsibility to express herself in a literary writing that interrogates feelings and experiences that differ from those that the man expresses in his writing. Through her writing, the woman can crystallize characteristics and features that light areas and spaces that have been considered shameful throughout the period during which the man has monopolized writing creative texts.

In writing, the woman can give up the 'moral' requirements that surround her as an objectified woman, who submits to the 'will' of society, in order to be able to come closer to those intimate spots that make her entity appear in its particularity, its distinction, and its opposition to the prevailing values of masculinity. The woman has proved that she can produce literature of high quality from the perspective of her human suffering that rages through emotional feelings that are unique literarily, physically and intellectually.

Because the Arab woman has read and written for decades according to the conditions of the man and under a curtain of several ideological wrappings, her voice has remained excluded and she has remained forbidden to make her voice heard, to show her concerns and to express her opinion. As a result of unjust social measures, we see that many Arab women writers have broken their silence and started crying loudly. Among these writers is the Palestinian writer Areej 'Assaf Damouny, who wrote the novel "*Ana Istithna'... Fahdar*"/ *I am an Exception...Beware*. Like other women writers, Areej 'Assaf Damouni seems to say in her discourse: "We are in need of women who reveal a genius that exceeds and challenges the man's genius," which implies a call for the woman to enter worlds that have been a monopoly for the man.

Key Words: prohibited speech, man, woman, literature, sex, freedom, society.

Primary School English Teachers' Understandings of Diversity in Qatar's Government Schools

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Abstract

Globalization has changed the demographics of the Gulf Cooperation Countries (GCC) countries creating vastly diverse resident populations. Notably, Qatar has emerged as a multinational and multicultural nation. Qatar's record economic growth demands high- and low-skilled expatriate workers causing a substantial discrepancy between citizens and expatriates. Nowhere is this more evident than Qatar's government schools, where 27% of teachers are Qatari, 66% are other Arab nationals, and 6% are from non-Arab nations. Diversity is also evident in the student population containing approximately 56.5% Qatari Nationals and 43.5% non-nationals from a variety of Arab and non-Arab countries. Despite the large body of research on diversity, little is written about primary school English teachers' perspectives toward student diversity in the GCC. Semi-structured interviews were used to explore 26 primary school English teachers' perspectives regarding their understandings and experiences with student diversity. Participants' responses are analyzed using a culturally responsive teaching framework. The results offer insights about teachers and diversity and suggestions that will enhance culturally responsive teaching, and several suggestions are offered to assist teachers in developing a culturally responsive approach to teaching.

Keywords: Primary Teachers, Diversity, Globalization, Gulf Cooperation Countries

An Assessment of Civil Society Volunteers Network Participation in Philosophy Capital Approach for Social Security in 3 Southern Border Provinces of Thailand

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Abstract

This research was aimed to examine the outcomes of philosophy capital and its influence on sustainability of social security in 3 southern border provinces of Thailand and to: 1) assess the civil affairs performance, 2) study supplementary factors, problems, obstacles, and solutions, and 3) present the operational development approaches of the civil society volunteers network participation for sustainable social security. Actually, philosophy capital was the beneficiary of King Bhumibol's Philosophy of Sufficiency Economy. The capital itself has been applied since 2016, but the assessment has been carried out in 2019 fiscal year. Nevertheless, an intensive investigation was accompanied by superb people participation, the final outcomes were beyond expectation. The researchers conducted in mixed methods positivist social science research and reflected on the philosophical and theoretical foundations of the study, for qualitative proposed to describe social phenomenon, reliability had been used in statistical hypothesis test. The conceptual framework has been refined and formed as integral part of data analysis. Non-probability sampling used were 184 people involved army civil affairs operations in 3 southern boarder provinces.

The research finding suggested 1) the civil affairs performance was in good level, 2) supplementary factors were all party participation, problems, obstacles were in small to large, solutions, focus on people participation by using the philosophy for security capital as the driving model, and, 3) the operational development approaches in participation should focus on promotion of using the philosophy for security capital model for activities, post project assessment, organize the events to enhance sustainable peacefulness, wealth, and security for people in the areas.

Keywords: 3 southern boarder provinces, Civil Society Volunteers Network, Participation, Philosophy Capital for Security

Executive Summary

Our studying initiated in 3 southern border provinces, Pattani, Yala, Narathiwat, and 4 districts of Songkla, the territorial conflict, these areas account for very high percentage of Thai Muslim population. Almost 30 percent of households in the southernmost provinces are below the national poverty line as compared to 9.5 percent nationally. Yala, Pattani and especially Narathiwat, had markedly lower average household income than the national level and human development in the region is suffering.

There were wide range of challenge presented in the south, the antecedent events in 3 Southern Border Provinces of Thailand, decades ago, both as a result and contributing to the ongoing conflicts, violence continued with almost daily incidents in the forms of individual killing, arson and bombing. (Southern Thailand Empowerment and Participation (STEP) Project 2010-2012, 2013).

The conceited discourse “petty thief” made by Thai prime minister in case gun robbery in early January 2004, this comment was seen as an insult to those who tried to trigger changes and brought about stronger adverse effects and the further escalation of violence in 3 southern border provinces.

This research was aimed to examine the outcomes of philosophy capital and its influence on sustainability of social security in 3 southern border provinces of Thailand and to: 1) assess the participation in masses mobilization by civil society volunteers network, Sub-district Peace Council, Civil Affairs Operation Team, Rangers, serve the security development to support security resolution in 3 southern border provinces of Thailand as Philosophy Capital Models for Social Security. 2) study supplementary factors, problems, obstacles, and solutions, and 3) present the operational development approaches of the civil society volunteers network participation for sustainable social security. The researchers conducted in mixed methods both quantitative and qualitative, purposive sampling, simple random sampling, and quota sampling. The samplings used for quantitative research were 300 people who involved the civil affairs operations in 3 southern border provinces and 184 border guards, and for qualitative research, 89 people who involved the civil affairs operations in 3 southern border provinces and 67 border guards.

Literature Review

Design and Drafting Problem-Solving Models

Problem-Solving Models

To develop decision-making and problem-solving skills, students need to be challenged to identify problems and develop solutions. The problems students identify or are assigned in technology education involve improving existing products and systems, as well as designing and developing new ones. Models that describe problem-solving processes should be developed with students so they understand the recurring nature of solving real-world problems (as part of a problem is solved, new problems arise and some steps in the processes recur). The following diagrams present a variety of approaches to describe problem solving in technology education. They are intended to provide teachers with ideas; they are not prescribed models. (**BC Ministry of Education’s Technology Education 11 And 12: Industrial Design Integrated Resource Package**, 1997)

1. Simple Linear Model

Some models suggest that problem solving is a set of clearly defined and prescribed linear steps (Figure 1). This is rarely the case.

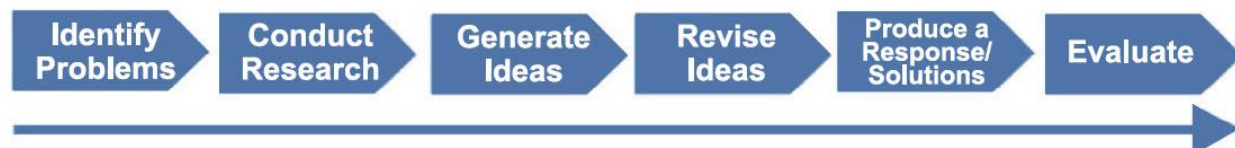


Figure 1—Linear model of problem solving

2. Generic Model

Designing is a problem-solving method used to develop solutions leading to the creation of articles, systems, or environments.

Some specialized problems are approached in unique ways, for example by using troubleshooting techniques or by assessing the repercussions that various decision-making frameworks may have on society.

Troubleshooting

Troubleshooting is a method of solving problems used to isolate and diagnose a malfunction. The stages involved in troubleshooting are as follows (Figure 2):

- Identify the purpose of a system (inputs and outputs)
- Identify the purpose of subsystems (inputs and outputs)
- Test subsystems
- Identify cause and implement solution
- Test solution
- Refine solution as required

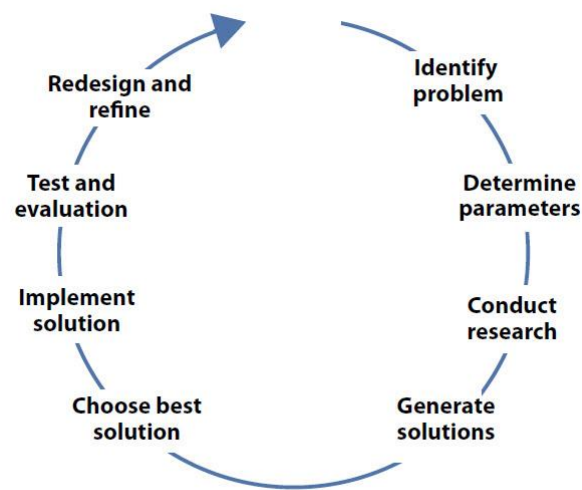


Figure 2—Stages of troubleshooting

Assessing Social Impact

This is a method of solving problems to appraise the social, environmental, and ethical implications of technological decisions. Assessing the social impact of a decision involves the following stages:

- Identify consequences and effects
- Develop a value system through critical thinking
- Judge benefits and disadvantages of technological applications
- Make ethical decisions

3. Action Model

Some models suggest a continuous flow of activity, from problem identification to the development of a refined product (Figure 3).

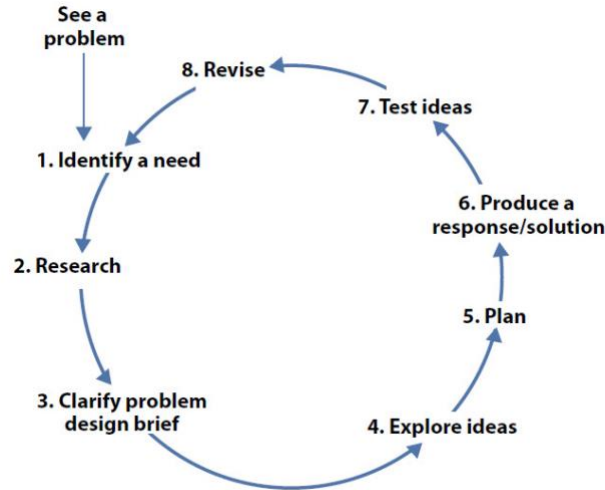


Figure 3—Action model of problem solving

4. Interactive Model

Interactive models illustrate the complexity of a process, in which at any time you might move to any point in the process in order to figure something out (Figure 4).

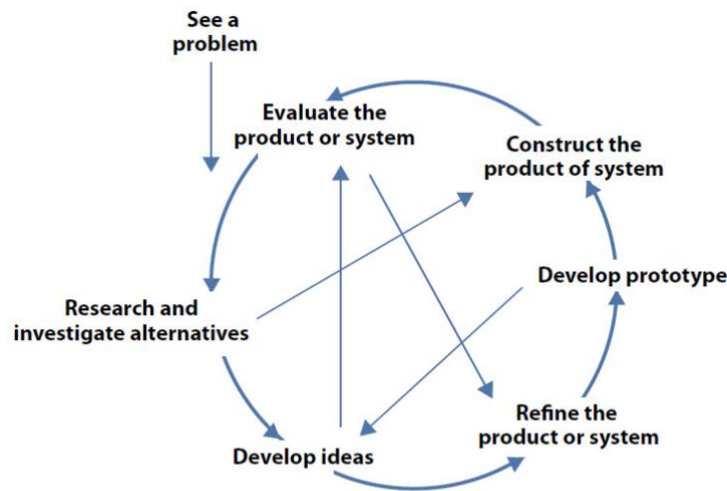


Figure 4—Interactive model of problem solving

The Conceptual and Theoretical Philosophy Capital for Social Security

The conceptual and theoretical antecedent of Philosophy Capital for Social Security

Concept of creating innovation in social society network mobilization by Royal Thai Army Directorate of Civil Affairs, in order to resolve the new form threatening problems, the inducement to the three components are reasonableness, moderation, and prudence, the King Bhumibol Adulyadej’s attributive “Sufficiency Economy Philosophy”. The body knowledge concerning communal development and participation which were: intelligent capital, folk wisdom, societal capital, communal culture capital, and asset capital. The codification of principles and theories in order to create the innovative model of civil society network mobilization in which was the innovative knowledge of security agencies and the practiced and proved models for mobilizing and resolving the problems gradually and continuously by civil society volunteers network. The integrated learning process in form of “sewage disposal system” learning by doing under the name “Philosophy Capital for Security (PCS)” (Royal Thai Army, Directorate of Civil Affairs, Information Technology Division, 2018).

Philosophy Capital for Security: PISA Model, means knowledge innovation in creation of communal participation and development by civil society volunteer network using learning process of integrated real operation for gradually sustainable in form of sewage disposal system with 3 main elements as follows:

1. Intellectual Capital (IC): the network of knowledgeable and capable leadership in innovative creation model to operational part such as; lecturer, teacher, technocrat, folk philosopher, graduate volunteer, folk wisdom, specialist, etc, who act as consultant and give advice to all parties by transferring an intellectually challenging to the communal action plans to achieve objectives.

2. Social Capital (SC): All parties of civil society volunteer network such as; formal and informal leaders, local official, village and sub-district community, etc, who act as action plan mobilization according to security development plan, create good understanding and identity based on acceptability, trust, and unionism.

3. Asset Capital (AC): The whole resources in the areas in form of cash and non-cash, voluntary force, co-network both public and private and potential citizen such as; materials, physical and mental strength, morale, and budget, etc. to be used as supporters in problem resolving according to the determined action plan, and communal needs.

4. Security: Peaceable settlement has been reached in whole country, reconciliatory society, safe in life and properties, communal threats are relieved and ended. The safe in life by PCS approach integrated resolve mechanism to be beneficial in mobilization of achievable objectives.

5. Wealth: To enrich the citizen for appropriate status well-being, and beneficiary of the further development as the PCS approach. The complete capital can enhance career and income to community in all areas continuously.

6. Sustainability: The development of the citizen's quality of life to meet all parties requirement, by civil society volunteer network, can extend results according to PCS approach, in levels of village, and sub-district gradually, continuously, in all areas and bring about sustainably common interest.

The Philosophy Capital for Security: PISA Model, are as shown in Figure:

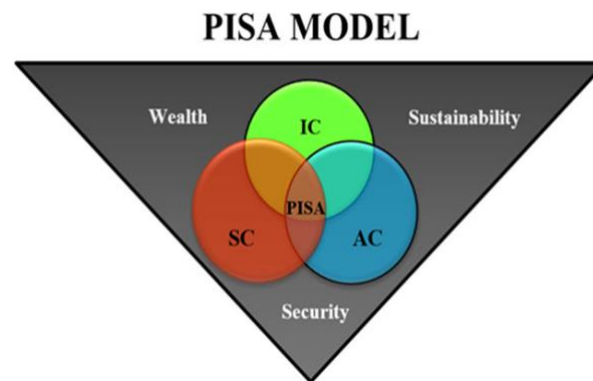


Figure: PISA MODEL P=Philosophy Capital,
I=Intellectual Capital, S=Social Capital, A=Asset Capital.
Source: Piset Sirigasem & Thanawachara Wisetsri (2019)

The Philosophy Capital for Security itself has been applied since 2016, the beginning of mobilization PSC approach, the youth volunteer against drugs project, sub-district guard operation base remodeling project, in the area of Tha Sap sub-district, Muang Yala, which was the pilot area in southern border provinces, consist of; 1) Intellectual Capital (IC), by the lecturers of Yala Rajabhat University to set up the meeting and create understanding, etc. 2) Social Capital (SC), by sprout club of Yala Rajabhat University, the peace student federation in southern border provinces, initiate project writing and organize activities, 3) Asset Capital (AC), by relation development club in the level of administrators in southern border provinces, to support in forms of materials, equipments, and budget, etc, till became concretely on September, 11th 2018, and continuous contextually.

In June-August 2018, there was extending as PSC model in spiritual volunteer together for security against drugs project, in Bang Lang dam sub-district area Bannang Star district Yala, continuously and effectively.

In October 2018-May 2019, there was extending as PSC model in activity project “spiritual society volunteer network camp” in 3 southern border provinces; by 90 pilot sub-districts of Yala, Pattani, Narathiwat 30 sub-districts each, the main missions were creative exercise against drugs action plan, focus on target groups in own sub-district, and spend budget save and worthy.

In June-August 2019, there was extending as PSC model, the people who were trained in spiritual society volunteer network camp, integrated creating good understanding with mobilization joint effort with sub-district peace council effectively in own sub-districts:

1) 3 sub-districts in Narathiwat; 1.1) “Peers (sewage disposal system) against drugs project” Sako sub-district, Su-Ngai Padi district, 1.2) “Multi- Culture training against drugs project” Bang Nak sub-district, Mouang district, and 1.3) “Warm family against drugs project” Puyoh sub-district, Su Ngai Kolok district.

2) 1 sub-district in Yala; “Spiritual volunteer for security project” Bannang Star sub-district, Bannang Star district, and,

3) 1 sub-district in Pattani; “Youth live a normal life, away from drugs for drugs problems resolution project” Sai Kao sub-district, Kok poh district.

The mobilization continued till present, and the other 85 sub-districts are during mobilization. Those innovations can lead to practicability and affecting sustainability.

Since December 2019 till now, there were extended results according to PCS model by construct threats prevention action plans in southern border provinces areas for 90 pilot sub-districts:

1) Construct civil society spiritual volunteer network to participate in territorial villages, and sub-districts for sub-district guards and village guards.

2) Promote education for non-formal youths.

3) Promote coexistence in multicultural society, and

Continue drugs prevention from previous year for intermediate mobilization concretely.

(Karunan Rattanasanwong, et al. 2018)

Materials and Methods

The researchers conducted in mixed methods approach and reflected on the philosophical and theoretical foundations of the study for qualitative proposed to describe a social phenomenon. Literature reviewing was at the beginning, it concern itself with people attitude toward environmental management in social society network mobilization by Royal Thai Army Directorate of Civil Affairs, and divided into two approaches as quantitative and qualitative studies. The non-probability-purposive samplings, categorized as: The personnel of Royal Thai Army Directorate of Civil Affairs and the people as stakeholder and concerned with authorities responsible for 3 southern border provinces of Thailand, Yala, Pattani, Narathiwat. The purposive sampling, simple random sampling, and quota sampling, used for quantitative research were 300 people who involved the civil affairs operations in 3 southern border provinces and 184 border guards, and for qualitative research, 89 people who involved the civil affairs operations in 3 southern border provinces and 67 border guards. The close-ended questionnaires were used simultaneously with in-depth interviewing with expertise as tools. The data collection completed and continued with descriptive data analysis, concluded, discussed and suggested for the next study. (Sahaschai Mahaweera, et al. 2019).

Results

The research finding suggested 1) the civil affairs performance was in good level, 2) supplementary factors were all party participation, problems, obstacles were in small to large, solutions, focus on people participation by using the philosophy for security capital as the driving model, and,3) the operational development approaches in participation should focus on promotion of using the philosophy for security capital model for activities, post project assessment, organize the events to enhance sustainable peacefulness, wealth, and security for people in the areas.

Conclusions

The research conclusions came out in 3 stages: Pre-Intermediate-Post. The mobilization of philosophy capital for security (PCS), intellectual, social, and asset capital, as whole:

The participant’s level of recognition:

Pre-joining-small

Intermediate-joining-large

Post-joining-large

1) Pre-joining details, an issue with:

The highest average was; the participants recognized intellectual capital organized the meetings, created understanding, analyzed, planned, instructed, and assessed, the project.

The lowest average was; the participants recognized asset capital supported in forms of materials, equipments, physical and mental strength, morale, and budget, and budget, etc, to participate the project spiritual voluntary.

2) Intermediate-joining details, an issue with:

The highest average was; the participants recognized philosophy capital for security consist of; intellectual, social, and asset capital.

The lowest average was; the participants recognized social capital organized an initiation of creative exercise project, preparation, coordination, direct activity mobilization according to plan/security project.

3) Post-joining details, an issue with:

The average conformed to an intermediate joining-stage, which was, the participants recognized philosophy capital for security, consist of; intellectual, social, and asset capital.

The lowest average was; the participants recognized social capital organized an initiation of creative exercise project, preparation, coordination, direct activity mobilization according to plan/security project.

Author biography

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Asst. Prof. Dr. Karunan Rattanasanwong is currently Adviser to The Army Research and Development Office, Thailand, born in Prachin Buri. Dr. Karunan graduated from Burapha University with both Bachelor's and Master's degree in Thai Language Education Program followed by academic rank Assistant Professor at age of 29. In the mean time of serving as lecturer, she got the scholarship for Doctoral Degree in Public Administration and spent two and half years for Ph.D. course of Public Administration. Dr. Karunan have been the researcher attached to National Research Council of Thailand for 10 years.

Maj. Gen. Piset Sirigasem is currently The Deputy Director of Civil Affairs Directorate, Royal Thai Army. He went to Armed Forces Academy Preparatory School in 1979, and Chulachomklao Royal Military Academy in 1981. After graduated Bachelor of Science in 1986, he earned some of B.B.A., B.P.A., B.Econ., B.Pol.Sc. and M.S (Agr). His positions concerning the civil affairs were: Chief of project and budget, Chief of civil affairs, Director office of psychological directorate of civil affairs. Presently, he spent most of time in enhancement of philosophical capital to be concretely sustainable and secure, in 3 southern border provinces.

Col. Thanawachara Wisetsri is currently chief of project and budget division, directorate of civil affairs, Royal Thai Army. He went to Armed Forces Academy Preparatory School in 1988, and Chulachomklao Royal Military Academy in 1990. After graduated Bachelor of Science in 1996, he earned M.A. from Ramkhamhaeng University. His positions concerning the civil affairs were: Chief of civil affairs section, Operation staff officer, Chief of project and budget division. Presently, he spent most of time in enhancement of philosophical capital to be concretely sustainable and secure, in 3 southern border provinces.

Dr. Moraya Wisetsri is currently the enterprise account manager of Advanced Wireless Network Company in Thailand. She earned Bachelor of communication on arts in public relations since 2003, and Master of Business Administration in marketing in 2011. She is holding Ph.D. candidate of Philosophy program in Development Administration. Her paper "Customer satisfaction toward the service quality of Siam Commercial Bank Public Company Limited after corporate revitalization" was published in the issue of Economic and Business Administration of the proceeding of 49th Kasetsart University Annual Conference 2011.

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Use Of Facebook Group As Learning Arena – Experiences From A Higher Education Course In Law Education

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study is to develop knowledge about the use of Facebook groups as a learning arena in higher education. In this case, a closed group on Facebook was used in combination with videos and seminars in a regular university context. 41 students participated in the subject of family - and succession law at a university in Norway. We have chosen a qualitative approach using two different datasets. A print-out of the communication in the Facebook group constitutes one of the datasets, and a focus group interview with one group of students accounts for the other dataset. We discuss the findings in the light of a sociocultural approach to learning, where we look more closely at how the lecturer and the students use the closed group in Facebook as a tool to develop knowledge. The content presented was mainly practical information and academic posts. The academic posts form a pattern, largely characterized by limited questions and answers sequences. The closed Facebook group is to a lesser extent used as an arena for discussion. If this potential is to be realised, it is important that the lecturer is aware of how he can contribute to development of the communicative space as a learning community.

Keywords: Learning community, situated learning, dialogic teaching, social media

INTRODUCTION

Today's students are part of the 'net generation'. Use of social media, such as Facebook, is part of the digital lifestyle. In the past two decades, awareness has increased regarding students' social interaction and knowledge development through online communities (Alrushiedat & Olfman, 2014). The digital development and growth of social media entails that time and space for learning has acquired new meaning. The development of online communities gives rise to new opportunities for teaching and learning. Therefore, it is important to investigate this new teaching context.

In this study, we will focus on social media, specifically the use of a closed Facebook group as an arena for interaction and learning in higher education. Our starting point is teaching at a university in Norway, where the lecturer of the subject 'family and succession law' (12 credits) utilised a closed Facebook group to promote interaction and communication. The teaching took place over one semester and consisted of three main components: video lectures, seminar assignments and seminars. Attendance on campus was mandatory for students during the seminars. Work relating to video lectures and the seminar assignments could be conducted remotely. The intention of the Facebook group was for it to function as a forum for interaction and as a supplement to the university's learning platform, Fronter, and the physical meetings in class on campus. This was communicated to the students and they were invited to become members of the group with a request to actively participate in the Facebook group with questions and in academic discussions.

PREVIOUS RESEARCH

The purpose of this study is to develop new knowledge about the use of Facebook groups as a learning arena in higher education. Our study is limited to formal use of Facebook in a formal teaching context.

Use of social media in teaching contexts in higher education is a burgeoning research field. The results of studies relating to pedagogical use of Facebook are contradictory (Manca & Ranieri, 2013). The majority of studies highlight the pedagogical opportunities (Jeljali, Al Naji & Khazam, 2018; Donlan, 2012). Far fewer argue that Facebook is not a suitable medium for educational purposes (Wiese, Skues & Williams, 2011). The disadvantages that are highlighted relate to privacy concerns. Concerns are also expressed regarding communication via social media replacing or limiting face-to-face communication.

We have identified three reviews relating to use of Facebook in higher education (Aydin, 2012; Manca & Ranieri, 2013, 2016). Manca & Ranieri (2013, 2016) find that Facebook is mainly used as an arena for discussion and cooperative learning, sharing of information and learning resources, and also as support for development of the contents of the subject. Aydin (2012) summarises in his review that there is a lack of research relating to Facebook as a pedagogical resource in teaching contexts. He also emphasises the value of lecturers to a greater extent utilising Facebook in the development of new learning designs.

When we examine the studies discussing pedagogical use of Facebook in formal teaching contexts in more detail, cooperation, information and knowledge sharing and interaction and communication are the areas that are highlighted. These areas are partly overlapping.

Studies that highlight cooperation refer to the importance of being able to cooperate on assignments, projects, the development of teamwork and the development of learning communities (Mazman & Usluel, 2010; Lonn & Teasley, 2009). Sharing research and subject matter, and quick and easy dissemination of information is highlighted during information sharing (Jelheli, Alnaji & Khazam, 2018; Wannapiroon, 2012). Lecturers can use Facebook to communicate and discuss with students in a less formal manner (Prescott, Stodart, Becket & Wilson, 2013). Furthermore, Facebook is suitable for communication and interaction between students (Henderson, Selwyn & Aston, 2017). This provides opportunities for questions, reflection and commentary on various course-related topics and issues.

A study by Wang, Woo, Quek, Yang & Liu (2012) found that students prefer Facebook over more traditional learning platforms. Students perceive Facebook as more accessible; they visit the site more frequently and spend more time on the platform, compared to traditional learning platforms. The number of posts by students is almost four times higher on Facebook. Furthermore, the students' posts address more complex topics and generate more detailed answers. Similar results are also found in the studies by Kent (2014) and Awidi, Paynter & Vujosevic (2019).

This summary of previous research shows that there continues to be a lack of studies examining use of Facebook groups as a pedagogical resource. We have not succeeded in identifying studies that have examined conversations in Facebook groups. This is also emphasised by Deng & Tavares (2013), who express that it may be challenging to access empirical data from Facebook groups that would make it possible to study interaction and participation. Furthermore, additional research is needed that highlights how students experience the use of Facebook groups as an aid for own learning (Deng & Tavares, 2013; Awidi et al., 2019). On this basis, we have developed the following research questions: What characterises the communicative space in the Facebook group, and what experiences do students have with the use of the Facebook group as a learning arena?

THEORY

This study is based on sociocultural theory and a situated perspective on learning. This perspective focuses on community, participation and activity in the situation, specifically how students and the lecturer interact, how they negotiate meaning and jointly develop knowledge.

Characteristics such as community, participation and activity shift the focus from the student as an individual to the learning community. Through active participation in a learning community, the student will acquire experiences and knowledge (Lave & Wenger, 1991). Learning and knowledge are situated in that they are anchored and interwoven in the specific cultural and social context of which we are a part. We often say that knowledge is distributed between participants in the community. The actors have different knowledge and skills, which jointly form a common knowledge base. Language as the mediating tool is emphasised (Vygotsky, 1978). It is through dialogue and language in a broad sense that knowledge is developed. Based on this learning perspective, the lecturer's primary task is to facilitate interaction processes and participate with their added knowledge in the learning community (Dysthe, 2012). The lecturer has a key role and serves as the scaffolding in the students' learning process (Bruner, 1996). The students can also function as scaffolding builders for one another.

In this study, we focus on how the lecturer and students jointly negotiate meaning and develop knowledge, based on the premise that they are to understand one another. We will focus on what conversation patterns develop. Here we see parallels between conversations that develop on Facebook and those referred to in the literature as classroom conversations. In our context, Facebook can serve as a communicative system that intentionally is to result in dialogic teaching. Dialogic teaching, introduced by Alexander (2008), seeks to stimulate thinking and learning. Dialogic teaching is characterised by having a purpose, it is collective, reciprocal, supporting and cumulative. The teaching has common learning objectives, the lecturer and students jointly work on learning assignments, listen to one another and share ideas. The students' views are taken seriously, and the lecturer expands on the students' previous knowledge.

Barnes (2008) distinguishes between exploratory and presentational talk. Exploratory talk invites the students and lecturer to try new ideas, receive feedback on these and sort their own thoughts (Barnes, 2008). Presentational talk is tied to fixed content with fixed answers. In presentational talk, the answers, or responses, are evaluated and presented as preconceived. Barnes (2008) emphasises that both presentational and exploratory talk are important for learning but that the lecturer must know the difference, as well as when it is suitable to use the different forms of talk.

It is our understanding that the characteristics of presentational talk (Barnes 2008) are similar to a classic IRE pattern, or participant structures characterised by initiative, response and evaluation of response (Mehan, 1979). The lecturer initiates a question to which the students respond, and the answer is then evaluated by the lecturer. If the lecturer then initiates a new question, repeats, gives new meaning to or otherwise comments on the student's answer, this is referred

to by Sinclair and Coulthard (1975) as *follow-up* or IRF. The IRF format has in recent years been followed up and expanded on by several researchers, including Gibbons (2009). Gibbons refers to this as IREF structure. F stands for *feedback*, as the lecturer often expands on, varies and reformulates the student's response. By asking follow-up questions or elaborating questions, the students can be encouraged to reflect on and elaborate in more detail on what they are thinking.

The IRE pattern is widely used but has been the subject of strong criticism (Høegh, 2018). In the literature, Wells (1993), for instance, notes that the structure is neither good nor bad. Advantages and disadvantages to this approach depend on the purpose for which this pattern is used. Thus, the IRE structure may be suitable in certain situations, such as in situations where the purpose is to monitor the student's knowledge and understanding (Mercer & Littleton, 2007).

METHODOLOGY

The intention of this study is to develop knowledge about the use of Facebook groups as an interaction and learning arena in higher education. In order to answer the research questions: What characterises the communicative space in the Facebook group, and what experiences do students have with the use of the Facebook group as a learning arena, we have chosen a qualitative approach using two different datasets. A print-out of the communication in the Facebook group constitutes one of the datasets, and a focus group interview with one group of students accounts for the other dataset.

Selection

All members of the Facebook group are included as participants in the first dataset. This comprises the lecturer and 41 students (17 women and 24 men). In the second dataset, the focus group interview, seven students participate (4 women and 3 men). Recruitment of participants for the focus group interview was conducted as follows: the lecturer posted information about the purpose of the study in the Facebook group with a request for students to express their interest.

Data collection and analysis

The first dataset consists of a print-out of all communication in the Facebook group for the entire semester. The print-out shows the authors of the posts, the timing of the posts, and whether the participants are starting a new post or replying to a post. The second dataset, the focus group interview with the students, was conducted shortly after the end of the semester. We used a semi-structured interview in which we asked how the students had used the Facebook group, and what positive experiences or challenges they had experienced with the use of the Facebook group as an arena for interaction and learning.

Both datasets were analysed with the aid of thematic content analysis (Fauskanger & Mosvold, 2014). Content analysis is a flexible approach to analysis of textual data and is a well-suited method to identify and classify patterns in data (Krippendorff, 2012). The work began with a coding phase where we developed codes and revised these by way of an interactive process including several cycles of analysis. First we searched for words and phrases to find patterns in the material. In the next phase, we used a conventional approach whereby we explored the material to find possible categories (Fauskanger & Mosvold, 2014; Krippendorff, 2012). This process resulted in categories that will be presented under our findings.

None of the researchers who were responsible for the collection and analysis of data had participated in the development of the teaching design or in the teaching. In the analysis work, we deliberately conducted independent analyses, separately, in order to ensure a high degree of reliability and validity. The units of analysis are individual statements by participants as they are expressed in the Facebook group and in the transcribed focus group interview.

Ethical considerations

This study was conducted in accordance with the General guidelines for research ethics from the National Committee for Research Ethics in the Social Sciences and the Humanities (NESH). The participants received oral and written information about the purpose and implementation of the study. The principle of voluntary participation, the right to withdraw from the study and measures to protect anonymity have been emphasised and safeguarded.

RESULTS

We have structured the presentation of results into two main parts. First, we present results based on the content analysis of the print-out of all communication in the Facebook group. Then, we present empirical data from the focus group interview. The findings are organised around the main topics and quotes are selected to illustrate what we interpret as key points.

PART 1 – USE OF THE FACEBOOK GROUP AS A COMMUNICATIVE SPACE

In total, 155 posts were written in the group, with 94 posts by the lecturer and 61 posts by students, respectively. The posts can be categorised into two main groups where we distinguish between starting a new post (main group 1) and replying to an already commenced post (main group 2). In main group 1, we find 65 posts. 70% of these were started

by the lecturer and 30% were started by students. In main group 2, we find a total of 77 replies to posts. These are distributed as follows: 54% by the lecturer and 46% by students. In total 16 (out of 41) students have chosen to post in the Facebook group. Four of these students stand out as more active. Most students only have one post. Through the content analysis of the print-out of the communication in the Facebook group, two categories crystallised: 'information' and 'subject'. These categories form the structure for the continued presentation.

Posts started by the lecturer

We will first present the posts started by the lecturer. The majority of these, 37 out of 46, are in the category 'information'. Most posts are found in the start of the programme and in the final two weeks before the exam.

Information

The posts in the category 'information' can be divided into three sub-groups where information relates to a) practical matters, b) students' participation and c) the purpose of the Facebook group. Examples of information regarding *practical matters* include announcements of submission deadlines, teaching hours and distribution of teaching materials. Information relating to *students' participation* is characterised by the lecturer encouraging students to actively participate in the coursework. For example:

Thank you for the great attendance at the info meeting yesterday! Hope you have started working on the subject and that you find that video lectures in combination with assignments is working well. It is important to get started and to work continuously on the subject.

Regarding information about the *purpose of using the Facebook group*, the lecturer communicates how he wants the Facebook group to be used. Among other things, he highlights the value of students and the lecturer being able to discuss and pose questions.

In the data, we see that sub-groups b and c are often combined in the same post. The lecturer refers to the purpose of the Facebook group to generate motivation for active participation in the group:

Does no one want to try to solve yesterday's Facebook assignment? There is no harm if anyone answers incorrectly. It is important to work on assignments in order to understand the law, and this is a forum where we can discuss smaller assignments before/between the seminars, but this requires an effort on your part.

Subject

Nine posts, out of a total of 46, are in the category 'subject'. The majority of these posts are assignments in the form of case studies. Case studies describe authentic situations from the field and contain relevant issues relating to the subject. The students receive specific questions about the case which they are to answer.

Posts started by students

Out of the 19 posts started by students, we find two in the category 'information'.

Information

In these posts, the students post questions relating to the curriculum and timing for the announcement of exam results: For example: *I have a collection of laws from 2014. Can I use this edition?*

Subject

17 out of 19 posts by students are in the category 'subject'. These posts are characterised by being short questions relating to use and interpretation of legislation, illustrated by the following example: *What is required in order to assess whether the third party is buying in good faith pursuant to Section 35?*

Replies to posts

We have now accounted for who posts in the Facebook group and what characterises these posts. It is also interesting to more closely examine what characterises the replies to these posts.

Posts in the category 'subject' started by the lecturer

It is mainly posting in the category 'subject' that generates replies from the students. Therefore, we have chosen to examine more closely the communication that develops in these posts. As a whole, the material shows that when the lecturer starts posts, it is mainly students who reply by answering the questions in the assignment. The lecturer then provides feedback to the students' answers, as the following example shows:

Lecturer: *Very good! Correct calculation and correct basis. You could also have referred to Section 1, second paragraph, which holds that the children of the testator are to inherit equally.*

This is a typical example of how the lecturer responds in the form of an evaluation of the students' answers. When the lecturer responds to students' replies, it is also very typical that he starts the reply by using the words 'very good', 'super' or 'good', to express that the students' participation is positive. Furthermore, there is a tendency for the lecturer to also elaborate on the students' answers.

For instance, where more than one student replies, these communication sequences are characterised by the first student replying, only answering parts of the assignment. The next student then answers other parts of the assignment.

We only find one example of a communication sequence where the lecturer starts a post and more than two students respond. In two of nine posts, we find that the lecturer posts assignments without receiving any response.

Posts in the category ‘subject’ started by students.

When students start posts in the category ‘subject’, more students tend to respond. Students’ responses often involve them asking questions which indicate that they have not understood how various legislation should be interpreted, or they are testing their own interpretation, own reasoning and argumentation.

Part 2 – STUDENTS’ OWN EXPERIENCES WITH THE USE OF THE FACEBOOK GROUP AS A LEARNING ARENA

The presentation of empirical data from the focus group interview is structured based on the three main themes in the interview guide: How the students have used the Facebook group, what positive experiences and what challenges they have experienced when using the Facebook group as a learning arena.

Use of the Facebook group

The students explain that they have used the Facebook group as a supplement to the university’s traditional learning platform and emphasise the value of the lecturer posting information on both platforms. “What you must have is posted on Fronter. Everything else is on Facebook”. ‘Everything else’ refers to case studies and communication regarding solutions thereof. The students clearly state that the majority of the lecturer’s posts have involved practical information and academic assignments. Some state that they have personally posted questions or answered assignments. Others clearly state that they have not posted anything in the group, nor have they wanted to. What all students have in common is that they have chosen to keep abreast with the activity in the group by reading the posts.

Positive experiences

‘Accessible’ is a word that is repeatedly used when the students discuss positive experiences with the use of the Facebook group in teaching contexts. The students experience that it is easy to stay updated in the Facebook group as students automatically receive a message when there is activity in the group. On the traditional learning platform, however, the students have to log in to see if there has been any activity. In the Facebook group, all communication is visible to everyone. Thereby, the students can read and learn from what others have written. Several highlight the value of seeing what other students are wondering, and how the lecturer and fellow students solve assignments. “There were generally several who were wondering about the same thing. Then, everyone received a specific answer to the question”.

Accessibility also refers to the lecturer. Through the Facebook group, the students experience that it is easy to contact the lecturer without the communication becoming too formal. The students’ experience that they receive answers faster: “We receive answers faster than if we use email”. The threshold for contacting the lecturer via Facebook is much lower than via email: “Had we not had Facebook, I would not have asked questions. I would not have bothered to send an email”. It is also highlighted that Facebook allows for the posting of topical issues in the media.

Challenges

A low student response rate to the lecturer’s posts is highlighted as a challenge. Some students experienced that the assignments were difficult, others perceived the assignments as repetition and a reminder of what subject matter was important. Therefore, the assignments did not motivate replies. Several also mention that there is a lot to follow-up on in the same time frame: “It is unnecessary to use Facebook. I do not think there is any point in having an additional site to keep track of. Facebook, in addition to assignment seminars and coursework, is too much”. When we ask the students if they are comfortable writing on the Facebook group wall, several express that this may be perceived as a barrier. Some express that they rarely or never post on Facebook. Others state that they are not reluctant to write posts but when few fellow students were active, this influenced the motivation to case of: Should I keep writing or not?” Another aspect that is highlighted as a challenge is that written explanations from the lecturer do not always generate the same clarity as oral explanations.

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

The intention of this study is to develop knowledge about the use of Facebook groups as a learning arena in higher education. We asked: What characterises the communicative space in the Facebook group, and what experiences do students have with the use of the Facebook group as a learning arena? Firstly, we will summarise the main findings from dataset 1, which relate to what characterises the communicative space in the Facebook group, before we present the main findings from dataset 2, which relate to the students’ experiences with the Facebook group as a learning arena. Then, we will discuss these findings in light of our theoretical perspectives.

What characterises the communicative space in the Facebook group?

One of our main findings is that the lecturer is the one who is most active in the Facebook group. 70% of the posts are initiated by the lecturer. The lecturer’s responses to posts make up 54%. We have categorised the contents of the

posts into two main groups: 1) 'information' and 2) 'subject'. The category 'information' mainly consists of posts regarding practical matters. Furthermore, we find that the lecturer encourages the students to participate and communicates the purpose of the Facebook group. The posts of an academic nature are primarily characterised by the lecturer presenting authentic case studies followed by questions.

When we examine the students' participation in the group in more detail, we find that out of 41 students, 16 students had posted. Four of these posted more than once. The majority of these posts, 90%, are related to the category 'subject'. The category 'information' makes up 10%.

It is interesting to examine in more detail what characterises the conversation pattern in the group. We find that the lecturer invites participation through the presentation of case studies followed by assignments and questions. Generally, it is a student who responds to the lecturer's invitation. The lecturer providing feedback on the student's post is a recurring theme. The feedback is generally an evaluation of the student's answers. We see a tendency for several students to participate when academic posts are started by students. Here we see a tendency for students to expand on and elaborate on each other's posts.

What experiences do students have with the use of the Facebook group as a learning arena?

The result from the focus group interview supports the main findings from the first research question. The students experience that it is easy to keep abreast with the activity in the group. Facebook is experienced as a more accessible learning arena than the traditional learning platform. It is especially highlighted that the communication in the group is accessible to all. All the students read and follow the activity in the group. A low student response rate to the lecturer's posts is a challenge. Several express that there are barriers relating to presenting themselves in the group.

How can we interpret the findings?

It is obvious that the lecturer has the intention of developing the Facebook group as a learning community (Lave & Wenger, 1991) where the students can acquire experiences and knowledge through active participation. Through the lecturer presenting authentic cases, it is assumed that knowledge is situated and anchored in a concrete, cultural and social context. The students also highlight this as valuable and we see that the lecturer thereby serves as scaffolding for the students (Bruner, 1996). The lecturer facilitates cooperation processes whereby students and the lecturer are able to participate with their added knowledge in the learning community (Dysthe, 2012). In principle, the lecturer invites what Barnes (2008) refers to as exploratory talk by facilitating discussions and reflections regarding the authentic cases. However, we find that the lecturer closes the discourse so that it takes on a more presentational nature (Barnes, 2008). A general pattern is that the lecturer initiates a post, a student responds, and the lecturer then evaluates the student's response. This can be understood in light of a classic IRE pattern (Mehan, 1979).

We also find a few examples of the lecturer initiating a question that can provide new direction for the student's answer. This is referred to by Sinclair & Coulthard (1975) as follow-up or as an IRF pattern. We do not find examples of what Gibbons (2009) refers to as an IREF structure where the lecturer expands on, varies and reformulates the student's response. The communicative space in the Facebook group bears little resemblance to what Alexander (2008) refers to as dialogic teaching, where the participants listen to one another, share ideas and expand on each other's statements.

Several students highlight pedagogical advantages relating to the use of Facebook as a learning arena (Jeljali et al., 2018; Donlan, 2012). Jelhli et al. (2018) and Wannapiroon (2012) highlight Facebook as an effective tool for sharing research and subject matter. In our study, the students report that it is easier to keep abreast with the activity in the Facebook group than on the university's traditional learning platform. Similar findings are also made by Awidi et al. (2019), Kent (2014) and Wang et al. (2012). The study by Wang et al. (2012) also shows that students' posts generate more complex topics and more detailed answers. We do not make the same findings in our study.

The students in our study experience that the communication with the lecturer in the Facebook group is perceived as less formal compared to communication via email or the traditional learning platform. This corresponds with the study by Prescott et al. (2013), which highlights Facebook's advantage as a less formal arena.

Conclusion

Henderson et al. (2017) emphasise Facebook as an arena for cooperation and communication with fellow students, a communicative space for asking questions, reflecting and commenting. This was also the intention in the pedagogical design our study builds upon. Our main finding indicates that this potential has not been fully realised. Through his Facebook posts, the lecturer in the context we have studied appears to be aware of the advantages of using Facebook as a learning arena and views this arena as an important supplement in the teaching design. The lecturer actively encourages students to participate. When, nevertheless, there is limited participation and discussion in the student group, the background for this may be that the lecturer insufficiently facilitates exploratory talk whereby the students are allowed to try new ideas, receive feedback on these and thereby receive help in sorting their own thoughts. Use of Facebook as a learning arena has many possibilities. In other words, it is a medium with considerable potential. If this

potential is to be realised, it is important that the lecturer is aware of how he can contribute to development of the communicative space as a learning community.

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100 Year Anniversary of D.W. Griffith's, "Birth of a Nation" – Still Framing Racial Opinion, Public Policy, and Violence in the United States

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On February 8, 1915 the film, "The Clansman," a three-and-a-half hour feature film, opened at Clune's Auditorium in Los Angeles seating 2500 people. At the time most films ran 15 minutes or less and screened at "Nickelodeans," cheap store fronts that generally seated 200 people or less. The film was later re-titled, "Birth of a Nation," and was the first movie to introduce modern shot composition, editing, and theatrics in a way that audiences had never seen before. Donald Bogle writes, "The film's magnitude and epic grandeur swept audiences off their feet." President Woodrow Wilson screened the film at the White House – the first feature film screened there. He said of the film at the time, "It's like writing history with lightning." Only the film wasn't history, it was single-minded propaganda written by Thomas Dixon.

The film was based on the book written by Thomas Dixon – a Southern white man, entitled, "The Clansman: An Historical Romance of the Ku Klux Klan," Dixon lived in North Carolina during the "Reconstruction" period immediately after the American Civil War. Reconstruction, dating from 1865 to 1877, was a period marked by the beginnings of enfranchisement for former black slaves, including advances in voting rights and elected office, which horrified whites in North Carolina (and throughout the South).

Dixon's father and uncle became leaders in the North Carolina Ku Klux Klan, a white supremacist group. By 1867, it is estimated that the Ku Klux Klan, had upwards of 40,000 members in the State of North Carolina. "Through intimidation, whippings, and occasional murders, it set out to... reestablish "white supremacy" in North Carolina."¹ It is against this backdrop that Thomas Dixon was raised. Growing up in this age of "radical Reconstruction" Dixon felt this was a tragic era in which the white South had been unjustly treated by the North. In his book, "The Clansmen," he felt was the true story of what had happened during Reconstruction. "He would later claim that some of his earliest memories dealt with the Ku Klux Klan, one of which was watching the [lynching] of a black convict."² By the turn of the 20th century, the Ku Klux Klan was in deep decline, a relic of Reconstruction, until 1915 with "Birth of a Nation."

Khalil Gibran Muhammad says In his book, *The Condemnation of Blackness*, "The post-emancipation period demanded a fresh and immediate inquiry into the new reality of black freedom in America. What grade of humankind were these Africans in America? What quality of citizenship did they truly deserve? What manner of co-existence [with whites] should be tolerated? These were the burning questions that animated the minds of many white Americans, especially scientists, journalists, and reformers, a generation after the Civil War." These are the same questions that seem to be plaguing America today, still unanswered over 150 years after the end of the American Civil War over slavery in the U.S.

The narrative presented by even the most liberal whites of the time were that the freed negro slaves were not like whites, that they could not attain the civility of whites, that – according to race relations writer of the times, Nathaniel Southgate Shaler - "black brains stopped developing sooner, leaving 'the negroes' with an animal nature...incapable of controlling their sexual impulses; they were unable to work together for a common purpose; and had no power to

1 Melvyn Stokes, "D.W. Griffith's The Birth of a Nation," Pg. 30. Oxford University Press. 2007.

2 Ibid.

delay gratification and plan for the future.³ Yet it was this slave labor that propelled this young United States into the world economic power of the times that it became.

In “Birth of a Nation,” Thomas Dixon and D.W. Griffith reinforced these negative stereotypes of the freed slaves given power. Dixon and Griffith show freed former black slaves running roughshod over white men, lusting after and attempting to rape white women, taking over the South Carolina State House of Representatives and levying odious burdens onto the white man. To relieve and solve “the white man’s burden of Reconstruction,” according to Thomas Dixon, in the movie the Ku Klux Klan comes to the rescue, in dramatic fashion, and saves the white woman from lusting blacks, saves the state by not allowing blacks to vote, and drives out former black Union soldiers, to save the day.

According to Melvin Stokes, “Since [Birth of a Nation] apotheosized the Ku Klux Klan of the Reconstruction Period, Birth would become closely linked with the new Klan founded by ‘Colonel’ William Simmons in 1915...the film functioned as a propaganda and recruitment film.”⁴

The negative stereotypes of Blacks in Birth of a Nation, Donald Bogle explains, “Literal and unimaginative as some types might now appear, the naïve and cinematically untutored audiences of the early part of the century responded to the character types as if they were the real thing.” It is estimated that by 1930 almost 50 million Americans had seen the film – fully one-third of the population of the country. In 1934, the Payne Fund Studies argued that, “Birth of a Nation showed how great an impact films could have in encouraging audiences’ racism.” Impacts still perpetuated and felt today. The White Supremacist group, the Ku Klux Klan, continued to use the film as a recruiting tool into the 1970’s.

“As frank racial propaganda, The Birth of a Nation is an elaborate construction of stereotypes.⁵” The film gave rise to negative black archetypes that continued to be perpetrated in the media for decades after the film and these negative archetypes still frame racial opinion, public policy, and violence in the United States over 100 years after it was released. In Donald Bogle’s classic book, “Toms, Coons, Mulattoes, Mammies, & Bucks,” he discusses these five archetypes that went on to be perpetuated in Hollywood films for the next 60-70 years, archetypes that would be engrained in popular culture and help serve as the basis for how Blacks as a whole in America are perceived: “to entertain by stressing Negro inferiority.”

In Bogle’s book, **Tom’s** represents “the Good Negro,” the faithful servant, who never turns away from their white masters. They remain hearty, submissive, stoic, and self-less. The term originated from the book, Uncle Tom’s Cabin.

Coons represent “the Negro as an amusement object and black buffoon.” Included in this are the **pickaninny** (Negro children played to comic effect) and the Uncle Remus types (Stepin Fetchit, Amos n Andy and other adults played as buffoons).

The Mulatto or also know as the **Tragic Mulatto** archetype is usually a fair-skinned mixed-race woman who lives as a white person but have the secret of black blood in their veins, forever in fear of being found out. Or, either scheming, untrustworthy, or crazed.

Mammies are similar to coons in that she is usually comic relief, generally greatly overweight, devoutly faithful to her white family yet fiercely independent in her domestic domain ready to do battle for her white family. In Birth of a Nation, Mammie sets straight the “low down black trash” from the North.

“James Baldwin traces her trajectory from the Birth of a Nation to Guess Who’s Coming to Dinner? (1967). ‘How many times have we seen her? She is Disley, she is Mammy in Gone With the Wind, and in Imitation of Life, and The Member of the Wedding.’ Moreover, we hear her persistent echo today as she smiles at us from pancake boxes.⁶”

3 Muhammad, Khalil Gibran – *The Condemnation of Blackness*, Harvard University Press (Cambridge, Massachusetts and London, England) 2010, Pgs. 17-18.

4 Ibid. Pg. 9

5 Guerrero, Ed – *Framing Blackness*, Temple University Press (Philadelphia, PA) 1993, Pg. 15

6 Guerrero, Ed – *Ibid*. Pg. 16

Of all of the archetypes, the **Brutal Black Buck** was introduced by D.W. Griffith. The Brutal Black Buck portrays the black man out to cause havoc, is often portrayed as a savage and violent character generally oversexed and eager to get his hands on a white woman and press his oversexed desires onto her against her will. In *Birth of a Nation* this plays out when Gus, the renegade negro, pursues Pet Sister (Flora). To save herself, she dramatically flings herself off a cliff to her death to get away from the big black buck Gus, played in “black face” by a white actor.

“Griffith presented all the types with such force and power that his film touched off a wave of controversy and was denounced as the most slanderous anti-Negro movie ever released.” Bogle goes on to say, “The early silent period of motion pictures remains important, not because there were any great black performances – there weren’t – but because the five basic types that were to dominate black characters for the next half century were first introduced then.”

Of the archetypes that continued to be perpetrated with great affect is the idea of the Brutal Black Buck. So scary was this archetype that even today, any police harassment or violence today against black men has been codified by law and condoned as justified, hence public policies such as New York City's failed policing policy of “Stop and Frisk.” Civil Rights Attorney Constance Rice (cousin of Condaleeza Rice) in the past has called these policing policies, “plantation policing.” In an interview with Tavis Smiley she says:

“We were in day-to-day combat because (the Los Angeles Police Department) was impervious. You could not talk to them, you could not reason with them, so you had to sue them. I mean, there wasn’t any other choice. So while communicating with them wasn’t possible, you fought them because they were terrorizing the Black community, they were emasculating our men, especially our poorer men, but they didn’t care if you were a senator, a judge or an ex-convict.

“They were pulling you out of the car if you were African American and proning out (putting the driver against the car, with their arms and legs spread apart), proning out judges and senators...LAPD was arrogant and it was cruel and it was aggressive and it was excessive in terms of its force and they saw the community as a target.

“They did not see the community as a partner. They didn’t see the community as someone to protect. They saw the Black community as you’re a danger to the good communities, therefore we’re gonna contain and suppress you just like the slave plantation police did. That’s where our modern policing really comes from is slave plantations.”

She goes on to say, “It’s part of our legacy, isn’t it? It’s our legacy of slavery. And post-slavery, you had to keep Black citizens – because they were now citizens after slavery – you had to keep them in check and you had to keep them down. And there were a lot of schemes to do that. Some of them have been outlawed, some of them are no longer done, but many of them continue. And the line connecting us back to slavery is so long now that we don’t even see it and we’re wondering what’s the problem?”

Even FBI Director James Comey weighed in on Race and policing in a speech in February, 2015. It was the first time a sitting FBI Director weighed in on race. In excerpts from his speech he said:

“Let me start by sharing some of my own hard truths. First, all of us in law enforcement must be honest enough to acknowledge that much of our history is not pretty. At many points in American history, law enforcement enforced the status quo, a status quo that was often brutally unfair to disfavored groups.”

He went on to say:

“A second hard truth: Much research points to the widespread existence of unconscious bias. Many people in our white-majority culture have unconscious racial biases and react differently to a white face than a black face... But racial bias isn’t epidemic in law enforcement any more than it is epidemic in academia or the arts.

“February 12, is Abraham Lincoln’s birthday. ...We have spent the 150 years since Lincoln spoke making great progress, but along the way treating a whole lot of people of color poorly. And law enforcement was often part of that poor treatment. That’s our inheritance as law enforcement and it is not all in the distant past.”

Connie Rice, later, as part of her work with the Los Angeles police department, interviewed over 900 police officers and asked them about their behavior towards black men, she says – “I would hear things like, ‘Look lady, I’m going to be honest with you. Black people scare me. I didn’t grow up around black people. I grew up in Antelope Valley. We didn’t have any blacks.’” Where did they learn their fear of Black people if they knew none?

In December, 1997 President Clinton held the first town hall meeting of his Initiative on Race. When talking with a white male attendee the man said if he were waiting on a Black man at the bank where he works, he wouldn’t give him a hard time but he says, “If I’m walking downtown on a street and I see a Black man walking towards me that’s not dressed as well, I may be a little bit scared. So, I mean, at the same time I have those prejudices.” When asked if this came from media or his personal experiences he replied, “It would have nothing to do with my personal experience. Just from the media, television shows and things that I have heard.”

In the book, *The Black Image in the White Mind*, their findings bear out this man’s experience. The authors, Entman and Rojecki state: “Racial isolation heightens the importance of the messages Whites receive about Blacks from the mass media, and especially from the most widely consumed source – television.”

A consumer today of American films, television, local and national news, music, books, any media sees few positive images or instances of black daily life – even today the stereotypes of Toms, Coons, Mammies, tragic Mulattoes, and especially scary big black bucks, still dominate modern media.

Entman and Rojecki go on to state, “Having only limited personal experience with Blacks, and raised in a culture where race is highly salient and Black persons rest at the bottom of the social hierarchy, Whites may be more likely to remember the negative than the positive in all the unplanned, media-generated impressions. Psychologists have found more generally that people remember negative information most readily. By what they both do and do not convey, the media can stimulate Whites’ tendencies to imagine, exaggerate, and misunderstand group differences.”

In discussing Blacks in the news, Entman and Rojecki say, “Politically Blacks are depicted as sources of disruption, as victims, or as complaining supplicants. One gets the impression from the overall pattern in these reports, in other words, that – although they do entertain us in songs and games – in what really counts, Blacks are takers and burdens on society.”

Still Thomas Dixon’s “White Man’s Burden” continues to be reinforced in media: TV News often equates Blacks with poverty, turning the mere appearance of African-Americans into a coded signal of poverty.

150 years after the end of the Civil War to end slavery and just after the 100 year anniversary of the film *Birth of a Nation*, images of scary big Black Bucks and trashy, lazy coons - male and female, still predominately permeate American media, news, policing policies, and public policy on what Black communities “deserve” in terms of resource allocation from tax dollars and community investment. How public policy is enacted, including justifications for police brutality, allocation of dollars in black communities for better educational outcomes versus school to prison pipelines, health care, the very quality of Black citizenship is impacted by these perceptions – which includes voting rights, under siege as much today as during the civil rights movement of the 1960’s.

Since 2014, in the United States, several deaths of unarmed black men: Eric Garner, Michael Brown, Philando Castile, and 12-year old Tamir Rice among others and the mistreatment and deaths of black women, at the hands of police officers, renewed public discourse about race in contemporary America. Many of the questions pundits have raised include: How are African-American communities perceived by the police and by European-Americans as a whole? Where do these perceptions emanate? How are they reinforced? Some of the answers begin with 100 years of brutally negative portrayals of Blacks in media ingrained into the collective fabric of American society as reality.

The questions posed during Reconstruction seem prescient today: What does Black freedom in America look like? What quality of citizenship will African-Americans be allowed? What manner of co-existence with whites will be tolerated? And, we can add, what role will media continue to play in the future framing this debate and this community? “Commercial cinema in the United States, from its inception in Thomas Edison’s 1890 ‘peepshows’ to the mega-budget entertainment packages of present day Hollywood, has pretty consistently devalued the image of

African-Americans and other racial minorities by confining their representation with an ideological web of myths, stereotypes, and caricatures.⁷”

Will we ever see the broad spectrum of life in black communities and other communities of color or just the stereotypical life white America has grown comfortable with? The one that frames the public discourse of what public resources or public/private investments these communities deserve.

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