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## Linguistics & Education

Aspirations on MOOC

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Highlights

Internet at Tertiary Level

Professional Development of EFL

Discovering Thoughts, Inventing Future

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LINGUISTICS & EDUCATION

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## Professional Development of EFL Teachers using Internet at Tertiary Level in Bangladesh: Purposes, Influences and Problems

By Nousin Laila Bristi

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*Abstract-* The aim of this study is to investigate the purposes, influences and problems of using internet for professional development of the tertiary level EFL teachers in Bangladesh. Using internet for academic and professional resources can improve EFL teachers' expertise to a great extent. Therefore, increasing its effective uses and removing its barrier are just the need of time. The study finds that, although tertiary level EFL teachers are aware of benefits of internet and using internet for their professional development, they are facing a number of problems, like poor internet speed, high cost, lack of institutional support, workload, lack of technological skill and lack of proper training. Based on the findings this paper will also recommend some possible solutions of these problems.

*Keywords:* internet, professional development, EFL.

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# Professional Development of EFL Teachers using Internet at Tertiary Level in Bangladesh: Purposes, Influences and Problems

Nousin Laila Bristi

**Abstract-** The aim of this study is to investigate the purposes, influences and problems of using internet for professional development of the tertiary level EFL teachers in Bangladesh. Using internet for academic and professional resources can improve EFL teachers' expertise to a great extent. Therefore, increasing its effective uses and removing its barrier are just the need of time. The study finds that, although tertiary level EFL teachers are aware of benefits of internet and using internet for their professional development, they are facing a number of problems, like poor internet speed, high cost, lack of institutional support, workload, lack of technological skill and lack of proper training. Based on the findings this paper will also recommend some possible solutions of these problems.

**Keywords:** internet, professional development, EFL.

## I. INTRODUCTION

We live in a world where information and technology dominate our life. They dominate our lifestyle, economics, politics, communications, education, culture and what not? Internet is one of the most amazing technologies which can provide one with an answer to any question whenever needed. English language and internet are growing hand in hand as 80% materials in internet are written in English (Aker, 2012). Hence the scenario of 21<sup>st</sup> century English classroom is also changing. It is not only a tool (Lee, 2001 Kabilan and Rajab, 2010) for English Language Teaching but also an authentic context where the users are exposed to extensive use of this language and opportunities of professional development. In Bangladesh at university level there is hardly any teacher who is not familiar with the term 'Internet' and the basic uses of internet. Also English is taught in every university as English as a Foreign Language (EFL). Therefore, internet as an endless source of materials and medium of communication can develop teachers' overall competence (Kabilan, 2005). The potential uses of internet can help them to be updated and cope up with current trends of technology and language teaching around the world. With the combination of internet and language teaching, learning of English can be more effective (Lee, 2001).

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Bangladesh has been fast developing in technology sector for the past few years. After the declaration of digital Bangladesh in 2008, different steps have already been taken by the government to enhance the use of technologies like mobile phone, internet, computer and laptop. However, in the tertiary level the use of ICT has also increased to a noticeable level. University teachers have more ICT knowledge and use more e-mail address than secondary and higher secondary level teachers (Bairagi, Rajon and Tuhin Roy, 2011). But, the use of internet for professional development of tertiary level EFL teachers is still out of the concern of the researchers. Consequently, the current study investigates the purposes, influences and problems of internet use for professional development of tertiary level EFL teachers in Bangladesh. Based on the findings the paper will also recommend some possible solutions of the problems.

## II. RESEARCH QUESTIONS

- For what professional purposes do tertiary level EFL teachers use internet to develop themselves?
- What are the influences of internet use on the tertiary-level EFL teachers in Bangladesh?
- What problems do they face while using internet for professional development?

### a) Objectives of the study

The objectives of this study are following:

- To make teaching EFL more effective and enjoyable.
- To ensure infrastructural development to use internet for the growth of EFL teachers.
- As a by-product to make EFL learning more effective.

### b) Significance of the study

The study is significant in many ways. First of all, it will create insight among EFL teachers about the potentialities of internet and facilitate both pre and in service teachers to increase their professional skill. As this study focuses on the various uses, influences and problems, it will enable teachers to be more aware about its obstacles and both help and inspire them to use internet more effectively.

The study is also significant for the researchers. The study only investigates the context of tertiary level EFL teachers. So it can be a leading research for those who want to do research with the same issue at other levels and areas of teacher education and education policy.

Finally, the study bears significance for the education policy makers. It will draw their attention about the integration of internet in the teacher development programs and courses. The study can help them to sort out the problems regarding the use of internet by the tertiary level EFL teachers and introduce proper methods and resources for the growth of these teachers.

#### c) *Limitations of the study*

- The research would be stronger if more respondents from public universities were involved in it. As the universities are far away from the researcher's town, and as she does not know any teacher of those universities, it was not possible to include them.
- The study would be more reliable if there were more participants. But not all the questionnaires disseminated were returned back despite the respondents were knocked several times.
- Many respondents seemed not to take the questionnaire seriously. They seemed very busy and not interested to fill up the questionnaire. Some of them filled up the questionnaire very quickly without pondering on the questions.

### III. LITERATURE REVIEW

#### a) *Teacher Professional Development*

Researchers have defined teacher's professional development in many ways and they have tried to identify the characteristics of it. By teacher professional development Beatrice Avolas (2011) means 'teachers learning, learning how to learn, and transforming their knowledge into practice for the benefits of their students'. 'Increased experience' and 'examining own teaching systematically' are two important elements of teacher development (cited from Glatthorn, 1995, p. 41 Cited in Reimer, 2003, p.11). Reimer also Cites from Ganser (2000) that, teacher development includes both formal and informal experience. In the current research context the use of internet indicates both informal independent and formal experiences that promote teacher's quality.

The effects of teacher professional development are enormous. According to OECD (2009) teacher professional development helps in a number of ways as follow:

1. It keeps the teacher updated about the recent changes of the subject.

2. It keeps the teacher updated about the ability, attitude and approaches about the new ways of teaching, goals, situations and researches.
3. It helps the teacher utilize newness to the curricula and other sides of teaching.
4. It helps the institution to implement new ways of curriculum and other sides of teaching.
5. It enables the teacher to share information and skill with other teachers.
6. It helps less efficient teachers to become more efficient.

#### b) *Teacher professional development and internet*

How can a teacher develop professionally?

There have been many researches on this subject. Many tools and methods were suggested by the researchers for teachers' professional development. But the last decade, with the rise of internet and technological devices, has seen an increasing use of technology for teachers' professional development. The relation between the use of internet and teacher professional development is also a much discussed issue among these researches. Internet is supposed to be an authentic problem solution situation related to the necessities of new teachers' development. (Herrington and Omari, 2002). They also say that internet can be highly beneficial for the professional development of newly appointed teachers who face lot of challenges and very few or no support from the colleagues or institution for overcoming those challenges.

Kabilan (2005) finds significant relationship between internet and teacher development. Teachers can develop themselves by participating in different Online Professional Development (OPD) activities. He in his study categorizes the influences of internet in five categories. (1) Motivation: the study shows that sharing experiences through internet makes pre-service teachers concerned about the present and future condition of teaching. Moreover, even when teachers face any problem, internet can come up with relief for them by introducing them with others who are also in problems. It also increases teacher's 'enthusiasm', determination and 'sense of ownership' (Cited from Bennett, Priest, & Macpherson, 1999; Bowman et al., 2000; Ellis & Phelps, 2000; Selinger, 1997; Watabe, Hamalainen, & Whinston, 1995). (2) Skill, Knowledge and Idea: the study finds that internet can help developing teaching skill by providing new ideas for both 'pre-service' (cited from Selinger, 1997) and 'in-service' teacher (cited from Spratt, Palmer, & Coldwell, 2000). As internet is a source of huge knowledge it also enriches a teacher with lots of knowledge and skills (Cited from Tsui, Wu, & Sengupta, 1996, p. 1). Moreover, sharing experiences through internet helps teacher to evaluate their own performance and thus develop their thinking power. (3) Self-directed learning: in this process a teacher himself finds out his needs, determines his

aim, finds the materials and examines themselves without taking help from other. Internet is highly beneficial in this sense because it provides an independent environment to develop oneself by implementing their thoughts and ideas. (4)Interactive competence: Internet, where teachers come to each other, develops interactive competence by providing mutual help, inspiration and acknowledgement. Teachers feel that they are not loaded with the activities they participate in the internet rather their learning is enriched. (5)Computer technology awareness and skills: Internet introduces teachers with other facets of technology. By using internet teacher can understand the importance of using technology in teaching and learning. Internet also increases their knowledge about technologies involved in teaching and learning.

There have been studies on the use of internet by English Language teachers in Zimbabwe (Mushayikwa, 2005), Palestine (Kabilan & Rajab, 2010),Korea (Shin, 2007). However, in Bangladeshno significant studyhas yet been conducted on the uses of internet for professional development of tertiary level EFL teachers. Therefore, this study is going to be one of the primary studies on developing professional skills of tertiary level EFL teachers using internet in Bangladesh.

#### *c) Internet in English Language Teaching:*

The history of the use of internet in English Language Teaching (ELT) is not very old just like the history of internet itself. Only thirty years ago, during the 1980s, with the use of Computer Assisted Language Learning (CALL) the journey of English language teaching with technology began(Jelinkova, 2005).But it had some limitations. Only a few activities could be done with CALL, like text-reconstructions, grammar activities, audio and video with the help of CD ROMs (Jelinkova, 2005). Computer was then a tool for information processing and display.

However, the internet and WWW was invented during the 1990 and since its beginning it has been creating a revolution (Wu,Li and Ben-Canaan, 2006) in the history English language teaching and learning. According to them both the spread of English and internet are endless. They also say that internet being the 'Linguistic medium' is influencing the structure of the language itself. It has also changed the role computer in the language class. Now with the help of internet computer is a 'tool for information process and communication'. While the features of CALL are still available (Jelinkova, 2005), the addition of communication feature of internet is enabling both the learners and the teachers to be exposed to real language context (Wu, Li, Canaan, 2006).This benefit of internet is not only influencing the language but also its teaching and learning. The accumulated result of all this is the rise of internet based pedagogy in the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

#### *d) Recent status of internet in Bangladesh*

In recent years Bangladesh has experienced a bump in the use of internet. The government declared digital Bangladesh in 2008 as a part of 'Vision 2021'. After that the government took several projects to enhance the uses of technologies including internet. For ensuring the use of technology in education sector the government has already disseminated laptop and multimedia projector in 20,000 schools. Primary and secondary teachers are also given training for using these technologies (Chandan, 2014).Moreover, the introduction of 3G internet in 2012 the users of internet through mobile phone have increased.At present 30% population of the country is using internet and most of them are using internet through mobile phone (Rahman, 2014).However, the greater part of the population is still out of the use of internet. As a result a 'digital divide' (Rahman, 2014) has arisen. Still the introduction of this new technologies e.g. internet, smartphone is inspiring the young generation to use internet more and more for their socio-economic and learning activities.

### IV. RESEARCH DESIGN

A mixed approach seemed appropriate for the context under investigation. For quantitative data collection questionnaire survey was conducted and for qualitative data five of the questionnaire respondents were interviewed.

The questionnaire: The questionnaire is divided into two parts. The first part explains to the participants the aim and importance of the study. It also asks the participants to give some of their personal information, like, age, gender, duration of teaching, and their designations. The questionnaire contains 21 close-ended questions which are based on the research questions of the study. A pilot survey among 15 teachers of different universities was done to ensure the validity and reliability of the questionnaire.

Participants: 46 teachers of three public universities and nine private universities participated in the survey. The three public universities are University of Dhaka, Jahangirnagar University, Barishal University, and the nine private universities are University of Liberal Arts Bangladesh, Daffodil International University, American International University, International University of Business Agriculture and Technology, Stamford University of Bangladesh, University of Development Alternative, ASA University of Bangladesh, IBAIS University, Bangladesh University. All the participants were teaching EFL in their respective universities.

Data collection: The questionnaire was distributed among the participants in the way most suitable for the situation. Some of the questionnaires were distributed manually by the researcher. Some participants, who are acquainted with the researcher, were contacted through mobile phone and the

questionnaires were sent to them via email and Face book.

a) *Data analysis*

Data were analyzed by using Microsoft excel and Microsoft office word.

b) *The interview*

In order to get deeper insight about the research questions, five of the questionnaire participants were interviewed. The participants are given number identity like T1, T2, T3, T4, and T5 in the findings and discussion of interview section.

The interview was a semi-structured interview w. The findings of the interview were compared and contrasted with those of the questionnaire.

Before taking the interviews, the permission of the participants was taken. The schedules of the interview were determined over the phone. The interviews were taken in the interviewees' own office room at their free time. Each interview lasted for about 15 minutes. All the interviews were recorded and then turned into written document.

c) *Findings and discussion of the questionnaire survey*

Based on the research questions the findings of the survey are divided into three parts. They are: a) Purposes of using internet for professional development by tertiary level English language teachers, b) influences of using internet on EFL teachers at tertiary level in Bangladesh, c) problems of using internet for professional development of tertiary level EFL teachers in Bangladesh

Purposes of using internet for professional development by tertiary level English language teachers.

Table 1 : Purposes of using internet

questions	yes	no	No comment	other	total
1. Aware about the positive effects of internet on professional development on EFL teachers.	44 95.65%	2 4.35%	0 0%	0 0%	46 100%
2. Use internet for reading/writing journal/blogs/ websites for professional development.	45 97.83%	1 2.17%	0 0%	0 0%	46 100%
3. Use worksheet, lesson plan, questions etc. from internet	37 80.43%	2 4.35%	3 6.52%	4 8.70%	46 100%
4. Use audio, video materials from internet for teaching EFL.	34 73.91%	8 17.93%	2 4.35%	2 4.35%	46 100%
5. Use internet for knowing about new trends of teaching EFL.	37 80.43%	4 8.70%	3 6.52%	2 4.35%	46 100%
6. Use internet for getting innovative ideas for teaching EFL.	39 84.78%	4 8.70%	1 2.17%	2 4.35%	46 100%
7. Share professional views and experiences with teachers of other areas through internet	23 50%	19 41.30%	2 4.35%	2 4.35%	46 100%

As Bangladesh is digitally fast developing country, the Tertiary level EFL teachers are highly aware about the benefits of using internet for teaching English language. The table shows that 96.65% teachers are aware about the use of internet for professional development. Interestingly only 4.35% are not aware about the influences of internet on English language teachers.

Bangladeshi tertiary level EFL teachers use internet for reading and writing articles, journals and websites and blogs which contributes to their professional development. In this way they are trying to enhance their teaching expertise by using internet.97.83% participants use internet for the above purpose. The table shows that only 2.17% teachers don't use internet for reading or writing journals, articles, blog or websites.

Using worksheets, Lesson plans, and questions is also quite common among the tertiary level English language teachers.80.43% teachers take help of internet to teach EFL and in this way they are trying to teach English in better ways. The table shows that 4.35% teachers do not use internet for drawing academic materials.6.52% answered no comment and 8.70% use these materials sometimes. A study in Korea also shows that teachers used internet for classroom materials (Shin, 2007). So the tertiary level EFL teachers in Bangladesh are not lagging behind in the technological sector.

Computer Assisted Language Teaching is enhanced by the use of internet by tertiary level EFL teachers in Bangladesh as they are using internet for getting audio and video materials for class.73.91% teachers draw audio and video materials for using their

in their class. This not only enables them to teach better but also keeps them aware about the importance of CALL. However, 17.93% teachers are not using internet for audio and video materials.4.35% teachers are silent about it and 4.35% use audio and video materials from internet sometimes.

The table shows 82.22% teachers use internet to know about the recent trends about EFL. 8.89% participants don't use internet for knowing about recent trends of EFL. 6.67% are silent, 2.17% did not answer the question and 2.17% use internet a little for knowing about the recent trends of EFL.EFL teachers of tertiary level in Bangladesh keep themselves updated about recent trends of EFL through internet. They try to know what changes are going on around the world in the field of English language teaching and upgrade their own ways of teaching and cope up with the world. A study in Palestine (Kabilan and Rajab, 2010) also shows that teachers use internet for getting updates about recent trends.

EFL teachers in universities seek new ideas for teaching on the internet. They are interested to develop

their teaching through innovative ideas that are shared on the internet. The table shows that 84% teachers seek new ideas in the internet which would not be so much available in the real world.8.70% participants don't use internet for getting innovative ideas for teaching EFL.2.17% participants are silent.4.35% teachers use sometimes.

Professional development by sharing views and experiences through internet is a common practice among the English language teachers at tertiary level in Bangladesh. Teacher share their own thoughts, ideas and experiences and enrich themselves for more effective outcome of their teaching. However, the table shows that 50% teachers share their experiences and views whereas 41.30% participants do not which is one third of the participants and cannot be ignored.4.35% participants are silent and 4.35% participants sometimes share their professional views and experience through internet.

Influences of internet on tertiary level EFL teachers in Bangladesh.

Table 2: Influences of internet on Tertiary-level EFL teachers

questions	yes	no	No comment	other	total
8. Internet helps to be creative	44 95.65%	0	2 4.35%	0	46 100%
9. Internet helps to increase professional skill and knowledge	43 93.48%	1 2.17%	2 4.35%	0	46 100%
10. Internet increases motivation in class.	36 78.26%	4 8.70%	4 8.70%	2 4.35%	46 100%
11. Enjoy developing professional skill using internet	39 84.78%	3 6.52%	2 4.35%	2 4.35%	46 100%

EFL teachers at tertiary level in Bangladesh are becoming more and more creative with the help of internet. They search internet for new and better ideas for teaching EFL. Table-2 shows that 95% teachers think that internet help them to be creative in teaching EFL.4.35% are silent about it.

Teachers who are using internet for teaching EFL at tertiary level think that their professional skills and knowledge are increased by the help of internet. As internet is a great source of materials and articles, it contributes greatly to their knowledge and skill. Table-2 shows that 93.48% teachers think internet helps to develop their professional skill and knowledge.2.17% is silent.2.17% thinks it depends on the situation and 2.17% think it sometimes helps to develop their skill and knowledge.

Internet increases tertiary level EFL teachers' motivation in class. As internet helps EFL teachers to be creative and more skilled, they feel more confident and motivated to teach better. Table-2 reveals that 78.26% teachers think internet increase their motivation in the

class. Therefore, as motivation is a key factor for teaching, internet is helping Bangladeshi tertiary level EFL teacher to upgrade their level of motivation for better teaching in the class. Only8.70% teachers think internet doesn't increase their motivation in class.8.70% participants are silent about it and 4.35% teachers think sometimes it help to increase their motivation.

Internet is a driving factor of professional development of EFL teachers in Bangladeshi universities. As internet offers a personal environment, it inspires EFL teachers to take the opportunity of internet to develop their teaching ability. The high percentage in table-2 is considerable in this sense.84.78% teachers enjoy developing themselves using internet.6.52% participants don't enjoy developing their professional skill using internet.4.35% participants are silent and 2.17% participants sometimes enjoy and 2.17% does not enjoy it always.

## V. PROBLEMS OF USING INTERNET FOR PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT IN BANGLADESH

Although Bangladeshi tertiary level EFL teachers are using internet for their professional development, they still face some problems in using internet for professional development.

Table 3: Problems of using internet for professional development

Questions	yes	no	No comment	other	total
1. Satisfied with the cost of internet	13 28.26%	27 58.70%	5 10.87%	1 2.17%	46 100%
2. Cost of internet hampers the use of internet for professional purpose	22 47.38%	14 30.43%	8 17.39%	2 4.35%	46 100%
3. Satisfied with the speed of internet	6 13.04%	34 73.91%	1 2.17%	5 10.87%	46 100%
4. Speed of internet hampers the use of internet for professional purpose	35 76.09%	6 13.04%	2 4.35%	3 6.52%	46 100%
5. Institutions Provide enough support to use internet for professional purpose	20 43.48%	21 45.65%	2 4.35%	3 6.52%	46 100%
6. Get enough time to use internet for professional development.	18 39.13%	23 50%	4 8.70%	1 2.17%	46 100%
7. Has enough technological skill for using internet for professional development	23 50%	17 36.95%	3 6.52%	3 6.52%	46 100%
8. Received pre-service training on use of internet for professional development	7 15.22%	35 76.09%	4 8.70%	0 0%	46 100%
9. Received in-service training on use of internet for professional development	4 8.70%	39 84.78%	3 6.52%	0 0%	46 100%
10. Thinks that training on effective use of internet for professional development is needed	28 60.87%	16 34.78%	2 4.35%	0 0%	46 100%

### a) Poor internet facility

One of the major problems faced by the EFL teachers while using internet for professional activities is the high cost of internet. They are not satisfied with the cost of the internet which affects their use of internet for professional development which is supported by table-3. 58.70% participants think the cost of internet is dissatisfactory in Bangladesh. 28.26% participants are satisfied with cost. 10.87% participants are silent and 2.17% think to some extent they are satisfied. And 47.38% think their professional works are hampered by the cost. However, 30.43% participants don't think their professional activities are affected by the cost of internet. This can be because of the recent availability of internet offered by mobile phone companies at cheap rates. 17.39% participants are silent about it and 4.35% participants think to some extent it hampers their professional activities.

The greater problem is the poor speed of internet connection. 73.91% participants are dissatisfied about the speed of internet as appears in table-3. As Bangladesh is still on the way of development of internet technology, the speed is not yet very smooth to work with it satisfactorily for the professional development of the EFL teachers. However, 13.04% participants are satisfied with the speed. 2.17% participants are silent and 6.52% participants are not happy with the speed always. 2.17% participants have no idea about it and 2.17% participants think the speed is satisfactory at

office but not at home. This dissatisfactory speed hampers the online professional activities of teachers to a great extent. 76.09% participants are hampered by the poor speed of internet. 13.04% participants are not hampered by the speed. 4.35% participants are silent and 6.52% participants think that it disturbs them sometimes. Because of these problems of internet service EFL teachers can't still avail all the potentialities of internet. Hence their professional development is restricted

### b) Lack of institutional support

For technological skill development and for using that skill for professional development institutional support is highly important. The institution must take every possible responsibility for its human development. The study finds that lack of institutional support affects the professional activities and development of tertiary-level EFL teachers. 45.65% participants think that their institutions do not provide them enough internet support to develop their professional skill using internet. However, due to the wave of creating digital Bangladesh the internet and CALL facilities are increased in many universities. 43.48% participants think that their institution provide enough support to use internet for the professional development. 4.35% think that their institutions provide very poor internet support. 4.35% participants think the supports are not enough and 2.17% participants think most of the time it is enough.



c) *Lack of enough time to use internet for professional development*

Lack of time to use internet in Bangladesh is another serious problem for using internet for professional development. 50% of the subjects think that they don't get enough time to use internet for professional purpose whereas 39.13% participants think that, they get enough time to use internet. 2.17% think that they don't get always time to use internet. 8.70% participants are silent. Therefore, table-3 suggests that, teachers are loaded with their institutional duties, so they can't get enough time to use internet for professional activities to develop themselves.

d) *Lack of technological skill for using internet for professional development*

As for technological skill, in table-3, 50% of the subjects think they are skilled enough to use internet whereas 36.95% participants think they don't have enough skill to use internet for professional development. Rest 4.35% thinks that they also have enough knowledge and 2.27% participants think they need improvement. Therefore, a good portion of the subject still lacks technological skill to use internet for professional development. They are slowing down in the competitive world of continuous technological advancement.

e) *Lack of Training on the use of internet for professional development*

Another paramount problem for using internet for professional development found in table-3 is lack of training. 76.09% of the participants have not received any pre-service training on the use of internet for professional development and 84.78% participants have not received any in-service training for the same purpose. 60.87% participants think that they need training to use internet more effectively for their professional development. Because of the lack formal training and knowledge, the EFL teachers at tertiary level in Bangladesh cannot utilize internet for the maximum professional development. 34.78% participants do not need any training as they think they have enough skill as supported by Table-2. A similar study in Korea also finds that, most of the High school EFL teachers did not receive any training for using internet for professional activities (Shin, 2007). Therefore teacher development through the use of internet is still not an established practice in some other countries including Bangladesh.

## VI. FINDINGS OF THE INTERVIEWS

a) *Purposes of using internet*

More than 90% respondents of quantitative study answered positive about their awareness about the positive influences of internet on EFL teachers. In the qualitative research also all the respondents replied that they are very about this.

T3 said, "Internet has made things easier for English language teachers. If we want to be more creative and involve our students in class, we can download and use materials from the internet. There are so many resources. We can browse download them and make our class lesson interesting."

Conforming to the questionnaire data, about 70-80% respondents use internet for using materials like worksheet, lesson plan, question and audio and video materials and innovative idea for teaching EFL. One thing that came out of all the interviews is that, they are also using these materials from internet; however, they are using them by adapting these materials according to their needs.

T4 stated, "I take materials from internet and modify them as my students need them. I modify and improvise them because our students are not that much up to the standard. We have to minimize the levels. These materials are for universal students, but our students come directly from remote areas, from farmer family. We need to improvise them (material) and make them easy for our students."

As reported by questionnaire data 80-90% participants are using net for reading and writing article and keeping themselves updated. Similarly, all the interviewees also agreed that they read articles from internet and keep themselves updated.

T1 said, "When I read journals proceedings of conferences, new issues of journal, I know about new things and remain updated about recent trends."

According to the questionnaire data, 41.30% participants are not using internet for sharing experiences through internet and 50% participants share their ideas through internet. All the interviewees replied that, they also share their ideas and experiences through internet.

As T4 and T5 informed that, they share their professional views and experiences sometimes on the Face book.

b) *Influences of using internet*

In the questionnaire survey more than 90% participants answered in positive that internet increases their creativity, professional skill and knowledge. In the interview also most of the interviewees (T1, T3, T4, and T5) said that internet increases their creativity.

T3 said, "It helps me for my continuous development. If it were not there what would happen? Suppose I want to know something which is not available on text. I can get it in internet."

T5 uttered, "Internet helps me to develop my professional skill and knowledge and I think a teacher who uses internet is far more advanced than a teacher who does not use internet."

According to questionnaire data internet is increasing motivation more than 70% respondents in class. Most of the interviewees (T1, T2, T3, and T5)

informed that, their motivation is increased with the use of internet.

T5 explained, "When last night I was preparing my lecture, I could not find suitable example for my topic. Then I searched the internet and found a lot of examples. So I was inspired and motivated that, I would be able to give a good lecture tomorrow."

#### c) *Problems of using internet*

Poor speed and high cost of internet are the main problems. The questionnaire data shows that about 50% participants are hampered by the cost and more than 70% participants are hampered by the speed.

T5 asserted, "I am not satisfied about the speed. It should be much higher. When I face the poor speed, I feel frustrated and de-motivated to use the internet. Then I feel less interested to use internet and I go for other sources like printed materials. It also causes me waste of my time."

As reported by questionnaire survey about 45% respondents think their universities are not providing them enough support whereas 43.65% respondents think their institutions provide them enough support. Likewise, the greater portion of the interviewees (T1, T3, and T5) informed that, their universities don't grant enough logistic support like computers. Apart from this, several other issues came up:

T1 opined, "There are not enough workstations. There are many journals which we have to subscribe. My university subscribes to a number of journals, but that is not enough."

T5 reported, "My institution does not provide enough support. My institution has given us internet connection, but it does not take any initiative to inspire us to use that internet. So it might happen despite having internet connection, a teacher may not use internet once in a month. We don't have enough computers. We have computer in our office, but no computer for all teachers."

According to the questionnaire data, 50% participants believe that they have enough technological skill to use internet effectively whereas 36.95% participants believe the opposite. On the contrary, all the interviewees informed that, they don't think their technological skill is enough.

T1 explained, "I do not have enough skill. I have the basic skill and there is no limit to the skills. New ways are there. New search engines are there. Internet is renewing every moment. I am not up to the speed of the internet. New tools are there. I do not have enough knowledge about them."

About 70-85% questionnaire respondents have not received any training and 60% respondents think that, they need training for using internet effectively. In the same way, all the interviewees also told that, they never had any pre-service or in-service training, and they need training.

T5 said, "Since we live in an age of internet we need more computers and we need more pre-service and in-service training."

## VII. RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Special funding should be introduced for the teachers to ensure uninterrupted internet use.
2. Institutions should provide enough logistic supports e.g. computers, Wi-Fi network etc. to make the best use of internet by the EFL teachers.
3. Institutions should ensure better quality internet services so that teachers can use them without being affected.
4. Teachers' workload should be minimized and they should be given enough scope to use internet.
5. Sharing professional views and experiences using should be made more popular. In this case institutions can help the teachers by introducing them to different chatting websites, professional websites by organizing workshops or seminars.
6. Teachers should be more aware about the development of their technological knowledge.
7. Institutions can also invite internet specialists and organize training programs for their teachers.
8. A separate technology course can be introduced in undergraduate or post graduate ELT program which will facilitate pre-service EFL teachers with updated technological knowledge.
9. Teacher training program for giving technological support to in-service EFL teachers can be introduced and made mandatory by the government.
10. Government can enact a law to ensure better quality internet facilities especially for EFL teachers.

## VIII. CONCLUSION

There is no doubt that, EFL teachers at tertiary level in Bangladesh are trying to enhance their professional standard by utilizing internet. They are exploiting internet in various ways to make their teaching more effective. With the help of internet they are keeping themselves updated, increasing their creativity, professional skill, knowledge and motivation. Despite all the prospects of endless professional development using internet, the existing problems in our context are making the progress slow and limited. If the suggested solutions are followed, these problems will be minimized to a negligible level. Sequentially, internet will open new windows for the development of our EFL teachers in universities. Otherwise "The digitally poor, who do not have the equipment, the knowledge or the confidence to enter the online world fully, may be missing out on developmental opportunities (Elliot, 2009)."

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## Indigenous Language and Church Teaching in Nigeria: An Assessment of Kuteb Songs in Kwambai Community

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*Abstract-* The worship mode of Africans is often enriched by songs that contain expressions of their faith, recount stories or render praise to God. They have taken pleasure and given regard to composing these songs in their local dialect, thus communicating the essence of Bible messages in ways that English language could not have been able to do. These songs have done much in Church teaching, indicating that mother tongue is a key factor in communicating to a larger audience in Kwambai community. Though English language was the original medium through which Christianity was propagated among them, the people have adopted and modified the gospel message to suit their needs. The assessment in this study relied on observation and unstructured interviews with song composers and other members of the community. The study opines that the role of mother tongue in communication cannot be underplayed if people in local communities will be reached with the message of the Gospel.

*Keywords:* kuteb, indigenous language, worship, songs.

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*Strictly as per the compliance and regulations of:*



# Indigenous Language and Church Teaching in Nigeria: An Assessment of Kuteb Songs in Kwambai Community

Kyantirimam Riken UKWEN

**Abstract-** The worship mode of Africans is often enriched by songs that contain expressions of their faith, recount stories or render praise to God. They have taken pleasure and given regard to composing these songs in their local dialect, thus communicating the essence of Bible messages in ways that English language could not have been able to do. These songs have done much in Church teaching, indicating that mother tongue is a key factor in communicating to a larger audience in Kwambai community. Though English language was the original medium through which Christianity was propagated among them, the people have adopted and modified the gospel message to suit their needs. The assessment in this study relied on observation and unstructured interviews with song composers and other members of the community. The study opines that the role of mother tongue in communication cannot be underplayed if people in local communities will be reached with the message of the Gospel.

**Keywords:** kuteb, indigenous language, worship, songs.

## I. INTRODUCTION

The Kuteb are one of over a dozen ethnic groups that are found around the south-eastern part of Taraba State where Nigeria borders with the Cameroon Republic. The area lies on Latitude 7o 10' N and Longitude 10o 00' E. The Kuteb are among those that felt the early influence of the Christian missionaries of the Sudan United Mission that found their way to the area through the inland waters up to Ibi, where the river Benue flows down to the confluence with river Niger at Lokoja. Although mission stations were established in Ibi and later Wukari (to the east of Ibi), Christianity did not gain as much acceptance as it did among the Kuteb in the area (further east of Wukari) and that led to the establishment of a station in Lupwe from where the spread of Christianity found its way to the surrounding villages, one of which was Kwambai community.

The use of songs in the worship tradition of the Kuteb has been a regular practice long before the introduction of Christianity by the missionaries around 1921. Songs were significantly part of the various festivals that marked the beginning of farming seasons or marriage ceremonies and the themes of such songs largely ascribed thanksgiving and praises to the Creator

(Rimam) as well as prayers for bountiful harvests or fruitful marriage unions among others. Songs are especially used as integral part of worship of African people as Mbiti (1969) notes that "God is often worshipped through songs, and African people are fond of singing" (p. 67). This is true of the Kuteb. Many significant events are recounted in songs; names of people who have achieved feats or are celebrating an event are often woven into songs.

The foregoing underscores the long existing role of songs in performances that Africans engage in from day to day. The role played by these songs is to be seen in the light of the messages they contain while at the same time entertaining. In the case of the Kuteb, songs have been used as a tool for criticism of morals or chastising certain behaviors. These take satirical patterns in some cases and carry hidden meanings that will require extra effort to decipher. When used in worship, these songs usually have themes that express the awesomeness of the creator and reverence to Him. Since songs are entertaining in nature, their use is often not restricted to situations of worship but used by individuals while engaging in other domestic activities. The messages of these songs are not easily forgotten as it becomes part of the consciousness of the person.

In the light of the above, this paper examines the events that followed the introduction of Christianity and the consequent effect of the alteration of worship pattern with focus on the use of songs in the indigenous language of the Kuteb. Although the missionary activities, particularly the introduction of the English language on the whole is not to be seen in negative light, the paper aims to throw light on the role played by the mother tongue in communication and teaching. The paper highlights the multi-functional role of songs as a tool for inculcating values in people who sing as well as those who listen.

## II. LANGUAGE AS A MEDIUM OF COMMUNICATION

The issue of communication and the appropriate language to be adopted for communication by African nations has been variously dwelled on by African writers. The views that arise are prominently in relation to the colonial experience of various African

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nations. Since a major effect of colonialism on Africans reflects in the influence the language of the colonialists continues to have on them, it becomes a major contestation as to whether or not these languages should continue to be used. Central to the argument is the idea that the Africans would not be free of colonialism so long as they continue to use the language of the colonialist as a language of communication.

One of the forerunners of this view is Ngugi Wa Thiong'o whose work on African literature expresses his dissatisfaction with the use of the language of the colonialist in African literatures. Wa Thiong'o (1981) asserts that "the choice of language and the use to which language is put is central to the people's definition of themselves in relation to their natural and social environment, indeed to the entire universe" (p. 4). Indeed choice of language is a key determinant of the success or failure of the struggle by Africans to liberate themselves from the continuous process of gaining control over their culture by the colonialists.

He decried the adoption by some writers of the languages of the colonialist in expressing pro-African views. He criticized African writers like Chinua Achebe and Gabriel Okara who advanced reasons for expressing African thoughts in English language. Wa Thiong'o sees language as the means through which the Europeans hold captive the Africans in non-physical terms. Expressing the need for Africans to return to the use of their mother tongue as the language of communication, he advances that "Language as culture is the collective memory bank of a people's experience in history. Culture is almost indistinguishable from language that makes possible its genesis, growth, banking, articulation and indeed its transmission from one generation to the next" (Wa Thiong'o, 1981, p. 15). Language thus forms an integral part of the lives of people and is the vehicle that aids the sustenance of culture and values over time. Language in this case is not to be considered lightly if it is being endangered by a foreign language because it is the factor that links people with their history in relation to the world.

In this perspective therefore, the advocacy is for Africans to ensure the sustenance of their languages and by extension their cultures through the use of their mother tongue in their expressions. This is the method through which the extension of colonialism through the language of the Europeans can be avoided.

Another proponent of this view is Obi Wali, whose reaction, like Wa Thiong'o's, came after the various submissions at the 1962 Makerere conference of African writers of English expression. He expressed his disagreement with the use of English and French as languages of expression and called for the use of African languages. Wali pointed to the fact that writing in these foreign languages will not in any way advance

African literatures and culture as much as the African languages will do.

On the other side of the divide is Chinua Achebe who argues that English language should be put to full use considering the circumstances under which Africans find themselves. This he opines makes it possible for the writer to modify the language to suit his intended purpose of expressing the African experience (Sofield, 1999). Considering how English language has gained a central place in the lives of Africans, the option available is to put to advantageous use.

Another proponent of the idea of maximizing the use of English language is Gabriel Okara. He supports the modification of the language of the colonialists to suit Africans so that it will enhance the expression of their ideas, thinking and philosophy (Sofield, 1999). This suggests seeking ways to mould the language into a form that will be convenient enough for the Africans to feel as close to the foreign languages as possible.

Also in this category is Wole Soyinka who opines that although English and French represent the languages of oppression and stems from the colonial masters, they are languages of wider communication. A point of decision must be arrived at where a writer needs to use a language that would be understood by the majority. This is where the foreign language becomes a tool for the African writer to be effectively used to the advantage of Africans. Soyinka points out the efficacy of using English or French languages to express the cultural values of Africans and achieve wide reach as a result of the dominant use of the languages.

The foregoing differing views of the various African writers mentioned show the approaches to the issue of the usage of languages of the colonialists in expressing the thoughts of Africans. It is accepted by these two groups that the colonialists have planted the roots of their languages on the African soil. Drawing from these two analogies, the practicable option is the modification of the foreign language to fit the Africans. These languages have taken roots in the lives of Africans and attempting to stamp it out at this point will be a hideous task that could be likened to rowing against fast flowing water.

One factor that is likely to work against this is the multi-lingual composition of some African nations. In his contribution to the suggestion of adopting mother tongues in communication, Soyinka opines for adoption of Swahili as the common language in Africa if such project will be feasible. The reason advanced is that Swahili is the language that is widely spoken in most parts of the Southern and Eastern Africa. It is noteworthy too that it is an issue of international politics. It becomes even more difficult when it becomes a case of individual countries adopting a common language. In a country like Nigeria where about two hundred and fifty languages are spoken, the challenge will be what criteria to use in making the choice of a common language to

adopt. The task of teaching the people a new language that will become the official language will be an enormous one - school curriculum will need to be reviewed, literatures published and official documents changed to fit the current needs. It is unlikely to be a welcome project in a country that is grappling with serious challenges in many facets.

Also to be considered is the socio-economic and political relations with other nations whose language of communication is English language. The positions of Ngugi for example were contained in a book which he published in Gikuyu but had to be translated into English language for others to read because it is a language of wider communication. The argument put forward for abandoning the language of the colonialists for mother tongues in this case works against itself. Restricting oneself to a language that is accessible to a few and yet intending to reach out to a wider audience is contradictory.

It is thus a fact that deep as the language of the colonialists may have become part of Africans, solution to this is not to be sought for in discarding the language and replacing it with the mother tongue but rather in encouraging the speaking of the mother tongue in order to sustain traditions and at the same time making maximum use of English in relevant expressions. Africans will be at advantage if they have access to multiple languages and put these to use as the need arises.

### III. CULTURE AND RELIGIOUS THRUST OF THE KUTEB

The Kuteb have all along been religious, expressed in conscious reverence to a Supreme Being who is invisible to humans but controls their affairs and is able to make things happen sometimes in miraculous ways and beyond human understanding. It was clear to the Europeans that Africans were very religious and this reflects in everything they do in life. The religious disposition is expressed in the life, not only of the individual but the community and this reflects in the beliefs, ceremonies, rituals and festivals of the community (Mbiti, 1969).

For example, the Kuteb allude to a time when they needed to cross a certain river and there was no canoe, so a hippopotamus aided them in crossing the river (Mgbe, n.d). They believed that it was an unusual incident made possible by an unseen power somewhere that controlled such an event. The Supreme Being responsible for such acts is thus referred to as Rimam, driven from two words: Ri (speak), and Mam (create or invent) thus meaning "the one who creates by talking" (Ejwocwu, 2000). This concurs with the Bible account of Genesis where God spoke and created the heavens and the earth. The idea of a Creator has thus been with the Kuteb before contact with Christianity. With regards to the concept of religion, Ejwocwu (2000), posits thus:

Religion so permeates the Kuteb communities that wherever one goes in Kuteb land one could see and hear about religion. God is brought to bear in all things so that the form of government of the people is theocracy. This has been there before the British rule in the 19th and in the first six decades of the 20th centuries. In this case, Rimam is the Supreme Ruler, ruling through "Ukwen" or "Kukwen" (the Chief Priest). The Ukwen has other "Akwen" (priests) under him who preside over sub-clan's religious affairs. These "Akwen" are religious lieutenants who receive God's instructions from "Ukwen" and pass same to the people (p. 10).

This indicates a well laid out channel of communication between the people and God. The recognition of the place of God in their lives is seen in their conversations, naming of humans and places and songs of worship.

The belief system of the Kuteb stems out of a tripartite world view: the world of the spirits where Rimam (Creator) resides, the physical world where humans live and the world of the dead where the souls of good dead people reside and are reborn into their families. These living dead watch over their families and requests are made through them. They punish those who err among the living and serve as mediators between men and God. Though there are cases of sharing food and drinks with them, there is no indication of worship being directed to them (Ejwocwu, 2000).

Commenting on the relationship between humans and the living-dead, Mbiti notes that various rites are performed to keep a contact and failure to observe these acts means in effect that humans have completely broken off their links with the departed and have therefore forgotten these spirits, some which are held to dwell in the woods, bush, forest, rivers or just around the villages. With particular reference to the living-dead, he notes that they are not worshipped but treated with respect as elderly members of the family. Mbiti (1969) posits that "men approach them more often for minor needs of life rather than they approach God. Even if the living-dead may not do miracles or extraordinary things to remedy the need, men experience a sense of psychological relief when they pour out their heart troubles before their seniors who have a foot in both worlds" (p. 83).

These sorts of beliefs and actions have been demonstrated in the religious lives of the Kuteb and it is apt to cite the experience related by Johanna Veenstra, a pioneer missionary in the Sudan region in the 1920's. Based on her limited knowledge of the religious lives of the natives as well as her own religious background, she described the lives of the Kuteb as characterized by "dreadful fear of 'spirit worship'". She however acknowledged that her experience "has been far too short and too limited to dwell at length on the matter". Veenstra (1926), narrates her experience thus;



In the month of April, I went to a certain village. During this month we frequently have very heavy tornado storms. Two men were walking along the path and they were killed in such a storm. The lightning struck a hut in the village and four people were killed. Quiet naturally the people are afraid of these storms. I noticed that outside the huts were two short poles; one a straight pointed pole, the other close it, a forked pole. I asked what these poles meant, and was told that they were the spirits guarding the hut and protecting the inmates against tornado storms. The straight pointed pole was the female spirit and the forked pole was the male spirit. At the same village I went to another compound and saw a large image of a beast. I asked the meaning of this, and was told that the spirit was to keep away the leopards (p. 93-94).

What she made out of this based on her little understanding of the religious lives of the people was a perceived superstition and worship of objects. This perception is borne out of her religious background and beliefs which she as well as other Europeans consider superior to that of the people.

Closely linked with the religious observances is the cultural celebration, the Kuchicheb festival which is an annual thanksgiving festival to God for bountiful harvest. The festival comes up in the month of March and lasts for seven days. The people are expected to purify themselves and be hospitable to visitors and express love to each other including children. The festival week begins with the arrival of the Iki (the masquerades) that symbolize the living-dead or the incarnate of the Kuteb ancestors (Ahmadu, 1990).

The people will then engage in a dance performance with the Iki in the circle. The festival is characterized by plenty of food and drinks for participants and visitors. Every day of that holy week, before the commencement of the dance at after midday, an elder would bring a calabash of water to the dance ground, dip palm tree leaves in the water and sprinkle the area three times and prays for peace. It is therefore, a week of peace with God and with every person, non-Kuteb inclusive. It is also a week of petition to God (Ejwocwu, 2000). At the end of this sacred week, a pilgrimage is made to Iya Ussa (a section of the Ussa mountain where a large stone is) where the representative of each of the Kuteb villages will fetch and carry to his village the holy fire that is gotten by striking a stone against a rock. This becomes a new source of fire throughout the Kuteb land as all fires would have been put out before then. Ahmadu (1990), captures the essence of this thus:

What this means to the Kuteb man and, indeed the whole of African socio-cultural thoughts and religious world view is that the entire universe consisting of the physical, social and spiritual orders

is one harmonious integral circle that must maintain constant equilibrium to effect peace, concord and euphoria (p. 8).

The cultural and religious lives of the Kuteb, in essence reflects reverence to God and singing is a major form of expressing their beliefs and celebration.

#### IV. A NEW FORM OF EDUCATION, RELIGION AND LANGUAGE

With the partition of Africa by the various European colonizers, the old and existing kingdoms were shared and Britain had authority over the major parts of the Fulani Empire in the north, the Yoruba and Benin kingdoms and the Ibo, Calabar and Ibibio tribes. The colonial government massively took to changing the orientation of the people to further their course by replacing the informal traditional system of learning and socialization with the western educational approach. The missionaries established schools in Towns and villages and students were taught on issues that had no link with what they knew. Subjects like geography, history and economics of Britain were taught in English language, thus making the learning of English language a requirement for communicating and engaging in business. Indigenous languages lost their place as oral and traditional poetry were overtaken by English literature (Fasuyi, 2007).

The Kuteb people were no exception in this drive for reorientation as the pioneer missionary in the area wrote that the two basic reasons for establishing schools then was so that the people could read English literatures as well as teach others. According to Veenstra (1926),

They were not able to read or write...He must learn to read the Word of the Lord;...be able to memorize the Ten commandments, the Lord's prayer and the Apostles' creed; become familiar with the early history of Genesis; and know the important facts about the life of Christ (p. 140).

This indicates a well-laid plan of inducting the people into a new form of language and indeed a systematic indoctrination process. Veenstra (1926) further records the result the schools had on the people when she wrote:

They came to us without ever having seen the alphabet; they left with a New Testament which they were able to read. When they first came, they sat with closed lips during the singing of the hymns; when they left, they possessed a hymn book and could find the place as the number of the hymn would be announced (p. 142).

This meant some success in inculcating a new orientation in the people who will in turn teach others.

The introduction of Christianity, like colonialism, came with its characteristics, one of which was an

attempt to rid the natives of all attachments to their religion.

Fasuyi (2007), opines that “the early missionaries came to introduce a new religion; all the former religious rites and manifestations (including dance and music) were banned, and the new converts were encouraged to dispose of any art works which had been used in religious rites” (p. 21).

Christianity was portrayed as the ideal path to tread if the African was to benefit from the “change” that will make him better than where he finds himself. It was painted as criteria for recognition as important people that could be reckoned in anything (Makamo, 2005). Anyone that took little or no interest in the trend was considered an aberration.

A conscious attempt was made to teach the people the English language so as to adopt it as the language of communication as the missionary cited earlier. Apart from English language, the missionaries used Hausa language (widely spoken in the northern region of Nigeria but not by the Kuteb) as means of communication and they recognized the folly of such a task as another missionary concedes that “We make one somewhat great mistake, however, for we did our preaching in Hausa language instead of the mother tongue of the people” (Maxwell, n.d, p. 61).

They replaced native names full of meanings with English names that had no immediate relevance to either the birth circumstances of the bearer or connected to his environment. The converts were given option of choosing new names from the Bible and many gladly did.

As it was contained in the plan of the missionaries, the students that were taught how to read the Gospel returned to their various villages to establish new churches to propagate the Gospel. By May 1926, a Kuteb speaking evangelist resumed at Kwambal, his place of assignment. There was positive response from the people, including the village chief and his elders who readily embraced Christianity. The year 1931 saw the dedication of a new church structure that could house about two hundred people (Ejwocwu, 2000).

It is worth noting that at that time before the recent translation of part of the Bible in Kuteb language the only available option was the English version. How effective were the church teachings that had their source from a language that was strange to the people? Perhaps the option of translation from English language to the mother tongue seemed a remote option thus the adoption of Hausa language in the task of Church teaching as Maxwell indicates that “we did our preaching in Hausa language instead of the mother tongue of the people” (Maxwell, n.d, p. 61). The people were now saddled with the task of grappling with a new language which they must learn in order to understand the teachings. Communication is most effective when the sender and the receiver are able to easily

understand the message intended. Where a barrier exists in coding and decoding verbal expression of language, it impedes the prospect of social relation but when one uses a familiar language, an active flow of communication is established (Boh and Ukwem, 2013). The first language of an individual is the easiest and most effective means to communicate with him or her. Some vocabularies that could be available in the native language might not be correctly conveyed in a foreign language with the exact meaning.

## V. MEETING THE NEEDS OF THE PEOPLE

The current method of church teaching in Kwambal community is perhaps a revolutionary recourse to the ideal form that was earlier relegated by the missionaries as the mother tongue is the principal language employed in church teaching. When interpreters are used in church service (for non-Kuteb speakers), it is to translate from the mother tongue to other languages. This allows the people to identify with the teachings since they are able to understand the language being used.

Songs were composed in Kuteb language with local instrumentation. These songs are often embellished with mental images and performed with gestures and mime. Several of such songs are contained in Akyang Nzu Kuteb, a compendium with 514 songs. The contents of many Kuteb worship songs are stories from the Bible accounts that are composed by talented composers based on their understanding of the teachings. Examples of the stories of Joseph, Dorcas and David are cited thus:

*Yusufu sung ra me njau na kurbin nau (2x)*

*Me njau ba fyenfe tso nae ra yau jabchi, ye pu tugba ra kyafa tse*

*Tse tso kwun na “ayee” ami nde mang, mbae mi cwupu re*

*Yusufu ta tang, u cwu ucwu be ra song taen Masar*

*Ye ti min yeba, ba na nwun ru taen Masar ba jab wuci jwo Yusufu, ba nung wu na?*

*Iye, ba nung ba be, ba nung ba nung ti na si awube*

*Kya na yang ti tse nda nyam kuko, tso nae yau ra jabchi taen Masar*

*Kafe ra kurbin na ki uki a?*

Joseph dreamt that his brothers bowed to him

Angered, they sold him, took his clothes and deceived their father

The father cried, “ah! What will I do? My son is dead”

Joseph was not dead but living in Egypt

When famine set in, they went to buy food from Joseph  
Did they recognize him? No they did not know it was him

Why would father honour my brother? Angered, I sold my brother in Egypt

And I have returned, bowing down to him?

The moral of the story is found in the last verse in which the application of the story is brought home to the audience.

Another example is as follows:

*Tabitha wu si ndae ta nyang wae ruba wo wakaen ba, wu si ndae ta nyangwae*

*Ye ti Tabitha cwu ande mimi zwub rae ba wooh, Tabitha cwu tin de mang*

*Na nung tugba ti Tabitha punam ta-ri (2x)*

*Na kunam Bitu ti tsen u ruba nde duwa kun nwun Tabitha be tin de mang?*

*Ati taen ta waeta ti jwo be, kwen tu waeta jwo,*

*Ani rom ta waeta ni jwo be kwen ti ni waeta jwo*

Dorcas was a generous person to the poor; she was a generous person

When Dorcas died all the people cried "Ah!" What shall we do?

See the clothes Dorcas gave me! (2x)

Hurry, call Peter to come and pray so she will come back to life

Let those of us who are not generous, learn to give to others

Men who are not generous, learn to give to others

The lesson again is contained in the ending verse, urging the audience to emulate Dorcas and her act of generosity.

Another example is presented below:

*Golia rembeb nyi Mam, nde Rimam tsi pi*

*Ba ken sin na Golia wu ba*

*Dauda yara tkwam kaen fa rika nwi ra Golia tanyi*

*Dauda wu ci bo kae ro!*

Goliath blasphemed God's name while the people looked on helplessly

They were afraid of Goliath

David took a stone, put it in hi sling and killed Goliath

David has won the battle!

The moral lessons of these songs are hardly to be missed as emphasis is achieved through methods such as gestures, repetition and acting. The composition of songs in the mother tongue is not restricted to the church as these songs feature in other celebrations and messages are sent across using songs that are composed specially for such occasions. They also carry moral messages for the youths to stay away from moral decadence and so on.

There is need to use more of the mother tongue as used in the other aspects of church teaching so that the messages of such songs will be available to more people. Songs, by their entertaining nature have the tendency to hold the attention of people who may easily lose concentration in a church sermon especially the aged and the young children. The messages of the songs, if accessible to them would make up for any deficiency thus bridging the communication gap.

Again, the singing aspect of the church service is about the only part that the congregation is able to participate in, thus allowing each to be able to express

his/her creativity through songs. Since songs are even taken out of the confines of the church and sung by individuals even while engaging in other domestic activities, the lessons that could easily be forgotten after the sermon is made alive in these songs day by day. The moral lessons to be driven from such songs will have more impact if it is understood by more people. Using English language in this case will certainly achieve minimal result as even the language of daily communication in Kwambal community is the indigenous language, Kuteb.

## VI. CONCLUSION

One major feature of colonialism on Africans is the introduction of English language and the activities of Christian missionaries that pioneered the propagation of the gospel among them. The Kuteb adopted this as well Hausa as languages of communication. Far reaching in usage as the English language is in all parts of Nigeria, there are circumstances under which the use of mother tongues will prove more effective in communication. The place occupied by English language in the lives of Nigerians is a result of the entire process of colonialism which could not have been possible without the introduction of the language of the colonialist through which communication with the people was made possible. In the present circumstances, the effort should not be to abandon its usage for the mother tongues but seeking methods to use it to advantage as well as re-establish the place of the mother tongues so as to use both in various situations that calls for such.

The Kuteb have notably taken such a step in church teaching in Kwambal community where the language of communication is not the English or Hausa languages that were initially introduced by the pioneer missionaries but the indigenous language that is widely understood by the people. This is borne out of simple logic: why using a language simply because it is the official language of the nation whereas majority of the people in the community speak and understand their indigenous language? This is based on the prevailing circumstance and local needs as the need will differ were it a cosmopolitan environment. It is for the purpose of achieving maximum result in communication.

The expression in indigenous language makes room for a larger number of people to participate. Since songs are not restricted to the confines of the church, their contents will prove effective in church teaching if the language is accessible to more people, thus need to use Kuteb songs in church teaching in Kwambal community.

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## The Influence of Location and Gender on the Level of Total Quality Management

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*Abstract-* The aim of this paper is to identify the level of Total Quality Management (TQM) in Iranian schools. Additionally, the paper aims to investigate the influence of school location and gender of principals and teachers on the level of TQM. To achieve these aims, the researchers conducted a survey research to determine the level of TQM, and used independent sample t-test to determine the significance difference between the level of TQM based on the gender of principals and teachers. They also applied one-way ANOVA and Kruskal- Wallis H test to determine the significance difference on the level of TQM based on the location of schools. The findings of this study showed that, the level of TQM is high in Iranian schools. The researchers found that there is no significant difference between TQM's level among male and female principals and teachers. It found that, there is no significant difference between the level of TQM based on the principals' schools location. But there is a significant difference between the TQM's level according to teachers' schools location. The study revealed that the level of implementation of TQM as perceived by school principals and teachers according to gender and school location. This information is useful for the provincial education authorities in shaping future TQM implementation as well as for future researches.

*Keywords:* total quality management; location; gender; principal; teacher; iran.

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# The Influence of Location and Gender on the Level of Total Quality Management

Dr. Masoumeh Pourrajab <sup>α</sup> & Prof. Muhammad Faizal Bin Ghani <sup>σ</sup>

**Abstract-** The aim of this paper is to identify the level of Total Quality Management (TQM) in Iranian schools. Additionally, the paper aims to investigate the influence of school location and gender of principals and teachers on the level of TQM. To achieve these aims, the researchers conducted a survey research to determine the level of TQM, and used independent sample t-test to determine the significance difference between the level of TQM based on the gender of principals and teachers. They also applied one-way ANOVA and Kruskal-Wallis H test to determine the significance difference on the level of TQM based on the location of schools. The findings of this study showed that, the level of TQM is high in Iranian schools. The researchers found that there is no significant difference between TQM's level among male and female principals and teachers. It found that, there is no significant difference between the level of TQM based on the principals' schools location. But there is a significant difference between the TQM's level according to teachers' schools location. The study revealed that the level of implementation of TQM as perceived by school principals and teachers according to gender and school location. This information is useful for the provincial education authorities in shaping future TQM implementation as well as for future researches.

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## I. INTRODUCTION

TQM is a management philosophy, first developed by Edwards Deming after World War II to maintain, develop, and improve the quality of companies' products [1]. In fact, TQM is a comprehensive management model. It is a set of practices that focus on continuous improvement, fulfilling the customers' needs, and reducing rework. It also emphasis on increasing involvement of employees and more teamwork, process redesign, competitive benchmarking, constant measurement of the outcomes, long-range thinking, team-based problem solving, and closer ties with the suppliers [2]. TQM principles can be applied to every organization, such as buisnesses, service organizations, universities, and schools [3]. As the world is presently going through dramatic changes and education is considered the dominant competitive change instrument, so TQM could be a reasonable

approach for developing education. The question is what can TQM contribute to education? The literature review of TQM in education shows that many researchers such as Comer and Gates [4], Burke [5], and Pal and Dhodiya [6] confirmed that the use of TQM in education has been encouraged. Sallis [7] found that if an education organization employed TQM, mistakes will be diminished with various systems and procedures, and good group work will be practiced through careful and attentive scheduling.

In education, some factors such as the budget reduction, the low level of the graduates' knowledge and skills have led to the need for society and governments to embark on extensive reconstruction or improvement of the education systems [8]. The Iranian education system is not an exception to these changes. Education experts have always been looking for techniques or strategies to improve the quality of education and keep up with the world standards [9]. They have been trying to increase the quality of education with improving students' knowledge, continual school improvement efforts, and school benchmarking. In this way TQM came to the Iranian education system [10]. Education system of Iran has applied some of TQM principles, including attention to new teaching skills (problem solving and brainstorming), pre-service training for teachers, emphasizing in-service training of the teachers and principals, using class size with the world standards, conducting correct evaluation methods, applying team and group work in classes, improving teachers' knowledge and motivation, and organizing parental associations [10]. Manocherzadeh [11] in her research showed that there are four principles of TQM implemented in Iranian schools which are included continuous improvement, team work, continuous training, and customer satisfaction. She claimed that in schools where TQM was implemented, it resulted in students' satisfaction. Kamali [10] believed that while some or all of the above principles have been applied in different educational areas in Iran, the effect of the implementation has not been clarified.

Even though the education system in Iran is centralized, which means all of the administration, resources and direction is determined by the Ministry of Education (MOE). It is obvious that all provinces and cities did not get same resources and facilities, for example deprived areas still receive less resources and facilities compared to developed or developing

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province. Therefore, in this study the researchers focus on Lorestan which is one of the deprived provinces in Iran.

There are many initiatives to improve the education system [9] which include the implementation of TQM in secondary schools, but in Lorestan province (research population), TQM has not resulted in improvements to as high a level as expected [12]. Therefore this study tries to determine the level of TQM implementation in schools in Lorestan province and investigate the significant difference between the level of TQM according to school location and gender of participants. Based on the purpose of this study, four hypotheses have been addressed as follows:

Hypothesis one: there is no significant difference in the level of TQM based on a principal's school location.

Hypothesis two: there is no significant difference in the level of TQM based on a teacher's school location.

Hypothesis three: there is no significant difference in the level of TQM based on a principal's gender.

Hypothesis four: there is no significant difference between the level of TQM and a teacher's gender.

## II. METHODOLOGY

Based on studies by Shyi-Huey [13] and Rampa [14], location is one of the demographic variables that has effected on TQM. This study was carried out in Lorestan province, one of the most deprived areas, in Iran. The Lorestan province has 10 cities located in two parts (east and west), and each part has five cities (total 10 cities). Some of the cities in this province are developing cities, and some of them are deprived. To determine the effect of location on the level of TQM, the researchers selected one developing and one deprived city in west part (namely: Khoramabad and Kohdasht) and one developing and one deprived city in east (namely: Borojerd and Azna) by simple random sampling, thus four cities in all.

The populations of this study were 1560 educators (teachers + principals) from 206 secondary schools. By using Cochran (1977) formula, the sample size was 320 educators.

To select 320 educators, at least 8 educators (1560÷206) had to be contacted from each secondary school. Therefore, a total of 40 secondary schools (320÷8) were selected from the four cities. Since each school has one principal; therefore the sample size included 40 principals and 280 teachers. Based on this calculation, simple random sampling used to select teachers in each school. For this purpose, a list of teachers in each selected school was obtained and 7 teachers were randomly selected.

The instrument used in the study was the 4 point Likert's scale questionnaire which was prepared by Rampa [14]. He granted permission to the researchers in this study to use his instrument. This questionnaire has two parts. The first part is biography data. The second part is about the implementation of TQM principles. The Cronbach's alpha value was 0.86 and this showed that the questionnaire has a quite satisfactory reliability [15].

## III. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

### a) Demographic findings

As it shown in Table 1, the responding sample consists of 280 (87.5 percent) teachers and 40 (12.5%) principals.

Table 1: Distribution of Respondents

Position	Frequency	Percentage
Principal	40	12.5
Teachers	280	87.5
<b>Total</b>	<b>320</b>	<b>100</b>

Table 2 shows that for principals and teachers, 52.5% of respondents are females and 47.5% are male.

Table 2: Distribution of Respondents' Gender

	Principal		Teacher	
	N	%	N	%
Female	21	52.5	147	52.5
Male	19	47.5	133	47.5
<b>Total</b>	<b>40</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>280</b>	<b>100</b>

Table 3 presents the information on principals' gender. Out of 40 respondents, 21 (52.5%) were female principals and 19 (47.5%) were male principals. The distribution of principals' gender according to city were: 10 (25%) female and 10 (25%) male principals from Khoramabad, 3 (7.5%) female and 2 (5%) male principals from Kohdasht, 6 (15%) female and 6 (15%) male principals from Borojerd, and 2 (5%) female and 1 (2.5%) male principals from Azna.

Table 3: Distribution of the principals based on gender and location

City	Female		Male		Total	
	No	%	No	%	No	%
Khoramabad	10	25	10	25	20	50
Kohdasht	3	7.5	2	5	5	12.5
Borojerd	6	15	6	15	12	30
Azna	2	5	1	2.5	3	7.5
<b>Total</b>	<b>21</b>	<b>52.5</b>	<b>19</b>	<b>47.5</b>	<b>40</b>	<b>100</b>

Table 4 presents the information on teachers' gender. Out of 280 respondents, 147 (52.5%) were female teaches and 133 (47.5%) were male teachers. The distribution of teachers gender by city were: 70 (25%) female and 70 (25%) male teachers from Khoramabad, 21 (7.5%) female and 14 (5%) male teachers from Kohdasht, 42 (15%) female and 42 (15%)



male teachers from Borojerd, and 14 (5%) female and 7 (2.5%) male teachers from Azna.

Table 4 : Distribution of the teachers based on gender and location

City	Female		Male		Total	
	No	%	No	%	No	%
Khoramabad	70	25	70	25	140	50
Kohdasht	21	7.5	14	5	35	12.5
Borojerd	42	15	42	15	84	30
Azna	14	5	7	2.5	21	7.5
<b>Total</b>	<b>147</b>	<b>52.5</b>	<b>133</b>	<b>47.5</b>	<b>280</b>	<b>100</b>

As can be seen from Table 3 and Table 4, the percentage of distribution of principals and teachers by gender and location, are the same.

b) Level of TQM

Table 5 illustrates that the overall mean score of the Level of TQM in Lorestan province is high (Mean=3.12; SD=.65) based on principals' perception. The result shows two cities scored high on the level of TQM. They are Khoramabad (mean=3.30; SD=.57) and followed by Borojerd (mean=3.26; SD=.60). Two cities achieved medium level of TQM, they are Kohdasht (mean=2.98; SD=1.12), and Azna (mean=2.94; SD=.33).

Table 5 : Mean distribution of principals' opinion on level of TQM

Principal	Mean	SD	Level	Rank
Khoramabad	3.30	.57	High	1
Kohdasht	2.98	1.12	Medium	3
Borojerd	3.26	.60	High	2
Azna	2.94	.33	Medium	4
<b>Overall</b>	<b>3.12</b>	<b>.65</b>	<b>High</b>	

Note: Low (1.00 < M ≤ 2.00), Medium (2.01 < M ≤ 3.00), High (3.01 < M ≤ 4.00)

Overall, the result in Table 5 shows that, based on principals' perception, the level of TQM principles application is high in their schools. There is a similarity between the finding of this study and that described by Thummatassananon [16] who reported that the level of TQM was high in Sakon Nakhon (Thailand) based on administrators' opinions. In Iran, Jahanian [17] reported that the level of TQM, based on principals' views, was high in Tehran school. Likewise, the level of TQM was also reported high Kohkilyeh and Boyer Ahmad province by Bagheri [18]. However, in the city of Marvdasht, in Iran Salehi, Gheltash, and Ebrahimi [19], found that the level of TQM was medium.

Table 6 shows that the overall mean score of the Level of TQM, based on teachers' perceptions, is high (mean=3.08; SD=.72). The highest level of TQM was Borojerd (mean=3.13; SD=.71). The second city with a high score of TQM was Khoramabad (mean=3.12; SD=.67). The third city with a high score

of TQM level was Azna (mean=3.11; SD=.71), but the level of TQM in Kohdasht was medium (mean=2.97; SD=.83).

Table 6 : Mean distribution of teachers' opinion on level of TQM

Teacher	Mean	SD	Level	Rank
Khoramabad	3.12	.67	High	2
Kohdasht	2.97	.83	Medium	4
Borojerd	3.13	.71	High	1
Azna	3.11	.71	High	3
<b>Overall</b>	<b>3.08</b>	<b>.72</b>	<b>High</b>	

Note: Low (1.00 < M ≤ 2.00), Medium (2.01 < M ≤ 3.00), High (3.01 < M ≤ 4.00)

Overall, the result in Table 6 shows that the level of TQM is high in Lorestan province. The finding is consistent with a recent study by Thummatassananon [16] in Sakon Nakhon (Thailand), who reported high level of TQM according to teachers' opinions. The pervious study by Toremen, Karakus, and Yasan [20] in Malatya, (Turkey), also supported the current findings. In the study by Ibrahim [21] reported high level of TQM among teachers in Malaysia (Kedah).

On the contrary, the level of TQM in Iran as reported by teaches in Tehran (the Capital of Iran) was medium [17]. Similarly the level of TQM in Marvdasht city, Iran as studied by Salehi, Gheltash, and Ebrahimi [19] was reported at medium level.

c) Hypotheses Testing

Ho<sub>1</sub> : There is no significant difference in the level of TQM based on principals' schools location

To test this hypothesis, the researchers applied Kruskal-Wallis H test, because of the homogeneity of variance assumption which was not met (Sig. p=.002).

Table 7 : Kruskal-Wallis H test of the difference in the mean score of TQM level between different cities (principals' opinion)

Principal	Chi-Squre	5.78
	df	3
	Asymp. Sig.	0.12

Table 7 shows that there is no significant difference in the mean score of TQM level between different cities based on a principal's opinion (p > 0.05). This data means that principals of different location have rated the TQM level similarly. This also means that the principal's school location does not influence their opinion on the level of TQM.

The results of this study do not agree with the findings of Shyi-Huey [13], who reported that there was a significant difference between the level of TQM and principals' location.

Ho<sub>2</sub> : There is no significant difference in the level of TQM based on a teacher's school location

To test this hypothesis, the researchers applied one-way ANOVA analysis.

**Table 8 :** One-Way ANOVA test of the difference in the mean score of TQM level between different cities (teachers' opinion)

		df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Teachers	Between Groups	3	0.55	2.77	0.04
	Within Groups	276	0.20		
	Total	279			

Table 8 illustrates that there is a significant difference in the mean score of TQM level in different cities based on teachers' opinions ( $F = 2.77$ ,  $Sig. p = 0.04$ ). This data means that teachers of different location rated the level of TQM differently. This also means that the location has influence on the level of TQM. To detect this significant difference, Post Hoc test was conducted and the result is presented in Table 9.

**Table 9 :** Post Hoc result of teachers

(I) City	(J) City	Mean Difference (I-J)	Sig.
Khoramabad	Kohdasht	.223*	.009
	Borojerd	.094	.130
	Azna	.144	.169
Kohdasht	Khoramabad	-.223*	.009
	Borojerd	-.129	.153
	Azna	-.078	.526
Borojerd	Khoramabad	-.094	.130
	Kohdasht	.129	.153
	Azna	.050	.644
Azna	Khoramabad	-.144	.169
	Kohdasht	.078	.526
	Borojerd	-.050	.644

\*. The mean difference is significant at the 0.05 level.

As shown in Table 9 a teacher's view that the level of TQM is significantly higher in the city of Khoramabad that compare to Kohdasht ( $Sig. P 009$ ).

The results of this analysis can be summarized as follows:

1. There is no significant difference in the level of TQM based on a principal's school location.
2. There is a significant difference in the level of TQM based on a teacher's school location.

It can be concluded that a principal's location had no significant effect on level of TQM, but location

had significant effect on TQM level based on teachers' opinions.

$H_{03}$  : There is no significant difference in the level of TQM based on a principal's gender

According Test of homogeneity of variances, the significant value for Levene test for principals is  $0.002 < 0.05$ , thus based on this score, the homogeneity of variance assumption was not met. Therefore, instead of independent sample t-test, Mann-Whitny test was conducted to investigate the significant difference in the level of TQM based on principals' gender. On the other hand, independent sample t-test was conducted to investigate the significant difference in the level of TQM based on a teacher's gender.

**Table 10 :** Mann-Whitney Test for level of TQM and principals' gender

	TQM
Mann-Whitney U	144.500
Wilcoxon W	375.500
Z	-1.523
Asymp. Sig. (2-tailed)	.128
Exact Sig. [2*(1-tailed Sig.)]	.138 <sup>a</sup>

The result from Table 10 shows that there is no significant difference in TQM's level based on principal's gender ( $Sig. p = 0.128 > 0.05$ ). It can be concluded that a principal's gender had no significant effect on the level of TQM.

The findings of this study are supported by Shyi-Huey [13], who reported that there was no significant difference in all TQM factors based on an administrator's gender. In the same vein, Aksu [22] found that there was no significant difference in level of TQM based on an administrator's gender.

$H_{04}$  : There is no significant difference in the level of TQM based on a teacher's gender

To test this hypothesis, the researchers applied an independent sample t-test to compare the level of TQM between female and male teachers.

**Table 11 :** t-test for TQM level based on teachers' gender

	t-test for Equality of Means			
	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference
Equal variances assumed	-.97	278	.33	-.05
Equal variances not assumed	-.97	277.38	.32	-.05

The result from Table 11 has shown that there is no significant difference in TQM's level based on teacher's gender ( $t (278) = -0.97$ ,  $p = 0.33 > 0.05$ ). This data means that a teacher's gender had no significant effect on the level of TQM.

The findings of this study are consistent with the Toremén, Karakus, and Yasan [20] study. They concluded that there was no significant difference in the level of TQM between male and female teachers. Thakkar, Deshmukh, and Shastree [23] reported that there was no significant difference between male and female teachers in the level of perception of TQM level in education.

On the contrary, other studies have indicated that there was a significant difference in the level of TQM in secondary school teachers based a teacher's gender in Mysore (India) [24]. The mean score of female teachers were higher than the male teachers. They also believe that female teachers are more honest and dedicated to their work.

#### IV. DISCUSSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The findings of this study show that a principal's school location had no significant effect on level of TQM, but location is one of the demographic variables which have effect on level of TQM based on teacher perceptions. As mentioned earlier, teachers in Khoramabad rated the level of TQM in their school (Mean=3.12) significantly higher compared to Kohdasht teachers (Mean=2.97). As Khoramabad is both the capital and the largest city of the Lorestan province, so the schools located in this city have more facilities and resources than schools in other cities in the province. While Kohdasht is one of the deprived cities in the Lorestan province; therefore, their schools have fewer resources and facilities compared to schools in Khoramabad. For this reason, the level of TQM in Khoramabad is higher and significantly different from that in Kohdasht. The result of this study has revealed that gender does not have any influential effect on the level of TQM implementation for principals and teachers. The outcomes of the present study made information available to the Ministry of Education in Iran, education administrators, policy makers, principals, and teachers to develop the level of TQM, with emphasis on students' satisfaction. In the case of Iran, it is recommended that the Ministry of Education be the driving force to establish a TQM department within the ministry headquarters. This department could study the current situation and develop a policy that ensures quality in schools and initiate new approaches as appropriate to tackle the situation. They can organize workshops and seminars on a regular basis, both centrally and regionally, to help educators develop their skills and knowledge about TQM. School principals and teachers should try to strengthen and stay at a high level for TQM. They should adapt themselves with new skills and make changes.

#### V. CONCLUSION

TQM was originally designed for industry. However, many researchers and educators believe that TQM can be applied to education systems and schools [25-27]. The principles of TQM could be applied as a tool for boosting the student's moral, raising productivity, saving time, empowering people at all levels, and providing higher quality services to customers [27]. This research paper tries to determine the significant difference in the level of TQM based on location and gender among principals and teachers in the province of Lorestan, Iran. As the general findings, the level of TQM was high based on principals and teachers opinion.

Based on results, there is no significant difference in TQM's level based on a principal's and a teacher's gender. Additionally, there is no significant difference in the level of TQM based on a principal's location. But there is a significant difference in the level of TQM based on a teacher's location. Teachers in the deprived city of Kohdasht rated the level of TQM as significantly lower the teacher in the more affluent city of Khoramabad. It can be concluded that a principal's and a teacher's gender, and also principal's location had no significant effect on level of TQM. The finding of this study also confirmed that the idea suggesting that the level of TQM is difference between male and female principals and teachers is not true.

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## Comparisons of Young People's Educational Aspirations on MOOC

By Enrique Sánchez Acosta & Juan José Escribano Otero

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*Abstract-* Are different government plans to cut the rate of young people known as NEET, now in the age between 15 and 29 years. These people have a serious problem to do a life plan and emancipation, however, has a much greater technological power than their parents and live in a continuously changing world. With the rise of massive open online courses (MOOC), these people have an opportunity to improve their quality of life in this model of education. However, it is possible that they might have troubles to adapt to this new way of learning. This research takes two courses with more than 6,500 students each, where most of the students are NEET. One of the courses is about something completely technology (video games) and the other is more traditional (law). The experiment will try to answer the question of whether the technological novelty of the subject influences in their interest and if it influences the occupational wishes of NEET.

*Keywords:* NEET, MOOC, assessment, aspirations, massive.

*GJHSS-G Classification : FOR Code: 939903*



*Strictly as per the compliance and regulations of:*



# Comparisons of Young People's Educational Aspirations on MOOC

## Comparisons of Young People's Educational Aspirations

Enrique Sánchez Acosta <sup>α</sup> & Juan José Escribano Otero <sup>ο</sup>

**Abstract-** Are different government plans to cut the rate of young people known as NEET, now in the age between 15 and 29 years. These people have a serious problem to do a life plan and emancipation, however, has a much greater technological power than their parents and live in a continuously changing world. With the rise of massive open online courses (MOOC), these people have an opportunity to improve their quality of life in this model of education. However, it is possible that they might have troubles to adapt to this new way of learning. This research takes two courses with more than 6,500 students each, where most of the students are NEET. One of the courses is about something completely technology (video games) and the other is more traditional (law). The experiment will try to answer the question of whether the technological novelty of the subject influences in their interest and if it influences the occupational wishes of NEET.

**Keywords:** NEET, MOOC, assessment, aspirations, massive.

### I. INTRODUCTION

One of the central pillars in educational research are massive online courses, many colleges and universities are looking into the possibility of include this type of courses in educational institutions, although much work remains to obtain conclusions.

Through this research is intended to observe if the method of massive online courses affects to how students would like to be evaluated by these courses, that is, how prefer the assessment of massive open online courses two groups of young people completely different.

This two MOOC analyse more than 6,600 students each, one on a traditional subject (Law and social networks) and another of them on a more innovative and technological subject (Video Game Design), both have 6 week and on the same MOOC platform. At finish was sent a survey to the students with more than 3,000 responses. First of all, it is necessary to know what a massive online course is, then, try to

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classify the courses and its assessment to use one or two of this assessment for the study.

### II. WHAT IT'S MOOC?

It's an online open course to a lot of students that integrates social network connectivity, the invaluable help of an expert in the field and lots of open resources and repositories that are on the Internet (McAuley, Stewart, Siemens, & Cormier, 2010). However, the most important of a MOOC is the active participation of hundreds or thousands of students who auto managing their participation according to a common goal of learning. And although, there may be supported by teaching assistants and temporal structure of several weeks duration, usually not generate any obligations except internet access and personal motivation.

### III. ASSESSMENT INSTRUMENTS FOR MOOC

Most MOOCs have a mix of assessment systems, usually a single type of assessment tool, multiple choice tests, and sometimes peer review.

Some of the elements that have current platforms are:

- Multiple choice questions and peer assessment
- Multiple choice questions only
- Peer review only.
- Others.

Most platforms studied by Katy Jordan (Jordan, 2013) are xMOOCs, assessments that take place in them are associated with these type of courses. But cMOOCs also has a number of assessment instruments to consider, such as, among others:

- Peer assessment of the activities carried out.
- The knowledge generated and collaborative learning.

It can be viewed on samples of assessment tools in some MOOC by Phil Hill (Hill, 2013), that in very few cases an assessment tool for open response questions is used, due to the difficulty of correcting this model for current computer systems.

Even if assessment tools for open response questions could be useful for student learning in an online traditional class, these techniques within a massive online course must necessarily be automated. The large number of students who would have MOOC

prevents a teacher from assessing responses of thousands of students in a finite time without the aid of technology (Sánchez Acosta and Escribano, 2013), first of all it must be defined what is the automated assessment.

To demonstrate that these evaluations are equally valid as if they were conducted by a specialist, current MOOC supported platforms are based on the large number of evaluations of an exercise that these students can perform to determine a more accurate rating. Thus, virtually all platforms support these types of assessments, and they all allow increasing the number of times a work is evaluated to a number superior to two.

*Automation based tools:* These tools or assessment instruments are based on automatic programs that analyze the responses with tools that implement a default correction algorithm.

With these tools, reliability of correction is pursued so that the same answer will receive the same evaluation every time it is subjected to automation. There are different types of instruments that can fit into this category, but the key feature is that they do not require human intervention, making them particularly suitable to be used in MOOC. Examples might be: multiple choice tests, automatic evaluation of problem sets, programming tasks, surveys and questionnaires, attitudes rating scales, written exams, troubleshooting, comparison charts, and images. In free writing responses, semantic analyzers can be used with or without dictionaries and thesauruses. MIT (Massachusetts Institute of Technology) is conducting research (for their Edx platform) on various Text Analysis Systems or AEG (Automated Essay Grading) (Markoff, 2013) to allow for essays and written tests to also be automatically evaluated.

However, there are several of these types of systems currently in the market and we should not forget that machines are much more consistent and can evaluate a larger number of items in a shorter period of time (Ezeiza, A, 2013). Currently, these systems combine algorithmic methods of grammatical analysis with semantic analysis, and holistic methods based on word searches. For example, the Summary Street System (Steinhart, 2000) compares summaries with the original text, or the Computer Learner Corpora (Granger, Hung, and Petch - Tyson, 2002) is compiling a database of students' texts to compare and analyze other written work. The e-rater (Attali and Burstein, 2006) combines statistical analysis and natural language processing to contrast the results with its database; it examines grammar issues, discourse markers, and lexical content using about 100 indicators. The results are supposed to have a success rate between 84% and 94% compared to human evaluators. This system is driven by ETS (Educational Testing Service) to develop the Criterion program. ETS uses this system in well-known TOEFL

tests (Test of English as a Foreign Language), matching machine with human evaluator only for some specific tests, which saves a significant amount of money (Knoch, 2009).

*Tools based on authority:* These are the tools which involve a professional or a person skilled in the field. They are very difficult to implement in a MOOC, mainly due to the large number of students enrolled in the course, so this type of evaluation would require an enormous amount of time from a professor or professors. However, sometimes these corrections are delegated to dynamic adjunct instructors who energize and support students. The problem of evaluation criteria disparity appears when a large group of professors is in charge of correcting instead of just one professor, this may cause that the same response could receive very different evaluations depending on the faculty member evaluating and even depending on when the faculty member performs the evaluation. To alleviate this problem, it is possible to apply very sophisticated evaluation rubrics that determine more objective corrections, parameters, and descriptors. But in the end, human beings evaluate largely based on intuition. Some authors argue that the previous experience of the evaluators and their knowledge are more valuable and relevant than any descriptor or rubric. Therefore, rather than spending hours and studies to build reliable and valid rubrics, they believe that it is more profitable to spend that money and effort in preparing people who can evaluate tests, reach a degree of agreement, and handle scales (Ezeiza, A, 2013). Some assessment activities that require evaluation tools based on authority are: seminars, workshops, practice exams, interviews, debates, and co-evaluation of activities in cMOOC.

*Tools based on social interaction:* Undoubtedly the communication potential of social networks is still largely undiscovered and should be studied more in depth (Guerrero, 2010). Currently, this potential is being introduced in the educational system, maximizing the opportunities offered by social networks not only in terms of MOOC, but also as a support tool for traditional classes. Some instruments that fit into this system of social interaction are: anecdotal evidence, portfolios, collaborative Wiki, gamification or motivation based on collaborative games, surveys and questionnaire, chats and forums, projects, workshops, tasks, exercises, activities, and generated knowledge or collaborative learning in cMOOC and xMOOC.

#### IV. HIGHER EDUCATION BUBBLE

To understand the start of this type of e-learning is necessary to know a new concept called "Higher education bubble" (Grau, 2011). According to official data from the Spanish Ministry of Education, in 1975 the total number of universities was 28, in 1985 increased to 35 and from 1985 begins the process of education

decentralization and begin to transfer jurisdiction over such matters to other regions. In 2010 we already had 236 university campus, of which 154 were public and 69 private universities, and continued growing. This situation was not only happening in Spain, but also extends for all the countries.

*a) Educational report*

If this is not enough, in 2009 the Department of Education of the United States published a report (Means, Toyama, Murphy, Bakia, & Jones, 2010) which enhances the online schooling to traditional education and spoiling the possible expectations of American universities in their future as traditional educational communities. At such times it appears in the Stanford University a professor of computer science called Sebastian Thrun with the first MOOC course with over 160,000 students around the world, Udacity just born, two months later come Coursera. (Mangan, 2012).

*b) Job search*

The massive online courses can help young people to find a job, there are different ways to act for it (Acosta, 2013):

- Personal brands: Companies may consult the student grades, their badges or achievements in different universities where massive online courses are implanted, thus can choose the best candidate. For example, Coursera reference to the best students in the
- courses, so that employers can choose from among the students of a particular course for the company. Of course universities in future be charged for this service.
- Student promotion is another strong point that exploit universities. They may charge a service to its students once completed the course to promote their Curriculum Vitae in a number of interested companies.
- Continuing education. The universities could offer courses for continuing education for employees, these would include employees from different companies around the world.

This massive courses for a specific subjects could increase the experience of the employees.

*c) Hypothesis*

Does it affect the technological novelty of the subject in a massive open online course in the dropout rate, interest and aspirations of NEET?

*d) Method*

After analyse two massive online courses very similar but with two completely different topics, one based on technology "Video Game Design" and other based on a more traditional topic "Law and social networks", similar results were obtained after 6-week course.

*e) Law and social network*

The course aims to achieve the following objectives (Tourino, A, 2013):

- Conduct a comprehensive approach to the concept, history and types of social networks in the world.
- Legal approach to the concept of social network and complexities.
- Familiarize the user with the privacy concept and how to manage it in the major social networks.
- Introduce the user with the concept of intellectual property.
- Conduct a systems approach to advertising and adware scheme of social networks.

*f) Course*

After consulting the sample data used in this study of law and social networks course, was also considered interesting to the conclusions of this research review chart completion, many of the massive online courses have a dropout rate similar (see Table 1), but it could be a relevant information for determining the conclusions. (See Figure 3)

*Table 1:* Lessons in course week by week

Lesson	Started	Finished
0	4164	4164
1	4755	3931
2	3721	3374
3	3225	3081
4	2952	2797
5	2692	2592
6	2344	2221



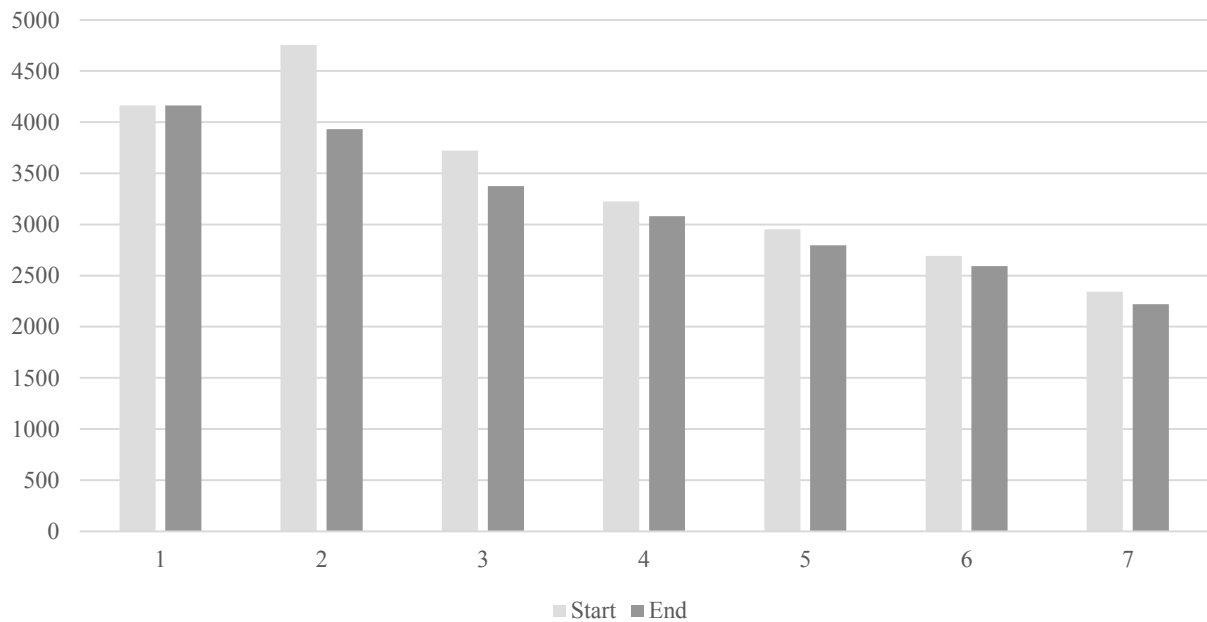


Figure 3 : Lessons per week in the course of law and social networks

## V. DESIGN, ORGANIZATION AND EVALUATION OF VIDEOGAMES AND GAMIFICATION

The Video Game Design course is the first bridge for those wishing to engage in the adventure of game design and development to explain all aspects of the industry, from design to financing through art and evaluation. (Castilla Cebrian, 2014)

The course will not cover any area of programming, pretend to develop a knowledge focused on the preparation of future designers through a map of key concepts and the shared experience of media professionals. Each module will take approximately ten short videos that will end in an interview with an industry professional who will give his opinion about the situation and possible developments of it.

### a) Course

It will also be important to obtain data on course completion of Video Game Design (see Table 2). This course had in the second week a peer review assessment which decreased the statistical data but it recovered normally in the third week. (See Figure 6)

Table 2 : Lessons in Video Game Design course week by week

Lesson	Start	End
0	4826	4825
1	5373	4211
2	4004	1349
3	2782	2365
4	2254	1996
5	1929	1671
6	1521	1249

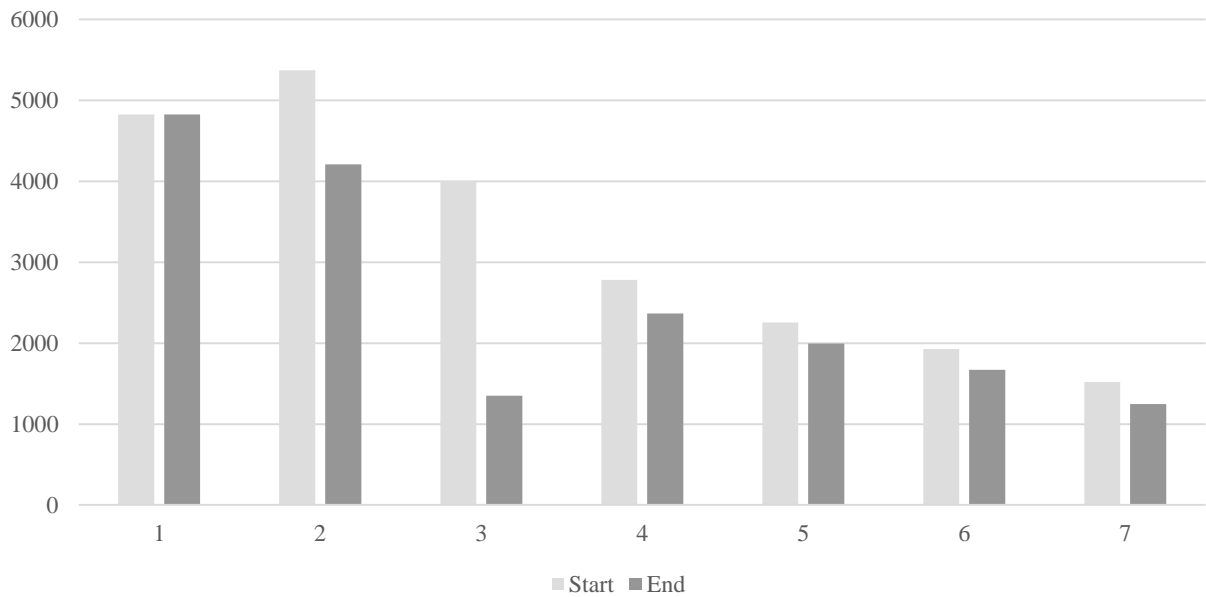


Figure 6 : Lessons per week in the course of Video Games

To conclude the working methodology used for this experiment, two surveys on both courses with wide acceptance were made and will take some interesting conclusions.

- Survey students of law and social networks: Over 1300 responses.
- Survey students of Video Game Design: Over 1200 responses.

b) Age

After studying the course, it was observed that the great majority of students were in the age group between 18 and 34 (See Figure 1)

VI. SAMPLE DESCRIPTION

a) Students of law and social network

Were enrolled in the course a total of 6,629 students, which started during the first week 4,847 people and after 6 weeks it were completed 2,150.

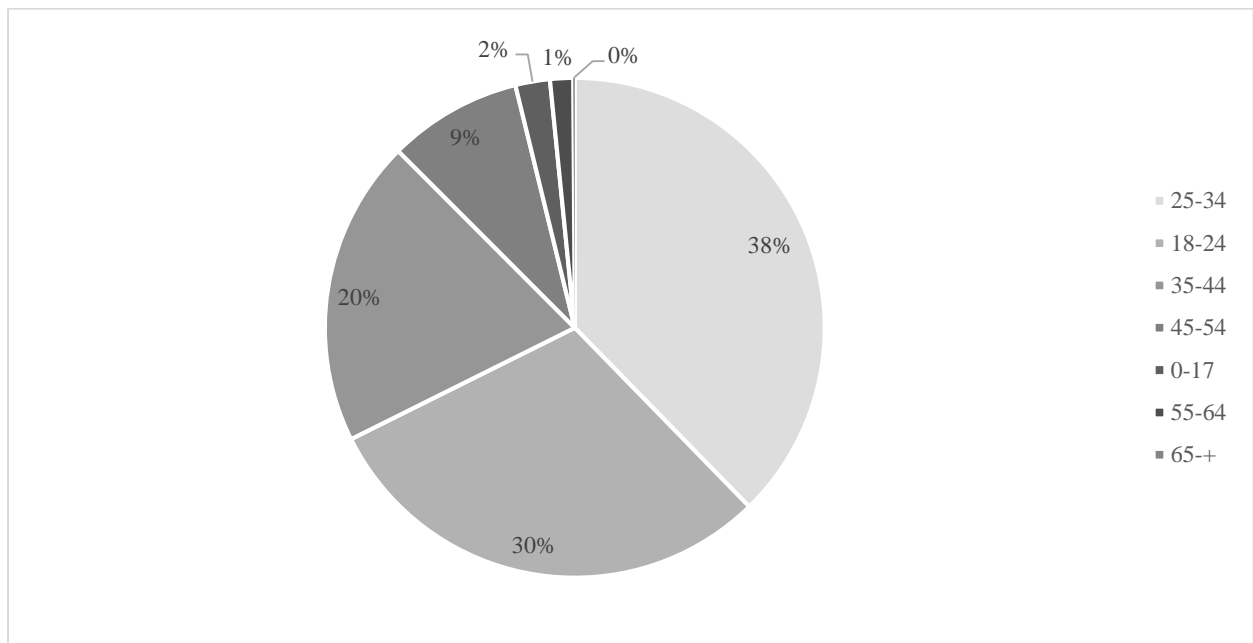


Figure 1 : Age range of students of the course on Law and Social Networking

c) *Genre*

In addition to these data, to make a decision about the aspirations of NEET is also important to consider the genre (See Figure 2)

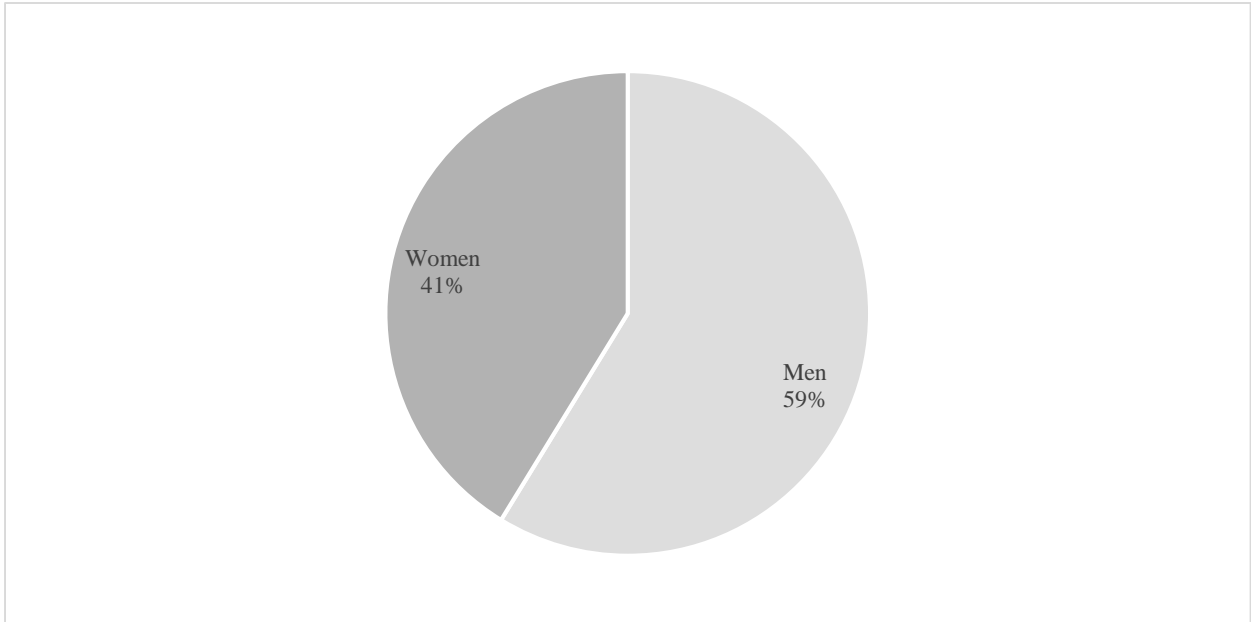


Figure 2 : Genre in the course of Law and Social Networking

VII. STUDENTS OF DESIGN, ORGANIZATION AND EVALUATION OF VIDEOGAMES AND GAMIFICATION

In this course a total of 7,386 students were enrolled, 5,777 students started the course and completed 1,213 students.

a) *Age*

First, should be studied the ages that are included in the largest group of this course, in order to determine that is similar to the other course that is being studied about Law and social networks. (See Figure 4)

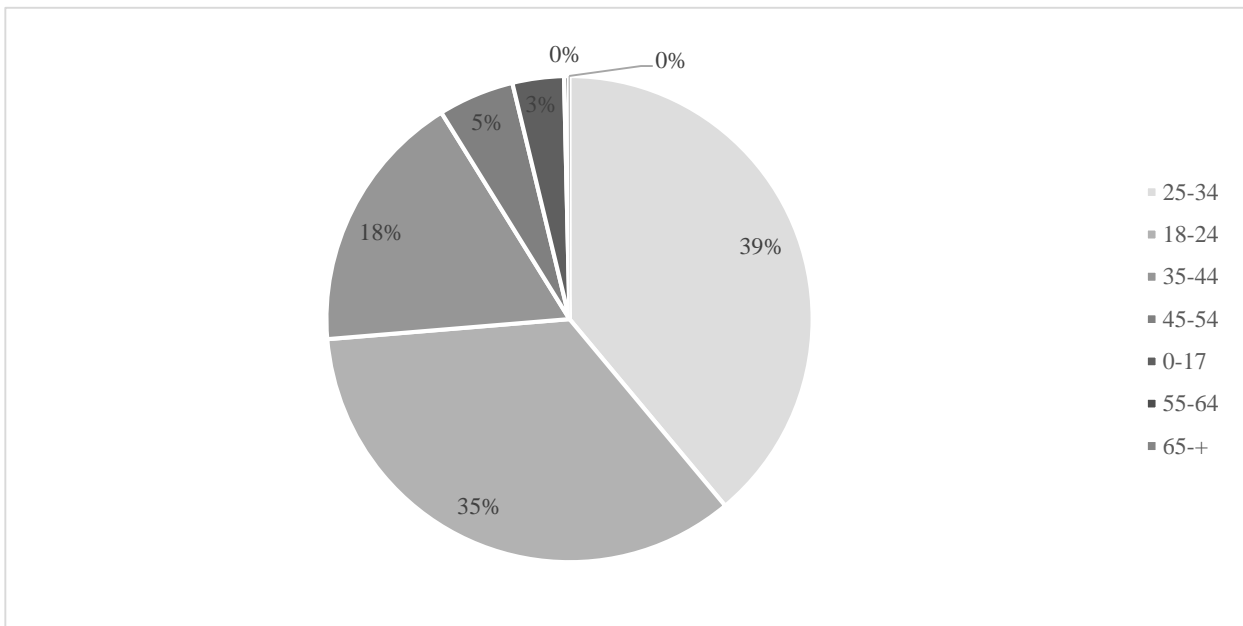


Figure 4 : Age range of students of the course of Videogames

b) *Genre*

In addition, we must also determine the genre of the sample, as it could also be relevant to the study (See Figure 5). Here, it can be clearly see a difference in the number of men who pay attention to this kind of

newest and technological subject, perhaps because women are more practical and do not see advantage to be drawn from this kind of course or simply a matter of taste.

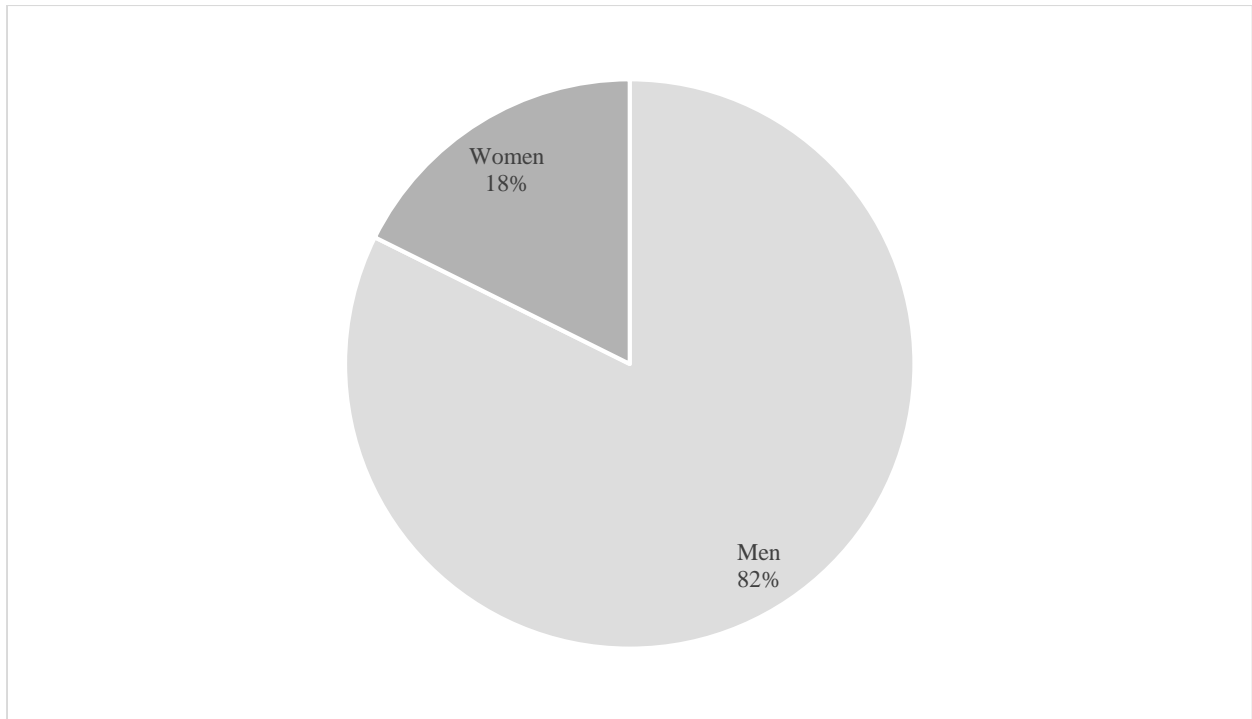


Figure 5 : Genre in the course of Video Games

c) *Results*

The most important questions of the survey conducted were:

- Do you think this certificate will be useful in your future career? (See Figure 7)
  - Yes: Law and social network: 945, video game design: 670
  - Not: Law and social network: 370, video game design: 607

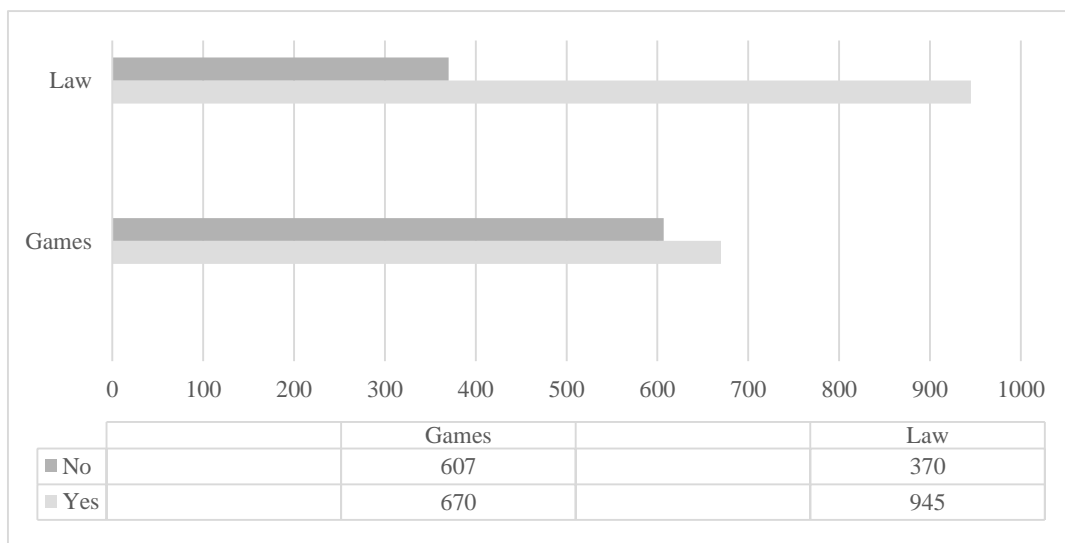


Figure 7 : Survey results to the question Do you think this certificate will serve you in your professional future?

- What was for you the level of the course? (See Figure 8)
  - Too high: : Law and social network: 15, video game design: 11

- o High: Law and social network: 224, video game design: 171
- o Medium: Law and social network: 775, video game design: 720
- o Low: Law and social network: 243, video game design: 308
- o Very low: Law and social network: 54, video game design: 63

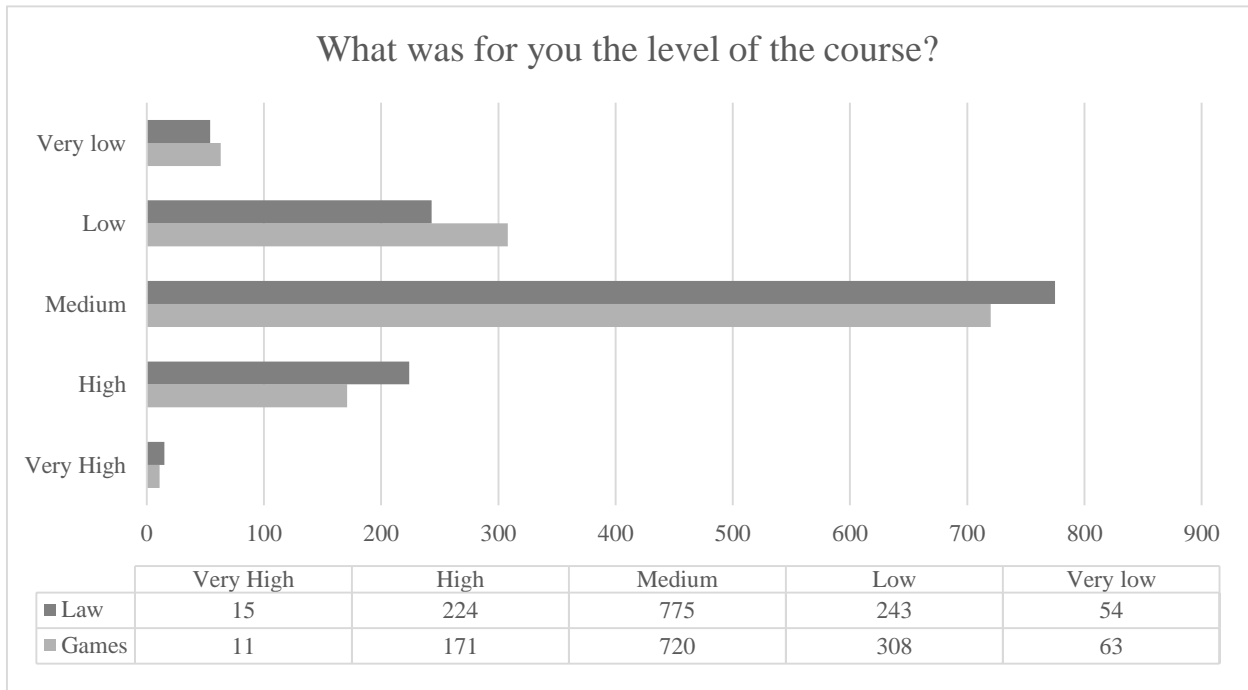


Figure 8 : Survey results to the question: What was for you the level of the course?

- How many questions should have tests for lessons? (See Figure 9)
  - o 1: Law and social network: 3, video game design: 80
  - o 3: Law and social network: 25, video game design: 329
  - o 5: Law and social network: 530, video game design: 486
  - o 10: Law and social network: 668, video game design: 326
  - o 10 or More: Law and social network: 89, video game design: 56

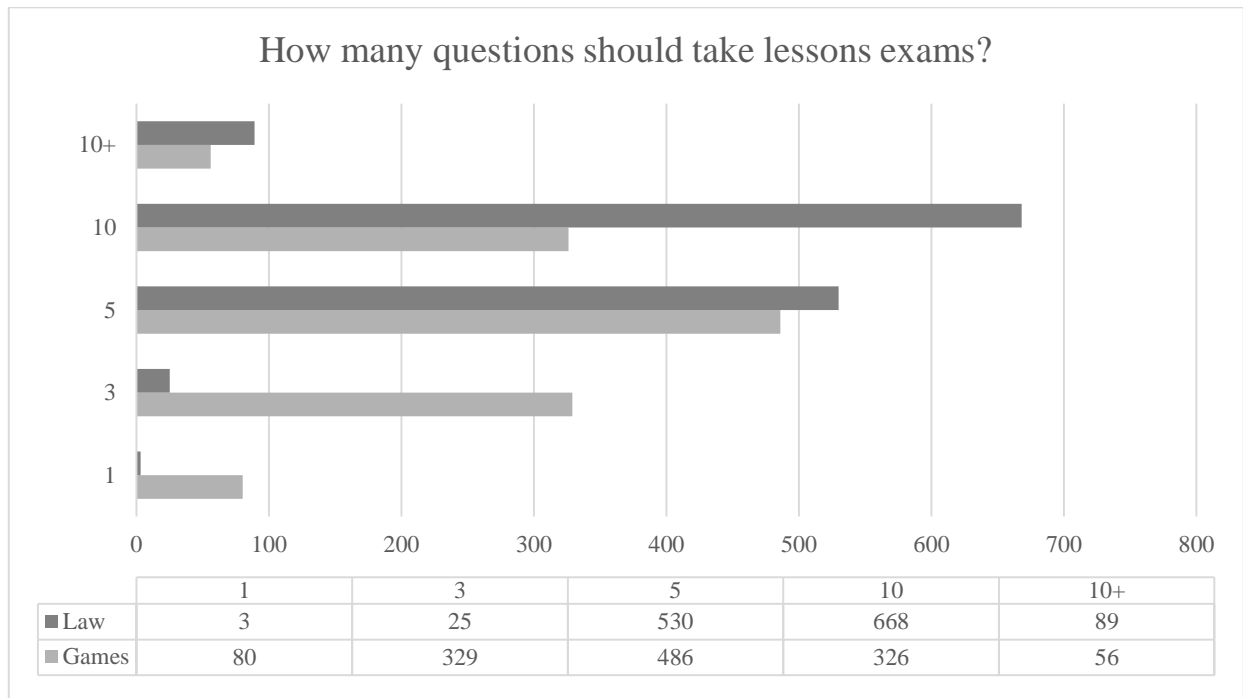


Figure 9 : Survey results to the question how many questions should take lessons exams?

- Do you think that a final review for each module should be included in the course? (See Figure 10)
  - Yes: Law and social network: 971, video game design: 828
  - Not: Law and social network: 344, video game design: 449

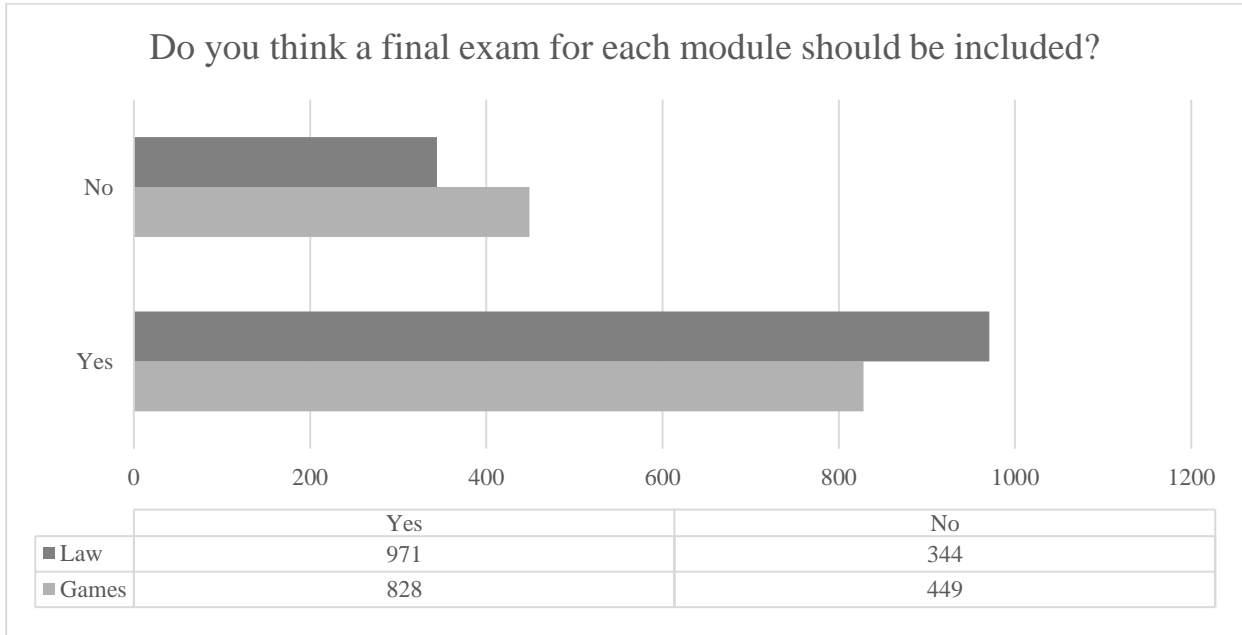


Figure 10 : Survey results to the question Do you think a final exam should be included for each module?

- What kind of test would you prefer in MOOC? (See Figure 11)
  - Abstract or essay: Law and social network: 50, video game design: 76
  - Multiple choice question: Law and social network: 849, video game design: 855
  - Match: Law and social network: 32, video game design: 48
  - Short answer: Law and social network: 143, video game design: 109
  - True or False: Law and social network: 281, video game design: 189

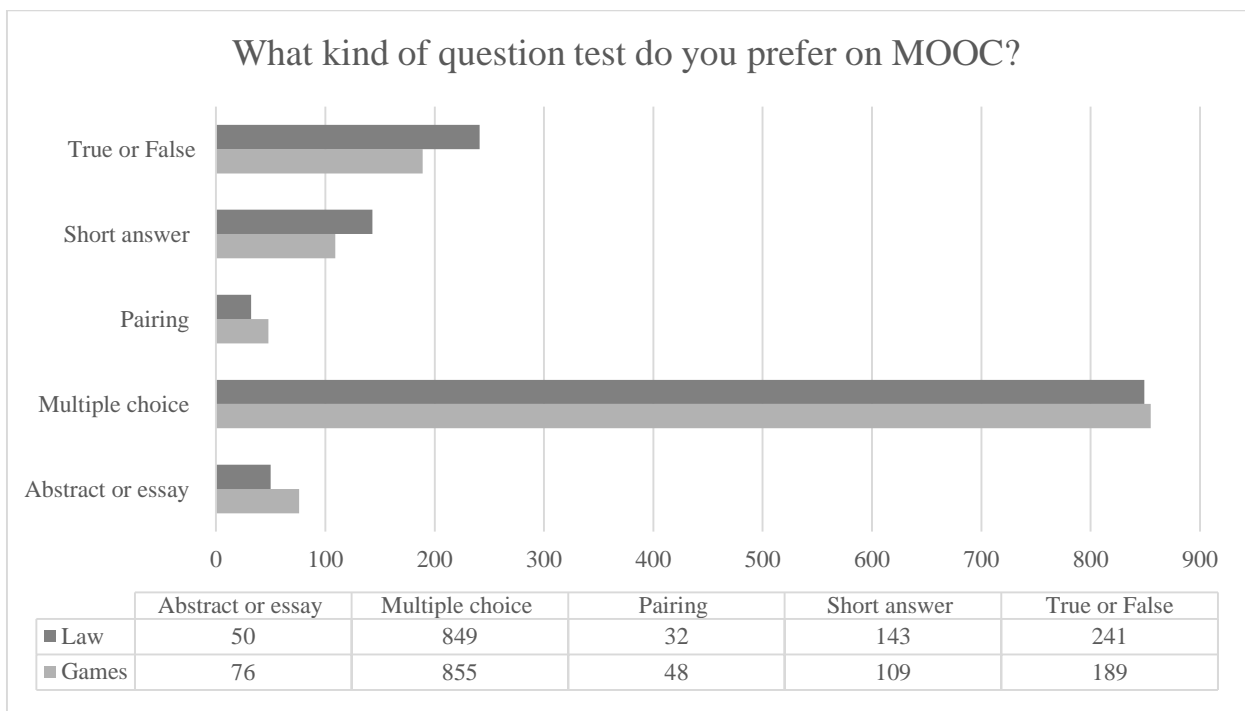


Figure 11 : Survey response to the question: What kind of test would you prefer in MOOC?

## VIII. DISCUSSION

It can be concluded as a result of these previous experiments that students interested with modern or technological subjects also had a lower number of students academically prepared, although the survey indicates that they expect the same results from the course but with less effort on their part. It seems that what is presented in an innovative way, also it wants to dominate faster, this speed in the acquisition of knowledge can be a mistake, and causing many of the students prefer abandon before finishing the course. However, those other subjects which are considered more traditional and the effort required seems more than

other courses, students are ready to make the effort to dominate the subject and the abandonment is lower.

Then, the hypothesis "Does it affect the technological novelty of the subject in a massive open online course in the dropout rate, interest and aspirations of NEET?" seems to be true but negatively, i.e., the interest and aspirations of young people known as NEET depends on the subject of the massive online course, if they are coursing an innovative subject in the MOOC they want to obtain fast results without effort, but if the subject of MOOC is traditional and every people thinks that you need effort to finish it, the student don't have problems to do this effort and the dropout rate decreases (see Figure 12).

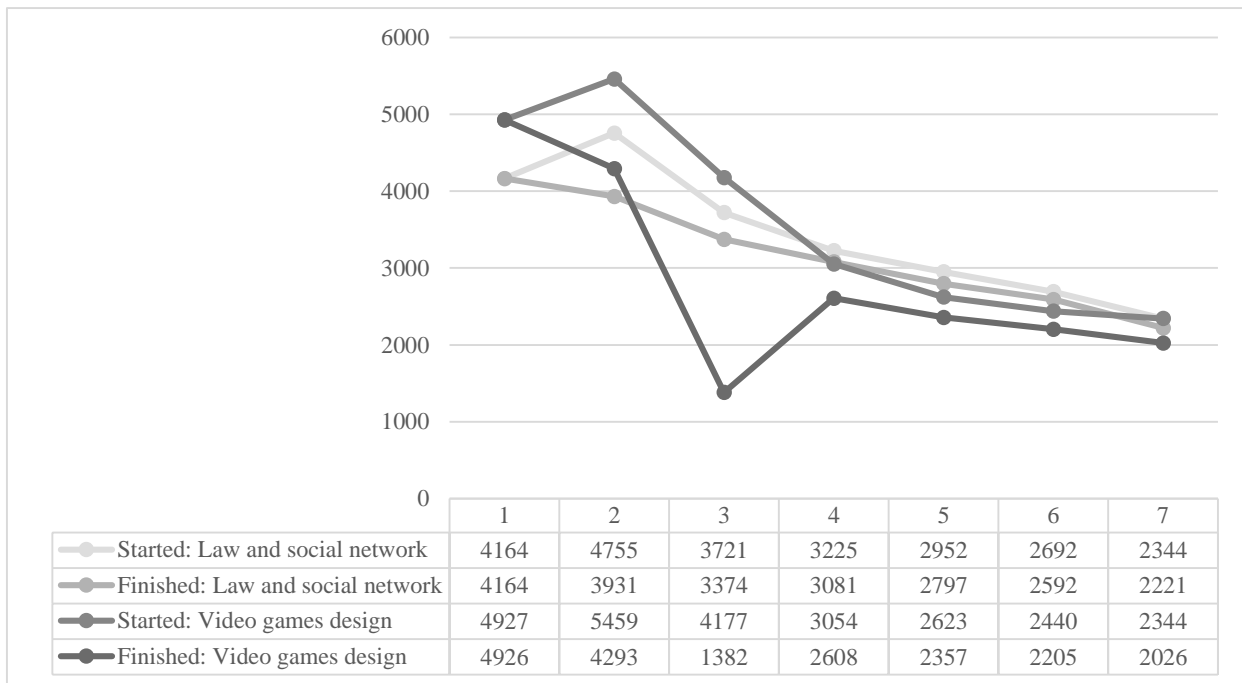


Figure 12: Two weeks on both courses Law and social network and video games design, were it can be seen how decrease one of each and increase another

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## Narratives as Meaningful Learning Experiences

By Dr. Javier González García

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*Summary-* This work focuses on exploring the use of narratives as a process of communication and meaning making, thereby reviewing different contributions by different research lines. The questioning from narratives is a learning experience that is shaping a common space, interacting with learning as a process, and the beginning of critical thinking as a product. Since the beginning of the process of access to reading, we can stimulate the ability to question and to reflect that, over time, will become an essential foundation for reading for pleasure. We build our common meanings based on the knowledge of reality in terms of the cultural context to which we belong. Children need to read or listen to stories read to find information on any area of knowledge.

*Keywords:* stories, discussion, elaboration of meaning, constructivism, cultural psychology.

*GJHSS-G Classification :* FOR Code: 130309, 930101p



*Strictly as per the compliance and regulations of:*



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# Narratives as Meaningful Learning Experiences

## Las Narraciones Como Experiencias Significativas De Aprendizaje

Dr. Javier González García

**Resumen-** Este trabajo se centra en explorar el uso de las narraciones como proceso de comunicación y elaboración de significados, revisando con ello distintas aportaciones por distintas líneas de investigación. La puesta en discusión a partir de narraciones es una experiencia de aprendizaje que va configurando un espacio común, con el aprendizaje en interacción como *proceso*, y el inicio del pensamiento crítico como *producto*. Desde el inicio del proceso de acceso a la lectura, podemos estimular la capacidad para preguntar y reflexionar que, con el tiempo, se convertirá en una base esencial para la lectura por placer. Construimos nuestros significados comunes sobre la base del conocimiento de la realidad en función del contexto cultural al que pertenecemos. Los niños necesitan leer o escuchar lecturas de narraciones para buscar información en cualquier área de conocimiento.

**Palabras Clave:** narraciones, discusión, elaboración de significados, constructivismo.

**Summary-** This work focuses on exploring the use of narratives as a process of communication and meaning making, thereby reviewing different contributions by different research lines. The questioning from narratives is a learning experience that is shaping a common space, interacting with learning as a process, and the beginning of critical thinking as a product. Since the beginning of the process of access to reading, we can stimulate the ability to question and to reflect that, over time, will become an essential foundation for reading for pleasure. We build our common meanings based on the knowledge of reality in terms of the cultural context to which we belong. Children need to read or listen to stories read to find information on any area of knowledge.

**Keywords:** stories, discussion, elaboration of meaning, constructivism, cultural psychology.

### I. INTRODUCCIÓN: NARRAR PARA APRENDER A ESCUCHAR Y A HABLAR

*“El cuento ayuda a explicar complejas relaciones prácticas, sus imágenes iluminan el problema vital, lo que no pudo hacer la prosa hízolo el cuento con su lenguaje figurado y emocional”* (Vygotsky, 1990: 27)

La literatura ofrece a los niños la oportunidad de encontrar el tipo de personajes que nunca verá en la vida real, y podrá adentrarse en su forma de pensar. Para que el niño utilice la lectoescritura con estos fines, necesitará la ayuda del maestro para que estas formas de expresar ideas sean parte de sus procesos de comunicación y pensamiento (Tough,

1989). El diálogo con las maestras va a ayudar a los niños a superar las dificultades. Cada maestro conversa con los niños para ayudarles a superar los problemas de análisis y construcción de palabras, para comprobar la exactitud de sus lecturas, y para reconocer claves con las que elaborar el significado de las actividades. Un cuento bien narrado es ya un comienzo de educación cultural. Esto nos conduce a una cuestión que a veces se olvida: se está aprendiendo una lengua mientras se profundiza en cualquier otra materia, y no únicamente cuando lo hacemos en lo que llamamos “*clase de lengua*”; y eso durante todo el proceso de la escolaridad. Leer y conversar son los modos básicos de cualquier tradición oral, y ésta de cualquier proceso cultural. Su aprendizaje y práctica es algo que nos define como individuos y como miembros de un grupo. La descripción del proceso de la lectura como un diálogo interno entre lector y autor, establece claras conexiones con la narración de cuentos porque se refiere a lo externalizable y audible, intercambiado entre el lector y sus oyentes. El intercambio está caracterizado por el activo compromiso del oyente en dar sentido a la historia en compañía del lector. El diálogo y las actividades de interpretación de textos requieren el uso de la imaginación, que está en función de cómo transfiere lo ya conocido a un contexto nuevo. De esta forma el uso de la Literatura Infantil para establecer una discusión es muy útil al comienzo de la lectoescritura. Al leerlos, al narrarlos, pedimos que reaccionen a las palabras como a los propios sucesos que representan. Poco a poco van siendo capaces de interpretar las ideas expresadas, y con ayuda de la maestra van percibiendo que el cuento es un registro de sucesos interdependientes que se relacionan entre sí.

Las ideas que se encuentran en la literatura, la forma en que se expresan y la conversación con la que los maestros ayudan a que el niño reflexione sobre sus significados, contribuyen a fomentar las destrezas del niño para que desarrolle sus propias ideas y las exprese a través de la conversación y, en un futuro próximo, a través de la lectoescritura. De este modo para que los niños puedan crear deben tener oportunidades para la proyección y la imaginación. Éstas comienzan con la adquisición de la conciencia de sus experiencias directas, y con ellas, el niño forma las bases a través de las cuales puede desarrollar situaciones e historias imaginadas. Con frecuencia las experiencias directas

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que programamos para los niños aportan esta base. De hecho el niño no puede desarrollar las destrezas necesarias para la escritura creativa, si no cuenta con oportunidades para la proyección e imaginación (González, 2013). Con su lado fantástico incluido las narraciones pueden ayudar a los niños a conocer su vida real, pudiendo pasar las historias escuchadas a formar parte de su bagaje y memoria. Pueden hacer suyas esas narraciones dentro de su propio entorno, y volver a contarlas, y pueden crear una forma personal y desarrollar una familiaridad con el medio en el que escuchan más y más narraciones, reteniéndolas y haciéndolas suyas. Desde el comienzo de la etapa infantil, sobre los tres años, los niños usan las historias que escuchan como primeras experiencias, materiales sin pulir con los que construyen la historia de su propia vida. Esto sugiere más funciones educativas para el maestro-narrador, a la hora de facilitar al niño la articulación de su comprensión de historias, a través de la adquisición de un metalenguaje, que les permitiera comprender algo de sí mismos y de su lugar en el mundo.

*“Estamos en un error si creemos que la narrativa permanece en completo contraste con otros tipos de discurso. De hecho es un recurso explícito de todo tipo de actividad intelectual”* (Wells, 1986: 213).

## II. LAS NARRACIONES COMO PROCESOS DE COMUNICACIÓN

*“Cuando queremos llevar un relato acerca de algo al dominio de los significados negociados, decimos, irónicamente, que ha sido “un buen cuento” o una “buena historia”. Las historias, por consiguiente, son instrumentos especialmente indicados para la negociación social”* (Bruner, 1991: 65).

El objetivo común y más extendido de la narración de cuentos en el aula es: avivar la imaginación y la creatividad del niño mediante una actividad lúdica que procura momentos de distensión y de recreo, y el desarrollo de la facilidad de comprensión y expresión en el niño. Los cuentos que han gustado a los niños no quieren abandonarlos y desean aclarar aspectos una y otra vez, que posiblemente no hayan sabido interpretar, por sí solos, durante la narración. Ello nos faculta, si el cuento lo requiere, para jugar con su estructura, desorganizarla, convertirla en un puzzle si es preciso, para volverla a componer y entender mejor el relato. En los procesos de nuestra investigación pudimos observar en varias ocasiones, cómo una vez ya enganchados en la discusión sobre el relato, preferían continuar con esta actividad a salir al patio de recreo. Con lo que apuntamos la posibilidad de que este tipo de actividades satisfagan tanto las necesidades de juego y convivencia como la propia hora del recreo (González, 2008). El relato abre la

posibilidad de enseñar a través de una conversación. La base para su posible *dialogización* reside en que cada cuento puede ser un elemento *motivador* que puede *“aglutinar un centro de interés”*. En este caso, la función para el maestro-narrador está en facilitar la articulación del conocimiento de los argumentos, ayudándoles a adquirir un *metalenguaje* con el que sean capaces de entender algo de sí mismos y de su lugar en el mundo. A menudo la narración de cuentos debe ser adoptada como una estrategia educacional central para el desarrollo del currículo; para ello son esenciales más orientaciones para el maestro-narrador, y una amplia comprensión de cómo el niño puede ser ayudado a articular su comprensión de los argumentos. La lectura de cuentos ejerce de institución cultural primaria, y un arte social del lenguaje. Su método de enseñanza se centra en la elaboración conjunta de historias. Los aspectos sociales de estas actividades tienen gran importancia, especialmente en los grupos de *reelaboración y reconstrucción* de relatos.

*“Al recordar no sólo intentamos convencernos a nosotros mismos con nuestras reconstrucciones de memoria, también se cumple una función de diálogo. El interlocutor de la persona que recuerda ejerce presión sutil pero continua. Esta es la clave de los brillantes experimentos de Barlett (1932) sobre la reproducción serial, en los que un cuento amerindio, en principio ajeno a la cultura de los sujetos, se convencionaliza culturalmente cuando pasa sucesivamente de un estudiante de Cambridge a otro”* (Bruner, 1991: 69).

La narración del texto va a alimentar la escucha, *lenguaje pasivo*, y también va a vertebrar la discusión posterior, *lenguaje construido* por todo el grupo, *lenguaje activo*. En este tipo de actividades se elabora un trabajo lingüístico, ya que se ha profundizado en un vocabulario del que se desconocían algunas o muchas palabras, se han elaborado distintos tipos de frases. A partir de la narración de un cuento se puede entrar en todas las áreas de conocimiento, especialmente relacionadas en Educación Preescolar. El diálogo es la característica principal de cualquier texto literario y humanista. No se refiere a un *“diálogo explícito”*, abierto, en el que participan dos voces, sino a la *“calidad dialógica”* de un texto (Bajtin, 1986), cada uno de cuyos textos incorpora las resonancias de otros textos. Igual que la conciencia individual solo madura al dialogar con la conciencia de otros. Bajtin creía que el lenguaje es la realidad primaria de la conciencia humana, y que el discurso literario, como *“producto tardío del desarrollo lingüístico”*, expresa las formas y mecanismos del habla que sólo pueden empezar a desarrollarse en el lenguaje oral ordinario. El desarrollo del habla desempeña un papel importante en *“la formación de la conciencia humana”*, de hecho, el análisis del discurso literario puede convertirse en un *“instrumento metodológico”* no sólo para estudiar el

lenguaje cotidiano, sino “*también la conciencia misma*” (Kozulin, 1994: 178). Para Bajtín (1994) el estudio de los géneros literarios ha adolecido de dos errores. El primero está en relación con las diferencias entre el discurso oral y escrito, separar y tratar en dos marcos, en gran medida independientes, el lenguaje oral cotidiano dentro de la lingüística y la psicolingüística, y el discurso literario dentro de la teoría de la literatura. El segundo se refiere a la unidad de análisis del lenguaje, considerar a la oración como la unidad “*natural*” de análisis lingüístico. Este autor defiende la idea de que tanto el lenguaje oral como el escrito se realizan en forma de emisiones o expresiones individuales. Los límites de emisión se determinan mediante cambios reales o imaginarios de hablante. El habla humana siempre se crea en géneros lingüísticos definidos, los usamos cotidianamente y, al escuchar el habla de otra persona, clasificamos su género de inmediato. Al mismo tiempo, igual que no prestamos atención a nuestro léxico y sintaxis, tampoco registramos los géneros lingüísticos. Estando algunos más estandarizados que otros, saludos, ritos y cumplidos están muy formalizados, mientras que los de la conversación social o el discurso artístico están abiertos a reformulaciones abiertas y libres. Bajtín (1994) suponía que cuanto mayor fuese nuestro dominio de los géneros y mayor la libertad para emplearlos, de forma más plena revelaríamos nuestra individualidad. Mostrando que un discurso literario avanzado, en el que se combinen varios géneros distintos, podría apuntar a modelos de lenguaje individual más desarrollados. Los psicólogos podrían abordar el problema de las funciones verbales desde el punto de vista proporcionado por este modelo, en lugar de hacerlo a partir de “generalizaciones basadas en muestras empíricas del lenguaje oral cotidiano”. La literatura no inventa la vida, ni nos proporciona una copia por escrito de sus acontecimientos; más bien, nos revela las capacidades de la conciencia y la comunicación que permanecen subdesarrolladas o invisibles en otros medios de expresión (Kozulin, 1994). En sus primeras experiencias con la literatura, los niños dependen de que el maestro les narre los cuentos, la interpretación no se ve entorpecida por las dificultades mecánicas de la lectura. La entonación, el ritmo, las inflexiones, las pausas, durante la lectura, mantienen la atención del niño y son un apoyo a sus esfuerzos para escuchar e interpretar el texto del cuento. Pero no basta con esta práctica diaria que ya realizan las maestras. Si queremos fomentar la lectura, es esencial que las maestras conversen con ellos sobre las narraciones que leen, para asegurarse de que han hecho una interpretación apropiada, y han reflexionado sobre los significados centrales de la lectura. Hacemos breve reseña de autores que han analizado la aportación del uso de la narración, desde esta aplicación comunicacional:

- *Rosen (1985)* reclama la importancia de la narración conversacional, los maestros narradores debieran ser el auténtico examen de las narraciones.
- *Dombey (1988)* identifica el papel del adulto como la clave para externalizar el dialogo interno entre el lector y el autor que caracteriza la “*conducta lectora*”. Esto dota al niño de un modelo o andamiaje que le permite lograr lo que difícilmente pudiera conseguir solo. Su descripción del proceso lector, como dialogo interno entre lector y autor, establece conexiones claras con la narración de cuentos, porque ésta se refiere al intercambio externalizable, audible entre narrador y oyente. El intercambio esta caracterizado sobre todo por “*el compromiso activo del oyente dando sentido a la historia en compañía del narrador.*” (Dombey, 1988:75, en Collins, 1999: 98 trad. Cast.).
- *Wolter (1992)* demuestra que el uso de pequeños grupos y la necesidad de flexibilidad del maestro a la hora de leer historias en un grupo. Se ofrecen sugerencias para seleccionar materiales, presentarlos, involucrando a la audiencia, y preparando la selección para la lectura.
- *Fox (1993)* considera la narrativa como un modo fundamental de organizar nuestra experiencia conforme a la dimensión tiempo. Identificó una necesidad de investigar en la adquisición de estrategias y habilidades narrativas.
- *Dombey (1995)* usa instrumentos de la gramática sistemática en un estudio de caso, que examina las experiencias de niños de 3 y 4 años ante narraciones y los efectos potenciales que estas experiencias en su futuro aprendizaje de la lectura. Los niños eran estudiantes de dos guarderías en el sur de Inglaterra. Procedían de familias con problemas de todo tipo. Los resultados apuntan a que las narraciones ayudan a desarrollar su atención. A lo largo de un año comenzaron a tender a ser más explícitos, aprendiendo a desarrollar su autoexpresión, y a mantener fuera su dependencia en las observaciones compartidas. Incluso algunos tenían un desarrollo sustancial del estilo de aprendizaje del lenguaje muy diferente que en sus primeras experiencias de conversación. En Octubre el 21% de las interacciones dialógicas entre alumno y maestro fueron iniciadas por los estudiantes, en Mayo se habían incrementado al 54%, los niños experimentaron avances en varias áreas a partir del aprendizaje de cómo construir activamente narraciones.
- *Collins (1999)* examina la contribución de las narraciones a la educación infantil, y revisa los marcos teóricos utilizados para contextualizarlo dentro de la educación formal. Presenta cinco

grandes contribuciones de la narración infantil: otros lenguajes y expresión artística, aportaciones de las narraciones al mundo interno afectivo, autobiografía, narrativa y otros aspectos de la cultura.

- *Jenkins (2008)* introduce el concepto de "transmedia storytelling" con el objetivo de definir la técnica narrativa basada en la creación de mundos (narrativos) que se desarrollan a través de múltiples medios y plataformas, integrando experiencias, muchas de carácter interactivo. A diferencia de otras técnicas, como por ejemplo de la traducción intersemiótica en la que una misma historia se reproduce en distintos medios o se traduce de lenguaje (una película basada en un libro), la narrativa transmedia se basa en la creación de mundos que desarrollan historias a través de distintos medios o plataformas. Cada una de estas plataformas muestra una parte diferente de la historia y cada una de ellas realiza una aportación diferente en el gran mundo narrativo. La proliferación de iniciativas transmedia es debido a un interés renovado por la narrativa combinada con el uso de nuevas tecnologías para su desarrollo, así como una respuesta a las nuevas experiencias derivadas de la convergencia de los medios. Algunos conceptos relacionados con la narrativa transmedia son cross-media, multimodalidad y narrativas multimedia (Kress, 2003; Bearne, 2009), haciendo todos ellos referencia a una idea común: el desarrollo de historias que transcurren en varios medios o plataformas. Algunos de los fenómenos narrativos transmedia más conocidos son *Matrix*, *Harry Potter*, *24* o *Lost*.
- *Grupo UAB (2011)* Así como los cuentos folclóricos han sido históricamente utilizados para transmitir tradiciones, preceptos morales, advertencias, conocimientos, de generación en generación; hoy son, en gran medida, los medios de comunicación los que se han apropiado de las narraciones. O la propaganda, trasmutando cotidianas en una nueva forma de comunicación en la que todos los medios configuras cuentos y aventuras que hace partícipes a todos a través de la emoción, más que de la razón. Pero así como la comunicación comercial y la propaganda han aprovechado la forma de comunicación, la educación puede hacerlo y de hecho, hay interesantes intentos. Se pueden encontrar experiencias del uso de la narración oral como herramienta de trabajo, estrategia de comunicación y/o como herramienta de apoyo en el proceso educativo, concibiendo los cuentos como material didáctico para trabajar, sumándolo al libro, al ordenador, al lápiz y a los juegos, en un ejercicio donde alumnos y docentes intercambian papeles de transmisores-receptores.

### III. NARRACIÓN Y ELABORACIÓN DE SIGNIFICADOS

Laycock (1988) analizó "el significado cognitivo de nuestra propensión a la narración de historias", clasificando el encuentro de los niños con la lectura de narraciones en 6 etapas:

- 1) Narraciones autobiográficas
- 2) Narraciones dialógicas
- 3) Dramatizaciones
- 4) Juego imaginario
- 5) Poemas narrados y otros juegos del lenguaje
- 6) Encuentros con relatos del mundo de la tradición oral, literarios o de la cultura popular.

Los relatos, en todas sus variantes, son fundamentales para nuestras vidas. Comienzan en la infancia, iniciado y promovido por el adulto que "tácitamente va guiando al niño a la hora de dar sentido a su mundo". El aprovechamiento de estas seis categorías puede ser fundamental, al poner en relación directa el desarrollo cognitivo y el afectivo, influyendo a cinco aspectos esenciales: "memoria, imaginación, emociones, reflexión, lenguaje y pensamiento" (Collins, 1999: 87 trad. Cast.). Exploramos la función cognitiva y cultural de la narración, para ello nos servimos de algunas aportaciones de la psicología cultural. El supuesto fundamental de la psicología orientada culturalmente es la relación entre lo que se hace y lo que se dice es interpretable. Una psicología que sea sensible a la cultura debe tomar en serio el estudio de las narraciones, es necesario "renovar y reanimar la revolución (cognitiva) original, revolución inspirada por la convicción de que el concepto fundamental de la psicología humana es el del significado y los procesos y transacciones que se dan en la construcción de significados" (Bruner, 1991: 47). Propone una renovación en el objeto de estudio, rescatar desde el legado cultural los procesos de enseñanza y aprendizaje.

Las narraciones como difusión oral y escrita de cada cultura han tenido y siguen teniendo un papel fundamental. Desde aquí va construyendo una psicología cultural, denominada con ironía como popular. Este autor se concentra en la descripción del concepto de narración, en los modos de organizar la experiencia, en sus funciones, y en el porqué de la atracción sobre la memoria del hombre. La función cognitiva de la narración va más allá de relatar una sucesión de acontecimientos, trata de dar cuerpo a un ensamble de interrelaciones de muchos tipos diferentes en un todo único. Quizá sea ésta su propiedad más importante, que son inherentemente *secuenciales*: una narración consta de una secuencia singular de sucesos, estados mentales o acontecimientos, en los que participan seres humanos como personajes o actores. Pero estos componentes no poseen una "vida o

*significado propio*". Su significado viene dado por el lugar que ocupan en la configuración global de la totalidad de la secuencia: "*su trama o fábula*". El acto de comprender una narración es, por consiguiente, dual: "*tenemos que captar la trama que configura la narración para poder dar sentido a sus componentes, que hemos de poner en relación con la trama*" (Bruner, 1991: 56). Las narraciones son un reflejo del mundo que rodea a cada aula y a cada niño, dotan de oportunidades para reflejar de forma imparcial la identificación con personajes y contenidos. "*Demandas cognitivas*" que empujan a cada niño a establecer nuevas relaciones y a ampliar sus puntos de vista (Fox, 1989, 2008). Tienen una importancia fundamental como base para dar sentido a las cosas. Por tanto, todos los niños necesitan enfrentarse a poderosos relatos que reúnan las características antes señaladas. Tenemos conciencia antes de interiorizar el lenguaje. Podemos decir que se produce una comprensión "*premitica*", cuyas características perceptivas y cognitivas constituyen en la actualidad el objeto de una intensa investigación (Egan, 1994). El narrador ejerce de *modelo* en el uso oral del lenguaje y, paralelamente, genera una serie de *analogías* que pueden ser reelaboradas entre el niño y el adulto, dentro de un *contexto de aprendizaje*. El desarrollo de la expresión oral facilita el avance en el aprendizaje alfabetizador. Las maestras establecen un ritmo al cuento, con un comienzo que plantea unas expectativas y una conclusión que satisfaga. Hay una conexión fuerte entre principio y final, que conforma una estructura, una unidad narrativa. El cuento es una herramienta eficaz (Vygotsky, 1995), para organizar y comunicar significados (Martínez Rodríguez, 1997), elabora *significados compartidos* en un contexto estable y estructurado en la escuela durante la etapa de educación infantil, que constituye la base para el posterior desarrollo óptimo del lenguaje del niño.

Pero, *¿cómo construimos los significados?*. Vamos a intentar acercar la construcción conjunta de significados a partir de una narración. Los significados son elaborados sobre la base de nuestro conocimiento acerca de la realidad en situaciones concretas, sobre la vida cotidiana y con la participación del lenguaje como "*instrumento que media nuestras acciones con otros adultos*" (Martínez Rodríguez, 1997:9). Con la adquisición del lenguaje vamos adquiriendo el significado de las cosas. A partir de utilizar el lenguaje adecuadamente en los contextos en los que nos desenvolvemos, el niño irá haciendo uso de expresiones cada vez más complejas y poderosas de discurso, como es la narración. Tanto en la *recuperación* como en la *comprensión* de una narración, puede distinguirse claramente entre la verdad de las afirmaciones incluidas en la narración, y la "*verdad narrativa*" del conjunto. Cualquier narración es un reflejo de la realidad, y por su propia naturaleza

como narración debe ser una selección de la realidad. En los cuentos trabajados diariamente en el aula se representa un drama. Burke (1945) dividía cada historia en cinco elementos, es la *Pentada* de Burke: *actor, acción, meta, escenario, instrumento*. Burke configura un *dramatismo* de toda narración, centrado "*en desviaciones respecto a lo canónico que tiene que ver con la legitimidad, el compromiso moral o los valores*" (Bruner, 1991: 61). Las historias tienen que ver con cómo interpretan las cosas los protagonistas, qué significan las cosas para ellos, y desde ahí las maestras intentan reconstruirlo. En todos los cuentos se deja traslucir unos valores, unas normas sociales que ejemplifican una cultura, sin renunciar a contenidos mágicos que acercan lo cotidiano a cada niño. Cada relato puede servir de experiencia vicaria, principalmente de situaciones reales o imaginadas en los que median valores y actitudes. Elementos de experiencia directa o vicaria que, al juntarse, produce un episodio vivamente imaginado. La captación del drama familiar cotidiano se logra primero en la praxis. El niño domina pronto las formas lingüísticas para referirse a las acciones y a sus consecuencias. Muy pronto aprende que lo que uno hace se ve profundamente afectado por el modo cómo cuenta lo que uno hace, ha hecho o va a hacer. Narrar se convierte entonces en un acto expositivo y también retórico. Estas explicaciones narrativas producen el efecto de "*enmarcar lo idiosincrásico en un molde vital o cotidiano que favorece la negociación*". Este método de negociar y renegociar los significados mediante la interpretación narrativa es "*uno de los logros más sobresalientes del desarrollo humano...*" (Bruner, 1991:75). Lo canónico es como un conjunto de normas que regulan nuestro comportamiento, de acuerdo con lo que se espera que hagamos en ciertas situaciones. El relato consistirá en la descripción de un "*mundo posible*" (Bruner, 1986), en el que se busca encontrar sentido o significado a lo que nos ha parecido un comportamiento excepcional. Bruner cita un experimento de Lucariello (1985), su objetivo era descubrir qué tipo de cosas desencadenaban una actividad narrativa en niños de 4 y 5 años. Les contaba una historia, en unos casos sobre una fiesta típica de cumpleaños, con regalos y velas; y en otros, sobre la visita de un primo de la misma edad del niño y sobre cómo jugaban juntos. En unos casos las historias "*violaban la canonicidad, las violaciones estaban planeadas para introducir un desequilibrio en la Pentada de Burke*" (desequilibrio entre agente y acción, o entre agente y escena). Después de contarles la historia, el entrevistador hacía algunas preguntas sobre lo que había sucedido. Se descubrió que "*las historias anticanónicas producían un torrente de invenciones narrativas diez veces superior*". Las elaboraciones de los niños aludían a un estado intencional (confusión de fechas del cumpleaños) "*en yuxtaposición con un imperativo cultural*" (requisito

llevar vestido adecuado a una fiesta). Las narraciones lograban su objetivo: *“proporcionar sentido a una aberración cultural aludiendo a un estado subjetivo del protagonista”* (Bruner, 1991: 86-87). Los niños de 4 años pueden no saber mucho acerca de su cultura, pero saben lo que es canónico y están dispuestos a proporcionar una historia que pueda explicar aquello que no lo es. Con 3 o 4 años, vemos a los niños aprender a usar sus narraciones para halagar, engañar, adular, justificar, obtener lo que pretenden sin provocar una confrontación con aquellos a los que quieren.

Al interpretar la información de un texto a partir del diálogo estamos negociando unos significados culturales, que es una forma de aprendizaje e introducción a una cultura. Construimos nuestros significados comunes sobre la base del conocimiento de la realidad, acerca de la vida cotidiana del contexto cultural al que pertenecemos. Por medio del lenguaje establecemos gran parte de esas relaciones, y el lenguaje se adquiere utilizándolo, la adquisición del lenguaje es muy sensible al contexto. Se pone de relieve el proceso de construcción de significados. El alumno para poder aprender un contenido, tiene que ser capaz de darle un significado. Atribuir un significado quiere decir que se revisa y aporta los esquemas de conocimiento que se poseen para dar cuenta de la nueva situación. Apuntamos cuatro condiciones que facilitan aprendizajes lo más significativos posibles:

- 1) Que los contenidos presentados al alumno estén *estructurados* interiormente y sean claros.
- 2) Que los conocimientos previos de los alumnos sean *pertinentes* y puedan ser activados por el contenido nuevo.
- 3) Que los alumnos tengan una *disponibilidad* hacia el aprendizaje, permitiéndoles atribuirle un *“sentido”*.
- 4) Es en el curso de las interacciones donde se ejerce la influencia educativa dirigida a lograr una *“sintonización progresiva entre los significados construye el alumno y los significados vehiculados con los contenidos escolares”* (Coll, 1990: 447).

Una vez que los niños captan la idea básica de referencia, necesaria para usar cualquier uso del lenguaje, *“nombrar, señalar la recurrencia y registrar el cese de la existencia de algo”*, su principal interés lingüístico se centra en la actividad humana y sus consecuencias, especialmente en la interacción humana.

*“Aunque tengamos una predisposición “innata” para la organización que nos permite comprenderla y utilizarla de modo fácil y rápido, la cultura nos equipa enseguida con nuevos poderes narrativos gracias al conjunto de herramientas que la caracterizan y a las tradiciones de contar e interpretar en las que empezamos a participar muy pronto.”* (Bruner, 1991: 90).

En toda esta explicación subyace la noción de *andamiaje* de Vygotsky. Las narraciones ofrecen una oportunidad de comprender su vida diaria. Bruner (2004) ha continuado la línea de investigación de Vygotsky, estudiando el lenguaje de la enseñanza y el aprendizaje, sobre todo a través de la observación de la interacción de los niños pequeños con sus madres. El concepto de andamiaje es fundamental, son los *“pasos que se dan para reducir los grados de libertad cuando se lleva a cabo algún tipo de tarea”* (Mercer, 1997: 85). La narración funciona como una herramienta cultural útil e integrada, que proporciona una estructura de relaciones por la cual *“los acontecimientos contenidos en la descripción”* son dotados de significado al ser identificados como *“parte de un todo integrado”* (White, 1987: 9; en Wertsch, 1999: 157). Los contenidos operan conjuntamente, y se refuerzan entre sí en torno a un núcleo central de significado, basado en un conjunto circunscrito de acontecimientos, en la que un protagonista se involucra en la salida a una situación. Un buen ejemplo de la negociación de significados en la recuperación y comprensión de información se da en el dominio de los textos históricos. En un estudio longitudinal, Beck y McKeown (1994) analizan las consecuencias de la organización de los textos en la comprensión que tienen los alumnos estadounidenses de su propia historia. Lo examinan a 35 alumnos antes y después de quinto y octavo grado, momento en el que los alumnos tienen que enfrentarse a la asignatura de historia de manera importante. Los resultados apuntan a que la información que los alumnos toman a menudo es incompleta, resultando confusa. La imagen de los orígenes de su propio país no está completa ni les resulta coherente. De hecho, las versiones de la historia que han desarrollado se asemejan a *“una sucesión de acontecimientos yuxtapuestos, sin conexiones, ni motivaciones.”* (Beck y MacKeown, 1994). El problema no está en la memoria, en el olvido de personajes, acontecimientos, o estructuras de la trama que los organizan en un todo coherente. Se apunta a que es más sencillo: esa organización nunca ha sido evidente para ellos. La causa básica para no llegar a la comprensión de un texto, tiende a originarse al no elaborar una estructura a partir de organizar un conjunto de hechos interdependientes. Parece ser que los textos con mayor coherencia *“proporcionan una mejor comprensión de la secuencia causal de acontecimientos o ideas”*. Este trabajo refleja que los docentes y los libros de texto intentan abarcar demasiado material, y en consecuencia, lo hacen de manera superficial. *“Sería mejor seleccionar unos cuantos tópicos y explorarlos con un tipo de atención reflexiva que puede proporcionar comprensión y aprendizaje”* (Beck y MacKeown, 1994: 255). Quizá estos alumnos saben poco, insuficiente, porque no dominan la forma narrativa consistente en un ensamble de interrelaciones organizadas en un todo único. El



concepto de narración discurre en paralelo al de “temporalidad”, la narración se organiza alrededor de una temporalidad. Cada narración posee una trama o estructura de relaciones por la cual los acontecimientos contenidos en el relato son dotados de significado al ser identificados como parte de un todo integrado. La narración es considerada como una herramienta cultural, donde sus formas de acción mediada representan el pasado. La narratividad resurge en psicología, de la mano de autores como Bruner (1986, 1991), que destaca la necesidad de analizar la narración como un modo clave de pensamiento. El impulso narrativo brota desde que el niño quiere “hacer referencia a los eventos y fija su atención en los elementos que componen las acciones: alguien hace algo” (Martínez Rodríguez, 1997: 55).

#### IV. LAS NARRACIONES COMO MEMORIA AFECTIVA

*“El afecto es algo así como la huella dactilar general del esquema que hay que reconstruir”* (Barlett, 1932: 213, en Collins, 1999: 88 trad. Cast.).

El desarrollo afectivo e intelectual de los niños está “inextricablemente enlazado”, tal como Piaget y Vygotsky lo defendieron. Pensamiento y lenguaje están fuertemente unidos, y son generados por “el placer y poder que el niño tiene al manejar el arte del relato” (Fox, 1989: 29). Vygotsky, Bruner, Fox, Goodman, Paley, Barlett, sus trabajos sugieren que la relación entre afecto e intelecto, emoción y pensamiento, pensamiento y lenguaje son factores importantes en el aprendizaje y desarrollo del niño. “Son recíprocos, alimentando y sosteniendo uno al otro” (Collins, 1999 trad. Cast.). La narración de relatos tradicionales puede alentar esta relación y promover la adquisición de aprendizaje en el área afectiva y en la educación de las emociones. El narrador adulto ejerce de andamiaje del aprendizaje del niño.

Bruner (1984, 1986, 1991) se basa en Barlett sobre la regulación afectiva. Al esforzarnos por recordar, lo primero que nos viene a la mente es un afecto o una “actitud cargada”. Un modelo distinto que centra la atención en lo que verdaderamente interesa, que lleva a estructurar lo importante de acuerdo con la clase de conceptos que usan los niños con mayor facilidad para adquirir nuevos conocimientos. Y un paso más, que lleva a descubrir la ilustración más viva de un hecho, a reunir los mejores recursos materiales, a decidir qué tareas encargaremos a los niños, a estudiar qué preguntas les ayudaran a apreciar algo de forma más plena, a seleccionar las analogías adecuadas con los hechos. El papel de las emociones, las sensaciones y el argumento es significativo en el desarrollo de la memoria. Vygotsky (1989) analizó la organización mental y la teorización que surge a partir de la narración. La narración sirve de camino para organizar

la memoria. A su vez la memoria es definida como “crónica de eventos”, ésta debe evolucionar selectiva relativamente pronto, para acomodar el enorme flujo de información que es requerido, es decir, no sólo para almacenar sino también para procesar. La memoria temprana puede tomar la forma de crónica de eventos, pero debe ser convertida pronto “en forma lógica” si sirve para traer la ingente densidad de información que acumulamos y necesitamos pasar a ver. La memoria debe, de hecho, convertirse en el “almacén de lo que está siendo más que el catálogo de lo que ya fue” (Britton, 1990: 20). En el aprendizaje cognitivo, la narración es la principal herramienta avalada para ordenar y organizar el pensamiento de los niños. Contar o recibir un relato responde tanto a necesidades cognitivas como emocionales. Las revisiones bibliográficas muestran la falta de literatura que reconozca la importancia de ambos aspectos, sin embargo la interacción de lo cognitivo y lo afectivo es el aspecto clave de la educación de las emociones. Es ésta, un área en la que el contenido de los relatos tradicionales puede desarrollar eficazmente al niño. Los cuentos aportan a la imaginación del niño nuevas dimensiones a las que le sería imposible llegar por sí solo. El niño necesita que le demos la oportunidad de comprenderse a sí mismo, en este mundo complejo al que tiene que aprender a enfrentarse. Para poder hacer esto, tenemos que ayudar al pequeño a que extraiga un sentido coherente al caos de sus sentimientos. Necesita ideas sobre cómo poner orden en su casa interior y, sobre esta base, establecer un orden en su vida en general. En la narración de cuentos los enunciados más complejos parten de una *base afectiva*, los temas desarrollados por los niños tienen un amplio alcance: miedo y ambición, amor y odio, vida y muerte. En la relación entre la idea de una actividad placentera y el desarrollo intelectual, se nota la falta de una descripción detallada sobre los procesos que la imaginación verbal juega, apoya y nutre dentro de una tarea afectiva, y sobre todo, se detecta una carencia de investigaciones que estudien el interés de los niños por las leyes del mundo y la expresión de ese interés dentro de un pensamiento razonado y lógico. Se necesitan más hallazgos para establecer más concretamente la contribución de la imaginación verbal de la narración de cuentos en el desarrollo de la comprensión del mundo. El papel jugado por las sensaciones al recordar hechos, eventos o argumentos es la clave del enlace entre el pensamiento y el sentimiento, entre el intelecto y el afecto. La implicación de esto para la educación es que las sensaciones hacen una gran contribución al aprendizaje, que en general tiende a ser reconocido y aprehendido. Oír y narrar cuentos tradicionales puede ser un instrumento educacional adecuado para desarrollar las sensaciones en la memoria y para el propio recuerdo. El trabajo colectivo de desarrollar un relato: narrar, escuchar, renarrar, tiene beneficios para

la clase como “*comunidad*”, desarrollando muchas actividades de aprendizaje colectivo. A través de estas actividades cooperativas se genera “*una lista de reglas, interpretaciones, preguntas*”. Además se construyen unas contribuciones grupales que ayudan a elaborar una identidad como grupo (Barton, 1988: 5, en Collins, 1999: 91 trad. Cast.) La contribución de la narración al desarrollo cognitivo y emocional es clara. Las narraciones elicitán una respuesta emocional, experiencia que puede contribuir a un aprendizaje completo. Goodman (1984) confirma la importancia de las emociones en el aprendizaje a partir de enlazarlas con otras formas de conocimiento. En el arte, y en la ciencia también, la emoción y la cognición son “*interdependientes, la emoción sin el conocimiento está ciega, el conocimiento sin la emoción está vacío*” (Goodman, 1984: 8, en Collins, 1999: 91 trad. Cast.). La narración hace que la lectura suene a cosa humana, pone voz de persona al mensaje que alguien dejó escrito. No fue una máquina, no está aquí desde siempre. Cuando lees algo, alguien te lo está contando.

## V. CONCLUSIONES

Narrar es una actividad bastante compleja que requiere seleccionar e integrar diferentes tipos de conocimiento. Entendida como un mecanismo para organizar nuestro conocimiento y como un vehículo en el proceso de la educación (Bruner, 1998), debe fomentarse su práctica tanto en la sociedad en general como en la escuela. Leer narraciones ayuda al lector a explorar e interpretar su propio mundo a partir de lo que ocurre en los textos. Escribir narraciones permite al escritor salirse de la cotidianidad para expresar ideas propias, dejar volar la imaginación, elaborar descripciones y plantear y resolver problemas de forma insospechada. Esto puede incidir en el establecimiento de nuevas relaciones y en la profundización del conocimiento tanto del lenguaje como de un tipo de texto en particular

La puesta en discusión a partir de narraciones es una experiencia de aprendizaje que va configurando un espacio común, con el aprendizaje en interacción como *proceso*, y el inicio del pensamiento crítico como *producto*. Se crea en cada grupo un proceso de aprendizaje en interacción. La parte sustancial de esa interacción es el aprendizaje, los alumnos se sumergen en un proceso de creación colectiva, van aprehendiendo, haciendo suyos, algunos de los conocimientos que han ido adquiriendo dentro y fuera de las aulas. En la medida de aprehender, vivenciar el conocimiento, se crea algo que sabe a propio, sintiendo el alumno su asimilación. Creación colectiva dentro de un grupo pequeño que revierte dentro de un contexto social de mayor tamaño. Conjuntamente creamos las bases para un producto, y meta, que retroalimenta el proceso: el *pensamiento crítico*.

Planteamos un enfoque *constructivo y creativo* que usa los contenidos y materiales de la cultura para crear, combinando nuevas formas de cultura, poniendo a alumnos y profesores al mismo nivel que artistas e investigadores. Abrimos espacios y experiencias de “*re-creación*” y “*re-construcción*” cultural que diviertan y estimulen al grupo, generando campos más amplios de significaciones y utilidades compartidas. Los contenidos de información son, por encima de una comprensión lógica inicial, objeto de reelaboración en cada grupo de discusión. El problema no está en la elección de los contenidos a abordar, sino en cómo abordarlos, cómo procesarlos, metodología y procesamiento de la información relevante, seleccionada con unos criterios claros de aprendizaje. Hay que conseguir la ilusión de cada niño por participar, junto a un ejercicio constante de actividades en discusión, y un liderazgo afectivo y eficaz por parte de cada maestro. Se necesitan horas de práctica para empezar a ver resultados. Una tarea clave, y difícil, de la educación de un niño es la de ayudarlo a encontrar sentido a la vida. Para obtener éxito en esta tarea educativa, es fundamental que los adultos que están en contacto más directo con el niño produzcan una firme y adecuada impresión en él y que le transmitan correctamente nuestra herencia cultural. La literatura infantil puede posibilitar esta labor (Bettelheim, 1988). En ocasiones, los profesores se esfuerzan en transmitir datos, ideas y teorías para ser comprendidos y estudiados, más que para ser tratados comprensiva y significativamente, constructiva y creativamente por los alumnos. Este objetivo de información reproductiva desvirtúa las posibilidades del desarrollo lógico y crítico, creativo y afectivo de los métodos de enseñanza. Si el mayor esfuerzo y tiempo se dedica a la información del contenido, queda poco espacio para criticar o sintetizar, para ver globalmente lo que se nos quiere enseñar, para hacerse preguntas o para resolver problemas, para analizar o para crear, para imaginar o para ilusionarse con lo aprendido. Cualquiera de estas operaciones lleva mucho más tiempo de ensayo y error, que la mera información y asimilación reproductiva. Pero también se saborea y disfruta más, descubriendo poco a poco el placer por aprender, incluso por comunicarlo. Aprender a leer y escribir es poder acceder a aprender muchas otras cosas por uno mismo. Nadie discute que uno de los propósitos principales de la escuela es enseñar a leer. Pero cabe preguntarse qué papel juega la escuela en la formación de lectores. De qué modo interviene para acercar nuevas generaciones a los textos escritos. Es frecuente escuchar que cada vez se lee menos, que la cultura audiovisual atrapa a niños y jóvenes, y que los libros se van dejando de lado. Por todo esto nos preguntamos (Fusca, 2003):

- *¿Qué se debe hacer para que los niños se apasionen por los libros?*

- *¿Cómo transmitir el gusto por lo literario?*
- *¿Es lo mismo aprender a leer literatura que aprender a leer publicidad?*
- *¿Qué se lee en la escuela?, ¿Cómo se lee?, ¿Quién puede leer?*
- *¿Quiénes poseen las formas de alcanzar la información?*
- *¿Cuáles son los nuevos soportes textuales?*
- *¿Quién selecciona los libros?*

La transición de la oralidad a la escritura muestra que la alfabetización comprende complejos y numerosos procesos que van de situaciones familiares y espontáneas a otras más formales. Admitiendo al adulto como mediador se deben buscar ideas para padres y docentes que puedan facilitar los procesos de transición entre formatos y etapas dentro de la alfabetización. En las escuelas infantiles se producen modos particulares de interacción lingüística entre niños y maestros, y entre niños entre sí. Las rutinas, estereotipos y tradiciones, forman parte de la vida cotidiana de las salas. Para ello, debemos considerar las posturas ideológicas de los docentes frente a los niños y qué modelos pedagógicos sustentan. Hay que ser conscientes del esfuerzo que estamos pidiendo a los niños, y de la paciencia y tolerancia a la frustración de los maestros. El propósito de formar lectoescritores es vital, partimos de que el camino es una espiral que empieza en un punto de la infancia y que no termina jamás.

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## Student Teachers Experiences of Teachers' Professional Identity within the Context of Curriculum Change

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*Abstract-* This paper presents the findings of a qualitative case study of how 8 student teachers' experiences of teachers' professional identity within the context of curriculum change in a university in KwaZulu Natal. The students described their personal experiences in teaching during teaching practice from which two major themes stood out; the complicated demand teaching places on the student teacher and professional development. In analyzing the data, the researcher further categorized it into four themes based on emerging trends; the single self and the multiple self, becoming a teacher and teaching skills. Several shortcomings in teacher education were discovered and teacher educators and stakeholders were called upon to restructure teacher education programs based on the kind of challenges student teachers are facing. The researcher used the social constructionist theory to give meaning to the experiences of student teachers.

*Keywords:* teachers' professional identity, experiences, curriculum change, student teachers.

*GJHSS-G Classification :* FOR Code: 930202p, 130313



*Strictly as per the compliance and regulations of:*



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Kehdinga George Fomunyam

**Abstract-** This paper presents the findings of a qualitative case study of how 8 student teachers' experiences of teachers' professional identity within the context of curriculum change in a university in KwaZulu Natal. The students described their personal experiences in teaching during teaching practice from which two major themes stood out; the complicated demand teaching places on the student teacher and professional development. In analyzing the data, the researcher further categorized it into four themes based on emerging trends; the single self and the multiple self, becoming a teacher and teaching skills. Several shortcomings in teacher education were discovered and teacher educators and stakeholders were called upon to restructure teacher education programs based on the kind of challenges student teachers are facing. The researcher used the social constructionist theory to give meaning to the experiences of student teachers.

**Keywords:** *teachers' professional identity, experiences, curriculum change, student teachers.*

## I. INTRODUCTION

In 1997 the Minister of Education announced the launch of Curriculum 2005, which marked a breakaway from the apartheid curriculum to democracy. Bhana (2002) argued that the new curriculum aimed at riding the educational system of dogmatism and outdated teaching practices and make way for democratic nation building. The new curriculum redefined teacher professional identity in the classroom (Parker, 1999) and made the delivery of lessons problematic. Singh (2001) agrees with this as he postulates that the large amount or number of policy ideas seeking to be implemented in South Africa is by and large conflicting with teachers' beliefs and as such bring controversy into the teaching and learning process. Cross and Teruvunga (2012) opine that every new minister of education in South Africa has brought a new curriculum. These included Curriculum 2005, National Curriculum Statements (NCS), Revised National Curriculum Statements (RNCS) and Curriculum and Assessment Policy Statements (CAPS). These changes also mean change in the professional identity of teachers thereby creating multiple identities as the curriculum changes.

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According to Schwab (2012), South Africa's education system was graded 140th out of 144 countries that were graded. As the quality of teachers in the field are problematic and for there to be improvement, student teachers experiences of what it means to be a teacher needs to be investigated and necessary guidance provided such that when they become teachers they will be able to deal with the hurdles or challenges that come with it. Recent studies (Akkerman & Meijer, 2010; Soudien, 2001; Flores & Day, 2005; Carrim, 2001; Cohen, 2009; Samuel, 2001; Chong, Ling & Chuan, 2011) at a more generic level attempt to 'get inside the minds' of teachers to understand how teachers develop conceptions of themselves (identity) and how they understand their actions, duties and responsibilities (roles). However, little or no research exists in South Africa on how student teachers experience or understand teacher professional identity as the curriculum changes. Hence, the present study provides a vantage point from which to view teachers' professional identity. Teachers' professional identity in South Africa is problematic to a large degree because it is embedded within experiences accumulated from the days of apartheid to democracy, as such the findings of the research may inform stakeholders, policy makers, teacher educators, teachers and all those who participate in the development of student teachers, of the experiences student teachers have of teachers' professional identity within the context of changing curriculum and may also serve as a springboard for the improvement of teacher education since it is the role of the teacher educators and teachers to guide, encourage and help develop student teachers by ensuring that they are prepared for their future profession.

## II. REVIEW OF RELEVANT LITERATURE

This section reviews literature through the themes of defining teachers' professional identity, and determinants of teachers' professional identity.

## III. DEFINING TEACHERS PROFESSIONAL IDENTITY

Day (2007) postulates that teachers' professional identity is all about being an accountable

and responsible teacher who exhibits compliance to externally imposed policy imperatives with consistently high quality teaching, which is measured by externally set performance indicators. This means that teachers' professional identity according to Day (2007) is all about being competent and producing results that are universally accepted. She adds that in this identity, teachers will be firmly concerned with creating and putting into place standards and processes which give students democratic experiences. In this light, Yamin-Ali and Pooma (2012) argue that teachers' professional identity is basically about knowing oneself as professional, setting standards of professionalism and performing one's duties using the same guiding principles. As such teachers' professional identity deals with the teacher's discharge of his or her duties and his or her perceptions of self.

Hollin (2011) argues that teachers' professional identity can be referred to as a dynamic and changeable relation or relationship spanning over their entire life situation, including the negotiation and renegotiation of personally and socially designed imperatives within the educational system. As such identity is negotiated by the teacher and certain factors determine the direction of the negotiation. Furthermore she also defines teacher professional identity as an ongoing process of integrating educational knowledge, experience and practices within the concept of self. This identity therefore is not static but keeps changing as the content of educational knowledge keeps changing due to changes in curriculum.

In this paper teachers' professional identity will be defined as teacher's sense of self or what it means to be a teacher (Stenberg, 2010). With this knowledge of what teachers' professional identity is, it is necessary to look at what makes up teachers' professional identity.

#### IV. DETERMINANTS OF TEACHERS' PROFESSIONAL IDENTITY

From the nature of teachers' professional identity it is clear that teachers' professional identity isn't stable but constantly in a state of flux. As such there are certain factors which determine when it should change and what direction it should take. Some of these factors are; curriculum change, relation and experiences.

#### V. CURRICULUM CHANGE

Curriculum change is one of the major determinants of teachers' professional identity (Seetal, 2006). Once the curriculum changes in any educational environment, the way in which teachers see themselves also changes. For example Cross and Teruvinga (2012) opined that Curriculum 2005 posited the notion of the 'disappearing' teacher as learners emerged as the initiators and creators of learning. The teacher ceased from being the all-knowing teacher as in the days of

apartheid and became a facilitator in the teaching and learning process. Cross and Teruvinga (2012) continue that Curriculum 2005 was laid aside in favour of the National Curriculum Statements (NCS) and later as a result of its failures and challenges the Revised National Curriculum Statements (RNCS) was formulated (Cross & Teruvinga, 2012), and presently the Curriculum and Assessment Policy Statement (CAPS). This frequent change of the curriculum and the curriculum policy document has led to a constant change in the professional identity of teachers, what they represent in the classroom, and has caused diverse problems in terms of lesson delivery and professional development for teachers (Cross & Teruvinga, 2012).

Furthermore, within the context of curriculum change, teachers more often than not are constantly in a frustrating position of being simultaneously both the subject and the agent of change (Seetal, 2006). They are often obliged to change themselves, their practice and take the necessary steps to meet specific objectives or laid down directions and principles outlined by policymakers who themselves know neither how to meet such objectives or the contexts in which the objectives are supposed to be met. At certain points in time teachers are required to make changes which they believe on the basis of their professional experience, to be unreasonable, inappropriate or impossible and this inevitably changes the way they see themselves and the very fact that they are required or expected to implement these imposed changes means that their professional identity fluctuates and their freedom and autonomy are further curtailed (Seetal, 2006). Teachers are continually required to alter their administrative and organization systems, their pedagogy, curriculum content, the resources and technology they use and their assessment procedures to meet new standards set up by the changing curriculum.

Cross and Teruvinga (2012) postulated that Curriculum 2005 brought with it an almost new professional identity for teachers and an educational discourse with a range of new demands in terms of teaching and learning, with which most teachers are unfamiliar. They add that the rearrangement of school subjects into eight learning areas and the introduction of the new forms of assessment have hampered the implementation of the curriculum and the way teachers see themselves. The merging of knowledge into learning areas means a recreation of identity for teachers and also the collapsing of the traditional boundaries and subject disciplines. This means that teachers who were used to teaching single subjects have to change their thinking, approach and what they know so as to meet the demands of the new curriculum. Seetal (2006) adds that during the apartheid era, the educational system had school subjects which enjoyed hallowed status. But in the new educational system teachers are expected to work together in teams, cooperating with one another to

promote a collaborative culture of learning amongst pupils, and encourage a problem-solving mentality and a project approach to the curriculum. As such teachers' professional identity is determined by curriculum change since it dictates what direction the teaching and learning process should take. Before the introduction of curriculum 2005 teachers were loners within the educational system. Once the curriculum change was introduced, not only did what was to be taught change, but also how it was to be taught and the person of the teacher was redefined. Due to this, it was noticed that the training required to support teachers perform their duty was inadequate (Seetal, 2006) and their performance drastically dropped leading to a failure of the curriculum change and consequently the introduction of a new curriculum with a new professional identity for the teacher.

Teachers' professional identity therefore has and always will be determined principally by curriculum change. The dictates of curriculum change in all academic systems, whether partial or complete change, has an impact on what teachers are to do in class and their professional identity. Much has been said on how curriculum change affects teachers' professional identity but there is a gap as to how student teachers experience teachers' professional identity and the changes that accompany it. This research therefore investigates this gap of how student teachers experience teachers' professional identity within the context of curriculum change.

## VI. RELATION

Relation is another major determinant of teachers' professional identity. Stenberg (2010) defines relation as the constant interactions with other teachers, the school governing body, government and the society around them. This is due to the fact that teachers make sense of themselves as a result of their relations to the world around them. Stenberg (2010) continues that the teacher relates to his or her learners or students (the pedagogical relation), his or her content, to students' studying and learning (the didactical relation) and to the teacher's personal work theory. The teacher's relation with his content includes the actual content of teaching or what actually transpires in the classroom. Relating to the content therefore embodies subject matter, instructions and classroom management amongst other things (Kemp, Blake, Shaw & Preston, 2009). To a larger extent it also involves the bigger content of the curriculum, the manifold settings in which teachers work and the school environment (Stenberg, 2010), as such his relation to these multiple settings aids in determining who he or she is or who he or she eventually turns out to be. The didactical relation refers to the teacher's relation to the students' relating to content or how teachers aid and support students' learning. This cannot be done by

following a specific set of rules. Instead, each teacher determines his or her approach or theory to use depending on the circumstances around him, because students learn in diverse ways and at various paces. The pedagogical relation shifts the focus from teaching and learning to the communication between the teacher and learners or students and to how the teacher aids and supports the learner or students' personal growth. The teacher also relates to his or her personal working theory which more often than not is derived from the teacher's professional and personal experiences, involving his inner values, understandings and beliefs that ultimately guide and determine his professional identity (Levin & He, 2008; Kansanen, 2009). Therefore as MacLeod and Cowieson (2001) postulate, it is most likely impossible to split the twin elements of the professional and the personal aspect of the teacher.

According to Rodgers and Scott (2008) the relations in the classroom between the teachers and the students involve more than just participants in the teaching and learning process and it is a complex process of meaning making for both the teacher and the learners or students. As such what transpires in the classroom is more than an exchange of knowledge but the reproduction of self by both parties and a rub off of this self. The issue of emotions nurtured by the complex relation between teachers, learners, coworkers, mentors, school, community and state is more and more being scrutinized as a critical aspect of teachers' professional identity (Timostsuk & Ugaste, 2010). This relation inadvertently impacts how the teacher treats or reacts to the students in his/her class and also the quality of his or her teaching. The relation with the professional community of teachers also influences their understanding of complex practices, and the understanding of self. Since other teachers also go through this process, it is therefore an exchange of who they are rather than an impartation, making relations a critical determinant of teachers' professional identity.

Therefore, the teacher's relation with his/her learners, content, colleagues and environment at large determines his/her professional identity. The teaching and learning process is a very complicated one in which the teacher has to relate with the curriculum, its designers and the stake holders to support the smooth functioning of the school. The exchange between the teacher and the rest of the contributors or partakers in the teaching and learning process therefore has a great impact in the meaning making process for the teacher about himself. Relation is therefore a significant determinant of teachers' professional identity.

## VII. EXPERIENCES

Since teacher professional identity is not static but rather involves the creation and recreation of meaning through experiences or stories over time



(Timostsuk & Ugaste, 2010), experiences is another major determinant of teacher professional identity. The teacher uses his experiences to construct and reconstruct his professional identity over time, owing to the fact that meaningful learning only builds upon previous knowledge and knowing who we are is the first step of knowing or determining who we want to be. Timostsuk and Ugaste (2010) consider teachers' professional identity to be a product of experience by seeing it as a process of practical knowledge building characterized by an ongoing integration of what is individually and collectively seen or experienced as relevant to the teaching field. Geijssel and Meijers (2005) attempt to model this integration, by treating the formation of teacher professional identity as an ongoing learning process, in which each professional experience is re-thought against a backdrop of mutual interactions of emotions and knowledge and where experiences can be both individualistic and one experienced with other colleagues. Thus, teachers' professional identity is determined by experience and this experience is a continuous learning process in which behavior amongst other things, like the creation of related meaning (Rodgers & Scott, 2008) and social context in a broader perspective, is the focus.

As Feistritzer argues, not only do the educational experiences shape the teacher's professional identity but also political, social and cultural experiences (Feistritzer, 2007). Seetal (2006) maintains that the relation between curriculum change discourses and teachers' professional identity provides insights to curriculum developers and theorists into how teachers' experiences determine or shape teachers' professional identity, teachers' practices and the meaning they make of it. Teachers therefore actively interpret and re-interpret their life experiences, creating their professional identity as teachers. It is therefore clear that teachers' professional identity cannot be complete or fully shaped without the teachers' experiences. With this understanding therefore, for student teachers to fully develop into practicing teachers, their experiences of what it means to be a teacher should be investigated and the results used in teacher education.

## VIII. RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

The research design for this article, aimed at answering the following questions.

1. What experiences do student teachers have of teachers' professional identity within the context of a changing curriculum?
2. How can these experiences shape or not shape their professional development as teachers of tomorrow?

This study is a qualitative case study of student teachers in a university in KwaZulu Natal. Neumann (2006), defines case study as "an in-depth study of one

particular case in which the case may be a person, a school, a group of people, an organization, a community, an event, a movement, or geographical unit" (p. 40). Neumann (2006, p. 41) opines that most case studies utilize a variety of data generation methods such as photos, interviews, observations, maps, documents, newspapers, and records in a single case. The researcher in this case aimed at capturing the lived experiences, thoughts, perceptions and meaning making process (Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2011) of student teachers about teacher professional identity. Denzin and Lincoln (2003) state that the benefit of the case study is that it presents a real life experience and offers a complete account of an example or a phenomenon and an insight that would provide the reader with visible experiences of the participants.

Neill (2007) argues that qualitative research provides a platform to gain insights through the unearthing of meaning by increasing comprehension. This approach explores the depth, richness and difficulty of situations and is often associated with interpretivist paradigms (Lowe, 2007) in which the main projector of meaning is the content (Henning, 2004). Again as Gonzales, Brown and Slate (2008, p. 3) put it, qualitative research provides intricate details and distinct understanding of meaning and observable as well as non-observable situations, phenomena, attitudes, intentions and behaviours. Therefore, this study is justifiably qualitative and this approach is employed to explore and explain the experiences student teachers have of teachers' professional identity. This is achieved by using evidence from their relationships, practices and perceptions (Henning, 2004). Their understanding or interpretation of teachers' professional identity aided the researcher in understanding the kind of experiences student teachers have while acting as teachers and how these experiences can be used to improve the quality of teacher education from their point of view (Sprat, Walker & Robinson, 2004).

The qualitative data of the study were generated using two methods: semi structured interviews and document analyses. For the research to be corroborated, more than one method needs to be used to gather data. According to Khanare (2012) semi-structured interview makes it easy to extract insight about what an individual (student teacher in this case) knows or has experienced and what he or she thinks (Sarantakos, 2005). The semi-structured interview provides the researcher with opportunity of probing deeper, asking clarifying questions and discussing with participants their understanding of the phenomenon. In this research a semi-structured interview was used to generate data for the first question. The participants for the study were sampled using non-probability purposive sampling. This method of sampling enables the researcher to hand pick participants based on prior knowledge or recognition and with the full knowledge

that it doesn't represent the entire population. A total of eight student teachers participated in the interview. Also ethical standards were upheld by ensuring that participants knew their rights and signed consent forms. Permission was also obtained from the university where the interviews were to be conducted. The participants were also code named using the NATO phonetic alphabet; Sierra, Tango, Uniform, Victor, Whiskey, X-ray, Yankee and Zuluto maintain anonymity. Document analysis was another method used to generate data. The documents were analyzed with the aim of answering the second question. Documents provide the researcher with meaningful and already organized data which has been generated by relevant authorities in the field (Henning 2004) and Creswell (2008) add that the importance of document analyses lies in the fact that it generates good data for qualitative study. Two articles; Key experiences in student teachers' Development (Meijer, Graaf, & Meirink 2011) and Teachers' professional development in schools: rhetoric versus reality (Gemedá, Fiorucci, & Catarci, 2013) was analysed. Trustworthiness was attained in the study by using different sources of data which provides the researcher the opportunity of checking one source against the other (Creswell, 2008). Creswell adds that using diverse sources of data enhances credibility, transferability, dependability and conformability in the study. The study is limited in that the results were a reflection of all the student teachers at the University but will be limited to the selected participants.

The data generated were made sense of use the social constructionist theory. The social constructionist philosophy of education articulates that the society needs a reconstructing and schools are the ultimate utensil to foster such changes (Harguindéguy & Gouin, 2012). The basic tenet of social constructionism according to Young and Collin (2004) comprises the focus on the collective rather than the individual construction of knowledge. Nawaz and Kundi (2010) argue that social constructionism focuses on learning as a process of understanding and the creation of meaning where learning is considered to be the construction of meaning based on experiences in and around the school environment. Khalid and Azeem (2012), postulate that social constructionists see the teaching and learning process as an active one and this point to the fact that student teachers can and do experience teachers' professional identity as a learning experience and make sense of it due to the wealth of knowledge they come into the teaching and learning process with. Experiencing teacher professional identity by student teachers in this case is learning by doing under the guidance of mentors or teacher educators and these experiences shape the kind of teacher they become in future.

## IX. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

The data generated was analysed thematically, where the data is coded and categorised into themes and sub-themes. The experiences provided by the student teachers were grouped into two main recurring themes. The themes are: complicated demand on self and professional development. These two themes were again divided into sub themes: individual self, multiple self, becoming a teacher and teaching skills. This analysis also includes diverse direct quotations from participants. Slavin (2007) argues it is of utmost importance to utilise direct quotations from data to illustrate and substantiate the arguments. In analysing the data, findings are also discussed.

### X. COMPLICATED DEMAND ON SELF

This refers to the nature of work the student teacher is expected to do when he or she assumes the role of teacher. Since teachers' professional identity or what it means to be a teacher is on-going and ever changing, according to Timostsuk and Ugaste (2010), the student teacher who is new to such a role finds it complicated. Lamote and Engels (2010) argue that teachers' professional identity is made up of three different sub-identities or roles and these three are based on different contexts and relationships. Puurula and Löfström (2003) concur with this as they see the three sub identities as the role the teacher takes upon his or herself. The first sub identity they identify deals with a teacher's personal understanding of the demands upon him or herself as an individual which ultimately leads to professional growth. The second sub identity deals with a teacher's perception of his or her skilled multiple self and this produces efficiency in the teacher. The third and last sub identity deals with a teacher's membership in a professional community, which generates commitment. Assuming the role of a teacher consequently places a complicated demand upon both the individual self and the multiple self of the student teacher. In order words, being a teacher is not just about teaching, but also about assuming different roles.

### XI. INDIVIDUAL SELF

Experiencing teachers' professional identity places a complicated demand on the individual self of the student teacher. Sutherland, Howard, and Markauskaite (2010) postulate that teachers' professional identity can be considered one facet of a multitude belonging to an individual which comes as a result of his understanding of self. Assuming the role of a teacher therefore places a demand on the student teacher as a teacher to ensure that teaching and learning process takes place effectively. The student teacher no longer sees him or herself as a student but as a teacher. The student teacher carries the personality

of the teacher and acts as the teacher. He has the responsibility of teaching and ensuring that his message is well understood. Sierra, one of the participants, stated that "being a teacher means developing lesson plans and developing teaching aids constantly. It is also about a perfect delivery of the lesson to one's learners and making a difference in their lives". This is the core of the teaching profession, since teaching and learning is all about knowledge construction between the teacher and the learner. Another participant Tango added that;

*Knowing what to teach is one thing and actually teaching it to the perfect understanding of your learners is another. Being a teacher is about re-enacting what you have learned to your learners and ensuring that they understood what you wanted them to.*

Since no meaningful learning takes place without understanding, it is the student teacher's duty to ensure that there is perfect communication between him or her and his or her learners. Rodgers and Scott (2008) articulate that communicating in the classroom between the teachers and the students involves more than just participants in the teaching and learning process but it is a complex process of meaning making for both the teacher and the students. Most student teachers described this task as a complicated demand on the individual self. The student teachers environment also dictates or shapes the nature of the demand.

Chong, Ling and Chuan (2011) postulated that what actually takes place in the classroom, especially during teaching practice, has a significant impact on the professional development of the student teacher and their sense of identity. They add that teacher education programmes should focus more distinctly and efficiently on the issue of identity since "quite often during teaching practice a great deal of focus is directed to the delivery of lessons and feedback by supervisors who focus on issues of knowledge and skills of teaching. On the contrary, teachers' identity is not measured purely by how good or bad they perform in the classroom. The student teachers' experience and understanding of the teacher's work and professional role is what ultimately shapes identity and fosters professional development"(Chong, Ling and Chuan, 2011p. 34). As such, it is clear that in fostering professional development for the student teacher, issues of teachers' professional identity should be taken into consideration in teacher education programs coupled with lesson delivery and responsibilities.

Another participant, Uniform, opined that taking up the role of the teacher places a complicated demand on her individual self as a student teacher. She stated that;

*for me to be successful in this task, means that I must have an understanding of how learners learn, a critical understanding of the learning area or subject, and be able to arrange, categorise and*

*present it to my learners in ways which will better enhance their understanding within that particular context of the teaching and learning process. And secondly to continuously review my strategy and develop new ways of improving learning.*

For this reason experiencing teachers' professional identity or assuming the role of the teacher comes with diverse responsibilities for the student teacher. It is the student teacher's response to such responsibilities that leads to professional development or frustration in the teaching profession. Cole (2004) postulates that student teachers fail to develop professionally because they focus on why they need to change and what they need to change but neglect learning how to negotiate and implement change. Adding to this, he argues that professional development is perfecting practice (or teaching as far as education is concerned), by acquiring new strategies, skills, ideas and attitudes required for meaningful change to occur. Without these tools, the student teacher's professional development is therefore far-fetched. Experiencing teachers' professional identity therefore provides the student teacher with the opportunity to encounter and respond to challenges first hand thereby building a platform upon which he or she should be guided to develop. But this seldom happens according to Britzman (2003) who postulates that teacher education establishments and programs provide students with fragmented knowledge and theories in ill-designed courses while the school environment gives the student teacher the platform to apply this knowledge. Student teachers therefore have the uphill task of utilizing their fragmented knowledge and adequately delivering lessons to learners when they assume the role of the teacher. Britzman (2003) adds that these traditional or ill-designed courses have proved ineffective in terms of equipping student teachers for their future profession. It is clear that experiencing teachers' professional identity is an asset to the student teacher and teacher educators. Teacher education programs should use the feedback provided by student teachers to design courses and to improve pedagogy. It is therefore clear that this experience lays a complicated demand on the individual self of the teacher.

## XII. MULTIPLE SELF

Experiencing teachers' professional identity also places a complicated demand on the multiple self of the student teacher. The multiple self of the teacher refers to the multiple roles the teacher assumes or plays to the learners. Some of these roles include: caregiver, parent, social worker, counselor and many others. Owing to the fact that these roles are professions in themselves, has made the participants see them as multiple or different faces of the teacher. For this reason the teacher has an individual self which has to do with teaching and a

multiple self which has to do with the different roles he or she performs within the school environment.

Victor another participant stated that the different responsibilities which she had to cater for when experiencing what it means to be a teacher were very complicated. Having specialized in the Foundation Phase, she is expected to become a parent to her learners. And being a parent, she added, meant different things to different people and her learners also expected her to care for them as their parents would. Due to the fact that the learners all come from different homes with different parents who treat them differently, it becomes very complicated for her to become a parent to all her learners. Whiskey also corroborated Victor's story with his own experience. He stated that:

*I had to be very sensitive and vigilant as a teacher since some of my students were experiencing diverse challenges and chose to speak to me instead of the school counselor because I was younger. Some told me deep and dark secrets while others wanted advice on how to win a girl they believe they are in love with. Counseling or advising them on what to do was very complicated especially when some of the troubles they were going through were bigger than me. To further complicate the situation, some made me promise not to tell anyone what they told me therefore it was difficult getting help for them from the school counselor or other members of staff.*

These multiple tasks of teaching, counselling, parenting and the rest become very complicated for the student teacher to handle, as it places demands on the multiple self of the teacher. Naidoo (2012) postulates that teaching is more often than not a socially constructed exercise which requires elucidation, negotiation and renegotiation of meanings built around the classroom. Therefore teachers develop professionally when they build up and implement personalised meanings of issues and phenomena in their practice. For, as Cole (2004) puts it, accumulating new knowledge, experiences and skills would be useless for a teacher until it is put into practice. For this reason the student teachers' experiences of teachers' professional identity should be used to improve modules in teacher education programmes, their strengths and weaknesses should be taken into consideration and necessary steps taken to make sure that their challenges become stepping stones for them to grow in practice.

These experiences accumulated by the student teacher can be used by teacher educators to redesign teacher education courses to make provision for basic training to be provided to the student teacher to handle such circumstances. In such circumstances the student teacher therefore develops professionally as he or she gains new skills and is able to handle the challenges he or she faced before. Experiencing teachers' professional identity therefore places a complicated demand on both

the individual self and the multiple self of the student teacher. He or she doesn't only teach but also assumes diverse roles.

### XIII. PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

Stenberg (2010) defines professional development as the process of expanding and increasing self-knowledge. She adds that the more the self-knowledge of the teacher increases, the more apt his or her decisions will be in the teaching and learning process. This is because self-knowledge empowers teachers to recognize how, why and when they teach the way they do. The lack of self-knowledge will cause a teacher to be lead or controlled by unexamined ideas, beliefs and cultural myths not forgetting fear. Gameda, Fiorucci and Catarci (2013) postulated that professional development comes as a result of all learning experiences and the structured and organised activities which are meant to be of benefit whether directly or indirectly to the student teacher, teacher or any organ or person within the teaching and learning process who contributes to the quality of education. Student teachers therefore need to develop professionally to become teachers and also to gain a variety of teaching skills and these comes as a result of learning experiences and a deep sense of self (Beauchamp & Thomas, 2009).

### XIV. BECOMING A TEACHER

The ultimate aim of teacher education is to produce teachers and this is done by training student teachers until they graduate or phase out into the teaching profession. As such experiencing teachers' professional identity is all about becoming a teacher in the classroom; disposing of your statues as a student and assuming that of the teacher and performing the duties associated with it. Meijer, Graaf, and Meirink (2011) postulated that student teachers are required to use every resource at their disposal such as portfolios, mentor reports and feedbacks, teachers' lesson plans, their reflection-reports and many others to monitor and foster their development into teachers. Experiencing teachers' professional identity is what provides the student teacher with those resources. To the participants of the study experiencing teachers' professional identity was all about becoming a teacher. Yankee one of them stated that;

*Once I stepped into the class I didn't want the learners to see me as a student teacher who is learning how to teach, I dropped everything both physically and psychologically that associated me to a student and fully became a teacher. I believed that this will improve my performance and increase my knowledge about the responsibilities and processes a teacher is involve in as he or she becomes involve in the teaching and learning process. Also owing to the fact that one of the teachers in the school abandoned*

*his class to me once I arrived the school, I had to be to be the teacher of the class.*

Schepens, Aelterman and Vlerick (2009) argued that student teachers often consider development to be the ability to do things better than before and those aspects which improved in their practice or the things they were able to do better and neglect how those things were improved. Teacher education and everything about it aims at helping the student teacher to become a teacher. As such when he or she goes into the school and assumes the responsibility of the teacher, his or her drive is growing in the practice and becoming a teacher. This progress or improvement in practice is what guarantees professional development for the student teacher.

## XV. TEACHING SKILLS

Experiencing teachers' professional identity is all about the exhibition or utilization of the teaching skills learned during teacher education. Wragg (2005) defines teaching skills as the strategies utilized by teachers to enhance learners' learning in the teaching and learning process and which are recognized by curriculum experts or assessment experts as skills. He continues that every skill has the capacity to be repeated time and time again and concludes that these skills should be analyzed from a broader perspective of activity such as classroom management, questioning, explaining, flexibility, versatility.

Tangoone of the participants of the study, believed that assuming a teacher's role is all about demonstrating his thinking skill in the classroom. He believed it is quite necessary for meaningful learning to take place in the classroom because;

*There are times when you plan a lesson and write down examples you are going to use but while in class you discover that your examples have not been well understood. As such your thinking skills have to come in play so that new examples can be constructed which will ease learners understanding.*

As such thinking skills are of outmost importance as far as experiencing teachers' professional identity is concerned. Student teachers therefore need to develop a strong thinking mentality or habit which will enable them to stand tall in the face of any challenge.

Cognitive skills are other teaching skills which are of vital importance as far as experiencing teachers' professional identity is concerned according to Yankee, another participant in the study. He stated that;

*In the classroom, this skill enables the student teacher to make quick and precise decisions based on changing circumstances and also amend lesson plans and teaching strategies to accommodate certain unforeseen circumstances. This is so because its development or cultivation provides the student*

*teacher with a wealth of information about the processes and random circumstances that might occur during the teaching and learning process. It makes him or her aware of what might or might not happen in the classroom and equips the student teacher with the necessary tools to deal with them.*

Kyriacou (2007) argued that teachers build a catalog of reactions and behavioral patterns from which they pick the most suitable to deal with impromptu situations ranging from learners not being able to do the work they are supposed to do, to the broader prospects of disruptive behavior or failing in an assessment task. He adds that the teacher's profession is quite tedious in its early years to beginning teachers because they have to develop their expertise of "knowing what to do and being able to do it" (Kyriacou, 2007, p.3). And this explains why many teachers leave the professional during their first few years of practice. Therefore teacher educators need to ensure that the development of these skills or expertise becomes part of the teacher education program such that student teachers will be fully equipped with these skills which will in turn ensure their smooth functioning in the teaching and learning process. The development of these skills by the student teacher ultimately leads to his or her professional development.

## XVI. CONCLUSION

To complete the teacher education program without experiencing teachers' professional identity is like being immersed in water but not getting wet. Experiencing teachers' professional identity is of vital importance for every student teacher since it helps build their arsenal of knowledge and approaches. In experiencing teachers' professional identity, the student teacher becomes entangled in the proverbial web of teaching. He or she becomes acquainted with what happens in the classroom and starts preparing his or herself for the eminent change of phase. Experiencing teachers' professional identity psychologically prepares the student teacher for the complicated task that awaits him or her in the future. Before fully becoming a teacher, he or she is given a glimpse of what it means to be a teacher and the kind of demands it places on the teacher as well as the kind of responsibilities he or she has to take on as a teacher. Through this experience, the student teacher also knows and understands how to handle the diverse challenges he might or will go through when he or she becomes a teacher. Teacher educators and stakeholders should consider the challenges student teachers go through when experiencing teachers' professional identity and take the necessary steps to meeting these challenges. The reports of student teachers' mentors should be treated on an individual basis and adequate steps taken to ensure that the student teacher develops professionally.

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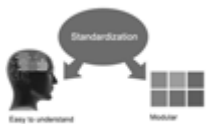
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