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Volume 57 #1

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Honing the Practice Mindfulness for Educational Leaders

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A computer search of the word "mindfulness" renders a veritable cornucopia of definitions. The process emanates from the Buddhist and Hindu practice of meditation. It is not our intention to dwell on the religious association. For many, the spiritual origin and connotation of the tradition of meditation have hindered its acceptance. The development of Jon Kabat-Zinn's *Mindfulness-Based Stress Reduction (MBSR)* program in the 1970s began to forge a more secular consideration of mindfulness. Today it is accepted that mindfulness refers to a state of mind while meditation is its primary but not an exclusive tool of achievement.

Educational leaders are responsible for establishing school and college conditions that energize their teachers and professors. These milieus tend to be lively and complex habitats. Leaders must be informed about what is going on in their work environment. While they must consider what has happened, what is happening, and what will be happening, the condition of mindfulness concentrates on what is happening, being conscious in the current moment.

With so many responsibilities, leaders frequently rely on the concept of autopilot. This is the behavior that we all engage in when we attend to various tasks without paying great attention to what we are doing, almost doing it by reflex, such as checking attendance. The Harvard Gazette (2010) indicates that autopilot is our state of mind, approximately 47% percent of the time. Considering the demanding situations that leaders frequently find themselves, this state of *mindlessness* has its practical aspect in handling routine circumstances. But anything worthwhile doing is only beneficial in the proper amount – more is not better.

Just as pilots rely on an airplane's autopilot for part of their time flying time, they must also disengage it and take over the controls at different points. What do leaders need to do when they mindfully take over the reins? As a term, mindfulness encompasses the dual aspects of the state of mind and personal dispositions. Depending on which text you read, a kaleidoscope of merits and conditions compose mindfulness. For example, being in the present moment and paying attention, forming an intent, being nonjudgmental, listening, accepting, having curiosity and kindness is among its cited components.

Being in the Present Moment and Paying Attention

In many conversations, we are planning our response rather than fully listening to the other person. You would not expect your physician to prescribe you medication before he diagnosed your problem. Inherent in the concept of being in the present moment is removing our thoughts and expectations from past events or future happenings. We become focused on the here and now, giving it our full undivided attention to the present moment. Jennings (2015) refers to the focus of the present moment as an awareness in which you detect everything in your consciousness. Sustaining this condition can be difficult, and we need to recognize that our minds will wander, but when we become aware of this, we guide our attention back to the present moment. Awareness of your distraction and reengaging in the present moment is the practice of mindful awareness.

Kabat-Zinn (2012) stipulates that paying attention is a trainable practice that leaders can fine-tune. At the same time, Gunaratana (2011) asserts that awareness is cultivated through the process of concentration. Meta-cognition is the psychological term for our understanding of our sensations, thoughts, ideas, and emotions, which lead us to consider our experiences more objectively. Gunaratana (2011) postulates that paying attention can enhance our understanding of our thoughts, words, and actions. More objective consideration of these attributes can lead to making better choices both on the job and in life.

Forming Intent

As good leaders, we have developed value systems that enhance our motivation and nurture a visualization for the direction of our actions. Just as we have benchmarks for student progress in school, reflection on our practice can serve as a beacon to guide what we intended to do. For example, if I plan to remain calm when working with a particular difficult faculty member, and I begin to feel a bit agitated, I can remind myself of my intention and make appropriate emotional adjustments. Gunaratana (2011) observes that if we fail to see the consequences of our actions, we are destined to stumble. While Jennings (2015) notes that we do not have to have an endpoint, but rather have an inspiration that helps us stay on course. We should consider what it is we want to happen today and determine how we want to behave.

A sense of morality is directly linked to intended behavior. Both Gunaratana (2011), Piaget (1932), and Kohlberg (1973) all propose that there are three levels of moral development. And, in the case of Kohlberg, three sub-stages. The initial level is adherence to a set of rules and regulations that are prescribed by someone else. The next stage involves following stipulated rules, even when not being monitored. The highest stage entails not necessarily following rules that are dictated by authority but rather behaving on our principals. This final stage is frequently referred to as ethics. Within the third stage, one considers all the variables in a situation and attempts to act creatively and appropriately.

Being Nonjudgmental

Elements of Covey's (2011) 7 Habits come to play in this section because individuals have to see and listen to the entire situation and give equal weight to their own needs and those of others. Gunaratana (2011) indicates that we need to be free from emotions such as greed, dislike, envy, and other self-serving actions that inhibit us from seeing the other person's perspective. Hence a deeper level of consciousness is needed.

Covey (1989) informs that successful leaders have a requirement to understand their stakeholders. To build listening skills for both spoken words and emotions. Covey goes on to convey that next to physical survival, the greatest need of a leader's stakeholders "... is to be understood, to be affirmed, to be validated, [and] to be appreciated" p. 241. After careful listening, a leader can then focus on prompting problem-solving

Being nonjudgmental is not intended to control or suppress our thoughts but paying attention to our experiences without judging them or attaching a label on them is essential. O'Brian (n.d.) expresses the brief that as we watch our behavior in this way we are less likely to act upon chronic ways of thinking reflexively. Thus we experience a new sense of freedom and choice in selecting our behaviors. Buller (2012) further observes that while leaders are frequently under pressure to make decisions rapidly, hurried decisions do not predominantly relate well with the quality of our choices. Mindful leaders allow time to deal with our experiences as experiences and not judgments. Buller cogently observes that a leader should make two lists. The first list should be options that are likely to produce decisions that they will not wind up regretting. The second list is a list that they might potentially regret. Then they should think of what the outcome they most hope will result from their decision. Mindfulness increases a leader's conscious awareness of what events are happening around them and allows them to consider how their actions will affect the surrounding situations. Leaders recognize that what they do does matter. Buller believes that

leaders should stop, take a breath, observe, and then proceed. Keeping in mind that the leader's presence and engagement with their stakeholders are vital.

Acceptance

The concept of "acceptance" is commonly misunderstood. It does not mean that whatever we think we should accept. Kabat-Zinn (2012) postulates that the notion of "... acceptance means realizing how things are and finding ways to be in a wise relationship with them. And then to act, as appropriate, out of clarity of vision" p.130.

When engaging in various meditation processes, individuals are encouraged to observe their feelings simply. When both positive and negative emotions emerge, accept them; however, don't get constrained by them. It is nearly impossible to be objective concerning our thoughts if we are not willing to accept and acknowledge our thoughts as they occur. McKay and West (2016) contend that mindful acceptance aims to understand how to tolerate distressing emotions. Lindsay, Young, Smyth, Brown, & Creswell (2018) assert that the process of acceptance is a critical aspect of mindfulness training for reducing stress.

Acceptance should not be confused with inaction. Segal (2016) indicates that it is not uncommon for people to struggle with the concept of acceptance, further suggesting that it is helpful to remind ourselves of three points. First, acknowledge negative sensations, for a minute, to consider appropriate action. Keep in mind that accepting is not synonymous with resignation. Second, rebuff the thought that the existence of negative emotions is risky to your mental health. Instead of being unwilling to acknowledge negative thoughts or feelings can lead to significant critical patterns in your mind. Finally, acceptance can empower you to work through the distasteful experience. Working through difficult emotions requires time and effort that is sustained over time.

Curiosity and Kindness

Naumburg (2017) indicates that when we are curious, we are engaged in active exploration, positing that curiosity has the additional value of it is nearly impossible to be curious and angry at the same time. Further, Raffa (2020) denotes that a critical component of a successful exchange of ideas is the asking of salient questions. When questions surface and are fashioned from a place of inquiry, minus judgment, and/or bias, a different line of discourse and interaction emerges. She contends that communication is an art, and curiosity is its brush.

The concept of a growth mindset, as advocated by Dweck (2006) and Raffa (2020), specifies that the driving force behind a growth mindset is curiosity. Open-mindedness directly relates to how leaders approach new ideas. Additionally, Covey (1989) explains curiosity is an excellent attribute for leaders because people are naturally drawn to those individuals who show interest in them.

Leppma (2012) indicates that mindfulness meditation accentuates caring and a kind connection with others. Neff and Dahm (2019) add that when people grapple with challenging struggles, personal miscalculations, disappointments, and problems, self-compassion reacts with kindness rather than critical self-judgment, knowing that imperfection is an aspect of the collective human experience.

Meditation

Earlier, we referred to mindfulness as a state of mind. Meditation is the primary, although not exclusive, means of achieving the state of mindfulness. Advocates of meditation consider it training or practice in achieving awareness and nurturing a healthy sense of perspective. When meditating, one does not try to create a void of thought or feelings; instead, you are developing a sense of observation that is not burdened with judgment.

In essence, meditation is a practice or perhaps an exercise. Consider golf as a form of exercise. As a beginner, you would not expect to play like Phil Mickelson or Tiger Woods. It is through instruction and repetitive practice that you hone your skills. Similarly, meditation requires sustained practice. This requires a sense of commitment. While few people think that they have an hour a day to sustain meditation, there are alternatives. Variations of meditation can take as little as five minutes per day, and Buller (2019) provides excellent options to classic meditation. Jennings (2015) describes two forms of meditation called focused attention and open monitoring. Focus based meditation involves sitting on the floor in an erect posture with crossed legs bringing attention to a set target, breathing being an example. This is not essential. For example, both authors have had knee replacements and spine surgeries that would be debilitating to this style of meditation. In comparison, open monitoring uses the flexible notion of attention, awareness, and acceptance. Buller's (2019) offers an array of open monitoring practices to foster mindfulness. He maintains that what is necessary is that you should position yourself in a way that encourages alertness but is not favorable to falling asleep.

Once in your comfortable position consider setting a timer for five minutes? For most neophytes to meditation, developing a focal point is recommended. Typically this is a concentration on one variable. Breathing is the most recommended focal point. Our breath is controllable but, by default, independent. One can choose not to breathe for just so long, and then the body will autonomously take over. Buller (2019) observes that there is a direct relationship between your breathing and mood that vacillates between cause and effect.

It is not our intention to provide a tutorial on the physical conduction of meditation. There is an abundance of literature available with a simple computer search. For those interested in guided instruction, consider Stahl and Goldstein (2010) stress reduction workbook that includes a CD with 21 guided meditations. Additionally, Stahl, Melo-Meyer, and Koerbel (2014) published a workbook for the reduction of anxiety that includes a downloadable guide to 24 meditations.

In summary, mindful leaders invest the time to know both themselves and their stakeholders. This investment can pay high dividends, given that these leaders are more likely to lead by inspiration. We do not downplay set benchmarks and other metrics but keep in mind that these are only tools. It is the role of the leader to go beyond simple tools and cultivate inspiration.

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**Nipping Bullying in the Bud:
Identifying, Understanding, and Responding to the Classroom Bully**

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Introduction

Exposure to physical or verbal bullying at an early age is much more common now than ever before. Around 20 % of children ages 2-5 aged had experienced physical bullying and 15% of children had been teased (Temkin & Snow, 2015). This prevalence of bullying in early childhood is critical as this is a crucial time in social and emotional development including social competence, expression of emotion, and self-regulation (Belacchi & Farina, 2010).

Bullying is defined as repeated, unwanted, and aggressive behavior that involves a real or perceived power imbalance between the aggressor and the target (Sampson, 2009; Smith, Barrio & Tokunaga, 2013). Bullying occurs in both direct and indirect means through physical (e.g., kicking, hitting, or pushing), verbal (e.g., teasing or insulting), and relational (e.g., excluding from a group or damaging someone's reputation) forms on those who are powerless to resist. Direct bullying is easily seen and occurs in the presence of the target, while indirect bullying is more subtle (Wright, 2003). This bullying has long and short-term effects on the lives of instigators and victims, negatively influencing their learning abilities with linkage to difficulty in physical and social-emotional development. The students who bully and are bullied have low self-esteem, experience depression, loneliness, or anxiety, and lack quality relationships including serious health problems (Morgan,2012).

Bullying can even start from preschool age and become more and more intense as the child grows older without intervention. In spite of this seriousness of bullying in early childhood education, much attention of the media and research is focused on older children (Snow, 2014). We were aware of the importance of intervention in bullying among preschool age children and tried to understand and intervene in bullying behaviors in their classrooms, with the hope that everyone would be more supportive and willing to take part in ways to prevent bullying so that children feel safer going out into the community and into school (Nansel, 2001).

Bully Intervention Program

With 20 three and four aged students in a state University child development center, teacher A observed bullying behaviors, applied intervention programs, and held a parent information session to identify, understand, and respond to the classroom bully over a three-month time period.

Classroom Observation

Teacher A anticipated that the inappropriate and unacceptable behaviors would decrease as children became more fully acclimated to the social group setting and learned about appropriate expectations. Although this occurred with the majority of the children, there remained inappropriate and unallowable behaviors among some children. To identify bullying behaviors, teacher A performed observations in the

classroom during week 1-2 by documenting the antecedent, behavior, consequences, duration, and setting. Teacher A recorded frequency with at which the students were presenting the behavior and noted specific time periods in which the students would exhibit or experience the most bullying behaviors.

The classroom observation revealed that name-calling, taking others' possessions, hitting, and pushing appeared to be the behaviors exhibited the most. Based on this observation information, teacher A designed three different interventions that took place during center time, with small groups and with individuals to lessen and prevent the behaviors observed.

Interventions

For the first intervention, during weeks 3-5, teacher A worked in small groups to promote children's social skills. The goal of the intervention was to develop pro-social behaviors and behaviors acceptable to group-life often referred to as good manners, sharing, taking a turn, respect for others, or asking for help. To achieve the goal, role-playing through scenarios was presented with puppets and children's books (e.g., "Why should I Help?", "Shubert Rants and Raves"). Specific strategies were applied to teach children to express needs and frustrations verbally. The teacher A also utilized immediate redirection of unsafe and inappropriate or negative behaviors with clear explanations and discussion about why the behavior was wrong and alternative actions and means to resolve problems.

For the second intervention, during weeks 6-8, teacher A targeted coping mechanisms and provided activities that showed children how to properly channel and control their aggression. The children were encouraged to see themselves as competent individuals who can resolve conflicts on their own through *Conscious Discipline* strategies. This center program incorporates social-emotional curriculum and classroom management with S.T.A.R. (Smile, Take a breath, And, Relax).

For the last level of intervention, during weeks 9-11, teacher A worked on establishing and maintaining healthy relationships. The children had opportunities to understand each individual's diversity and promote acceptance of differences by listening to books titled "Shubert's New Friend," and "Llama Llama and the Bully Goat." Then, teacher A discussed the importance of respecting differences and the ways of improving friendship.

During the interventions, two students (Child A and Child B) exhibited direct and indirect forms of bullying behaviors that often interfered with classroom activities and had adverse effects on peers. Child A (3 years old, female) showed the bullying behaviors of name calling and hitting during the initial observation period. Part of her bullying behaviors stemmed from her unease of the family circumstances of her mother who was expecting another child (Figure 1). Child A demonstrated behaviors such as taking the toys of peers which resulted in hitting and name calling. The teacher attempted interventions such as individual discussion and explanations of the child's behavior to help her understand inappropriate and appropriate behaviors. The child from whom the toys were taken would respond with physical violence, followed by Child A hitting in return which resulted in name-calling by both children. At the end of intervention, there was some improvement in name-calling which was reduced. The teacher noted that with this child, verbal recognition for appropriate behaviors appeared to be effective. The use of books on bullying and individual discussions with the child proved to be effective as well.

The primary bullying behavior of Child B (4 years old, male) was taking other's possessions. At the beginning intervention, he took a peer's toy and refused to give it back which resulted in the peer crying. He used aggressive threats and pushed the peer violently. The teacher intervened and asked Child B to return the toy to him, with the notation that he could play with the toy after the peer finished. At the end of the intervention, when a similar situation occurred, Child B asked the peer if he would share the toy or give it to him when finished playing with it (Figure 2).

Parent Info Session

While the intervention program was implemented, teacher A realized the necessity of solidarity with parents for better and consistent prevention of bullying. Teacher A held parent information session to address with them, the seriousness of bullying in preschool and share useful resources that could be applied at home. The teacher A informed the parents of characteristics and causes of bullying behaviors, underlying issues, and interventions used in the classroom. They discussed specifically the social skills their children needed to develop and strategies parents could use to help eliminate or avoid being a bully or a victim. At the end, teacher A provided practical suggestions and resources for parents to use in the

home and encouraged them to make cooperative efforts to prevent and/or intervene with bullying in the classroom.

Conclusion and Implication

Adjustment to life in a group setting does not occur immediately and is difficult for young children, especially those in a first experience in a preschool or a childcare center. It takes children some time to understand expectations, appropriate behaviors, what social norms are, how to make and keep relationships with friends, and how to navigate disagreements with peers. To learn respect and acceptance of others which are necessary to promote positive behaviors, children need to practice a script of how they would respond to a bully (Colino, 2016). Practicing with a script, or teaching children how to respond verbally, is one method of teaching appropriate responses to both a victim and one who initiates bullying behaviors.

It is important to assess and document bullying behaviors so that teachers can redirect and/or find useful interventions, depending on their behaviors and reasons of bullying. Teacher A started to observe and document children's bullying behaviors as a first step in teaching children how to appropriately respond to bully behavior. The class observation is proof that documentation of occurrence of behaviors is essential in the prevention and intervention of bullying and victimization. Because self or peer report about bullying is not applicable for preschoolers, teachers need to carefully address and document the kinds of bullying behaviors demonstrated with identification of the ones who exhibit this behavior or who are referred to as the bully and the children identified as the victims. Written documents such as an observation log, provide details of information for identifying risk factors for students who may bully or become victims of bullying as well as respond in a timely manner.

Research notes that teachers tend to ignore students' bullying behaviors with little or no concern and with little attention given to the problem both of the bully and the victim (Olweus, 2004). Based on the documentation logs, Teacher A identified the children who showed bullying behavior more often and in specific situations. To avoid bullying before it happens, it is helpful to understand reasons that trigger bullying behaviors. Teacher A noticed that children increased hurtful behaviors when their play was

interrupted or when someone disturbed them. Sickness and fatigue can be triggers of increased bullying behaviors. This shows that not only external reasons, but also internal causes, not easily perceived, need to be uncovered. Teachers can reduce the factors that are provoking and troublesome, and establish successful strategies to improve prosocial behaviors.

After recognizing the problem of the aggressor, and the target and understanding what is going on with them, teachers may be able to take proper action in response to the negative behaviors and encourage the positive behavior. The intervention activities teacher A developed served as a way to decrease bullying and improve the overall learning environment—healthy emotional, mental, and social development. Teachers can utilize books, puppets, role-play, art, or music activities for children use in practicing and resolving problematic situations in a constructive way and in ultimately building health relationships (Colino, 2016). Teacher A used problematic situations for guiding children to understand appropriate and inappropriate behaviors focusing one-on-one interaction. One of the practical strategies to change children’s negative actions is *Stop, Coach, and Engage* (Storey&Slaby, 2013). Teachers simply say “Stop” to immediately block bullying rather than scolding or lecturing and then talk about the issues later. For the victims, it is effective to “Coach” them to respond with firm attitudes by speaking up for themselves. Teachers also need to “Engage” bystanders to help them support the victims, for example, inviting them to their play or comforting them. Further, it is necessary for young children to be provided a variety of hands-on experiences in order to cultivate the attitudes of respect and acceptance and positive behaviors.

As Belacchi & Farina (2010) emphasized, teachers play a critical role in promoting children’s social-emotional development. Teachers should try to (1) uphold clear, consistent expectations and consequences to inappropriate behaviors, (2) help children regulate their emotions, (3) understand their emotions, (4) help children understand that others may have different emotions, and (5) provide activities that foster children’s prosocial abilities.

Final Thoughts

As teacher realized the importance of parent involvement in bullying interventions and that teachers need to connect and cooperate with parents for effective intervention and prevention of bullying. Parents tend to be unaware of, or unconcerned, about their child's bullying behavior and those experiencing bullying. To appropriately address bullying and respond effectively to both the victim and the bully, parents or guardians need to be cognizant of their children's behaviors and carefully observe if aggressive behaviors become repetitive and more intensive. Likewise, education of the victim and of the parents of the victim is of value and should not be neglected. Focusing on the individual harmed initially, is an appropriate response of a classroom teacher or a parent; however, this is only the beginning when describing an intervention program for victims of bullying or aggressive behavior in the home or in the school environment. When children show warning signs such as feeling depressed for a long time or consistently resisting going to school without any specific reasons, it is necessary for parents to discuss with teachers to identify the reasons and request the use of assessment and documentation for verification of the issue. It is important for parents to understand that the learning process is a partnership in which the reinforcement of positive behaviors must be continued in home. Parents can be instructed about effective strategies to prevent children from bullying and from being bullied and practices to teach their children prosocial skills or coping mechanisms in correlation with the teacher and school. Parents, for instance, can educate their children using books about how to stand up for themselves and verbally express their emotions or thoughts to their friends. Positive feedback focusing on children's appropriate social behaviors rather than negative ones can be useful as a part of essential efforts to prevent bully. Teachers can help parents to use real life examples as a way to provide a practical opportunity for parents to teach children social skills. Parents can also teach through modeling appropriate interactions and responses. A parentrole model is a valuable tool in responding to conflict situations, in resolving social problems, and in aiding their children's interaction with their others. For bullying interventions and ultimately for children's health, for their development as a member of society, parent involvement and collaboration will maximize the teachers' practices to prevent bullying in the classroom or childcare center.

Lastly, parents can learn about ways to report situations adequately and ways to obtain resources to get help and build their own confidence in being pro-active on behalf of their child'. They also acquire information about agencies and individuals with whom they can work to support their children, including teachers, school counselors, social worker, or other community officials.

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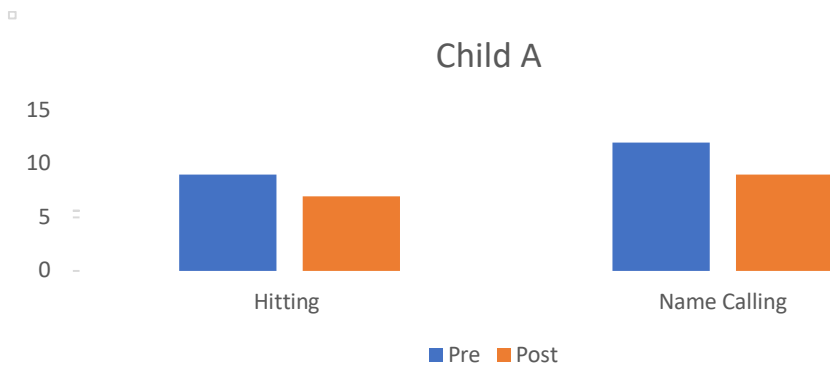


Figure 1. Child A Results

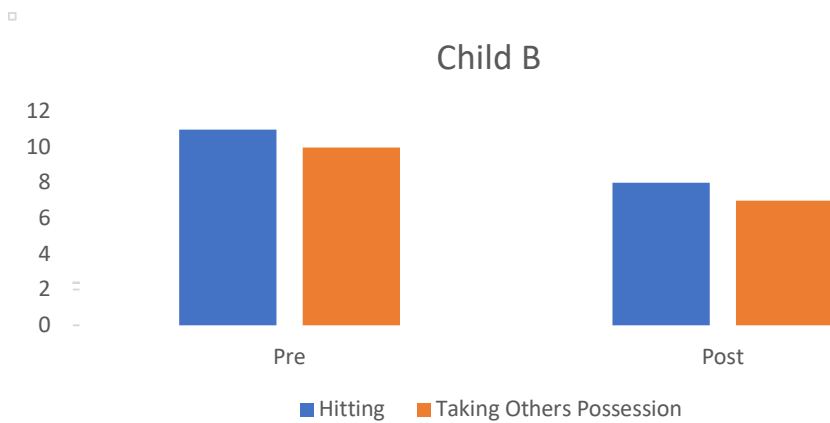


Figure 2. Child B Results

African Linguistic Elements and Cultural Practices in
American Blues

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"Memory is everything"

-Brenda Mary Osbey

The Blues is America's heart music. It was born out of the blood and pain endured by African slaves transplanted in a new land. As Africans became Americans, they created music that told their stories of alienation and pain, but also stories and sounds that reconstructed community, identity, and language. The blues was one of those rich musical expressions, the forefather of jazz, rock and roll, and R&B. When waves of African people from different origins and traditions met, cross-cultural exchanges, fertilization, and cross-fertilization occurred and transformed Africans and their cultural products into something new and powerful. This study is a language exploration of the blues to highlight many of its African continuities and the process of "creolization" (in the sense of Edouard Glissant) to be found in its lyrics and practices.

Africans were violently taken during the slave trade from specific regions of the continent where certain ethnic groups were predominant. Even though it has been documented that slaves were often "deliberately and effectively mixed to prevent interaction by members of the same ethnolinguistic group" (Alleyne, 1994), cohesive groups were also maintained in certain states because of desired specialized skills or certain dispositions as noted by traders. Whether cohesive groups or not, some main commonalities of the many African "tongues," world beliefs, cultural expressions and practices can be found in Black culture then and now. By recomposing and transforming African cultures to fit new world realities, the enslaved found forms of agency that could carry them through hardship, maintain their humanity, and provide tools of cultural resistance. The continuum of an African consciousness in

America expressed itself in a new African American culture which retained much of its African base. Many early scholars such as Carter G. Woodson and W. E. B. Du Bois have stressed early on the rich African “survivals” in the arts, technology, folklore, and spirituality in Black culture. Some of the most important areas of African survivals are in the areas of language and music. In addition to African influences in musical structure and performance, the blues carries strong African imprints in language, practices, ideas, and world conceptualization from some of the main African groups brought to North America.

A map provided by Mildred Milo Hall in Slavery and African Ethnicities shows some of the main ethnic groups transplanted in the Americas with their specific regions of arrival. These groups brought with them languages, cultural practices and beliefs that survived or blended into other new world practices. Her research shows that in the U.S, many of the first slaves who arrived were from the Senegambian region of Africa (Senegal and its coast). Later, in the mid-18th and 19th centuries, slave traders turned to more populated areas further south (along the Gold coast) and into Angola and the eastern edge of Africa (current Mozambique and its interior). In the U.S. for example, it is documented that “during the first years of the African presence in Louisiana, Le Page du Pratz, the director of the Company of the Indies (company involved in the triangular trade), noted that the Wolofs were called Senegal by the French colonists but they continued to be called Wolofs (Ddjolaufs) among themselves” (Alleyne, 1994). Africans from the Senegambian region brought with them specialized skills. For example, many groups from that region included individuals with highly developed metalworking skills. But if the Africans were from that particular region, they would have also included

groups from the Mandinka (Mandé) and the Fulanis (Fula or Fulfulbe). It should be noted that, at the time, these ethnic groups had been heavily Islamicized since the 9th century and that many would have also brought with them Islamic beliefs and practices to the Americas as well as literacy in Arabic. In addition to the indigenous traditions and languages of the major ethnic groups of the Senegambian and Sahelian regions, possible additional influences rooted in Islamic culture must also be considered. In the book entitled From Slave Shipto Harvard: Yarrow Mamout and the History of an African-American Family by Johnston, the stories of Yarrow Mamout or Ayuba Suleiman Diallo, Fulani slaves in Maryland, describe individuals who were literate in Arabic and practiced Islam. About Diallo, Johnston recounts: “Denton sold Diallo to a planter on Kent island...Diallo was put to work in the tobacco fields. However, the young aristocrat Fulani proved unsuited for hard labor and so was assigned the easier job of tending cattle. The Muslim later told Bluett that he would often leave the cattle and withdraw to the woods to pray” (Johnston, 2012). Very few studies of the blues have stressed the connection between West African Islamic practices and the blues. Researcher Sylviane Diouf was one of the first to clearly put forth the Islamic imprint on the genre. She first stresses that it can be determined that more than 30% of the African slaves between the 1600s and 1800s were originally Muslim. Despite being forced to give up their religion and old ways, West Africans in the new world found a way to voice and express through song and music their belief in God in the fields and in the dark of night. The field hollers, work songs, spirituals, and eventually the blues all retained the traces of the slaves’ original languages, diverse cultural expressions, and beliefs rooted in the many influences to be found in West Africa at the time.

Coastal South Carolina was also a major “port of entry” for slaves in the U.S. according to Peter Wood in Black Majority: Negroes in Colonial South Carolina from 1670 to the Stone Rebellion. The *Lowcountry* of South Carolina is often referred to as the “Ellis Island for African Americans” with the main difference being that Africans did not come voluntarily, but they were *forced migrants*. The cultivation and the economic success of rice cultivation in that area was a major factor in the need for slave labor. When planters noted the agricultural skills of Africans from today’s Sierra Leone and Ghana regions, a high demand for those regions (the “Windward” region of Africa as often mentioned in literature) ensued. This African area included groups such as the Temne and Mende. The moving story of Amelia Dawley from the Gullah islands in South Carolina shown in the documentary The Language You Cry In, demonstrates the power of memory through language. As a young girl, Amelia was taught a song passed down from generation to generation by her grandmother in a language she did not understand. Assisted by African American linguist Lorenzo Turner, they uncovered that the song was in Mende, a language from the Sierra Leone area and she was able to reconnect with her ancestral African ties and village. Knowing the specific ethnic groups and where African slaves came from allows for more detailed studies of African cultural influences in the Americas and the rekindling of the links between African Americans and their ancestral past.

Edouard Glissant developed a useful frame for understanding the refashioning of culture in the Americas through the process of “creolization”. Glissant explains the process of cultural agency and identity reconstruction using the concept of “traces.” He writes about creolized culture in these terms: “Il recompose par *traces* une langue et des

arts qu'on pourrait dire valables pour tous. Là où, par exemple, dans une communauté ethnique sur le continent américain on a conservé la mémoire des chants d'enterrements, de mariage, de baptême, de joie, de douleur, venus de l'ancien pays, et qu'on les chante depuis cent ans et peut-être plus dans diverses occasions de la vie familiale, l'Africain déporté n'a pas eu la possibilité de maintenir ces sortes d'héritage ponctuels. Mais il a fait quelque chose d'imprévisible à partir des seuls pouvoirs de la mémoire, c'est-à-dire des seules pensées de la *trace*, qui lui restaient il a composé d'une part des langages créoles et d'autre part des formes d'art valables pour tous [...]". (*Introduction à une poétique du divers*, p. 17). [it recomposes through traces a language and arts available to all.....he/she [the African] was able to create something unpredictable from the power of memory, from the traces left in his mind; from there he was able to create creole languages, but also artistic forms for all] (my translation). Traces of African cultural practices, languages, and worldviews are strongly present in the blues.

The Blues Man, Blues Woman, and the Griot/te Tradition

In West African societies, griots are the musicians, storytellers, and historians of the village. They are often attached to a prominent family, kings, and nobles to preserve genealogies. But some griots are also independent and travel around to lease out their services. Griots praise, give hope and stir the soul, but they can also use language to criticize and condemn. Bluesmen and women present many similarities with the griots of West Africa. First, they are specialized musicians and wordsmiths. From the hollers in the fields, storytellers and entertainers at night in the slave quarters to the evening porch fiddlers and traveling musicians with no fixed home but the next juke joint,

bluesmen and women have traditionally carried messages from the heart and the stories, not just of their personal experiences, but also the traces of the collective memory of Black folks. Even though African music is generally a collective practice, the personage of the griot often stands alone and tends to accompany himself/herself to perform as the central figure, just like the bluesman. String instruments such as the Xalam and the Kora are king with the Wolof and the Mandinka and are said to be the African “memory” or “trace” for the American banjo. Early fiddles used by slaves resembled the Sahelian goge with its bow and the riti (Nyanyeru) of the Fulani. In The Land Where the Blues Began, Alan Lomax writes: “through the work of performers like Sid Hemphill, Blind Lemon Jefferson, Charley Patton, and their like, the griot tradition has survived full-blown in America with hardly an interruption” (1993).

In terms of rhetoric and word artistry, the griot in West Africa is feared by many because of his/her reputation of having a “sharp tongue.” In his research about griots and blues performers, Lomax notes that “they [the griots] are social satirists whose verses, once on a time, dethroned chieftains.” Early on, blues men and women continued in this tradition: mocking lovers and their shortcomings, mocking power through satire, and at times, offering social and political commentary through their lyrics. Examples can be drawn from Bus Ezell’s “Obey Your Ration Laws” or Buster Brown’s “War Song”, to name a few. The tradition of providing social commentary was and continues to be strong in West African societies and carried through in the Americas with blues singers. Blues men have often been the ones mentioned in most reviews, but we cannot pass over the tremendous contributions of blues women in highlighting personal and social conditions from a Black woman’s perspective. Blasting

to pieces the stereotypical image of the “Mamy” and domestic servant, blues women sang of independence, wits, being the captains of their own ships, including sexual independence (which meant a lot in view of America’s long history of rape of Black women). Many of Spivey's songs were laced with expressions of sexual freedom in subtle ways, including “Good Cabbage”, “I'll Keep Sittin' On It if I Can't Sell It”, etc. Alberta Hunter’s “Yelpin' the Blues” is a direct reference to the determination and strength of women. You can also find political commentary in songs such as “Christmas Mornin' Blues” by Victoria Spivey in which she points to some of the negative aspects of America’s politicized and systemic racism. Spivey’s “Murder in the First Degree” has references to African Americans, especially women at that time, not being able to climb the social ladder as she laments about the common occupation for African American women at the time, domestic servant.

Another similarity between the blues artist and the griot is the traditional myth of their association with the “devil” or some obscure force. The story of Robert Johnson at the crossroads and his meeting with the devil is a seminal moment in blues folklore. The story goes that on a dark night while reaching US 61 and US 49 in Clarksdale, Mississippi, the devil heard Johnson’s despair and offered the bluesman extraordinary musical talent in exchange for his soul. After that encounter, Johnson rose to fame. Stories of crossroads play an important part in West African folklore with the crossroads symbolizing dilemmas, the making of decisions, and crossing boundaries. In African beliefs, strong spirits linger around crossroads. Demanding something precious in exchange for a musical talent is a common trope with griots in West Africa. For example, griot JuldehCamara, one of the leading Riti players (traditional African fiddle)

from the Fulani ethnic group in the Gambia, tells how a spirit or djinn met his father in the forest and taught him to play the Riti. The price for this musical gift was his father's eyes, though the djinn sweetened the deal by giving him "the gift to see what others cannot see."

African Linguistic Elements

Many African conceptualizations and linguistic elements are manifest in the language of the blues. In addition to looking for "traces" of the many African languages brought to the Americas, it is interesting to also look at what anthropologist Michael Agar terms "languaculture", which can help us understand an even more dynamic process at work. The concept reminds us that "a language includes not only elements such as grammar and vocabulary, but also past knowledge, cultural information, habits, and behaviors." In our case, the African cultural heritage, worldviews, and practices are embedded within the language of the blues. Languaculture in the blues is in the end a reflection of language used in everyday life historically by African Americans in certain contexts and milieux and at a certain point in time. As all languages, it evolves, some of it seeps through in the mainstream, maintains a place, or sometimes disappears. From a vocabulary standpoint, here are a few terms that have been directly plucked from the many languages in West Africa. Here is an interesting short list highlighted by Debra DeSalvo in [The Language of the Blues](#) to which I added some details in view of my knowledge of Wolof and many traditions in West Africa/the Sahelian zone in particular.

Dig: to "dig" something is to "get it". Linguist David Dalby traces the expression from the Wolof verb "degg", which means "to understand, to call attention to, to appreciate." Deggnga? "Do you get it"? Deggnga Wolof? Do you understand Wolof? An example would be in Albert

Collin's "Give Me My Blues": *"I play my music the only way I can. Play my music only, only way I can. Some people really dig it. Some just don't understand".*

Mojo: Muddy Waters' famous song "I got My Mojo Working" and many other blues songs refer to this seemingly fun sounding and mysterious term. One explanation of its origins is from the Fulanis of West Africa. In Fula (Al Pulaar), *mocca* means to cast a spell. Through time, it also referred to the material item of a "prayer bag" made out of twigs, nail clippings, or locks (also called a gris-gris or a hoodoo bag). Metaphorically in the blues, it was also used to express male sexual vitality and charisma such as in Muddy Waters' song. In "Louisiana Blues" by Fred McDowell, the singer talks about "a mojo hand" that can "fix" a lover: "I am going down to Louisiana to buy me a mojo hand/ I am going down to fix my baby so she won't have no other man."

Gris-Gris: Much of Louisiana and South Carolina received a significant percentage of individuals originating from the Senegambian region as shown by Dr. Hall. Among these, the Wolof, Mandinka, and Fulani, in particular. As mentioned, many of these groups had been Islamized as early as the 8th/9th centuries. The gris-gris is an amulet commonly worn by these groups. Traditionally, it is adorned with Islamic scriptures and other items (locks, nails, etc.) that call back to the ancestors for protection and to ward off evil spirits. They can also be attached to or suspended in homes or other places for protection. The gris-gris in the Americas took on additional characteristics from other groups such as the Bakongo who also use charm bags that contain medicinal herbs. The word comes from grigri in Wolof meaning "amulet" and in Mandinka as a verb "to shake." See Gris-Gris GomboYa-Ya by Dr. John.

They call me, Dr. John, The Night Tripper

Got my sizzling Gris-Gris in my hand

.....

They call me the Gris-Gris man

Got many clients

Come from miles around

Running down my prescription

I got my medicine, to cure all your ills

I got remedies of every description

Hey Now

(Gris-Gris Gumbo YaYa)

Hey Now

Chick: A term used to refer to a pretty young woman. Linguist David Dalby and Holloway point to the Wolof origin of the expression: “jigeen” which means a woman. The term seemed to have converged with the word “chicken” by mispronunciation to later be shortened to “chick.” In T-Bone Walker’s song *Long Skirt Blues*:

When I first met you, baby, you were a real gone chick

When I first met you, baby, you were a real gone chick

Now you've let your skirt down 'n' you know that ain't the lick

Jam: DaSalvo again points to a possible origin stemming from the Wolof word for “slave” and maybe referring initially to the gathering of slaves for entertainment, in Congo square for example. In my view, the Wolof term for “peace” can also add to our extrapolation. It is a common greeting response when people meet and gather around “Jammreckk” (peace only). Other convergences could be from the Arabic “jama” which refers to crowd gathering.

Juke: from the Wolof “dzug” meaning to misbehave. In Bambara (the language of the Mandika/Mande), you have “dzugu” which means to be wicked. The term brought about the English “juke-joint”, a place of unbridled fun, music, and dance. In addition to words and expressions, hidden African symbols can be found as part of the blues “languaculture”.

Hidden Symbols

Everyone in Chicago is familiar with the “Checkerboard” Lounge. It no longer exists, but the aura it carried and the big names associated with it were all part of the renowned Chicago Blues scene. Opened in 1972 on the South Side of Chicago, the club saw some of the greats grace its stage from Buddy Guy and Junior Wells to Muddy Waters and the Rolling Stones (on that infamous night of November 1981). But the **Checkerboard** is not only a name. In Black culture the design carries meaning and history inherited from Africa and later used to encode messages of freedom to those in bondage. Ideographic script is common amongst groups such as the Hausa, the Akan (and the Kente cloths), and the Igbo & Ekoi (Ejagham) people in Nigeria. In scripts such as **Nsibidi**, ideographics stand for love, marriage, divorce, illness, and other human conditions, but they also stand for values such as male power. Ideographics in these societies encode secret knowledge not available to outsiders.

For many groups in Nigeria and Benin, the spotted pelt of the leopard is often symbolized by a checkerboard pattern and refers to male power over society. Other meanings of the checkerboard can be found with the masks of the Hausa, the alternate black and white squares representing knowledge and ignorance. Freedom quilts and other strategies (notes) used by escaped slaves used ideographics to express very

precise instructions for the life and death voyage. The crossroad square was symbolized by a checkerboard type design. With all symbolism aside, playing checkers was also a common pass-time for African Americans early on. It did not require any cumbersome set up and captured the memory of ancient African games such as the Ashanti Oware game, Zamma in North Africa. Whether in rural or urban areas, checkers' games in all their variations (including pool checkers) were a meeting place, a space for community and fellowship. In an interview, expert player Alfred "East Point" Barnett describes the game in these words: "It was a popular pastime. Old men, as they almost always were, would set up boards in barber shops, on someone's porch, under a "shade tree"-any place two people could find seats. That was the beauty of checkers. In a pinch, you did not even need actual pieces. Soda caps would do just fine". The Checkerboard lounge in itself has become a torch symbol for the blues and a space where what originally began as Black music, has been shared and appreciated by people of all races and origins worldwide.

Many symbols that refer to the animal kingdom are recurrent in the language of the blues. There are many references to "king snakes" in blues lyrics. An example would be "Crawlin' Kingsnake Blues" by John Lee Hooker with some of the following lyrics:

You know I'm a crawlin' king snake, baby, and I rules my den

You know I'm a crawlin' king snake, baby, and I rules my den

I don't want you hangin' around my mate; wanna use her for myself

...You know you caught me crawlin', baby, when the, when the grass was very high

I'm just gonna keep on crawlin' now, baby, until the day I die

Because I'm a crawlin' king snake, baby, and I rules my den

The symbol seems to be used as a metaphor for virility and male domination. Snakes are part of the wide pantheon of spirits in African mythology. The Fon of Benin (Dahomey) who brought Voodoo practices and influences to our shores has Dan (also known as Dambala with its “3500 coils” whose power helped to create the universe. The people of Ouida, present pythons as guardian of wells (water is a precious commodity on the Sahel), but also the symbol of male virility. The classic “Catfish Blues” is another example of animal-symbolism in blues which extends along the lines of the “snake” used by many blues performers for powerful, sexual imagery.

Jim Jackson’s “Kansas City Blues”

I wished I was a catfish, swimming down in the sea;

I ‘d have some good woman, fishing after me.”

Ref: “Then I’ll move to Kansas City,

I’ll move to Kansas City;

I’ll move to Kansas City,

Babe, honey, where they don’t ‘low you.”(3)

Animal symbolism is very common in traditional African societies to stress individuals’ strengths or weaknesses, to also point to the supernatural characteristics of heroes or antagonists in tales and myths. Blues performers choose such symbols as their performance names: “Kingfish” (Christone Ingram), the band “Kingsnakes”, “Richard “Rabbit” Brown, or “Howlin’ Wolf”.

Proverbs in the Language of the Blues

Proverbs have always played an important role in speech, song, and poetic traditions in Africa. In West Africa, the culture of the Wolof, for example, highly values individuals

who are able to use an array of rich proverbs in conversation to illustrate a particular situation or teach values to a group. Ogede(1993) discusses the constant use of proverbs in praise songs in West Africa. In a similar fashion, proverbs appear in blues lyrics as a continuation of this African impetus to pepper one's speech with vivid imagery to prove a point or to reach for the memory of certain folk knowledge. You will also find in the blues items that clearly have a proverb structure and function proverbially within the song, but that were created by the singer or author. Finally, as A. Prahlad noted: "Though proverbial structure remained important and certain traditional items became a part of traditional verses, these items are often given different social meanings than they may have had or are applied in innovative ways to new situations." (Prahlad, 1996). Such strategies can be found in blues performances of Albert King, offering a variation of the commonly known proverb "Never burn your bridges behind you." He re-interprets it in this way: "Don't burn down down the bridge, cause you might wanna come back/And the grass ain't no greener on the other side of the track" (*Don't Burn Down the Bridge*). The folk saying "Don't fatten frogs for snakes" is reworked by Sonny Boy Williamson: "Took me a long time to find out my mistake/But I'll betcha my bottom dollar/I ain'tgonna fatten no more frogs for snakes." Contemporary blues singers today continue the tradition of incorporating proverbs in their lyrics in creative ways, keeping some of the basic structures, but carrying a different contextual meaning. Fernando Jones' title song "Blood is Thicker than Mud" (a variation of blood is thicker than water) is an example in this regard.

Conclusion

The blues is a musical genre that carries the unique and rich cultural imprint of Africans and their descendants in North America as it travelled from the deep south to the streets and clubs of Chicago and other big cities. My study only scratches the surface, but hopefully will encourage the use of the blues and music in general to uncover the hidden past and the African heritage contained in language that still lives on today.

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Social-Cognitive Aspects of Anthropomorphism in Children's Literature

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Abstract

Few studies of anthropomorphism of animals in children's literature have examined in depth the variety of animals and their human-like characteristics including types of clothing. The Little Golden Books published from 1942 to 1970 were examined for such anthropomorphism and identified more than ninety different types of speaking and non-speaking animals.

Introduction

Books for young children are a multimodal genre of literature that reflects social and cultural phenomena such as behaviors, gender roles, dress, communication, food, and living spaces (Markowsky, 1975). Authors' frequent use of animals with human characteristics in children's literature is a type of anthropomorphism that is multifunctional and helps children to identify with animals, show kindness towards animals, engage in fantasy, create a greater variety of characters with different personalities, and adds humor. Although picture books with anthropomorphism tend to contradict a biological perspective on teaching children about animals and, based on research evidence, have come under criticism for being misleading and even harmful (Hubben, 2017; Waxman, Herrmann, Woodring, & Medin, 2014; Zito, 2018), the intent in fiction is quite different from non-fiction. Amusement, novelty, and play are considerations even if the underlying intent is for the author to use the characters to convey an educational or moral lesson. Talking animals are part of a genre called animal fantasy (Dunn, 2011; Lynch-Brown, Tomlinson & Short, 2011).

Children's literature uses both text and illustrations to transport children into an imaginary play world where they can empathize with characters and explore deep, non-literal and often humorous meanings. The use of animals as people, showing emotion and making mistakes, creates a powerful emotional distance for the reader, especially when the story message is embarrassing, dangerous, or sends a message about morals or ethics. In addition, the stories may playfully resonate with a reader who shares similar experiences. Third-grade children and children of other ages relate more to animal than human characters when presented with both types of stories (Boyd & Mandler, 1955; Zito, 2018). Hubben (2017) notes that, however charming the story, it is the images that promote a lasting impression on the child. She argues that, based on many reader reports, these animals can create an emotional connection with the reader that leaves a lifelong indelible imprint. She also points out that many of the animal images are gender-free and this is true when the animals are not in clothing, but one significant aspect of the clothing is to emphasize both gender and the role of the animal in the story whether the animal is, for example, a small child or a parent.

History of anthropomorphism in literature

The use of animals as story characters that talk is an ancient genre commonly used as satire; for political or spiritual including religious messages; or for carnivalesque humor (Cosslett, 2002). Anthropomorphism in oral child and adult folklore has existed for centuries in many cultures such as African, Native American, and Latino. The animals frequently have cognitive attributes such as thoughts and beliefs, and personality attributes such as arrogance or wisdom. The first books considered children's literature were published in England in the 1740s and had a dual purpose of amusing and instructing

children. This was the time period when children were beginning to be recognized as not just miniature adults but as people with specific developmental needs including play. Children were considered closer to animals, having more imagination than adults, so animal stories with pretend characters were appropriate for children (Cosslett, 2002). From the 1840s to the 1940s the purpose of children's literature was similar, and written to help the child acquire knowledge and reading skills, and learn lessons about adult social expectations. Part of the playful enticement for reading in the 1840s was to use talking animals with human characteristics. The first attempt to add humor along with teaching social messages was in 1845 with Heinrich Hoffman's *Struwwelpeter* (Slovenly Peter) series of silly stories about such topics as disobedience. Another purpose for animal stories might have been to instill in children a kindness towards animals such as *Black Beauty* (Sewell, 1896) where it is the voice of the horse telling the story. *The Tale of Peter Rabbit* (1902) by Beatrix Potter is an example of Victorian children's literature where anthropomorphism in her stories was important and clothing played a significant role in the story lines and illustrations. In 1921 the well-known *Wind in the Willows*, with Frog and Toad, included animals with clothing who spoke like humans and provided humor in the stories (Grahame, 1908). By the 1950s a shift in visual thinking and narratives meant that some authors combined illustrations with their writing as picture book artists and storytellers. By the 1960s there was a new era of vibrant color in illustrations that resulted in the emergence of the true picture book with or without written narrative and character discourse.

Variations in how animals are used in stories

Arbuthnot (1964) grouped animal stories into only three categories: stories where the animals dress and act like people such as Grahame's *Wind in the Willows* (1921); stories where animals look like animals but talk, such as *Bambi* (1923), *The Puppy Who Wanted a Playmate* (1995) or *Rainbow Fish* (1992); and stories where the animals are just animals. She suggested that children progress developmentally from the first type to the third, for which there is little evidence. Only the first two types are anthropomorphic, but it is likely that there are other categories based on the degree to which the animals are dressed, speak and behave. For example, *Sheep in a Jeep* (1986) has animals without clothing, and they do not speak, but they show human like behaviors and cognition such as pulling a jeep out of mud with a rope.

One series where many of the books contain animals as characters is the Little Golden Books. This was a highly successful children's picture book franchise targeted to the age range 3-6 years. The Little Golden Books, first issued in 1942, revolutionized children's picture books because they were sturdy, available in general stores, and the cost was minimal compared to other children's books (Marcus, 2007). The books were written by many different authors and are still being published today. The earliest published books from 1942 included the well-known *Little Red Hen* and *The Lively Little Rabbit*. Later books such as *Bugs Bunny's Carrot Machine* (Carlisle, 1978) and *Hopping Hens Here* (Gikow, 2000) show that some books in the series began to be linked to television, movie and cartoon characters, thus reflecting social changes in what adults, especially publishers, thought would appeal to children.

Research questions

Anthropomorphism in children's literature has been discussed by several researchers, but few have examined in detail the types of animals and the variations in human-like features through dress and appearance in children's books for the three- to six-year-olds. This study explored several forms of anthropomorphism in different types of animals in the Little Golden Books from 1942 to 1970s. The research questions were, "What are the most common animals authors included in children's books? Were the animals those that are considered pets like cats and dogs, popular farm animals, or zoo animals? What were the variations in the degree of anthropomorphism such as limited or extensive clothing? Finally, what types of clothing were typical for different animals and the social and cultural implications such as a reflection of clear gender roles?"

Method

The Little Golden Books collection in the Strong Museum of Play in Rochester, New York was the data source for this study. The Museum awarded a summer research fellowship to the first author to access materials in the Sutton-Smith Library and Archives. From their extensive collection of the Little Golden Books, she extracted the books from 1942 to 1970 where animals were anthropomorphized, and these

were then examined for content and illustrations. Duplicate copies were excluded. These books consisted of 125 different titles that formed a convenience sample. The first step was to identify which animals the authors had included in their stories and to determine which animal types were most popular. Even if a particular animal was pictured several times in one book, it was only counted once for that book. Then, each book was coded on whether the animals spoke and whether they wore clothes or not. Finally, extensive notes on the characters, clothing, and examples of their speech were compiled.

Results

In 125 books there were 98 different types of animals. The most common was the rabbit, then cat, bear and pig found in 33-42 books. These were followed by the mouse, dog, fox, duck, and chicken in 14-31 books. Animals that were only found in a single book included the beaver, woodpecker, koala, badger, kookaburra, warthog, possum and a yak. We observed a trend in the Little Golden Books. The books varied and could be categorized as those with animals that 1. did not talk and behaved like animals, 2. did not talk but exhibited human-like behaviors, 3. did not wear clothes but did talk to each other or to humans, 4. wore minimal clothing and talked, and 5. wore elaborate and varied clothing and talked.

The number of books containing animals who spoke was 112 (90%) and 13 (10%) did not. In all of the books where the animals did not wear clothes, they did speak. In the books where animals did not speak, sometimes they made animal sounds. Out of the 125 books, 64 (51%) books had animals in clothing, and 46 (37%) books had animals who did not wear clothes. Fourteen (11%) had limited or few clothes like just wearing gloves or a scarf or jacket and one book had some animals with clothing and some without so was inconsistent. Books where the animals spoke but did not wear clothes varied from classics like *The Gingerbread Man* (1972) to cartoon books like *Tom and Jerry* (1951) to stories about farm or zoo animals. In contrast, other books across the time period had animals dressed in elaborate clothing including shirts, jackets, overalls and hats. A more detailed analysis of types of clothing revealed that most dressed animals did not wear shoes with only a few exceptions such as a chimpanzee called Muggs in *J. Fred Muggs* (1955). The classic clothing was dress and pinafore for the mother figure, and shirt and pants for father figure, with a variety of accessories such as a pipe.

Discussion

The Little Golden Books were published by many authors and some authors were also illustrators and others had different illustrators. There were a larger variety of animals as characters than expected. Choice of animals was likely an author and/or publisher decision when writing the story and most seemed to select familiar, soft and endearing animals like rabbits and cats. However, other animal characters are common because of associated personalities like the fox being cunning. Classic fairy tales like *Goldilocks and the Three Bears* (1973) and the *Three Little Pigs* (1948) had the bear or the pig as the central animal. Farm animal stories were more common than zoo animal stories and likely related to socio-cultural factors in that many children lived in rural communities. Some of the Little Golden Books became linked to popular culture of cartoons and comics where a different kind of animal such as Bugs Bunny was portrayed.

Surprisingly, more books than expected had animals speak, but not in clothing. The purpose behind this choice must be related to the degree of fantasy the authors wished to include. The clothing was classic and traditional, associated with traditional gender-based roles. These books were up through the 1970s, so maybe since the 70s there might be changes. The one common feature of not having animals in shoes except indoor slippers might be intentionally a way to retain some characteristics of the animals so they do not look too human.

There were four categories of children's books with anthropomorphism of animals, and with an additional category of animal stories with no anthropomorphism, that would make five categories rather than Arbuthnot's three categories (Arbuthnot, 1964). This suggests that there is a continuum of how anthropomorphized animals are presented in children's literature especially in relation to dress and communication.

Limitations and Future Directions

This exploratory research was based on a large sample of Little Golden Books but did not include all books with animals and did not extend beyond the 1970s to the present day. It also did not examine the

varying degrees of anthropomorphism in dress and appearance related to animal types. Additional analyses could further explore the cultural and social aspects of these animal characters and their behaviors. Another aspect of the anthropomorphism is investigating what the authors of these books had the animals say and how the words they used are suitable for children's reading levels. Although most of the Little Golden Books had an educational consultant, as indicated inside the books, the complexity of the language in some cases seems in advance of the assumed age of readership and this may also vary from the 1940s to more recent books.

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Assessment: The key to better planning, organizing, targeting, evaluating, and validating learning

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Abstract

The purpose of this study is to explore the relevance, importance, and application of assessment for better planning, organizing, targeting, evaluating, and validating student learning. The goal is to help the teacher plan and implement meaningful content with significant learning outcomes. It is important for teachers to understand the different types of assessment and what purpose each serves in the daily planning of instruction, the inclusion of the Common Core Standards, goals and objectives, strategies to use to help students learn more effectively, different types of activities designed to provide the applicable experiences for students, and the data needed to be collected to help the teachers better help their diverse students' needs.

Introduction: What is assessment?

By definition, "Assessment is a process that involves collecting information (data) about a student for the purpose of making decisions" (Swanson& Watson, 1989). As used in education, it is a problem-solving approach that helps teachers and other education personnel best serve the student's needs.

Another definition, "...assessment is defined as a process for documenting, in measurable terms, the knowledge, skills, attitudes, and beliefs of the learner (Delclos, Vye, Burns, Bransford, & Hasselbring, 1992; Poehner, 2007).

According to Huba and Feed (2000), "Assessment is the process of gathering and discussing information from multiple and diverse sources in order to develop a deep understanding of what students know, understand, and can do with their knowledge as a result of their educational

experiences; the process culminates when assessment results are used to improve subsequent learning” (p.8).

Purpose of the Study and Methodology

The purpose of this study was to search the literature on assessment in order to ascertain how different researchers and authors define the concept, what purposes are assigned to assessment in education, and assessment as used in the learning environment, and what type of assessments are available to teachers in the traditional sense and in online settings.

In order to carry out this study, the authors searched the available literature online, used articles from magazines, and textbook information relating to assessment and teaching/learning.

Additionally, a survey was sent out to thirty educators to find out their perspectives on assessment and its use in teaching and learning. Twenty-one surveys were returned and results are included in the Findings below. The findings are discussed in the specific section of this paper below.

Review of the literature

Beirne and Velsor (2012) state that “Assessments help students to know what the expectation is for demonstrating what they have learned” (p. 73). This statement validates the fact that teachers need to use assessment as a means to an end. The end being what the students produce. That is the product.

In lesson planning or any other activity that students are engaged in, teachers need to focus on national and state standards that help to guide learning for each grade level and content areas in the K-12 educational system. Standards are further broken down into general goals and goals into specific learning objectives. Teachers follow this planning process as a way of focusing on what is to be learned by the students and how the learning is to be assessed and evaluated as teachers go through the lesson steps to provide students with a step by step approach of breaking down important concepts so that students can understand, practice, and internalize the information.

Assessments are needed throughout the planning, implementing, and evaluating of the learning (Beirne & Velsor, 2012). Assessments can be divided into different ways but the most common include diagnostic assessment, formative assessment, and summative assessment.

According to Johnson, Musial, Hall, Gollnick and Dupuis (2005), teachers must follow certain principles in order to design or use high quality assessment. These principles include the following (p. 407):

- *Base assessments on the Common Core Standards for learning.
- *Represent student performances of understanding in authentic ways.
- *Embed assessments in the school’s curriculum and instruction.
- *Provide multiple forms of evidence about student learning.
- *Evaluate standards without unnecessary standardization.

Making sure that students are progressing effectively and are learning the skills and concepts curriculum, is an effective way of evaluating the performance of students in our school. However, the reality is that parents and others are depending on the results of standardized tests which compare students' performance and learning to how well other students are doing on these tests. Thus, it is important that assessments used in the classroom should strengthen students' skills and knowledge in order to also perform well on the standardized tests (Johnson, et al, 2005). Classroom instruction, thus, needs to "assess the content standard, the instruction, the process (of teaching), and the product" (Beirne & Velsor, 2012, p. 74). It stands to reason that if teachers plan, implement, and assess the learning effectively, students will be able to be successful in any type of testing situation.

Diagnostic Assessment (Pre-Assessment)

This type of assessment is used for the purpose of gathering data from the students to find out what they know or don't know about a specific skill area. The data gathered provides teachers with specific information about how to plan lessons, unit plans, strategies to use in instruction, and activities that will be specifically tailored to the needs of the students. Some examples of diagnostic assessment, include (Johnson, et al, 2005, P. 398):

Mind maps Student reflection	Graphic Organizers Checklists	KWL Charts Discussions
Student Interviews Observations	Flow Charts Questioning	Journal Entries Pre-test

Formative Assessment

This type of assessment is ongoing from start to finish when presenting a lesson, a unit plan, projects, and other assignments. It is important that teachers use a variety of ways to check students' understanding of the content or skills being presented in any subject area. The focus is on students' performance as the learning information is presented with the intent being to help and encourage the students to complete their activities successfully. Gambrell et al (2007) state that "Formative Assessment is conducted in situ, or as the process of teaching and learning unfold" (p. 274).

Black, Harrison, Lee, Marshall, and Wiliam (2004) "identified four central types of formative assessment that seemed to matter most for students: (a) questioning, (b) feedback, (c) peer assessment, and (d) self-assessment." In Capraro et al (2011). According to the article, students liked this approach to classroom assessment and were motivated to do well.

Some examples of formative assessments include:(Johnson, et al, 2005, P. 401):

Questioning Quiz	Talkaround Journal Entry	Observation Discussions
Peer Evaluation Progress reports	Conference Self-Evaluation	Portfolio check Exit Card

Summative Assessment (Post Assessment)

The summative assessment’s purpose is to find out how well the students’ learned the content that was taught and whether they met the minimum level as stated for the specific assignments. According to Capraro et al (2012), “Summative assessment attempts to capture the culmination of students’ achievements.” The information gleaned from the summative assessment will provide the teachers with the opportunity to help or remediate those students who failed to meet the requirements of the objectives. Providing additional support for those students is essential if they are to keep up with the rest of the students and be able to successfully learn and internalize the information into long term memory. William (2000), states that “If schools used assessment during teaching, to find out what students have learned, and what they need to do next, on a daily basis” (p. 106), it will be shown that students’ knowledge and understanding would significantly improve.

No matter what type of summative assessment you give your students, keep some best practices in mind:

- Keep it real-world relevant where you can
- Make questions clear and instructions easy to follow
- Give a rubric so students know what’s expected of them
- Create your final test after, not before, teaching the lesson
- Try blind grading: don’t look at the name on the assignment before you mark it.

Some examples of summative assessment, include (Nisbet, 2019):

End of Lesson Test Unit Test	Performance Test Portfolio Review	Product/Exhibit Demonstration
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Findings

The first question of the survey was: Assessment is a key component of our school’s program? The purpose of this question was to see the degree of agreement among the participants. Seventeen out of 20 respondents agreed with this statement while two agreed.

The second question of the survey was: It is important to assess your school’s learning after every lesson. In order for teachers to find out whether a student met the objective(s) of a lesson,

some type of assessment is necessary. Twelve of the respondents agreed with this statement and five disagreed.

The third question of the survey was: Students are well informed about the need for ongoing assessment and how the results are used. Eight of the respondents strongly agreed with this statement. Six respondents were not sure while four disagreed and one disagreed. One respondent did not know.

The fourth question of the survey was: Parents at my school are in full support for ongoing assessment because it helps teachers help students more effectively. Keeping parents informed about the teacher's methods of assessment and how data is used to help students learn more effectively is a good way to help parents understand how a teacher goes about gathering information for helping students with their individual learning needs. Seven participants strongly agreed with this statement with six agreeing while one agreed and one disagreed.

The fifth question of the survey was: Teachers overdo assessments and should cut back. This is an important issue because some teachers assess students frequently while others do not. It's important to students and parents to know that assessment is not overdone because it may cause too much anxiety on the part of the students and their learning may be affected. One respondent strongly agreed while six agreed. Three respondents were not sure while nine disagreed.

The sixth question on the survey was: Researchers say that "assessment drives planning, instruction, and learning." To what degree do you agree with this assertion? Assessment plays a significant part in learning and this question targets the heart of the role of assessment in the curriculum. Fourteen respondents strongly agreed with this statement while four agreed and two did not know.

The seventh question on the survey was: Summative assessment informs me how well my students learned what was taught. It is the purpose of summative assessment to provide the teacher with information about how well the student learned what was taught. It allows the teacher to use the data to strengthen future strategies and learning activities. It also provides the teacher with the opportunity to remediate the learning with the affected students who did not meet the objective(s) of the task.

The eighth question on the survey was: Formative assessment takes place before the learning and during the learning. Formative assessment plays a key role in the process of learning and what the teacher did to help the students to learn the content being taught through various strategies, learning activities, and ongoing checks for understanding. Twelve Respondents strongly agreed while four agreed and five did not know.

The ninth question on the survey was: How do you feel about assessment in your program? Are there any concerns? Please explain.

Below is a compilation of the responses to the ninth question:

- My program teaches the value of assessment (assessment is always ongoing), and that assignments need to include variety, differentiation, and use UDL strategies.
- Assessment allows the teacher an opportunity to collect and use relevant information regarding student ability, interest, and performance. The teacher can evaluate how a student processes information to provide constructive feedback. However, too much assessment fails to prioritize planning.

- I believe assessment is important as it assists teachers in better understanding their students' performance in the classroom, as well as assessing how well the teacher is meeting their students' learning potential.
- I believe authentic assessment versus multiple guess questions which do not provide the instructor with a deeper understanding of what their students really know, understand, and can apply in a practical manner.
- Assessment is not worthwhile unless it is graded immediately and teachers meet, discuss, plan and work through interventions and challenges based on the data. This takes tremendous scheduling, commitment and training from both the administrative point of view and the teachers. There are some terrific programs that help with assessing and grading, however, unless there is a deep level of training, commitment and fidelity to whatever program is chosen, they do not work. Children are over assessed, now, we must think more in-depth about this due to distance learning and time on the computer. How can we improve distance learning with mini assessments throughout the live lessons and avoid more computerized testing?
- I am a strong advocate for assessment because it drives instruction and can effectively assist in meeting students' needs if done appropriately. I am concerned that assessment is demonized because it is not viewed as an instructional component but for exclusion, classification, and competition.
- As a parent of two boys who go to public schools, I strongly hope the teachers are doing daily ongoing assessments to assess the students' needs and progress and adjust instruction accordingly. In most cases, they are doing this and giving the help needed.
- One of my concerns has been the use of end-semester final tests, under controlled, times circumstances, heavily weighted. I am glad there has been some movement away from this to more of portfolio/ongoing assessment, untimed, for students who do not do well under controlled testing circumstances. This leads, however, to other concerns of test security and how sure we can be that students are really doing their own work. A balance between different types of formal and informal assessments would address many of the conflicting concerns.
- Secondary content area teachers do not understand how to assess literacy skills, and as a result are struggling with supporting advancement of literacy skills in their content areas. English teachers are not focused enough on assessing expository and informational genres of reading and writing.
- I feel great about our assessments. We provide along with meaningful feedback. All assessments are aligned with course outcomes.
- Frequently, candidates come into my classes believing that assessment=test. They do not understand the differences between diagnostic, formative, and summative assessments. They do not understand the purposes of the different types of assessments-including benchmark and standardized assessments.

Recommendations

According to the review of the literature and the responses from the participants, assessment is a key component in learning. What teachers need to understand is the different types of assessments, their uses, and application in helping the teachers to better prepare their instruction through the use of well written objectives, a selection of effective strategies, well thought out process of delivering the information to the students, providing good support for the students during the learning and finally administering a summative assessment that will inform the teacher whether the students learned what was taught or not.

It is equally important that teachers are cognizant of the fact that they have a provision about how to help those students who failed to meet the objectives of the activity or lesson. Reteaching should be an option where the teacher uses different strategies and activities to help the few students who need additional support and practice to learn the information so that they can keep up with the rest of the

students in the class. Making sure that all students are successful is the best way to motivate students to want to learn to the best of their ability.

School districts should provide opportunities for classroom teachers to get frequent training on the use of a variety of assessments in order to help them better assess their students needs and be able to plan learning activities to help the diverse populations of students in our classrooms. Making sure that all students can benefit from good instruction gives assessment a key role in the use of data for more effective teaching and learning.

Conclusion

As shown in the participants' responses and statements, assessment is an integral part of teaching and learning. If teachers have a good understanding of the various assessments, their purposes and applications, students will benefit significantly because the data collected will help teachers better plan their curricula to help meet the variety of student needs. Additionally, if teachers shared what they were doing with their different assessments to school administrators, parents, and students, it stands to reason that the support generated will greatly increase motivation on the part of the students. Motivated and interested students will show significant growth in their learning and be able to thrive in their learning endeavors.

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What is assessment in education?

<https://www.google.com/search?q=What+is+assessment+in+education+PPT?&>

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SURVEY

Assessment Survey: PART I

Your level of teaching: K-3 _____ 4-6 _____ 7-8 _____ 9-12 _____ College/University _____

Other (specify): _____

How long have you been teaching? 1-5 Years _____ 6-12 _____ 13-20 _____ 21+ _____

Your degree: BA/BS _____ Master's _____ Doctorate _____

DIRECTIONS: Please answer the following questions from your point of view. The information will be used in a study and presented at a conference. Your name is not required. Thank you for your help.

Check that which applies to you:

Parent Student Teacher Administrator Counselor Other

Use these designations for responding below, please.

1=disagree 2= not sure 3= agree 4= strongly agree 5=don't know

1. Assessment is a key component in our school's program?
Circle one: (1 2 3 4 5)
2. It important to assess your students' learning after every lesson.
Circle One: (1 2 3 4 5)
3. Students are well informed about the need for ongoing assessment and how the results are used.
Circle one: (1 2 3 4 5)
4. Parents at my school are in full support for ongoing assessment because it helps teachers help students more effectively.
Circle one: (1 2 3 4 5)

5. Teachers overdo assessment and should cut back.

Circle one: (1 2 3 4 5)

6. Researchers say that "assessment drives planning, instruction, and learning." To what degree do you agree with this assertion?

Circle One: (1 2 3 4 5)

7. Summative assessment informs me how well my students learned what was taught.

Circle One: (1 2 3 4 5)

8. Formative assessment takes place before the learning and during the learning.

Circle One: (1 2 3 4 5)

9. How do you feel about assessment in your program? Are there any concerns? Please explain.

Vaping Perceptions Among Youth and Teachers

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Introduction

According to research by Dutra, Grana, and Glantz (2016), “Chinese pharmacist Hon Lik is frequently cited as inventing the modern e-cigarette in 2003. However, tobacco companies have developed electronic nicotine delivery systems since at least 1963” (p. 1). “Vaping” is the colloquial term for the use of electronic cigarettes. The use of this technology allows users to heat products into vapor form for inhalation instead of charring it as one would when smoking tobacco. Since vaping technology is fairly new, there are not many laws or regulations compared to tobacco cigarettes. There are not many recent studies looking at the negative health effects of vaping; however, vaping has been touted as a less harmful alternative to smoking. Increasingly, school leaders are concerned about the impact of vaping because usage among K-12 students is showing alarming growth in Canada, the US, and around the world.

In May of 2018, the Canadian federal government approved The Tobacco and Vaping Products Act (TVPA) that restricts the sale of vaping products to anyone under the age of 18 (Tobacco and Vaping Products Act, 1997). It set general rules about promoting vaping products and put bans on the use of certain ingredients. Prior to the TVPA, companies were allowed to advertise flavored vaping products to the general public. However, because there is still little research on vaping (as compared to tobacco cigarettes) laws and regulations are constantly changing as new findings come out. Canadian laws around accessibility to vapes and regulations on advertising show some differences province to province. Although this present research is centered in Canada, there are similar realities are found in the US. For instance, the US Food and Drug Administration (2016) only recently began to regulate electronic cigarette products as tobacco products, including banning the sales to minors.

Vaping has trended toward normalization just as tobacco smoking did many years ago. It can be quite common to see youth using vapes in public and on social media, and the use has become increasingly observed among students at school. Students vaping at school is a common topic when educators and administrators get together from different schools. It becomes a cat-and-mouse game as students use vapes during class, during breaks, or after school, and administrators try and figure out who the users are. The difficulty in identifying the users is related to the fact that vapes do not produce the same odor as cigarette smoke; instead there is sometimes no scent left behind, or there is some other non-tobacco scent that does not draw a school official’s attention. Since there is no combustion process involved, users are able to turn the vapes on and off with the push of a button, making it even harder to pinpoint users because there are no combustion odors of any kind.

Purpose and Rationale

This study sought to investigate the perceptions that teachers had on vaping and assess ways to effectively support teachers using a curriculum to create awareness about issues related to vaping. With vaping being a newer trend, there is a lot of misinformation among youth about the harmful outcomes of vaping. By investigating teachers’ perceptions about vaping the researchers aimed to determine what kind of supports teachers needed to accurately provide students information on the health risks of vaping. In initial surveys many teachers proved to be comfortable teaching the risks and dangers of smoking; however,

they noted a lack of experience and knowledge that would enable them to teach the dangers of vaping. Since this study was designed using an action research design, it sought to find ways to support teachers implementation of a vaping curriculum to help address the growing use among school-aged students and their lack of knowledge about the harmful impacts on health. The main question used to organize this research was: After assessing teachers' comfort level with teaching the risks of vaping, what impact does a curriculum guide and teaching resources have on teacher comfort level related to teaching about vaping?

Context

This research was conducted at a middle school located in a Canadian city with a population of around 150,000. To maintain anonymity, the exact details are not disclosed, but according to 2014 statistics the median age is 37.9 years, the median individual income is \$26, 428, and the median household income is \$62, 350. The percentage of the population that are considered children (<15 years) is 18.9% and seniors (65+ years) is 14.7%. The city is a diverse community that is predominantly made up of 5 ethnicities.

There are more than 15,000 students this school district. The middle school where the research was conducted had a student population of over 600. Although the city is ethnically diverse, the school in which the study took place is located in a predominantly Indo-Canadian neighborhood. The school's student population is over 80% Indo-Canadian.

Review of Literature

Research regarding perceptions of vaping is still minimal in comparison to tobacco research. However, we know that e-cigarettes are now the most common tobacco product used by US adolescents (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 2015). Even so, the long-term health effects are not understood because e-cigarettes are so new.

Smoking Cessation

There seems to be some disagreement on whether vapes are successful at promoting smoking cessation; the majority of studies suggest that vapes are ineffective at smoking cessation. For example, a study conducted by Lee, Grana, and Glantz (2014) investigated e-cigarette use among Korean adolescents and the relationship between their usage and traditional smoking cessation. Analysis was performed on data that was collected from the 2011 Korean Youth Risk Behavior Web-based Survey which was completed by 75, 643 students aged 13 to 18. A summary of the findings by Lee et al. shows that:

- Never-e-cigarette usage among grade seven was much higher than grade 12 students (85.5% versus 65.5% respectively)
- Boys were more likely to be users than girls (7.8% versus 1.8% respectively)
- Students that had smoked every day in the past 30 days were the most likely to be e-cigarette users (50.8%) in comparison to those that are non-smokers (0.6%)
- Current cigarette smokers that were trying to quit smoking were more likely to use e-cigarettes than those not trying to quit (40.0% vs. 29.1%)
- Current smokers that also used e-cigarettes associated with higher levels of cigarette consumption

Lee et al. found that instead of e-cigarettes being used as an alternative to smoking, most users were dual users (e-cigarettes and tobacco cigarettes).

E-cigarettes as a Gateway

To analyze e-cigarette usage among California students, Bostean, Trinidad, and McCarthy (2015) used the California Healthy Kids Survey from 2013–2014 (n = 482,179) to determine the extent to which adolescents who have never used tobacco, try e-cigarettes. A summary of Bostean et al.'s findings include:

- 1) Males and older students were more likely to use e-cigarettes than females and younger students.
- 2) Nearly 25% of California middle and high school students had tried e-cigarettes.
- 3) Nearly 50% of the students who had tried an e-cigarette had never smoked conventional cigarettes.
- 4) Hispanic students who had never smoked or used cigarettes were more likely to try e-cigarettes than were white students

Aleyan, Cole, Qian, and Leatherdale (2018) found that although vapes are advertised as a support for smoking cessation, vapes also “act as a gateway to future cigarette smoking” (p. 1). Aleyan et al.’s study followed students in grade 9-11 over a two-year period that had never-smoked. After 2 years they found that current e-cigarette users were significantly more likely to try a cigarette than students that did not use an e-cigarette. Their findings “supported public health concerns that e-cigarette use may contribute to the development of a new population of cigarette smokers” (p. 4). This study supports the idea that it is possible that vapes act as a gateway to smoking. A similar study was conducted by Miech, Patrick, O’Malley, and Johnston (2017) where they found that grade 12 students that were vape users were more than four times as likely to have used a tobacco cigarette one year later. They summarized that vaping can be a “one-way bridge to cigarette smoking among youth” (p. 8). Both studies mentioned that students that were non-smokers and begin to use vapes tend to be at a significantly higher risk of becoming smokers in comparison to non-vape users.

Intervention Techniques

There is very little research investigating the effectiveness of interventions on creating awareness around the dangers of vaping. Therefore, as background information, this present study examined research related to tobacco product interventions; this examination revealed a study that studied both issues. McMenamin et al. (2018) conducted research on the effectiveness of the Tobacco-Use Prevention Education (TUPE) program in California. The study was conducted in 2016 and involved a total of 3,564 educators from 590 schools and a total of 47,981 students from 117 schools. Schools that participated in the TUPE program associated with lower tobacco use among students in comparison to schools that did not participate in the TUPE program. Additionally, they found that at both TUPE-funded and non-TUPE schools, educators “felt better prepared to talk with students about traditional tobacco products than about emerging products such as e-cigarettes” (p. 8). This suggests that educators do not feel as comfortable discussing the dangers of vaping in comparison to smoking or other traditional forms of tobacco usage. The study by McMenamin et al. highlights that opportunities to learn about the dangers of vaping need to be made more readily available to teachers. It appears that educators who do not feel comfortable with the research and realities themselves, are less likely to try and share it with students.

E-cigarette Marketing

Since vaping technology has only recently been developed, there is not much regulation regarding advertisement and display. In contrast, there is significant regulation on advertisement of cigarettes and how they can be displayed in stores. Although it is slowly changing, until recently advertisements for vapes were not regulated in the same manner as cigarettes, and companies have freedom to target youth. According to Kim, Popova, Halpern-Felsher, and Ling (2019), vapes are advertised as similar to cigarettes, but also as a solution to the issues related to cigarettes (e.g., smoke odor). Kim et al. found that after watching e-cigarette advertisements, students that had never smoked e-cigarettes lowered their perceived risks of smoking. Another concern around vaping advertisements is the focus on the various flavors available. Examples of flavors include fruits, soda flavors, and even candy flavors. A study performed in Great Britain by Measham, O’Brien, and Turnbull (2016) found that young people used e-cigarettes primarily for the flavors and to perform tricks.

Pepper, Emery, Ribisl, and Brewer, (2014) investigated awareness of e-cigarettes across genders, age, education, and race in a national survey of adults across the United States (N= 17,552). The most common ways of finding out about e-cigarettes was through another person, ads on television, and seeing e-cigarettes being sold. More than half the respondents (52%) were never-smokers, 28% were former smokers, and 21% were current smokers. The mean age of respondents was 47 years old. Hearing of e-cigarettes through another person, seeing them on sale in stores, on the internet, and advertisements on television were the most common ways that adults became aware of e-cigarettes. The most common way of learning about e-cigarettes for adults was through another person.

Risk Perceptions

Recently, Rohde et al. (2018) investigated adolescents’ knowledge and beliefs about e-cigarette risks. Specifically, they were interested in determining whether knowledge and risk beliefs of e-cigarettes

were associated with e-cigarette usage. Adolescents completed a survey (N=69) on e-cigarette knowledge, attitudes, and behavior.

Rohde et al. found that only 49% of participants knew that e-cigarettes may harm teen brain development and only 59% knew that e-cigarettes are not risk-free. Students that were ever-users of e-cigarettes were less likely to think that e-cigarettes would cause negative health. This further supports the idea that students are not aware of the risks associated with e-cigarette usage, especially the students that are using e-cigarettes.

Methodology

One of the purposes of this study was to provide educators with selected targeted interventions to impact the comfortability teachers have with implementing curriculum on vaping. An examination of the literature showed that many studies have been cross sectional examinations of students' perceptions on vaping, by age, and by comparing users and non-users. However, there has not been much done in terms of action research to see how perceptions can be changed. As mentioned earlier, McMenamin et al. (2018) conducted research in which they assessed the effectiveness of a tobacco awareness program by using survey questions about vaping.

This present study was conducted at a middle school located in Canada. The study had teachers volunteer to complete an initial survey at the beginning of the 2019-2020 school year. The survey was used to assess teacher knowledge levels on vaping in general, perceived dangers of vaping, and supports that teachers needed to implement a vaping awareness curriculum. Based on the responses, curriculum was investigated and provided to these teachers by the researcher. Finally, an exit survey was completed by teachers that participated in the study and the researcher conducted interviews with the teachers to further investigate the effectiveness of the selected interventions and to determine if teachers believed student perceptions in their classrooms changed.

Findings

When designing the survey, emphasis was put on identifying a specific area where teachers needed support. By doing this, specific curriculum guides could be provided to teachers as an intervention. Based on the results of the first teacher survey, the CATCH My Breath (n.d.) program fit the needs of the participating teachers. On a 5-point scale from very uncomfortable to very comfortable, teachers were asked questions to determine how comfortable they were teaching the health risks of vaping, describing the differences between a vape and tobacco cigarette, about media literacy, and teaching students to think critically. Teachers were asked these questions in the initial survey (results shown in table 1) and then again after implementing the Catch My Breath Program (results shown in table 2).

Discussion of the Results

The only teachers that participated in the initial survey were non-smokers and teachers that had never tried an e-cigarette themselves. This was not by design; the data revealed this as an unexpected pattern. However, based on the teachers that participated, the majority believed that e-cigarettes are equally as harmful as tobacco cigarettes. A large number of teachers were also unsure as to whether or not e-cigarettes helped with smoking cessation. Most teachers based their knowledge about e-cigarettes on what they heard from friends, what they saw on the internet, and what they had seen on mass media. Additionally, initial survey results suggested that most teachers already felt comfortable teaching students to critically think, and they felt either neutral or comfortable teaching students about media literacy. However, there was a wide range of comfort level regarding teaching students about e-cigarettes. Based on this, curriculum that focused on general e-cigarette information, differences between e-cigarettes and tobacco cigarettes, and media literacy was implemented. The curriculum was designed by Coordinated Approach to Child Health (CATCH, n.d.) and is called "CATCH My Breath a Nicotine Vaping Prevention" program. The program is composed of four PowerPoint lessons that incorporate multiple student activities such as an ingredient investigation, parent interview, and a process where students create their own advertisement campaign. The focus of the curriculum is on ingredients that go into vapes, risks associated with nicotine usage, strategies to refuse vapes, and understanding marketing strategies.

When comparing the results of the initial survey and the final survey taken by classroom teachers the results suggest that after implemented the CATCH My Breath program teachers felt: 1) more

comfortable teaching the health risks of e-cigarettes; 2) more comfortable teaching the differences between e-cigarettes and tobacco cigarettes; 3) more comfortable teaching students about media literacy; 4) and no significant change in teaching students to critically think.

Based on interviews, teachers that used the provided curriculum found that students were quite responsive to the materials. Lots of organic discussions occurred in classrooms as a result of misconceptions students had, especially around the idea that e-cigarettes “mostly contain water vapor.” Another area of the curriculum that generated discussion was around the meaning behind “addiction.” The addictiveness of nicotine in comparison to other drugs was also a shock for many students. Teachers credited the organic discussions to the questions probed in the CATCH My Breath series and a specific diagram (see appendix) that made comparisons between the different levels of other drugs’ addictiveness (i.e., narcotics, depressants, stimulants, anesthetics, hallucinogens, cannabis). Additionally, teachers themselves felt they learnt a lot about e-cigarettes. Many teachers commented on not knowing what went inside an e-cigarette cartridge before looking at this curriculum. They found that the specific curriculum content provided by the Catch My Breath program was organized well and easy to use.

The feedback that was noted repeatedly in interviews was that many teachers felt they had a lack of background knowledge before teaching students about e-cigarettes, but that the curriculum provided during the research investigation helped fill that void. However, there were many comments on how the teachers themselves did not know about specific chemicals associated with e-cigarettes, and concerns around addiction.

Recommendations

Without regulation of advertisements on vaping, it appears that youth will be influenced to believe what they see in advertisements and social media. Lawmakers need to be acting proactively on this to ensure that youth perceptions are not being changed by companies that want to promote the usage of vapes. We also need to be sharing accurate information on the dangers of vaping at schools so that students have access to information that is not biased. To help this happen, there needs to be: 1) professional development for teachers, increasing their content knowledge to help them become more comfortable teaching students about e-cigarette usage; 2) curriculum should include content around e-cigarette advertisement; and 3) access to digital resources to use with students and families.

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Table 1

Initial Survey Determining Teacher Comfort Level Around Curriculum Implementation

Question (N=11)	Very uncomfortable	Uncomfortable	Neutral	Comfortable	Very comfortable
1	1 (9%)	2 (18%)	3 (27%)	4 (36%)	1 (9%)
2	0	3 (27%)	4 (36%)	4 (36%)	0
3	1 (9%)	0	3 (27%)	6 (55%)	1 (9%)
4	0	0	0	7 (64%)	4 (36%)

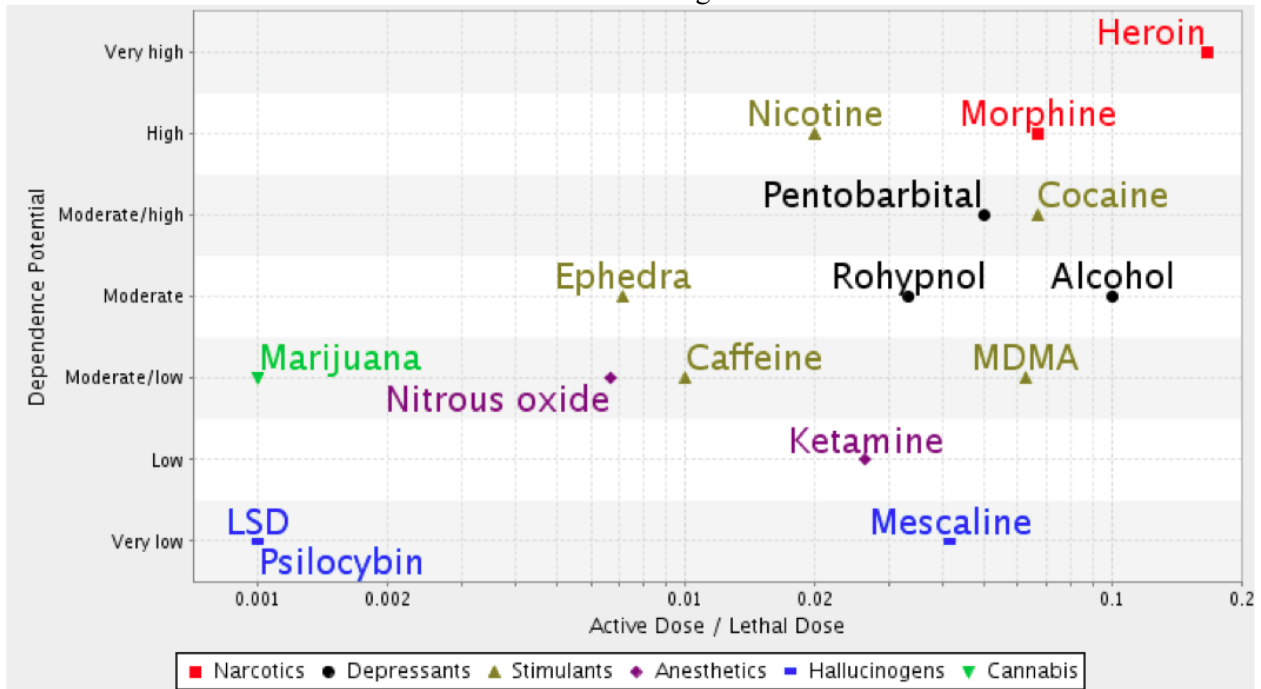
Table 2

Final Survey Determining Teacher Comfort Level Around Curriculum Implementation After Being Provided Resources and Instruction

Question (N=6)	Very uncomfortable	Uncomfortable	Neutral	Comfortable	Very comfortable
1	0	0	0	4 (67%)	2 (33%)
2	0	0	0	5 (83%)	1 (17%)
3	0	0	0	4 (67%)	2 (33%)
4	0	0	1 (17%)	4 (67%)	1 (17%)

Appendix

Active/Lethal Dose Ratio and Dependence Potential of Psychoactive Drugs Taken from Session 2 of Catch My Breath Program



Online Teaching of Critical Thinking

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Everyone today, including students, are bombarded by the messages of modern mass marketing and mass culture. These messages may be seductive as well as conflicted. Some are shady, others are out right lying. They can easily produce harmful effects. Developing critical thinking is vital for successful living in today's electronic world.

With the development of online teaching the use of critical thinking activities as a part of online courses has flourished. As have courses teaching the subject of critical thinking, which have been added to the curricula of many online programs.

Before the advent of today's increasing demand for critical thinking online there were numerous calls for critical thinking to be taught and used in the classroom. From President Ronald Reagan's 1983 National Commission on Excellence in Education's *A Nation at Risk* to President H. W. Bush's "America 2000" educational initiative, to Common Core to President Barack Obama's 2009 address calling for critical thinking the subject has been of national concern. On the one hand the need has been to replace "rote factory" learning with critical thinking.¹ On the other hand it is impossible to reason with effect from ignorance. Teachers need to have an ever-growing body of knowledge to impart in "clever" ways.

Logical thinking has been taught in the West from before Aristotle. He basically systematically summarized the ancient Greek logical thoughts. The Greeks and soon thereafter the Romans were the last of the major cultures of the ancient world. The Greeks were able to systemize the wisdom movement of the ancient world.²

What Is Critical Thinking

Critical thinking is a skill. It is thinking about thinking, whether one's own or the "thinking" of other people, for the purpose of raising questions, defining problems, gathering information, making sound decisions, and evaluating judgments of facts or values. It is a process of purposeful self-aware judging that uses reason and evaluates emotional responses.

The word "critical" comes from the ancient Greek word, *kritikos*, which means "careful judgment." Today it is promoted in the field of education because, human thinking needs to be aided with sensitive self-awareness in order to avoid prejudice, bias, distortions, being ill-informed and just plain ignorance. In addition, critical thinking is a life-skill that promotes success and defends against harmful or deadly consequences due to poor judgement.

There are numerous definitions of critical thinking. Because the teaching of critical thinking in education ranges from kindergarten to undergraduate students the cognitive and rational needs vary and so the depth and rigor of critical thinking materials also varies as well. Critical thinking skills differ across the curriculum so that what may be useful in sociology may not be useful in biology. Consequently, the definitions of critical thinking range from simple sensitivity to rational thought to what are virtually traditional courses or books in logic.

Most definitions treat critical thinking as a process that aids understanding and responding to common problems of life. It is a deliberative skill which has been practiced for over 2500 years. It can claim to have its beginnings in the development of logic in ancient Greece. The development of democracy in Greek city-states was led by orators who developed rhetorical skills of persuasion for public speaking. Today critical thinking should also be used to oppose tyranny and to promote democracy.

Today logic courses in philosophy are closer to mathematics and generally critical thinking is closer to rhetoric. Both still seek to use objective analysis to evaluate issues before forming a judgment.

While critical thinking as the use of rational thought in a disciplined manner resembles logic, it is different from logic. The focus of logic is on arguments. An argument is an examination of connected statements that are seeking to establish a proposition. The proposition is a claim of some kind which is usually true or false.

In general, the definitions of critical thinking point to the use of skills for making clear, careful, evaluations and judgment about what are facts and what are values. Establishing facts requires setting out criteria for determining what is and what is not a fact. The rules of evidence in history, sociology, law, science and other disciplines have been developed critically in order to establish the capacity to present statements that describe materials, conditions, activities or other matters that are true because they correspond to reality and form a coherent web of truth. Because the methods for establishing facts vary from discipline to discipline, critical thinking techniques will be somewhat different in each discipline.

Judgments of facts are usually easier to establish with common agreement than are judgments of values. Issues are the points of disagreement or controversy that arise from problems. Among the issues may be issues of fact, issue of value or issues of policy. Issues when stated are the reason(s) for a controversy or for a conversation. Issues of fact are descriptive issues. In contrast issues of value are prescriptive issues.

Engaging in Critical Thinking

Nicholas Capaldi has written that critical thinking involves at least two subcategories. First, to think critically is to think logically. Second, to think critically is to know where and how to challenge the arguments that one encounters in daily life.³

Critical thinking seeks to guide students through levels of rational development. The student, who is an unreflective thinker, that is, one that is insensitive to problems in life or is unaware that their reasoning process has problems is one commonly met by instructors every fall term. Even if students are logically cogent in class, they can emerge to do stupidly risky things. Frances Jensen and Amy Nutt have found a gap between reasoning ability in teenagers and their ability to act wisely some years later.⁴ Moving students through intellectual growth steps to become a challenged thinker who can see problems previously unknown to themselves requires the introduction of problems previously unknown and un-experienced. Often this critical thinking process is one that simply makes students sensitive to matters about which they were previously unaware.

Logic and Emotions

This paper seeks to cover ways for critical thinking to be taught. Humans are not Vulcans from a Star Trek movie living purely by reason. Humans use reason and have emotions that can clue them in to illogical thinking. For example:

*Cactus has lots of spines,
Automobiles travel on gasoline,
Therefore, no one should eat tuna fish.*

Hopefully this pile of sentences will evoke an emotional response. A negative response that says the “conclusion is nuts” is an appropriate one. The technical term for this example is *non sequitur*. It is illogical because it does not follow the standards of logical reasoning. What is important is to cultivate a recognition of the feeling that something is irrational. To identify when people say as illogical claims is an intuition that needs to be encouraged. The idea is put crudely by Postman and Weingartner when they seek to sensitize the student’s “crap detector.”⁵ Their metaphor of smelling something “rotten in Denmark” as it were, is a clue to being sensitized to illogical claims.

Two warnings are in order here. First, sensitivity to illogical claims means that doubt is raised. This feeling has always been circulating in the world of logic. It is a feeling that was long ago exploited by both the Hellenistic Sceptics and the Cynics. For the Cynics nothing has value. There is nothing good. Common experiences refute this constantly, but especially the feelings of joy. The Academic Sceptics who claimed, “this we know, nothing can be known,” were able to evoke feelings of despair in some famous ancients such as Saint Augustine who eventually understood that their claims were self-refuting because he knew he was doubting even as he was doubting therefore, he did know something.

Modern problems have arisen with the discovery of cognitive biases which are systematic errors in judgment. There are many of these cognitive biases. An example is the confirmation bias. The key to guarding against it is to look for reasons not to believe something such as a conspiracy theory. Many other examples can be found on the internet. However, this is not the end of the story for human reasoning.

The laws of logic also called the laws of thought are a help here.

The principle of identity: If a statement is true, then it is true. Expressed symbolically expressed as:
A is A

And if A is A, then A is not B, C, D, ... An apple cannot be a banana, cucumber, date, ear of corn, fig, grape, ... if it is an apple. Therefore, a thing is what it is, and it is therefore not something else.

The principle of non-contradiction: no statement can be both true and false.

A ≠ not A so to believe that one is one's great-grandmother is unfounded

The principle of the excluded middle: a statement is either true or false.

A = A, or, A ≠ not A, but not both at the same time.

So, can anyone be both here and there at the same time? You may be here, and if you are here you are not there. If you are in Georgia, you cannot be in California or London or Paris or Berlin at the same time.

More than just exposure is needed. The world is full of attempts to violate these laws with nonsense. A common example are claims that we can "have our cake and eat it too."

Contradiction is well illustrated in the famous Monty Python skit, the "Argument Clinic." Both the text and video versions are online. The take-away line in the skit is "An argument is a connected series of statements intended to establish a proposition."

The "Argument Clinic" can be intimidating. The emotions raised in argumentation may be frighten or sicken to some students. Therefore, it is important to communicate that "argumentation" as practiced by critical thinkers is a civil discussion that seeks to establish a proposition and ultimately a policy for the common good. As humans we all have needs and wants. So how do we get them? Communication. But others may have conflicting "interests" so discussion or "debate" is the tool we use to influence others. It is creating and promoting acceptance of a belief. So, should our student group go for pizza or for tacos? Civil discourse is how we work it out. However, there are those who will seek their way as the only way no matter what. This kind of behavior devalues others which is an understanding that all should have.

Using Contradictions to Bully

Before advancing to logic and its ways of evaluating arguments, it is important for students to understand that there are those who use contradictions as a form of bullying. This is a trick used by people who cannot prove their case or refute others. The use of logical tricks developed by the Sophists are called "informal fallacies." A fallacy is a mistake in reasoning, and they are "informal" because they do not have a common form. They number in the hundreds. Many have Latin names because the Greeks taught them to the Romans who later passed them on. Among the most famous the fallacy of *argument ad hominin*, which is an argument against the person for saying something or making an argument that someone or some group does not like. It does not attempt to refute what is said but attacks the one who said it. Name calling or character assignation or any form of vilifying that ignores refuting someone's claim illustrates the attack upon the person and are just bullying.

Others use misleading informal fallacies such as composition, division, petty fogging, obfuscation, and the loaded question. Emotions are abused with appeals to vanity, to age, to novelty, to pity, to money, fear, force, poverty, ridicule, snobbery and more. Some fallacies such as red herrings seek to distract. Great numbers of these can be found on the internet with examples. It is important for students to see how they work and to be able to explain how to refute them. Repetition is also vital for long term remembrance.

Good critical thinking should teach students to ask, "Why?" should I believe what is being claimed? To ask "why" is to ask for the rationale for the claim. What is being claimed and what makes it true? This is the beginning of the process for become a skilled critical thinker.

To engage in critical thinking in modern academic settings whether in traditional physical classes or online, means to study examples of clear versus unclear thinking. If something is clear, then it is understood. If it is not clear, then it presents a problem that invites the use of the skills needed for critical thinking that can solve or at least understand the problem.

Online discussions of things that students encounter in their daily lives in mass society, provides a fertile field for materials for critical examination. Because critical thinking affects every area of communication it can be a collaborative effort in online course discussions.

Using presentations, relevant current events and discussion materials faculty can provide opportunities for students to generate ideas that are designed to address issues in problems they are discussing. Collaborative learning in a discussion forum or a chat room can be an arena where critical thinking skills are applied enabling students to exchange ideas, goals and values.

Critical Thinking and Feelings

Critical thinking skills include dealing with feelings. Among the habits that can be taught are to be critically aware of their first reaction to anyone or anything. The emotional reaction whether appealing or disenchanting should be critically examined as should any thought before anything is embraced. Part of the critical activity would be to question why the encounter sparked the reaction it did. Furthermore, to speculatively question also other possible reactions that might have been possible. Finally, the student should consider whether the second reaction arising from consideration was more appropriate than the first impression reaction. These considerations are designed to move students beyond feels in order to apply critical reasoning to claims in order to judge whether they have merit or not.

Emotive Language

Some object to emotions as a part of reasoning, however there is reason in emotions. In ethics Emotivism claims that ethical reasoning is just reporting on someone's emotional responses to something. However, philosophers have found that there is reason in emotions. For example, a phobia of puppies would be an emotional response that is excessive to any danger posed by a puppy. A fear of a rabid dog or a hissing rattle snake is very rational. In fact, fear is a very proportional emotional response to the danger.

Critical thinking is also a process for develop student sensitivity to the logic of messages such as the emotive use of language that distracts from the main point. For example, a partisan claim that oil companies are making "obscene profits" is using a very emotional term that evokes disgust. Its emotional power is used to distract from the real meaning which is "high profits." This means that the student will need to understand that "high" is a vague term that lacks precision. With critical thinking sensitivity student can learn to stop, look, and listen for the propaganda persuasion that would capture their thinking with emotionally loaded terms.

Using Concepts

A concept can be used to build logical discussions about how things are related. For example, start with the word honey. In a brainstorming format it leads to sugars, flavors of honey, toxic honey, medicinal uses, honeybees, species of bees, the hives of bees. The honeycomb and its symmetry which follows Fibonacci numbers. Youtube uploads can be found on the internet which demonstrate how many things in nature such as sunflowers follow Fibonacci numbers. Sugars differ chemically. Sugar has an history connected with slavery, with cooking, celebration and with diabetes. It is hard to run out of links with most concepts.

The use of concepts opens many doors for discussions and for linking. The teacher will need to work through as many links as possible before hand.

The Government in Your Life Exercise

An online critical thinking exercise used in government courses requires students to go for a walk or a ride (with someone else driving). The assignment would be to record all the things that government is be involved with versus anything that might be non-governmental. The exercise sensitizes students to the ubiquity of government. The student's findings are posted online for discussion between members of the class to form a common awareness of how much everyone's life is or potentially could be affected or controlled by government.

This exercise requires knowledge or quick research skills by the teacher. For example, if a student says that grass is not regulated it would be easy to suggest that someone Google “Johnson Grass” which was a grass imported by the Federal Government for cattle and mule feed. It does that well until the frost hits it. It then turns toxic to livestock. What are the questions to be asked then? Was this import over sold or underreached? Or a reply to grass would be that rare is the town or city that does not have laws mandating mowing lawns to abate mosquitoes or as fire abatement.

If an answer were trees, then the teacher can ask who owns the land upon which a tree is growing? Public or private? Are there laws about stealing? Even trees? Especially valuable wood trees. And on it goes for any suggestion that something is not regulated by government. Even churches which are covered by police protections, sewage, water, and fire regulations.

The Red Tape Exercise

An exercise for older students is to have them report on their experiences of bureaucratic red tape. Examples may be from getting a driver’s license or dealing with financial aid. Ask their parents or grandparents of examples offers opportunities for intergenerational engagement. The stories would then be reported and discussed.

CDC Bioterrorism Exercise

An exercise for creating student awareness can be applied to the problem of bioterrorism. An online exercise would require that students visit the website of the Center for Communicable Disease (CDC) where the various disease agents (e.g., Ebola fever, Smallpox) are described. These agents are shown as germs that can be turned into biological weapons. They make a frightening impact that sensitizes students to begin to think critically. A discussion forum can then where their thoughts are posted and where they engage with other students on fears and what needs to be done.

All reasoning has a purpose. So, to use critically sensitizing experiences, such as these, opens minds to an awareness of the problems that affect everyone. Critical thinking education experiences such as these are easily taught to online college student. With minds sensitize to harsh realities they can then advance to higher levels of critical learning.

Asking Questions

Students who grow in critical thinking skills move from beginning thinker to advanced thinker by practicing critical thinking skills. One of the necessary skills is to develop skill in asking questions. The ability to ask questions gives students the power to evaluate the reasoning of a writer or speaker. Pertinent questions include those that ask about issues, conclusions, reasons, assumptions, evidence and causes. Other questions seek to define terms that may be vague or ambiguous, or to identify fallacies (mistakes in reasoning) as well as omitted information. And finally, to ask about what may be reasonable conclusions.

Other questions that can be asked are about the quality of evidence, its relevance, depth, accuracy, importance and fairness. The questions asked by a student engaging in critical thinking are important for deciding if there is a real problem versus an apparent problem. Other skills include being able to prioritize and to order matters in an orderly array or ranking. Other skills include gathering evidence and interpreting the data used as evidence.

Numerous online discussion problems can be posted which develop the ability to identify assumptions and to understand and apply with clarity language that is used to understand, evaluate and judge issues. This ability is closely connected with knowing what may be warrants that justify conclusions or generalizations. Testing conclusions aids in the construction of rationally justified beliefs which are part of a worldview. Ultimately critically reasoning skills are a process of steps that improve the “pictures in minds” so that these are developed and clarified. In the end critical thinking produces justified knowledge or belief about the facts and experiences of life in a developing worldview that aid understanding the world so that decision-making can be more efficient, effective, and ethical. A worldview is composed of statements describing the world (or some part of it). The beliefs, the perspective, the assumptions that form the framework in which facts are produced organize a student’s understanding of life or about a subject matter’s data. Mental models can be used to explain human thought processes or the way that something in the real-world works.

Science Geometry and Critical Thinking

Geometry developed by ancient Greeks (Euclid and others) is useful for defining concepts and for advance thinking in the area of formal logic. Some logic puzzles use geometry. Or its use can be illustrated in the use of a variety of structures such as struts or geodesic domes. These use geometry in order to provide a load pathway for the compression and tension in the structure under review. When Archimedes exclaimed “eureka” what problem had he solved? How large a lever did Archimedes need to be a world moving champion?

Using Logical Puzzles⁶

There are now numerous books and websites with logical puzzles. Always these are a rationalizing of the unknown. Some of those used by “Caliban” are about the veracity of tribes on an island who always lie or tell the truth. Others use other puzzle forms. Working out the solution to these is slow at first but moves on ever more quickly as the solution becomes ever easier because the mind can do the steps more quickly. Eventually student will be able to “read” the situation. Military genius is the ability to read the battlefield (*coup d’oeil*) “at a glance.” Great quarterbacks do this during the execution of a play.

Examples from Literature

Literature abounds in logical stories. In ancient times there was a tall well-built young man walking on the road to Egypt. He encounters a caravan that is taking the Queen of Sheba to Jerusalem to see King Solomon. She sees the young man and orders her guards to take him prisoner as a slave. In camp that night they test his skills and discover that he is a champion wrestler. He is a prize-winning wrestler in the Olympic Games of which his captors have never heard. When they arrive at the court of King Solomon the Greek is present when Solomon presents the Queen of Sheba a very beautiful necklace. She is enchanted and exclaims how wonderful it is and how she will always treasure it. She puts it on and feels that it is adding to her splendor. After some public business, the royals call for entertainment. Part of the entertainment is a wrestling match between King Solomon’s wrestlers and the Greek. He soon defeats them all. The Queen of Sheba is so very pleased that she blurts out, “you have may anything but your freedom.” The Greek waits a moment, and then asked for the necklace King Solomon had just presented to her. If looks can kill he would have been dead. She is thinking wait until I get you back to camp. She however has given her word in the presence of the whole court. She feels that her honor is at stake. She gives the Greek the necklace. After things settle down a moment the Greek then holds up the necklace and says, “with this I would like to buy my freedom.” After King Solomon stops laughing at the Greek’s wit, she takes the necklace and grants him his freedom. He wisely leaves quickly.

What are the logical techniques used by the Greek in the story above would be the point of any discussion? How would the Greek’s cunning compare with way Odysseus handled the Cyclops in the Odyssey? Cunning is “street smarts” or savvy. It is also the skill of those who are very critical thinkers. Detective stories and mysteries use logic as the detective seeks to solve the “who dun it.”

Conclusion

How can humans be defined?*Homo sapiens sapiens—the being that thinks about thinking—with an attitude!* Human beings are thinkers who reason with an attitude, a disposition to reject errors and to discover truth. Every aspect of critical thinking can be developed as a skill set like those of swimming or other activities. Some aspects are cumulative. Other as more situational. But promoting critical thinking is a civic mandate for a good life in a good society. It seeks to teach that there is order in the world and purpose in human actions which are all understandable by reasoning.

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End Notes

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Cultivating Empowerment in Rural Secondary Novice Science Teachers

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Cultivating Empowerment in Rural Secondary Novice Science Teachers

Abstract

The purpose of this research was to investigate what can be learned from the *professional voices* of secondary novice science teachers in rural schools during their first one to three years of their teaching assignment. The results of this research were viewed through the lens of empowerment as defined by Melenzyer (1990) and the six dimensions as specified by Short (1994): autonomy, self-efficacy, professional growth, status, impact, and decision making. This study examined what caused teachers' empowerment to change in the context of their work environment, focusing on critical events or experiences that caused appointment to change. Empowerment was higher than expected after the teachers attended a science education conference. Teachers who experience conference science teacher professional development felt empowered to be more effective and confident.

Research Purpose

The purpose of this research was to investigate what can be learned from the "professional voices" of novice science teachers in rural secondary schools during their first one to three years of teaching placement. This study examined teachers' empowerment in the context of their work environment, focusing on critical events or experiences that cause empowerment to change. The results were viewed through the lens of empowerment (Melenzyer, 1990) and the six dimensions defined by Short (1994): autonomy, self-efficacy, professional growth, status, impact, and decision making. Figure 1 below portrays the research model with the lens of empowerment impacted by the teachers' events or experiences.

Problem

Each year, billions of tax dollars are invested in U.S. teacher preparation programs, professional development, and recruitment. The teaching profession is the largest occupation work-force in the United States, and turnover is high (Ingersoll & Merrill, 2012). When the largest work-force is losing between 40 to 50 % of the new teachers within five years, there must be an explanation. Phillips (2015) found that nearly 50 % of the new teachers will try to transfer to another school or leave the profession within five years. Presently, in some districts, experienced teachers are being encouraged to retire so schools can hire novice teachers for less. And disbelieving as it may seem, some school principals encourage turnover because they can hire new teachers for less money (Phillips, 2015). Students suffer the most academically due to low teacher retention and high attrition year after year.

Most of the research on novice science teachers focuses on elementary education, but no data exists on rural secondary-school novice science teachers and empowerment. For the most part, new teachers are isolated as they are inducted into their teaching assignments with little or no support from their peers and administrators. Some schools and educational entities have seen the need to develop induction or mentoring programs. Other school systems have used intensive professional development to alleviate some of the problems that induction-phase teachers face daily. Kelley (2004) pointed out national and local efforts seem to be misplaced. Most remedies for the teacher shortage focus on adding more teachers to the system through alternative teaching programs instead of retaining qualified novice teachers. Researchers Sanford (1988) and Watson (2006) found that science teachers have more day-to-day challenges early in their careers in planning and teaching compared to other disciplines. As most secondary science instructors are content specialists, this puts an extra hardship on them.

Research among Australian teachers found primary science and technology instructors complained of a "lack of collegial support for novice science teachers to teach the subject. Also, they had a low level of understanding and implementation of a constructivist pedagogical approach to the teaching of science and technology" (Cahill & Skamp, 2003, p. 16). Research has also found content-specific support during the year would help alleviate some of the problems experienced by first-year science teachers (Cahill & Skamp, 2003, p. 16). Recent research spearheaded by Texas A&M's Policy Research Initiative in Science Education (PRISE) project indicated that teachers who are satisfied with their teaching assignments are more likely to contribute to the professional culture of the school (Bozeman & Stuessy, 2009). Lastly, according to Hobbs (2004) and Short (1994), empowered teachers are more likely to stay in the teaching profession.

Significance of the Study

The findings from this research can be used to study what novice science teachers in rural secondary schools bring to the classroom, as well as what they need to become empowered, effective teachers. It is essential to study the qualities and needs of novice teachers and the events or experiences that cause empowerment to fluctuate, empower teachers to their full potential, and remedy the "leaking pipeline or churning" of science teachers. The results of this study can be used to determine how to differentiate professional development for science teachers and how they can be professionally sustained, empowered, and retained over time.

Research Question

The purpose of this research was to investigate what can be learned from the "professional voices" of novice science teachers in rural secondary schools during their first one to three years of teaching. What kinds of events or experiences cause professional empowerment to change or fluctuate in novice science teachers in rural secondary schools?

Research Framework

The research methods mirrored the work of Hobbs (2004), Hobbs and Moreland, (2009), and Moreland (2011) using qualitative data including novice secondary-school science teachers' case-study interviews, behavior-over-time graphing (BOTG), and The Teacher Empowerment Survey (TES).

Short (1994) presented "six empirically derived sets of dimensions of teacher empowerment to define the construct and broaden the dialogue beyond the rhetoric of empowerment (p.488)." These dimensions are involved in decision making, teacher impact, teacher status, autonomy, opportunities for professional development or professional growth, and teacher self-efficacy (p. 489). These dimensions were developed as a result of research from the "Empowered School District Project" conducted in nine school districts across the country from 1989 to 1992 (Short, 2004, p. 488). Descriptions of the six dimensions are as follows:

1. Involvement in *decision making* denotes the teacher's ability to be involved with key decisions that might affect the workplace environment and how a teacher instructs.
2. *Status* is a dimension of empowerment that is most often seen in teachers who have some experience as it pertains to how they are perceived and respected by their peers for being knowledgeable and for functioning at a high level.
3. Teacher *impact* refers to teachers' perceptions that they make a difference and profoundly affect school life.
4. *Self-efficacy* refers to teachers' perceptions that they have the skills and abilities to help students learn, are competent in building effective programs for students, and affect student learning (p. 490).
5. *Autonomy* refers to teachers' beliefs that they can control certain aspects of their working life, such as the curriculum they teach, scheduling events, and pedagogy (p. 490).
6. *Professional growth* refers to the idea that teachers believe the school where they work provides them with opportunities to grow and develop professionally, learn continuously, and expand their skills through their work in the school (p. 490).

Limitations of the Study

Due to the small geographic area and the limited number of individuals who participated in this research, limitations exist. The study was qualitative and consisted of five case studies. Emails were then sent to schools asking for teacher participation in the research. The availability and location of teachers only included novice science teachers in rural south Texas, 2014. The teacher's experiences and conclusions drawn from this study should not be generalized to other teachers or location; however, they can provide a more in-depth and robust look at professional empowerment in novice science teachers in rural secondary schools.

Methodology & Qualitative Design

Qualitative case studies were chosen as a research method because they can be characterized as being particularistic, descriptive, and heuristic. "Particularistic means that the case study will focus on a particular situation, event, or phenomenon, which in this case is empowerment. The qualitative approach was best to examine the construct of professional empowerment and its six dimensions compared to quantitative research, which takes apart a phenomenon to examine parts. Qualitative research can reveal how all the parts work together to form a whole" (Merriam, 1998). Creswell (2008) stated qualitative

research provides a more detailed account from the "voices" of the participants being contextualized in the settings in which they provide experiences and the meanings of their experiences.

The one-on-one empowerment interviews included narrative-inquiry techniques (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000) with systems dynamics behavior-over-time graphing. The TES was developed by Hobbs & Barufaldi (2006) in their National Science Foundation (NSF) funded research project because interviewing numerous subjects was time-consuming, and they could include more participants with the survey. The Teacher Empowerment Survey was funded by a four-year NSF grant, *Project Instrument Development (I.D.): Exploring the Professional Growth Continuum* (Moreland 2011, p. 63). The survey consists of "quantitative and qualitative open-ended elements" and was intended to measure K-12 science teachers' sense of professional empowerment using the six empirically derived dimensions of the construct (Moreland, 2011, p. 63). The Teacher Empowerment Survey items were statistically tested and validated by an external statistician from *Project I.D.: Instrument Development for Exploring the Professional Growth Continuum* (NSF Grant No. 0554468, 2007; Moreland, 2011, p. 60).

The TES identifies experiences related to empowerment for the novice science teacher by using a Likert scale where a response of 1 indicates the respondent strongly disagrees, ranging up to a response of 5 to indicate the respondent strongly agrees, and a response of 0 means the respondent doesn't know (Moreland, 2011).

Sampling

Selected teachers had to be working in grades 6-12 and teach a full load of science classes in a rural school district. Ten TES's were returned completed. However, five teachers met all the criteria. All teachers meeting the criteria for the research were rural science teachers in their first three years of teaching. Four out of the five teachers were presently teaching in year two, while one teacher was in year three. Two of the five teachers were high school teachers, and two were middle school teachers; one teacher was both a middle and high school teacher.

Results

The research supported this model in that when a dimension was affected, it caused empowerment to fluctuate positively or negatively. Some of the teachers in this study seemed to be more successful in finding empowerment through the personal dimensions of empowerment: professional growth, self-efficacy, and status, while as they felt little could be done to control the organizational dimensions; decision making, autonomy, and impact. Each dimension can add or take away from empowerment; however they do not all need to be present to affect empowerment. The results described in this paper are summarized, and the interview scripts would be too long to include in this proposal.

Teacher empowerment fluctuated for all five teachers throughout the year. Four prominent themes impacted it; professional development mandated curriculum, leadership, and classroom management, which will be translated into four dimensions of empowerment. Empowerment refers to "the opportunity and confidence to act upon one's ideas and to influence the way one performs in one's profession" (Melenyzer, 1990, p. 18). A greater analysis was conducted with these themes in mind to determine which dimensions fit within these themes. This research autonomy and decision-making were seen as similar because when one was threatened or reduced, the other dimension would also be affected. Mandated curriculum diminished the novice teachers' ability to make decisions about how and what to teach to their students. Most teachers received no training or warning about the new curriculum, and many spent countless hours preparing the new school year's curriculum. When the mandated curriculum was presented to them, it caused their empowerment to decrease. They were forced to use lessons and assessments and follow a regimented guide on how it should be taught. One teacher was not restricted to any one curriculum; however, he felt he was micro-managed at his school and could not make any decisions independently, which directly affected his autonomy and decision-making abilities. Figure 2 below illustrates the authentic empowerment graphs for the five rural novice science teachers.

Professional development's theme appeared to have the most considerable impact on empowerment overall for the five teachers. Professional development usually refers to some type of formal training to promote the content knowledge and pedagogical skills of teachers. Four out of the five teachers pointed to professional development as a very empowering event or experience while one was impacted negatively by not acquiring any professional development. Attending a conference on science education was a dominant force within the professional development theme. Each of the four teachers spoke about how the conference motivated and changed what they were doing in the classroom.

Attending conferences gives novice teachers insight into what being a professional teacher looks like. It also permitted teachers to network with other professionals and ask questions that would allow them to bring back ideas to use immediately with their students. This theme fit into the dimension of professional growth, and it seemed to drive empowerment upward for four out of the five teachers. One teacher's empowerment started low and increased as she attended some very empowering professional development opportunities. Another teacher stated, "My empowerment was low until I attended the science education conference, and then it all began to fall into place. Networking with other teachers and content-specific workshops really helped me." Two teachers' empowerment ended low by the end of the year because the teachers experienced many classroom management problems.

Conclusions& Recommendations

Networking with other professionals at conferences gave these rural teachers who normally teach in isolation from other science teachers a chance to learn new ideas and see what others are doing in the field. Classroom management was a key theme throughout each teachers rendering of their story and in most cases impacted their empowerment negatively. The research results can give administrators, teachers, and others insight into the realm of a rural novice science teacher and their professional needs in the professional community. More has to be done to promote empowerment and retention among novice science teachers. The following recommendations can be easily implemented by schools and persons involved in developing professional development for teachers, which could benefit these five novice science teachers and perhaps novice teachers in general:

- Individualized professional development programs rich in content knowledge and classroom management techniques.
- Attend Science Education and Teaching Conferences.
- Providing an experienced teacher for support.
- Strong leadership that promotes positive reinforcement and collegiality among new staff and faculty.

Rural science teachers in their novice years of teaching need more professional constructivist content knowledge. Even though teachers may have a degree in science, it does not always prepare them for the subject they will be teaching. Most of the teachers in this study are not teaching what they were certified to teach, so increasing their content knowledge is a very empowering experience. Other research (Hobbs, 2004; Moreland, 2011, Gardner-Webb University, 2019) showed teachers who gained science content knowledge through professional development or higher education gained empowerment from the experience. Teachers require different kinds of professional development targeted for their experience levels and their personal needs. Professional development is not a one size fits all. It should be individualized according to the needs of the teachers involved. Schools tend to provide campus-wide training for their teachers without considering where teachers are on the professional continuum. When teachers are allowed to attend professional development opportunities benefitting their personal needs, this

will affect or change empowerment by connecting positively with autonomy, decision making, self-efficacy, status, and impact. Teachers can demonstrate greater empowerment based on professional growth as they gain knowledge through experiences and share it. Teachers are more successful as they employ the new strategies gained from professional development experiences, which contribute greatly to their overall empowerment and confidence in teaching. Networking with other science professionals gave these teachers invaluable information to allow them to transform their teaching. Administrators should not forget that these recruits need help by providing them with an experienced teacher or mentor for support. Providing a strong teacher mentor for new teachers would give novice teachers a much-needed support system. This support system thus provides ongoing scaffolding for the new struggling teachers. Mentors should be chosen not to be appointed by the administration but by experienced teachers who can meet with the new teacher regularly. In small schools, it may be difficult to provide someone who teaches the same subject, but an experienced teacher even in a different content area can help new teachers learn the ropes and provide them with classroom management ideas to help the novices get a firm grip on their classrooms and students.

Administrators could make multiple changes to ease numerous problems novice teachers experience their first few years of teaching. First, administrators should never isolate new teachers. All administrators should provide ongoing support for their new teachers and listen to any problems or ideas that these teachers bring to the table.

The important findings from this research emphasized that conference professional development is essential in cultivating novice science teachers' empowerment in rural secondary schools. The new teachers will be more effective in the classroom and hopefully retained in that setting. Most importantly, this research supports teachers in advocating for science content professional development. Teachers who participate in science teacher education conferences felt empowered to be more effective and confident teachers.

Figures

Figure 1 Model of Research

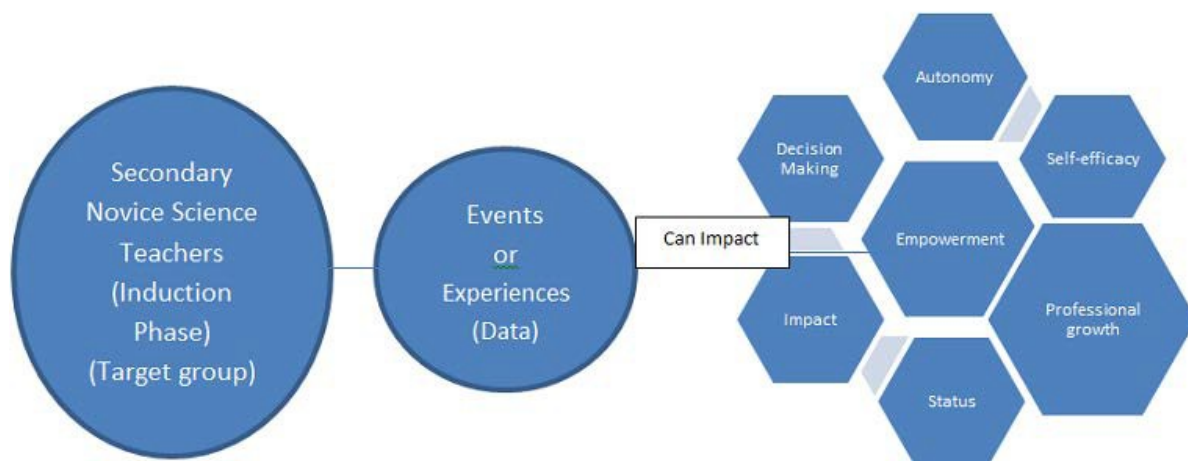
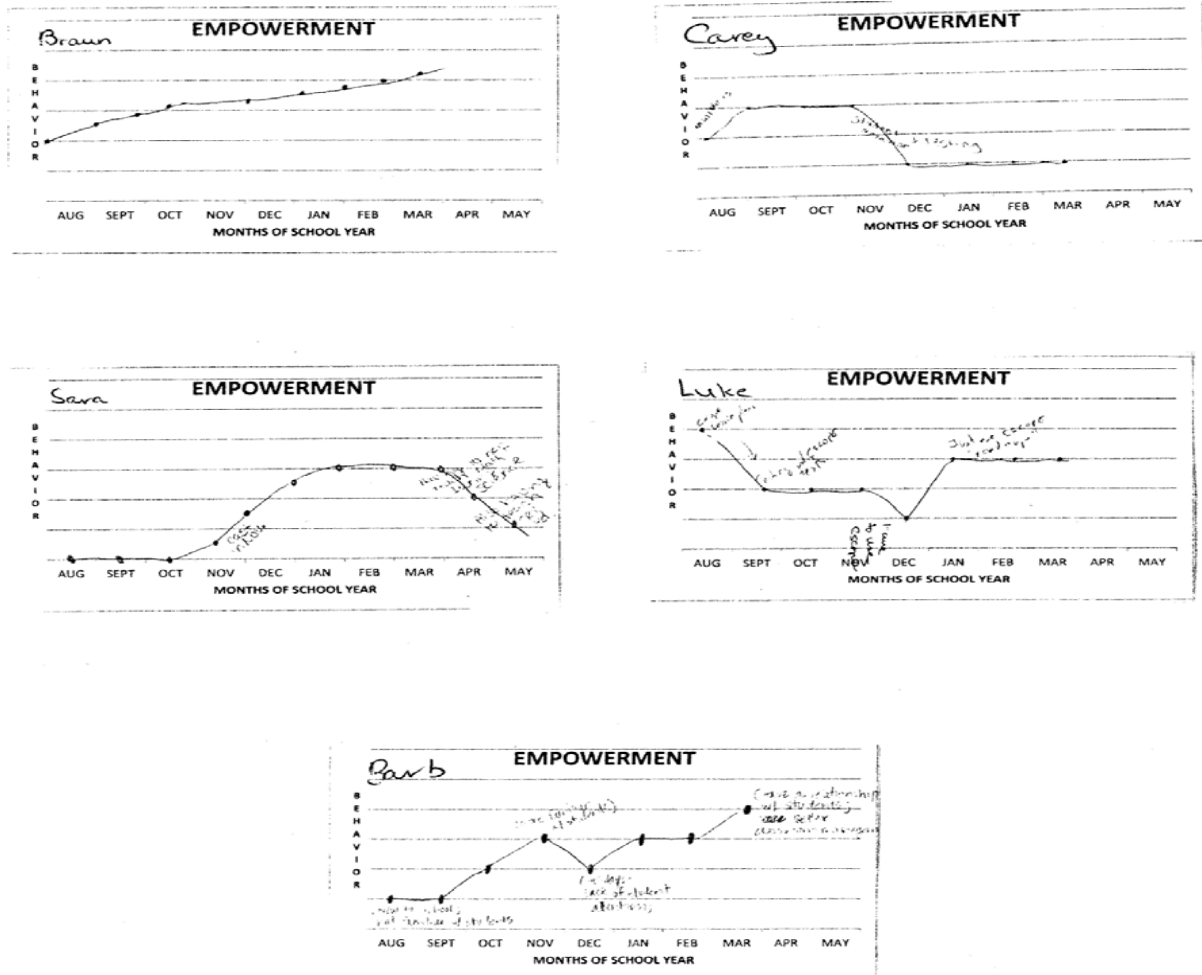


Figure 2 Teacher Self Analysis of Empowerment over Time



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