

**Agents of Change and Continuity:
The Pivotal Role of Teachers in Albanian Educational
Reform and Democratization**

Author

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Abstract

This article explores how teachers navigate and respond to the competing pressures of school change in a global policy context. In postcommunist Albania, national policies reflecting global norms for the teacher's role overshadowed complex and cultural aspects of teaching and learning and, as a result, led to gaps in implementation. On the basis of ethnographic research and the analysis of two Albanian teachers' narratives, this article shows the complexity of the teachers' world as well as their significant dual role as agents of change and stakeholders of continuity. Findings suggest that in response to pressures, teachers selectively adopted reform policies and created hybrid forms of practice. To avoid unintended consequences, policy makers should thus reinforce teachers' experiential knowledge along with policy aims.

Practical/Social Implications

When introducing and implementing educational reforms, educational authorities should recognize that teachers respond from a multiplicity of perspectives. My findings suggest that to avoid negative unintended consequences, policy makers should emphasize the value of teachers' intuitive and experiential knowledge as well as larger social, political, and international policy goals. By tapping into the metis of experienced teachers, policy makers can galvanize momentum for change, allowing for teachers to develop and gradually incorporate new elements into their classroom configurations of power, relationship, knowledge, and pedagogy.

Citation

Gardinier, M. (2012). Agents of change and continuity: The pivotal role of teachers in Albanian educational reform and democratization. *Comparative Education Review*, 56, 659-683.

**The More Things Change,
the More They Stay the Same?
Prior Achievement Fails to Explain
Gender Inequality in Entry Into STEM
College Majors Over Time**

Authors

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Abstract

This article investigates the empirical basis for often-repeated arguments that gender differences in entrance into science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM) majors are largely explained by disparities in prior achievement. Analyses use data from three national cohorts of college matriculates across three decades to consider differences across several indicators of high school math and science achievement at the mean and also at the top of the test distribution. Analyses also examine the different comparative advantages men and women enjoy in math/science versus English/reading. Regardless of how prior achievement is measured, very little of the strong and persistent gender gap in physical science and engineering majors over time is explained. Findings highlight the limitations of theories focusing on gender differences in skills and suggest directions for future research.

Practical/Social Implications

Gender gaps do remain on many national standardized tests. We are not suggesting that such disparities are unimportant; however, we argue that researchers studying them need to provide another reason why they are important. Continuing to suggest such gaps are an important cause of women's underrepresentation in some STEM fields is not only inaccurate, but potentially harmful in its consequences if it contributes to the perpetuations of gender stereotypes.

Citation

Riegle-Crumb, C., King, B., Grodsky, E., & Muller, C. (2012). The more things change, the more they stay the same? Prior achievement fails to explain gender inequality in entry into STEM college majors over time. *American Educational Research Journal*, 49, 1048-1073.

**Recreational Therapy: A Model
for a Human Service Profession that Transcends
Language, Culture, and Geography****Authors**

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Abstract

Recreational therapy (RT) involves the use of structured and adapted recreational opportunities with the goal of improving physical, cognitive, social, and emotional functioning of people with disabilities, illnesses, or limitations. As a human service centered profession, RT grounds much of its work in the social sciences; therefore, theories, such as self-determination, enjoyment and social fun, and optimal experience are commonly applied. Within the United States of America (USA), recreational therapists work in various settings ranging from rehabilitation and hospital-based settings to community service settings and schools. RT services are similarly available in Canada and increasingly in South Korea, Australia, Finland, New Zealand, and Switzerland. Using research specific to structured recreational activities as they are used to assist in rehabilitative and academic processes within the USA, and to some degree, internationally, the purpose of this paper is to define and describe RT from a global perspective, provide a model for how RT services transcend language, culture, and geography, and how the RT profession within the USA is uniquely positioned to assist individuals in developing a model for similar services within their respective countries.

Practical/Social Implications

The International Classification of Functioning, Disability, and Health (ICF), along with RT and related services as they exist internationally, present increased possibilities for collaboration and sharing of information and resources among professionals interested in improving and

expanding services for people with disabilities or limitations. RT services are prevalent in the USA and Canada and are emerging in a small number of other nations, the room for expansion of services is unlimited. Ways in which collaborative efforts might be advanced could be through increased efforts among researchers to publish research specific to RT in journals internationally. Similarly, RT professionals might consider seeking opportunities for multidisciplinary research opportunities aimed at exposing RT research to allied health care professionals. Finally, individuals interested in pursuing studies in RT might consider pursuing on campus or online degrees from universities within the USA. Graduates could then, in turn, fulfill a goal of bringing RT knowledge and resources back to their respective countries.

Citation

McKenney, A., Candace, A., & Broach, E. (2012). Recreational Therapy: A model for a human service profession that transcends language, culture, and geography. *Humanities and Social Sciences Review*, 1, 455-464.

**Life Skills Developed by Those
Who Have Played in Video Game Tournaments****Authors**

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Abstract

The purpose of this study was to determine if there are significant differences in the development of life skills, such as personal, educational, social, and work-related skills, between those who had and had not played in video game tournaments. Results from a survey of 203 students in a public research university are reported in the paper. Using Chi-square analysis, statistically significant differences were found between students who had and had not participated in video game tournaments in the reported improvement of several life skills or abilities, such as arithmetic skills, giving directions to others, functioning as a member of a team, leading a group of people, coordinating the activities of other people, and ability to memorize information. The results show that playing in video game tournaments does have positive consequences.

Practical/Social Implications

The findings of this study suggest that classroom teachers could use video games in a tournament format to facilitate the learning of life skills. While intense tournament competition can be stressful to some students, others could learn from less intense and even friendly competitive tournament environments. Educational games could be built to facilitate varying levels of such competitive behavior in the classroom. Teachers should be given the option of varying the intensity of the competition in the tournament settings depending on the characteristics of the students in their classrooms.

Citation

Thirunarayanan, M.O. & Vilchez, M. (2012). Life skills developed by those who have played in video game tournaments. *Interdisciplinary Journal of Information, Knowledge, and Management*, 7, 205-219.

An External Validation Study of a Classification of Mixed Connective Tissue Disease and Systemic Lupus Erythematosus Patients**Author**

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Abstract

Mixed Connective Tissue Disease (MCTD) and Systemic Lupus Erythematosus (SLE) are autoimmune rheumatic diseases that are difficult for physicians to diagnose and to distinguish for a variety of reasons. The correct classification of these two diseases is a crucial issue for clinicians who treat autoimmune rheumatic diseases. In prior research, medical risk factors represented by instrument or laboratory measures and physician judgments (12 key features for MCTD and 12 key features for SLE) were parameterized with a one parameter logistic function in a Rasch model. Those results identified separate diagnostic dimensions for MCTD and SLE. This procedure was replicated in the present research with a sample of largely African American and Hispanic patients. Results verified separate dimensions for MCTD and SLE, which suggests MCTD is a separate disease from SLE.

Practical/Social Implications

The available data and the results of the current study lend confirmatory support to the research hypothesis that MCTD and SLE are distinct diseases and that MCTD cannot be considered as a subset of SLE. The results of this study and its predecessor strongly suggest that new classification criteria for the classification of MCTD need to be developed, and the results of this paper have provided some grist as input into the development of new criteria for MCTD classification.

Citation

Hoffman, R.W., Bezruczko, N., & Perkins, K. (2012). An external validation study of a classification of mixed connective tissue disease and systemic lupus erythematosus patients. *Journal of Applied Measurement*, 13, 205-216.

Teaching General Safety and Body Safety Training Skills to a Latino Preschool Male with Autism**Authors**

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Abstract

This case study describes the implementation of a safety training program with a 5-year-old Latino boy diagnosed with Autism Spectrum Disorder. The program focused on teaching him general safety rules and body safety in an effort to reduce his likelihood of sexual victimization and injury. The boy was treated in conjunction with another child by two therapists, while his caretakers participated in a caretaker group. Both groups consisted of 10h of safety education instruction. Results show that the boy was able to learn a few safety concepts as well as increase his knowledge of personal safety. Caregiver data revealed a minor increase in knowledge of general safety and an increase in family communication regarding safety issues. However, upon a 3-month follow-up, the boy appeared to lose some knowledge. Recommendations for implementing the Body Safety Training program with children with disabilities and providing their caretakers with information regarding the risk of child sexual abuse is provided.

Practical/Social Implications

There are several implications for teaching safety skills to children with ASD based on our findings. Parental involvement is key to the success of the KLAS program. As with many other types of treatment, it was imperative that lessons be practiced at home, “teachable moments” employed, and opportunities to review the information repeatedly be found.

There is little research done with children with disabilities and body safety, although what little research exists seems to indicate a preference for behaviorally-oriented methods of teaching (Lumley & Milten-Berger 1997; Lumley et al. 1998). Our work with Enrique seems to confirm this as the key to learning appeared to be repetition of the concepts, both verbally and in practice, coupled with immediate reinforcement.

Citation

Kenny, M., Bennett, K., Dougery, J., & Steele, F. (2012). Teaching general safety and body safety training skills to a Latino preschool male with autism. *Journal of Child and Family Studies, 21*, 1-11.

Implementing Writing Support Circles With Adult Learners in a Nonformal Education Setting

Authors

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Abstract

Most students come to their graduate programs with academic writing skills insufficient to excel in their studies. A lack of academic writing skills among graduate students has been a problem in a college of education at a large southeastern public research university where the project described in this article was implemented. To address this lack of academic writing skills, a new service, Writing Support Circles (WSCs), was designed and implemented for a small group of Latina students supported by a grant as a pilot program. WSCs are a series of workshops intended to create a community of learners who work together on improving their academic writing with guidance of a facilitator. The purpose of this article is to share the author’s experiences with designing and

implementing WSCs with adult learners in a nonformal education setting at a university.

Practical/Social Implications

Help from the college administration could be instrumental in this process. The administration needs to require instructors to communicate with facilitators to improve the outcomes of the WSCs. The administration can also implement other processes to increase the effectiveness of the WSCs. For example, instructors could be required to create peer support groups to share their syllabus and assignment guidelines with each other and get feedback and to increase readability and understandability of the assignment. In addition, the administration needs to implement a program that teaches faculty how to grade written assignments, and uniform expectations should be created around good academic writing across the college.

Citation

Plakhotnik, M. & Rocco, T. (2012). Implementing writing support circles with adult learners in a nonformal education setting. *Adult Learning, 23*, 76-81.

Enacting Diversity in Dual Certification Programs

Authors

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Abstract

This exploratory study, based on a content analysis of program descriptions, course syllabi, and related program documents, examined the curricula of three fully merged teacher education programs that were redesigned to better prepare teachers for the full range of diversity in their student populations. In these programs, graduates earn a general and special education elementary license simultaneously. Results suggest that attention to disability is more prevalent than attention to other social identity markers such as race, class, culture, or language.

Practical/Social Implications

In these well-intended early attempts to rethink the boundaries between general and special education, the programs may best be understood as transitional rather

than transformational—that is, programs that reflect a willingness to take steps toward becoming more responsive to diversity, but that could benefit significantly from greater creativity and imagination in how that is to be accomplished.

In moving toward transformation, the curricula of such programs will need to move away from an additive approach, where special education content has simply been placed within or appended to an existing curriculum

(Pugach & Blanton, 2009), and address more fully how to situate content related to disability within multiple, intersecting diversity communities. This requires a more thorough rethinking of the curriculum's underpinnings.

Citation

Pugach, M.C. & Blanton, L.P. (2012). Enacting diversity in dual certification programs. *Journal of Teacher Education*, 63, 254-267.

