

Perceptions of Educational Philosophies: Written Reflections of Female Saudi Arabian Pre-service Teachers

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Abstract

The purpose of this study is to provide a preliminary investigation into the perceptions of educational philosophies as viewed through the individual lens and ‘voice’ of master-level, female Saudi pre-service teachers studying abroad in the United States. This study explores the personal and cultural belief systems juxtaposed with intentions for classroom practices in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia and the extent to which transformative learning occurs through the reflective thinking process. Transformative learning theory and critical feminist theory frame this study. A qualitative design with a constructive paradigm were utilized to examine the handwritten reflections of eleven Saudi women enrolled in a higher education course in a 4-year university located in southwest region of the United States. Five educational philosophies taken into account include perennialism, essentialism, pragmatism, reconstructionism, and existentialism. Through the manual coding process and thematic data analysis, four major themes emerged: cultural beliefs and values, academic freedom and personal empowerment, intentions for classroom practices and beyond, and learning through reflection. Findings revealed multiple educational philosophic orientations, based on cultural beliefs and values, and transformative learning through reflective thinking with specific intentions for future classroom practices. Implications and recommendations are also included.

Keywords

Higher education, educational philosophy, pre-service teachers, Saudi Arabian women, transformative learning, critical reflection

Introduction

Numerous studies have been conducted on the importance of educational philosophies among pre-service teachers and the influence philosophical beliefs have on classroom practices (Dewey, 1916; Kalaw, 2018; LaBelle & Belknap, 2017; Liu, 2004). As Conti (2007) suggested, educational philosophies "provide a comprehensive and consistent set of beliefs about the teaching-learning transaction" (p. 20). However, few studies explore the perception of educational philosophies from an international perspective. Even fewer studies explore the perceptions of educational philosophies specific to female master-level pre-service teachers from the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia (KSA). Women teachers in higher education represent most of the educators in the KSA (Aldegether, 2009; Yakaboski, Perez-Velez, & Almutairi, 2016). Alsuwaida (2011) noted, "Today, Saudi Arabian women are relentlessly pursuing higher education" (p. 111). Given the importance of educational philosophies for classroom practices, together with the increase of Saudi women pre-service teachers choosing to pursue their master's degree in the United States (U.S.), this research is timely and relevant.

The purpose of this study is to provide a preliminary investigation into the perceptions of educational philosophies as viewed through the individual lens and 'voice' of master-level, female Saudi Arabian pre-service teachers studying abroad in the U.S. This study also aims to explore the personal and cultural belief systems juxtaposed with intentions for classroom practices in the KSA as well as the extent to which

transformative learning occurs through the reflective thinking process: What are the perceptions of female Saudi pre-service teachers relating to educational philosophies? What influences do educational philosophies have on classroom practices in KSA? What role do transformative learning and reflection play in the implementation of educational philosophies in the KSA? Findings contribute to educational research and greater understanding of the transformative learning processes of female Saudi pre-service teachers in the U.S. educational environment. Excerpts from the participants' written reflections are included to add insight on how the participants constructed meaning associated with educational philosophy. Implications of the findings and recommendations for future research are also included.

Literature Review

Cultural attitudes concern issues of "individual freedom and cultural diversity" (Daenekindt, de Koster, & van der Waal, 2017, p. 791). The widely held assumption that "different cultural attitudes consistently cluster together ensues from the idea that cultural belief systems are guided by one latent factor which shapes the various, more specific, attitudes" (p. 795). According to the Dos Santos (2018), teachers' cultural and personal belief systems tend to influence their behaviors and pedagogical strategies in their daily classroom practices. In this study, Dos Santos found that when teachers interacted and engaged with their students via their pedagogical teaching strategies, they utilized their cultural and personal belief systems. Furthermore, it is known

that teachers have personal beliefs when it comes to their teaching philosophy, which consists of their own personal learning experiences, their goals for their students, their roles as teachers, and the curriculum they teach.

Kindsvatter, Wilen, and Ishler, as cited in Dos Santos (2018), discovered in their study that teachers' classroom practices may differ between teachers' various cultures and the various settings provided in education. Richardson's (1996) findings align with Dos Santos'. In her work, she found that when teachers are learning how to teach, their existing knowledge and beliefs play a big part in shaping what students learn and take from their pre-service programs. One's existing knowledge and beliefs are tied to many things pre-service teachers bring to the classroom. Examples include but are not limited to, how they view the world through various lenses, how they view self and others, what they believe to be the role of schools in society, and their ethnic, gender, and religious upbringing, just to name a few (Richardson, 1996).

Furthermore, it is important to point out that for many people, culture is the lens through which they view their own lives and how they interpret the world in which they live. Understanding this notion helps others understand why this cultural lens plays a huge role in not only filtering out information they do not want to use, but this lens helps determine the decisions that are made in classrooms by teachers. What occurs in the classroom is socially constructed based on one's own cultural lens. Therefore, teachers' beliefs are not context free. Knowing this helps others understand why certain practices and behavior occur in the classroom

environment, hence the culture of the classroom environment (Mansour, 2009).

It is well known that countries across the globe are vastly different in how they develop and shape their youth in terms of the types of skills they want them to have and the attitudes they should embrace in their respective countries. It should be no surprise that different cultures will also have different philosophies, when it comes to how to educate their youth and generations to follow; this includes the United States (Hassan, Jamaludin, Sulaiman, & Baki, 2010). However, this concept does not mean one cannot learn to either combine or make adaptations to current beliefs to provide an educational environment that benefits all students in one's classroom. It means that one may face challenges, especially if the cultural climate they create is counter to their own personal belief systems.

As a result, one must remember that educational philosophies can be used as a tool to promote one's professional development and growth. Self-reflection is key as an educator. Without self-reflection one will not be able to recognize both challenges and achievements made in the classroom. Self-reflection also helps us recognize how our own personal beliefs emerge in our classroom environments and in our pedagogical practices (Beatty, Leigh, & Dean, 2009).

One's educational philosophy, which consists of one's personal and cultural beliefs, is key in understanding how one creates a classroom culture for all stakeholders in the classroom. These philosophies are personal and a reflection of our various social and cultural identities that intersect on a daily basis. This idea aligns with the belief that various

philosophies also intersect in the classroom. This occurs based on the various personal beliefs about what entails good teaching and learning.

Theoretical and Conceptual Frameworks

This investigation is grounded in the transformative learning theory (TLT) and the critical feminist theory (CFT). TLT is a series of cognitive processes through which the student expands his or her worldview. Tupas and Pendon (2016) described TLT as the learning that “changes the way we see ourselves, those around us, and the world; based on three (3) fundamental activities: learning from experience, critical reflection, and personal development” (p. 449). While the present study demonstrates the three fundamental elements as experienced by the Saudi women pre-service teachers, TLT did not address the specific research matter of their handwritten ‘voice’. This detail is particularly important in the context of patriarchal power structures in countries such as the KSA (*Country Comparison*, 2019). As Al Alhareth et al. (2015) stated, “Saudi society is a unique mix between religion and culture; the position of women in this society is complicated, they face a lot of barriers to get an education as they live under male authority all the time” (p. 121). To address this area of the study, the researchers chose to incorporate elements of CFT. CFT builds on critical theory’s focus on dominance and power, and it encourages giving voice to those who otherwise may be silenced and empowers them to express their personal viewpoints (Young & Marshall,

2013). Since the major area of this study investigates the transformative learning process of the female Saudi Arabian pre-service teachers in their own ‘voice,’ the combination of TLT and CFT were utilized to frame this endeavor.

Conceptually, this study is anchored in educational philosophies and the intentional process of reflective thinking. Hubbs and Brand (2010) described the reflective process as “the internal making of meaning that allows the writer’s insights to be overtly expressed” (p. 59). Furthermore, Mezirow (1990; 1991) stated that the transformative learning process involves a specific function of reflection in which assumptions based on current beliefs are reassessed and, in turn, insights resulting from the transformed meaning of new perspectives are acted upon. In relation to educational philosophy, Conti (2007) asserted awareness of one’s educational philosophy is important because not only does it help to clarify what one does in practice but also clarifies the principles and reasons why they do it. This study provides evidence of how awareness of educational philosophy was stimulated by reflective thinking.

Method

Data Collection and Procedure

The goal of this study is to provide a preliminary investigation into the perceptions of educational philosophies through the individual lens and ‘voice’ of female Saudi Arabian preservice teachers studying abroad in the U.S. This study also explores its participants’ transformative learning experience, intentions for classroom practices, and how they might navigate their new

knowledge—given the cultural expectations in their home country.

A qualitative methodology with a constructivist paradigm was used in this study. A constructivist paradigm emphasizes reality as socially constructed in which multiple realities exist (Mertens, 2019). Moreover, research that seeks to understand individual differences of expressions and perceptions of cultural beliefs and values is an appropriate fit for qualitative methods (2019). It was an exhaustive and thorough examination of the data. Grounded theory guidelines (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016) along with thematic content analysis (Saldaña, 2016) were used for data analysis. The focus of grounded theory is to build theory that is grounded in the data (Corbin & Strauss, 2015); however, in this study, building theory was not the goal. Rather, the “inductive comparative nature of data analysis in grounded theory provides a systemic strategy for analyzing” the data (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016, p. 32). Therefore, we applied this strategy in the continuous interrogation of the data during the analysis process.

Data were collected from the final project of eleven students who were enrolled in the course, *Philosophical Foundations in Education*, either during the fall of 2015 or during the fall of 2016. Merriam and Tisdell (2016) noted that gathering documentation data is one of the more common forms of data collection in qualitative research found in education. All students in this study were female, study-abroad, master-level pre-service teachers from the KSA studying higher education in the U.S. IRB approval was granted for this study.

Each of the eleven data sets consisted of 20 or more handwritten pages of reflections for a total of 224 pages. To organize the data, we separated each of the 20 data sets, by student, and made a hardcopy of each set. To ensure anonymity, all eleven participants' names were replaced with an identifier. For instance, IS1 refers to international student #1; IS2 refers to international student #2, and so on. Next, in preparation for manual coding, each data set was uploaded to Google Drive in a private document file so that both researchers could access and review the documentation during the coding process. At the top of each page, we placed the participants' identifiers. For ease of coding, each of the 224 pages of text was formatted into four columns titled: 1) Memo Notes, 2) Transcript, 3) Researcher #1 Coding, and 4) Researcher #2 Coding.

Concerning memo writing, Saldaña (2016) posited, “Memo writing before, during, and after you code becomes a critical analytic heuristic” (p. 69). Charmaz (2014) suggested that memo writing encourages researchers to “stop, focus, take your codes and data apart, compare them, and define links between them” (p. 164). Thus, the researchers utilized the practice of memo writing throughout the process of data collection, analysis, findings, and the writing of this study. We believe the process added deeper insight into our participants as well as our data analysis and findings. In addition to memo writing, the researchers used a separate, personal data journal to capture reflective thoughts, ideas, reactions, interpretations, and insights throughout the coding process (Miles, Huberman, & Saldaña, 2020).

Per Saldaña (2016), “Coding is not a precise science; it is primarily an interpretive act” (p. 5). Therefore, to initiate the process of interpreting the data, each researcher engaged in initial line-by-line coding of each of the 20 data sets, which consisted of 224 pages of written text. Line-by-line coding prevents researchers from accepting the participants' viewpoint without further inquiry (Charmaz, 2014). It also prevents the researchers' assumptions to dictate the direction of the data rather than “looking at the data, critically and analytically” (p. 127). Moreover, Charmaz (2014) suggested that line-by-line coding helps researchers “gain surprising insights [and] also gain distance from your preconceptions and your participants' taken-for-granted assumptions about the material so that you can see it in new light” (p. 133).

Data were analyzed by each researcher individually, then collaboratively. An inductive approach to coding was employed, manually, in a 2-cycle process utilizing InVivo coding in the first cycle and pattern coding in the second cycle. Thomas (2006) noted, “The primary purpose of the inductive approach is to allow research findings to emerge from the frequent, dominant, or significant themes inherent in raw data” (p. 238). InVivo coding was used to ensure that the focus stayed on honoring the participants' ‘voice.’ As Saldaña (2016) stated, a primary aspect of utilizing InVivo coding is to “prioritize and honor the participants' voice” and its usefulness in understanding worldviews from the perspective of those whose “voices are often marginalized” (p. 106). The first cycle process was helpful to the researchers in summarizing “segments of

data” (p. 226) in preparation for the second cycle of coding.

In the second cycle of coding, pattern coding was utilized to allow for the “grouping of the first cycle summaries into a smaller number of categories, themes, or concepts” as well as for the “development of major themes from the data” (Saldaña, 2016, p. 236; 296). Through this process, the researchers identified repeated patterns from the categories, and the patterns were grouped into larger emergent themes. Thematic content analysis was a useful strategy for data reduction and for capturing the intricacies of meaning within the textual data set (Given, 2008). This allowed the researchers to make inferences about the broader context of the participants' words. In addition, this study includes quotations from the writings of the participants to justify conclusions (Schilling, 2006) and support assertions. Reflective analysis of the codes revealed the emergence of four principal themes relevant to the purpose of the study. These themes are discussed in the following section.

Findings

The primary focus of this study is to provide a preliminary investigation into the perceptions of educational philosophies as viewed through the individual lens and ‘voice’ of master-level, female Saudi Arabian preservice teachers studying abroad in the U.S. This study also aims to explore personal and cultural belief systems juxtaposed with intentions for classroom practices, and the extent to which transformative learning occurs through the reflective thinking process. As shown in Table 1, the five main educational philosophies taken into account include perennialism, essentialism,

pragmatism, reconstructionism, and existentialism. The following paragraphs briefly describe the five main educational philosophies used in this study:

Progressivism is a student-centered philosophy that refers to a holistic approach that people learn best from what they consider most relevant to their lives. The educational principles of progressivism are to emphasize learners' interests, experiential learning, deep learning, engagement with the learning content and the teacher as facilitator rather than rote learning and viewing the teacher as dictator (Nicholson, 2016).

philosophy that values knowledge that transcends time. Perennialist believe that there are ideas that have lasted through time and space, and survive as universal truths (Guttek, 2014). The perennial curriculum is subject centered, relying much on defined disciplines and the teachers as authorities in their fields. In fact, it is the perennialists who rely heavily on the great works of the past and by learning these classic works of the past, teachers will develop intellectuals among their students. The students' interests are of no interest to perennialists (Nicholson, 2016).

Table 1: Participants' Philosophical Leanings

Participants	Progressivism Pragmatism	Perennialism Realism Behaviorism	Existentialism Humanism	Reconstructionism Critical Theory	Essentialism
IS1	X				
IS2	X				
IS3	X				
IS4		X		x	
IS5		X			x
IS6	X				
IS7	X				
IS8			X		
IS9	X				
IS10		X			
IS11	X		x		
Total	7	3	2	1	1

Note: X = strongest leanings, x= equal strength of leanings

Existentialism rejects universal and absolute ideas. Rather, they argue that individuals make their own choices to define themselves and therefore construct their own reality. For existentialists, students are free, unique and emotional, having personal fears, hopes and aspirations (Gutek, 2014). As a result, education should consist of a broad education with many options for students to explore, reflect and articulate their own personal beliefs.

Reconstructionism is a student-centered philosophy that promotes social and world progress and develops a vision for the future. Reconstructionists believe that education should not focus on merely academics, but be about social construction and creating a new, more democratic, more humanitarian, and more reasonable society (Gutek, 2014). This philosophy consists of a process of social reform, where students should be empowered to solve personal and social problems and where teachers should support learners as transformative agents, aiming for the kind of social change they wish to see (Nicholson, 2016).

From the analysis of the data, four major themes emerged: (a) cultural beliefs and values, (b) academic freedom and personal empowerment, (c) intentions for classroom practice and beyond, and (d) learning through reflection. These themes connect to the purpose and significance of the study and are discussed further in the following sections.

Theme 1: Cultural Beliefs and Values

Beliefs are the doctrines or "convictions that people hold to be true" (OpenStax College, 2015, p. 56). Individuals in a society have specific beliefs, but they also share collective

values. "Values are a cultures' standard for discerning what is good and just in society" (p. 56). The following examples illustrate ways in which the participants conveyed the relevance of cultural beliefs and values nestled within their choice of educational philosophy and ideology:

***IS10** - Coming from the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, our philosophy of education is one that is mixed with our religion in Islam. Idealism is a philosophy that best fits my conservative ideology, and best fits my job in preserving the values of our beautiful country. I understand that the United States has chosen to separate church and state and that is perfectly fine for this country. As for my country, our faith is the essence of who we are as a nation. Spreading this love for my country and Islam is at my very core as a teacher and individual. I see now how I can implement my love for teaching and faith with an idealistic and realistic philosophy.*

***IS8** – The King of Saudi Arabia has given me this opportunity to advance my education knowing that the laws, including religious laws of my country, will have a role on what is and what is not taught in our classrooms. I will not permit that factor to stop me from blending in the beliefs of Existentialism as long as they do not cross the lines of the Saudi Arabian laws.*

Evidence of pride of country and love of religious faith were written both explicitly and within the broader context of cultural heritage and model citizenry. The following is an example that conveys these sentiments:

IS10 - I have always believed that teachers should work together to help our students maintain their cultural traditions and beliefs. Pride for one's country builds community and maintains the cultural heritage. A teacher's duty is not only to educate her students in the core subject but to also assist in the responsibility of showing her students how a model citizen should participate in society. I will be a role model and mentor to my students and show how to be good citizens of KSA.

Whether students chose one educational philosophy over another or combined them to convey their educational philosophical orientations, the examples noticeably articulated the high regard participants placed on the cultural beliefs and values of their home country.

Theme 2: Academic Freedom and Personal Empowerment

The American Federation of Teachers (*Academic Freedom*, 2019) describes academic freedom as the concept of a free exchange of ideas that is a crucial element to good education. All eleven participants expressed elements of academic freedom that address the evolution of education growth over time. The following reflections are examples of this concept:

IS3 - My personal philosophy of education is pragmatism. This theory gives the opportunity to students and teachers to reach empowerment. As an educator I know that there are standard curriculums I should be teaching, but I will always encourage my students to think out of the box, be creative, and free.

IS8 - I am a firm believer that the imagination is a powerful tool for being

successful, and being a resident of this country gives me the opportunity to blend in my beliefs with the ones I have been introduced to by attending the [university]. This factor gives me the power to envision the possibilities that I can carry on with me to my future; [it] is a perfect example on how powerful the mind is to human achievement without crossing the lines of my religious and ethical beliefs. This approach emphasizes my existence as an individual person with the freedom and responsibility determining and developing my own identity through acts of looking to expand my horizons while I have been given the opportunity to do such a thing.

In addition to academic freedom, three participants expressed sentiments of personal empowerment. Poddar (2013) defined empowerment as a process that involves not only decision-making but also personal self-esteem. Among the eleven participants, the following reflection articulated the most expressive 'voice' of personal empowerment and self-esteem relative to new knowledge acquired through educational philosophies:

IS8 – I find Existentialism educational and useful to advance my way of thinking. Prior to coming to this country, I had no connection with any philosophy in education. I never thought I would be so independent in the way I think, but by practicing the theories of Existentialism in the way [I] think, even strict Saudi Arabian law cannot take that away from me. As a student, as a woman from the Middle East, I have a voice and I will definitely make it be heard.

The participant's reflections of personal empowerment and academic freedom provided how she constructed meaning associated with educational philosophies. The reflections also provided context to the participant's intentions for classroom practices within the KSA cultural belief and value systems.

Theme 3: Intentions for Classroom Practice and Beyond

All eleven students reflected on their intentions for classroom practices in the KSA that revealed their new knowledge relating to educational philosophies. Here, a participant reflects on establishing a private school in the KSA as a means to transfer her new way of thinking to future students:

IS7 - When I graduate from the university in the United States, I am planning to open a private school in my city because there are not enough private schools. In order to open a private school, I can apply many types of learning that I have learned in the US classroom to my own private school. In my home country Saudi Arabia our education system does not follow these progressive ideas. Students still learn by reading textbooks and taking formal written exams. I feel that if Saudi Arabia incorporated more hands-on activities and real-life examples into education, students would have a deeper understanding of the subjects and enjoy their learning experience more as well.

Some participants associated their philosophical orientation with the broader context of mentoring as a social responsibility as well as the importance of connecting educational philosophies to real-life experiences:

IS6 - In the philosophy of education I found that I identify most with Pragmatism. I believe that this philosophy helps students gain specific knowledge they will need for the future and connect it with real-life experiences. Coming from Saudi Arabia, the education system is very different from this philosophy. In Saudi Arabian education, the students are expected to read a variety of books and gain knowledge from them, without relating what they are learning to any of their own personal experiences. I believe that Pragmatism is a philosophy I can relate to and apply to my own philosophy of education. I will create a learning environment in my home country in which I am not just delivering lectures and talking to the board, but one in which students understand that their research and discussions are what power true learning and comprehension.

IS5 - I want my students to truly connect with what they are learning, to realize that if they can make real life connections with the content they are learning then this knowledge will mean much more to them than an answer on a test. This is particularly important to me coming from Saudi Arabia, as the process of education there is to simply read a book and memorize facts.

Intentions for classroom practices and the transference of knowledge through mentorship played a major role in the reflections of the participants. Interest in the educational connection to real life and the broader society revealed a direction of the intended path forward.

Theme 4: The Path Forward: Learning Through Reflection and Critical Thinking

Tupas and Pendon (2016) described the fundamental activities of transformative learning as “learning from experience, critical reflection, and personal development” (p. 449). Analysis of the data revealed that all eleven participants personally experienced the process of transformative learning relevant to expanding their worldview and vision for the future:

IS1- The main reason I believe in pragmatism is because it is like trying to liberate the mind and will of a person. If the globe is to administer an activity, it must learn how to transform it, and this can only be possible if it is accommodating changes.

IS2 - One of the primary things I learned this semester entailed the shifting role of the student. Students are no longer just subordinates to their instructors but are rather agents of change. Students are expected to be involved in their community in way like never before.

In addition, all participants expressed a strong desire to utilize critical thinking in both their professional and personal lives related to decision-making. The following participants express these thoughts:

IS5 - As a future educator, the most valuable lesson I could teach my students would be that you have the power to make yourself, to think critically, and to always connect past experiences with the knowledge you acquire.

IS8 - Explaining how this philosophy [Existentialism] creates imagination and critical thinking in decision-making. This will simply help me identify certain learning behaviors, which will be significant for my students in my country. In fact, I find it very educational and useful to advance my way of thinking. The philosophy, Existentialism, and I connected because it has made me a better student willing to learn in a new environment.

Chen and Wen (2019) found that pre-service teachers’ discussions of critical thinking concepts are “shaped by their cultural understanding of thinking, educational ideals and the development of agency and professional identity in teaching experiences” (p. 84). The findings revealed that the perceived path forward toward expanding worldviews incorporated the fundamental elements of transformative learning: critical thinking and intentional reflection.

The four themes of cultural beliefs and values, academic freedom and personal empowerment, intentions for classroom practice and beyond, and the path forward—learning through reflection and critical thinking—reveal and relate to the deeper personal and cultural belief systems that reasonably indicate the extent to which transformative learning occurs through the reflective thinking process. For example, in juxtaposing the four themes with intentions for classroom practices in the KSA, we found that the participants do not recognize nor desire to separate personal learning from their religion. Recognizing the view through the lens of the Saudi women pre-service teachers, “provides a framework to understand what is at the heart of an

individual's cultural belief system" (Williams, 2001, p. 5). Therefore, it is prudent for teachers in Western classrooms to heighten sensitivity to Muslim religious teachings and from a religious perspective when exploring educational philosophies. The connection between the four themes to the transformative learning process is linked directly through the strongly held cultural beliefs and values rooted in religion.

Discussion

Notwithstanding references to learning opportunities in the U.S. and insights into various educational philosophies, all students in this study are profoundly proud of their home country and the welfare of its citizens and community members, which includes its students. With Hofstede Insights (*Country Comparison*, 2019) reporting the KSA as a collectivist culture in which the welfare of the group and group relationships are exhibited through their values, it was not surprising that cultural beliefs and values play a significant role in the lives of the participants. Noticeably, all eleven participants' written reflections referenced a deep sense of obligation, "my duty" and "a teacher's duty" versus "my goal" and "a teacher's objective," as is commonly heard in the U.S. As Hassan, Jamaludin, Sulaiman, and Baki (2010) found, "different cultures will have different philosophies, which results in different ways of doing things, especially in educating the next generation" (p. 2). Indeed, the findings reveal that cultural beliefs and values are critical elements in the lives of the participants and their intentions for classroom implementation of educational

philosophies in the KSA and, most importantly, in educating their students who are the next generation.

Given the importance each participant placed on cultural norms, interestingly, only three of the eleven participants chose the teacher-centered philosophy, perennialism, as a philosophy that most resonated with them. A primary goal of the perennialism environment is to be tightly structured and soundly disciplined in which students cultivate a lifelong search for the truth. However, findings indicated that while the participants are collective in the principles of their country, they are not a homogenous group. They are strong, intelligent, critically-thinking, individual, future teachers who do not have to be limited in their imagination and intentions for professional classroom practices at the risk of working against their personal convictions. This is evident in the multiple ways in which the eleven participants experienced educational philosophies, personally.

The participants' experienced a diverse range of educational philosophical orientations. As shown in Table 1, the five main educational philosophies utilized in this study have developed over the years. Some of these philosophies are teacher centered and some are student centered, but they all have the same goal, and the goal is to provide students with the best education possible. With the multiple philosophical orientations that the participants chose, the perceptions of educational philosophies specific to female Saudi Arabian master-level pre-service teachers deserve closer attention.

It is important to note that because of the scope of the study, this study's findings cannot be generalized widely;

however, it is important to appreciate the insights that the participants provide that could greatly influence U.S. higher education educators in developing a curriculum that addresses the findings in this study.

Limitations and Recommendations

Goals for students in this study included the following: a) demonstrate their understanding of educational philosophies, and b) express how they would apply their philosophical leanings into their classroom/professional place of practice. While the use of this classroom project enabled the students to express their thoughts in their own words, Creswell and Creswell (2018, p. 188) posited that not all participants are "equally articulate" in expressing their views. The students completed their assignment in English; however, English is not their first language. Thus, some participants were more articulate and fluid in their writing expressions than others. To lessen misunderstandings, students also presented their work as an oral presentation accompanied by PowerPoint slides and/or other visual material they created.

In addition, all participants involved in this study returned to their homeland upon successful matriculation from the graduate studies program. Therefore, students were not available for follow-up conversations relating to their stated intentions for implementing their educational philosophies. Future studies might consider examining the extent to which students were able to implement their chosen educational philosophies into their

classroom practices, within their home country. A longitudinal study that follows students' experiences for a more extended timeframe may be helpful.

This study contributes to educational research and the understanding of the experiences of female Saudi Arabian pre-service teachers studying abroad in one university located in the southwest region of the US. Thus, it does not demonstrate the experiences for all students that fit into this group of participants. Future studies may wish to investigate the premise of this study on a wider scope.

Implications

The findings from this study have far-reaching implications for elevating the topic of educational philosophies across the international student study-abroad platform. In particular, for master-level, higher education majors that choose to study in U.S. universities.

Saudi women represent the majority of educators in the KSA, and among those educators, Pre-service teachers continue to pursue higher education through study-abroad opportunities, particularly in the U.S. (Aldegether, 2009; Alsuwaida, 2016; Yakaboski, Perez-Velez, & Almutairi, 2016). Thus, it is prudent for U.S. educators and educational researchers to investigate ways to help give 'voice' to their imagination and intentions for classroom practices.

Conclusion

The goal of this study was to provide a preliminary investigation into the perceptions of educational philosophies as viewed through the

individual lens and ‘voice’ of female, Saudi Arabian, pre-service teachers who study-abroad in the U.S. This study also explores the participants' transformative learning experience, intentions for classroom practices, and how they might navigate their new knowledge—given their cultural expectations in their home country. In addition, this study explores personal and cultural belief systems juxtaposed with intentions for classroom practices in the KSA and the extent to which transformative learning occurs through the reflective thinking process. The findings go a long way in contributing to a greater understanding of the transformative learning process and the constructed meaning associated with educational philosophies for female Saudi pre-service teachers in the U.S. educational environment.

As Alsuwaida (2016) recognized, education in the KSA will progress only through those who embrace a shift in attitudes and perspectives. Through the basic activities of the transformative learning process such as learning from experience, critical reflection, and personal development, the women of this study effectively expanded their worldview and created a space that allowed for personal and professional development:

IS2 - The most influential thing I learned in the class is the expanding and changing role of the academic institution. Most of my educational background is found in traditional classroom-textbook education. I am now able to perceive an academic institution as not only a place for learning math, English and science but also as a conduit for stimulating the imagination,

generating artistic forms of expression and for learning practical life skills.

This study has provided a deeper insight into the mindset of female, Saudi Arabian, pre-service teachers who study-abroad in the U.S. and lays the groundwork for future research in this important area of study. By understanding the individual philosophical perspectives, motivations, and intentions of Saudi women, we, as educators, can better understand how to establish a deeper, more beneficial and meaningful curriculum that combines educational philosophies and transformative learning through written reflection.■

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