

Experiences and pedagogy: A qualitative case study that examines teaching experiences,  
philosophies, and best practices of University Distinguished Teaching Scholars  
at Kansas State University

by

Mónica Elva Vaca-Cárdenas

B.S., Escuela Superior Politécnica de Chimborazo, 2003  
M.S., Universidad Nacional de Chimborazo, 2013

AN ABSTRACT OF A DISSERTATION

submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

Department of Curriculum and Instruction  
College of Education

KANSAS STATE UNIVERSITY  
Manhattan, Kansas

2017

## **Abstract**

This qualitative case study examined how successful professors who were awarded the Coffman Chair for University Distinguished Teaching Scholars at Kansas State University describe their teaching experiences, philosophies, and best practices in undergraduate teaching and learning.

Educators today are concerned about what are the best practices to educate new generation students to survive in a rapidly changing world. Additionally, because most research focus on best practices on the implementation or evaluation of a specific methodology, method, or strategy in one particular course or program, this research addressed the need to investigate the teaching experiences, philosophies, and best practices of outstanding award winner professors in different areas; to understand the challenges they face and the ways they handle undergraduate teaching and learning.

This qualitative case study was informed by Critical Theory as the theoretical framework, grounded in Constructivism, because critical theory cares about social justice while abandoning obsolete, elitist and antidemocratic features of traditional concepts of education. Seven distinguished teaching scholars, who belong to Psychological Sciences, School of Integrated Studies, Political Sciences, Horticulture and Natural Resources, Modern Languages, English, and Physics departments, voluntarily participated in this study. Multiple methods were used to collect data including demographic questionnaires, semi-structured interviews (time line elicitation interviews, formal interviews, and photo elicitation interview), analysis of documents, and journaling.

Seven themes emerged from my findings. The first theme identified the influential people and struggles encountered by professors when they were students. The second identified events

that led professors in choosing their major, why they became teachers, and their teaching strengths and passions. The third identified the challenges they face when teaching undergraduate students and mentoring support received as professors. The fourth identified how participants described themselves as successful professors and the way they organize and balance their academic and personal life. The fifth identified specific educational theories the professors apply in their teaching, the insights of their teaching philosophies, and their thoughts about the importance of education. The sixth identified the way professors decide the curriculum to teach and the way they evaluate their students. Finally, the seventh theme identified the significant work they did as recipients of the Coffman Chair for University Distinguished Teaching Scholar, and their teaching best practices. Recommendations for practice and future research were also addressed. Thus, this study contributes to the understanding of teaching experiences, philosophies, and best practices of successful professors in undergraduate teaching and learning, based on evidence which is the personal experiences of the participants for the benefit of every person involved in education.

Experiences and pedagogy: A qualitative case study that examines teaching experiences,  
philosophies, and best practices of University Distinguished Teaching Scholars  
at Kansas State University

by

Mónica Elva Vaca-Cárdenas

B.S., Escuela Superior Politécnica de Chimborazo, 2003  
M.S., Universidad Nacional de Chimborazo, 2013

A DISSERTATION

submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

Department of Curriculum and Instruction  
College of Education

KANSAS STATE UNIVERSITY  
Manhattan, Kansas

2017

Approved by:

Co-Major Professor  
F. Todd Goodson

Approved by:

Co-Major Professor  
Kay Ann Taylor

# **Copyright**

© Mónica Elva Vaca-Cárdenas 2017.

## **Abstract**

This qualitative case study examined how successful professors who were awarded the Coffman Chair for University Distinguished Teaching Scholars at Kansas State University describe their teaching experiences, philosophies, and best practices in undergraduate teaching and learning.

Educators today are concerned about what are the best practices to educate new generation students to survive in a rapidly changing world. Additionally, because most research focus on best practices on the implementation or evaluation of a specific methodology, method, or strategy in one particular course or program, this research addressed the need to investigate the teaching experiences, philosophies, and best practices of outstanding award winner professors in different areas; to understand the challenges they face and the ways they handle undergraduate teaching and learning.

This qualitative case study was informed by Critical Theory as the theoretical framework, grounded in Constructivism, because critical theory cares about social justice while abandoning obsolete, elitist and antidemocratic features of traditional concepts of education. Seven distinguished teaching scholars, who belong to Psychological Sciences, School of Integrated Studies, Political Sciences, Horticulture and Natural Resources, Modern Languages, English, and Physics departments, voluntarily participated in this study. Multiple methods were used to collect data including demographic questionnaires, semi-structured interviews (time line elicitation interviews, formal interviews, and photo elicitation interview), analysis of documents, and journaling.

Seven themes emerged from my findings. The first theme identified the influential people and struggles encountered by professors when they were students. The second identified events

that led professors in choosing their major, why they became teachers, and their teaching strengths and passions. The third identified the challenges they face when teaching undergraduate students and mentoring support received as professors. The fourth identified how participants described themselves as successful professors and the way they organize and balance their academic and personal life. The fifth identified specific educational theories the professors apply in their teaching, the insights of their teaching philosophies, and their thoughts about the importance of education. The sixth identified the way professors decide the curriculum to teach and the way they evaluate their students. Finally, the seventh theme identified the significant work they did as recipients of the Coffman Chair for University Distinguished Teaching Scholar, and their teaching best practices. Recommendations for practice and future research were also addressed. Thus, this study contributes to the understanding of teaching experiences, philosophies, and best practices of successful professors in undergraduate teaching and learning, based on evidence which is the personal experiences of the participants for the benefit of every person involved in education.

## Table of Contents

List of Figures .....	xvi
List of Tables .....	xvii
Acknowledgements .....	xviii
Dedication .....	xix
Chapter 1 - INTRODUCTION .....	1
Overview of the Issues .....	2
Statement of the Research Problem .....	5
Research Purpose .....	7
Research Questions .....	7
Methodology .....	8
Definition of Terms .....	9
Limitations and Delimitations of the Study .....	10
Limitations .....	10
Delimitations .....	10
Significance of the Study .....	11
Researcher Bias .....	11
My Teaching Philosophy .....	19
Organization of the Study .....	20
Chapter 2 - LITERATURE REVIEW .....	21
Introduction .....	21
Theoretical Framework: Critical Theory .....	21
Origin of Critical Theory .....	22
Definition of Critical Theory .....	22
Emphasis of Critical theory .....	23
Influence of Paulo Freire .....	23
Freire's Literacy Approach .....	23
Conscientization .....	24
Freire's Praxis .....	25
The Third World .....	26



Oppression .....	26
Banking Education.....	27
Problem-Posing Approach.....	27
The importance of Dialogue .....	28
Historical Background .....	28
Philosophies and Theories of Education.....	29
Philosophy.....	29
Philosophy of Education .....	29
Philosophical Perspectives.....	30
World Philosophies .....	31
Educational Philosophies .....	31
Educational Philosophies .....	31
Perennialism.....	31
Essentialism .....	32
Progressivism.....	32
Reconstructionism.....	32
Researcher's position .....	32
Educational Theories .....	34
Examples of Educational Theories pertinent to Teaching and Learning .....	34
Theories of Learning.....	35
Researcher's position .....	36
Curriculum Theories/Ideologies .....	36
Scholar Academic ideology .....	37
Social Efficiency ideology.....	37
Learner Centered ideology.....	37
Social Reconstruction ideology .....	37
Researcher's position .....	38
Previous Research.....	40
Teaching Philosophies .....	40
Awarding Excellence in Teaching .....	43
Excellence in Teaching .....	44

Best Practices .....	48
Summary .....	54
Chapter 3 - RESEARCH METHODOLOGY.....	56
Introduction.....	56
Rationale for the Study .....	56
Research Design of the Study.....	58
Research Purpose.....	60
Research Questions.....	60
Theoretical Framework.....	60
Epistemology - Constructionism.....	61
Theoretical Perspective-Critical Theory .....	62
Methodology .....	62
Context of the Study .....	63
Selection of Participants .....	64
Coffman Chair for University Distinguished Teaching Scholars .....	65
Institutional Review Board (IRB).....	70
Data Collection Methods .....	70
Semi-structure Interviews .....	71
Time Line Elicitation Interviews. ....	71
Formal Interviews. ....	72
Photo Elicitation Interview. ....	72
Journaling.....	73
Bracketing.....	73
Analysis of Documents. ....	74
Member checks. ....	74
Peer-Debriefing.....	75
Reliability and Validity.....	75
Reliability.....	75
Validity .....	75
Triangulation.....	75
Control of Bias .....	76

Reciprocity and Ethics .....	76
Reciprocity .....	76
Ethics.....	76
Trustworthiness and Rigor .....	77
Confidentiality .....	77
Data Analysis .....	77
Constant Comparison Method: A Kaleidoscope of Data.....	78
Comparing Incidents applicable to Each Category.....	79
Categories: .....	79
Integrating Categories and Their Properties .....	80
Delimiting the Theory.....	81
Writing the Theory.....	81
Representing and Visualizing .....	81
Summary.....	86
Chapter 4 - FINDINGS.....	87
Introduction.....	87
Demographics .....	88
Personal Portrait 1: Dr. Patricia E Ackerman, “Passionate about Writing” .....	91
Education and Work Experience .....	92
Personal Portrait 2: Dr. Donald A Saucier, “Someone who likes to have a lot of fun and who does things very enthusiastically” .....	93
Educational and Work Experience.....	97
Personal Portrait 3: Dr. John A. Fliter Jr, “Passionate about teaching” .....	97
Education and Work Experience .....	100
Personal Portrait 5: Dr. Kimberly A Williams, “I was born to teach”.....	101
Education and Work Experience .....	104
Personal Portrait 6: Dr. Douglas Benson, “Teaching is not teaching. Teaching language is facilitation” .....	105
Education and Work Experience .....	107
Personal Portrait 7: Dr. Gregory J Eiselein, “I’m genuinely sincerely excited about the material I am teaching” .....	108

Education and Work Experience .....	109
Personal Portrait 8: Dr. Christopher M. Sorensen, “I think of myself as a scientist” .....	110
Education and Work Experience .....	112
Findings in Accordance with Research Questions and Emerging Themes .....	113
Research Question 1: How do awarded professors perceive their teaching experiences in undergraduate teaching and learning? .....	115
Previous Experiences- In the students’ shoes .....	116
Influential People. ....	116
Struggles as Students .....	119
Teaching and Learning Experiences .....	122
Why your Major? .....	122
Why become a teacher? .....	124
Teaching Strengths and Passions .....	127
Difficulties in the Profession .....	130
Challenges in the teaching and learning practice.....	130
Mentoring Support .....	131
Knowing yourself.....	132
Successful Professor .....	132
Organizing and balancing time .....	135
Research Question 2: How do awarded professors describe their teaching philosophies? ....	138
Philosophical Perspectives .....	138
Educational Theories .....	138
Insights of their Teaching Philosophies .....	141
Importance of Education.....	146
Research Question 3: What are the teaching best practices or innovative teaching strategies of the participants? .....	148
Deciding the curriculum .....	148
Curriculum and Instruction .....	148
Evaluating Students .....	150
Innovative teaching pedagogies. ....	153
Coffman Chair .....	153

Super “Critical Thinking” Hero .....	154
Super “Engagement” Hero.....	154
Super “Active Learning” Hero.....	155
Super “Experiential Learning” Hero.....	155
Super “Diversity” Hero.....	156
Super “First-Year” Hero .....	157
Super “Physics studios” Hero .....	157
Personal Practices .....	158
Active Learning .....	158
Asking questions – Conversation.....	160
Experiential Learning.....	161
Lecture .....	162
Socratic Method .....	163
Story teller.....	164
Chapter 5 - DISCUSSION .....	165
Introduction.....	165
Overview of the Research.....	165
Research Purpose .....	165
Research Questions .....	165
Methodology .....	166
Participants.....	166
Discussion and Interpretation of Findings .....	167
Research Question 1: How do awarded professors perceive their teaching experiences in undergraduate teaching and learning? .....	168
Previous Experiences- In the students’ shoes .....	169
Influential People .....	169
Struggles as Students .....	170
Teaching and Learning Experiences .....	172
Why your Major? .....	172
Why become a teacher? .....	175
Teaching Strengths and Passions .....	176

Difficulties in the Profession .....	178
Challenges in the teaching and learning practice.....	178
Mentoring Support .....	179
Knowing yourself.....	181
Successful Professor .....	181
Organizing and balancing time .....	182
Research Question 2: How do awarded professors describe their teaching philosophies? ....	183
Philosophical Perspectives.....	183
Educational Philosophies .....	183
Educational Theories .....	184
Insights of their Teaching Philosophies.....	187
Importance of Education.....	189
Question 3: What are the teaching best practices or innovative teaching strategies of the participants? .....	191
Deciding the curriculum .....	191
Curriculum and Instruction.....	191
Evaluating Students .....	192
Innovative teaching pedagogies.....	193
Coffman Chair .....	193
Critical Thinking.....	193
Engagement.....	194
Active Learning .....	194
Experiential Learning.....	194
Diversity.....	195
First-Year .....	196
Physics studios .....	196
Best Practices .....	197
Active Learning .....	197
Asking questions – Conversation.....	197
Experiential Learning.....	198
Lecture .....	198

Socratic Method .....	199
Story teller.....	199
Recommendations for Practice. ....	199
Recommendations for Future Research .....	201
References .....	203
Appendix A - INTERVIEW PROTOCOL .....	217
Appendix B - DEMOGRAPHIC QUESTIONNAIRE .....	219
Appendix C - OPEN-ENDED LIFE NARRATIVE .....	220
Appendix D - IRB APPROVAL .....	221
Appendix E - INTERVIEW QUESTIONS.....	222
Appendix F - E-MAIL OF INVITATION .....	224
Appendix G - PARTICIPANT CONSENT FORM.....	225
Appendix H - RELEASE FORM.....	227

## **List of Figures**

Figure 3.1 Coffman Chair University Distinguished Scholars 2007-2017 .....	68
Figure 4.1 Dr. Patricia E. Ackerman.....	91
Figure 4.2 Images courtesy of Dr. Ackerman.....	92
Figure 4.3 Dr. Donald A Saucier .....	93
Figure 4.4 Images courtesy of Dr. Saucier .....	97
Figure 4.5 John A. Fliter .....	97
Figure 4.6 Images courtesy of Dr. Fliter.....	99
Figure 4.7 Dr. Kimberly A Williams .....	102
Figure 4.8 Images courtesy of Dr. Williams.....	104
Figure 4.9 Dr. Douglas Benson.....	105
Figure 4.10 Images courtesy of Dr. Benson .....	107
Figure 4.11 Images courtesy of Dr. Eiselein.....	109
Figure 4.12 Images courtesy of Dr. Sorensen.....	111
Figure 4.13 Kolb's Experiential Learning Model .....	139
Figure 4.14 Images courtesy of Dr. Fliter.....	160



## **List of Tables**

Table 2.1. The Role of the Teacher in the Social Reconstruction Ideology .....	39
Table 3.1 Data Analysis Matrix .....	81
Table 4.1 Demographic Data of Participants .....	88
Table 4.2 Demographic Data of Participants .....	89
Table 4.3 Themes and Categories .....	114
Table 4.4 Research Questions, Themes and Categories .....	114

## **Acknowledgements**

I would like to acknowledge God for his many blessings in allowing me to pursue and complete this degree.

Then, I would like to acknowledge the Ecuadorian Government through the Secretaría de Educación Superior, Ciencia, Tecnología e Innovación (SENESCYT), for the scholarship without which it would not have been possible for me to carry out this program.

Thank you to my family, my parents, brothers, sisters and niece for their unconditional love and encouragement.

To the University Distinguished Teaching Scholars who agreed to participate in my research: Dr. Patricia E Ackerman, Dr. Donald A Saucier, John A Fliter Jr, Kimberly A Williams, Dr. Douglas Benson, Dr. Gregory J Eiselein, and Dr. Christopher M. Sorensen.

To the honorable Supervisory Committee: Dr. F. Goodson, Dr. Kay Ann Taylor, Dr. James Teagarden, Dr. Jana Fallin, and Dr. Kevin Sauer.

And finally, to all the people in my life, who I have had the pleasure to meet during this journey.

## **Dedication**

To God, my all in all; to my family, my blessing, my motivation, to my students, my vocation, to my country, and to every teacher in the world who care about their students.

## **Chapter 1 - INTRODUCTION**

Historically, education has been a concern of governments, politicians, educators, philosophers, and society in general around the world. Today, there is a concern that the world is modernizing and changing but not so much in education. We can still see environments and teaching styles similar to the last century and we can still find classrooms where students sit in rigid lines. They receive knowledge from the professor, but they cannot express their own ideas.

Students and teachers are most of the time more concerned about testing and grades, which determines the amount of funding they receive. Students are still competing to get an A or a 10, quantities that determine the quality of a product. Some teachers are still teaching the same thing the same way, and students are still expecting the same type of instruction. Thus, we can still see educational systems that kill the individuality and creativity of students and teachers.

The world has progressed, and we do need to enhance students' creativity, innovation, and critical thinking. We are not preparing robots or students with identical talents any longer; everyone is unique, and therefore their talents are unique, too.

Unfortunately, today, most faculty members care more about research than teaching and learning. Mainly because they get higher salaries for how many articles they publish and how many grants they write, but they do not always get credit for good teaching.

However, I believe, educators have the most important job in the world; unfortunately, they are underpaid regardless the great mission they have. Great teachers impact lives, touch hearts, and are heroes who are usually criticized. I am a teacher myself, and from my experience I can say that as teachers, we each want to help our students learn. We do our best to be excellent teachers and to improve the quality of education. However, teaching has never been easy. It requires planning, organization, reflection, imagination, efficiency, calculating, facilitating,

succeeding, failing, improving, creativity and courage. Teaching is one of the most difficult professions, which most of the time is misunderstood and not appreciated. Of course, not everyone is a great teacher, but most of the time teachers are not the problem, but the system is the problem, which is rigid, with a few options and rights and standardized tests have the priority.

In order to improve education at all levels, the educational system needs to change as well as the way we teach needs to improve. I personally believe that education is the motor that moves societies, and can transform the world. In addition, I believe that regardless of the system, the responsibility is in the desire of every educator and student to do their best.

During my years as an educator, while working in different levels and contexts, I have always asked myself how I can be a better teacher. How can I help my students thrive regardless of the lack of resources, or in spite of the social, economic, and political issues that affect our education and society? The answers to those questions are not easy to find, but I believe, that every teacher can make a difference in the search for a better world. The change we want to see starts with us; it is in our commitment.

## **Overview of the Issues**

Historically, education has been a concern worldwide. In the United States, education has been a hot topic due to education is in the economy of government's budget, is in the culture, and is social (Robinson, 2015). As a popular topic of discussion, education in the United States has received some criticism. Researchers like Martinez and McGrath (2014) lament that while society has changed in the twenty-first century, public education in the United States is still attached to the practices of the twentieth century. Such practices are characterized by teachers lecturing by standing in front of the class where desks are organized in rows and with students

using heavy books and taking notes with pencils. The expectation is that the students memorize the content instead of putting it into practice. Additionally, according to Robinson (2015), the American educational system is still a factory model organized on mass production principles, efficiency, and abilities designed for the beginning of the twentieth century.

However, as I have said, a changing world in the twenty-first century suggests a change in education. Educators agree that the American education system needs to change. Boggs (2013) states that “widespread agreement that educational institutions are in need of restructuring” (p. 32). In turn, this change in education suggests changes in the teaching and learning processes, passing from a mere transmission of information to helping students learn by themselves and think critically (Darling-Hammond, 2010).

Furthermore, educators of the twenty-first century must prepare students to be creative, innovative, and independent. There is a need for students who are able to find solutions and are ready to face new problems while they work with people whom they have never known and who have diverse values, cultures, and experiences (Daniels, Patterson, & Dunston, 2010).

Additionally, according to the National Center on Education and the Economy (U.S., 2007). Students need also be prepared for the jobs of the future. The candidates for future jobs will have to be good at analyzing and synthesizing, creative and innovative, self-disciplined and well organized, able to learn fast and work well in teams, and have the capacity to be flexible and adapt to regular changes.

Higher education is urged to play a main role in supporting all of the areas of development. Brazdauskas (2015) incites higher education institutions to support the sustainable development, especially by promoting thinking driven by student innovation and creative problem-solving to find solutions for social and environmental challenges. Students of the of the

twenty-first century must be able to apply what they are learning in real-world settings, such as finding and using resources that are available in their communities (Daniels, Patterson, & Dunston, 2010).

The new mission of schools as Ravitch (2010) puts it, “is to prepare students to work at jobs that do not yet exist, creating ideas and solutions for products and problems that have not yet been identified, using technologies that have not yet been invented” (p. 2). In all this vision, higher education plays the most important role in preparing students of the twenty-first century.

To develop the competencies that students need for the twenty-first century, we also need teachers equipped with the skills and knowledge to foment this learning. Unfortunately, in the same way that education in general has been critiqued in the United States, the formation of teachers has also been critiqued. Darling-Hammond (2010) observes that the country has not maintained investment in a well prepared and stable teaching force.

The preparation of teachers in the United States according to Lukenchuk, Jagla and Price (2013), “seems to be at a crossroads” (p. 62). Similarly, Ravitch (2010) states that it is a “hodge-podge” in which many programs of teacher education produce teachers with highly different levels of knowledge and abilities (p. 197). Additionally, Rust (2010) claims that the preparation of teachers in the United States is sealed in an unproductive and dysfunctional pattern. American programs of teacher education graduate thousands of new certified teachers each year, but unfortunately, there is a weak evidence that even one half of the new teachers are dynamic and capable.

Frequently, the programs for teacher education grasp for a historically out-of-date and defective vision of teacher education, which is in opposition to a society of demographic, economic, technological, and global change. In this environment of quick changes, the programs

of teacher education of the United States should show the relevance and impact of their graduates in the achievement of the student, otherwise they face the danger of disappearing (Levine, 2005). In this context, Fullan (1993a) asserts that teacher education institutions must assume responsibility for the reputation they have earned.

Therefore, the teacher education institutions must assume responsibility for preparing dynamic and equipped teachers in order to teach students of this century. As Fullan (1993a) puts it, “Teacher education has the honor of being the worst problem and the best solution in education (p. 57). I believe it is not only the responsibility of teacher educational institutions, but it is also the responsibility of every educator, and every student to update, innovate, create, and be ready to compete in this new century of changes and challenges.

However, although I agree and support change, progress, innovation, and development, I do not agree in transforming education in a business where people compete to make the most money. As Slaughter and Rhoades (2004) argue, education has become a merchandise, where educational software, technologies, and distance education are lucrative activities. As I said before, people are not robots, they are human beings who have feelings. Therefore, it is my view that in education educators need to care more about the person than lucrative endeavors.

### **Statement of the Research Problem**

Teachers touch students’ lives. From the youngest preschooler to the graduate scholar; every student has been touched by teachers. I consider that teachers make a powerful impact on students, which sometimes can be positive or negative. Therefore, to be a teacher is a great responsibility. Taking into consideration the importance of education and the importance that teachers play in it, I got interested in conducting research on successful professors.



Understanding of their good teaching practices can help other educators to improve education in their own context of work.

All philosophies of education have tried to improve education. However, there are still conflicts on which one is best. Today, educators continue trying to find a way how to teach better and how to help students learn better. One of the challenges professors face is how to get students engaged and participating in class (Howard, 2015). Other issues are how to evaluate students in a way they consider fair, how to care about students, and how to promote critical thinking, active learning, and diversity in class. The ability of professors to motivate students is another important factor to consider regarding excellence in teaching and learning. Additionally, some professors teach as they were taught, using a minimum amount of new innovative methodologies and strategies. This perpetuates a traditional education and does not consider the interests and needs of the students. Reyes and Crawford (2012) state that, we can find classrooms everywhere that follow a rigid curriculum with no creativity, mandated discipline, silent students, rows of desks and chairs, and monotonous daily class routines.

However, there are many excellent teachers around the world, but their teaching gifts and practices are not well documented and any record of these is lost when teachers retire or die. Most teachers do not document their own teaching experiences and practices and no one else does it for them (Bain, 2004). Therefore, in this qualitative case study, I want to look at the practices and thinking of outstanding professors who have demonstrated interest in undergraduate teaching and learning. I want to document the practices of those individuals who have had remarkable success in helping their students achieve their educational goals.

While there is literature on teaching philosophies, theories of education, and best practices in general, there is a lack of analysis and research about the teaching experiences,

philosophies, and best practices of outstanding award-winning professors. Specifically, there is no research about the teaching experience of professors awarded the Coffman Chair for University Distinguished Teaching Scholars at Kansas State University.

In addition, research done on best practices usually focus on one area or course of education at a time, such as Engineering, Psychology, Math, Music, and so on. However, my research focuses not just in one area of higher education, but in best practices on different areas such as Critical Thinking, Expository Writing, Psychology, Civil Rights and Liberties, USA Politics, Administrative Law, The Judicial Process; Constitutional Law II ,Civil Rights and Liberties; Constitutional Law I, Institutional Powers and Constraints; Law, Politics, and Literature; Greenhouse Operations Management; Herbaceous Crop Production; Interior Plant scaping; Spanish; English; Seminar in Cultural Studies; The Physical World I; and Descriptive Astronomy. Classes that participants in this study teach. Therefore, it makes sense to document the best practices of successful professors based on evidence, which is the experience of successful professors at K-State.

### **Research Purpose**

The purpose of this qualitative case study is to examine teaching experiences, philosophies, and best practices of successful professors who were awarded the Coffman Chair for University Distinguished Teaching Scholars at Kansas State University in undergraduate teaching and learning.

### **Research Questions**

The overarching research question guiding this inquiry was:

How do successful professors awarded the Coffman Chair for University Distinguished Teaching Scholars at Kansas State University describe their teaching experiences, philosophies, and best practices in undergraduate teaching and learning?

The sub- research questions guiding this inquiry were:

1. How do award winning professors perceive their teaching experiences in undergraduate teaching and learning?
2. How do award winning professors describe their teaching philosophies?
3. What are the teaching best practices or innovative teaching strategies of the participants?

## **Methodology**

This is a qualitative case study informed by Constructionism as the epistemology and critical theory as the theoretical perspective. I conducted a qualitative research because the topic of this research is most appropriately addressed by using qualitative research. In addition, a case study methodology was selected to develop in-depth investigation of the teaching experiences, philosophies, and best practices of awarded professors in undergraduate teaching and learning. A case study research method is appropriate when the researcher wants to answer to descriptive question like what? or an explanatory question like how? Or why did something happen? (Yin (2014).

The participants of this inquiry were distinguished professors, recipients of the Coffman Chair for University Distinguished Teaching Scholars at Kansas State University in undergraduate teaching and learning, who accepted to participate in this qualitative case study. This study took place in the departments of Psychological Sciences, School of Integrated Studies, Political Sciences, Horticulture and Natural Resources, Modern Languages, English, and

Physics at Kansas State University. This University is located in the city of Manhattan, state of Kansas, in the United States of America.

I used multiple data collection methods including formal interviews, photo elicitation interviews, and time line elicitation interviews, analysis of documents, bracketing, and journaling. The type of questions for the interviews were semi-structured open-ended questions, which in turn created follow-up questions driven by the conversation.

### **Definition of Terms**

For the purpose of this study, I am defining the following key terms of my research:

**Excellence:** According to Wariboko (2009), “excellence is no longer the virtue of doing something well, but the clearing that allows human creativity to manifest and persons to creatively resist obstacles to human flourishing in all forms of sociality” (p. x). For the purpose of my research excellence is a process of doing something well.

**Teaching Philosophy Statement (TPS):** For the purpose of my study, the TPS is a written statement of one’s approach to teaching which outlines a plan for future development of teaching style and methods (Hegarty, 2015, p. 29).

**Pedagogy.** Pedagogy is the art and science of teaching. The term pedagogy is sometimes used as a synonym of teaching. Loughran (2013) states that pedagogy “is not merely the action of teaching (which itself can easily be misinterpreted as the transmission of information), more so, it is about the relationship between teaching and learning and how together they lead to growth in knowledge and understanding through meaningful practice” (p. 2). Thus, for the purpose of my research, pedagogy is understood as the art of teaching and learning which is performed by best practices.

**Best Practices:** This term does not have a very clear definition, but it is being used by many people. The expression “best practices” is taking the place of “quality education” It has become very popular in the vocabulary of “teachers, administrators, board members, policy makers, education reporters, and every day citizens” (Daniels & Bizar, 2005, p. 11). For the purpose of my study, I will use this term to refer to the teaching and learning strategies and methodologies that teachers apply in their teaching practice.

## **Limitations and Delimitations of the Study**

### **Limitations**

1. The nature of the study limited the number of participants. Because this is a qualitative research, an in-depth analysis was required. Therefore, it was limited by a small number of participants.
2. Distinguished Teaching Professors have very busy schedules in their work and not much availability to collaborate with the research.
3. Participants might have found a little bit uncomfortable sharing personal experiences and other details, since they chose not to be anonymous.

### **Delimitations**

This qualitative case study was limited to:

- a) Professors who were award recipients of the Coffman Chair for University Distinguished Teaching Scholars at Kansas State University, starting in the school period 2007-2008.
- b) Distinguished Teaching Scholars who were willing to participate.

## **Significance of the Study**

This inquiry examined teaching experiences, philosophies, and best practices of awarded professors of the Coffman Chair for University Distinguished Teaching Scholars at Kansas State University.

While there is a considerable body of literature on theories of education, pedagogy, and best practices in teaching and learning in specific areas, there is a lack of research specifically on the teaching experiences, teaching philosophies, and teaching best practices of professors acknowledged for their excellence in undergraduate teaching and learning. In this qualitative case study, I wanted to capture award-winning professors' experiences in order to document what they do, and how they do to help students learn.

This research is significant because it will potentially encourage other educators to improve their best practices by finding better ways to teach as well as considering what works well and what does not. Documentation of this case study will contribute to the continual professional development of teachers and professors. Moreover, the findings of this study will inform and provide researchers, professors, and students with practical applications for excellence in teaching and learning that will contribute to the philosophy and theories of education.

The research is also significant because of the methodology implemented. Qualitative case study provided in-depth explorations and validity in understanding the teaching experiences, philosophies, and best practices of outstanding professors.

## **Researcher Bias**

Every researcher needs to be aware of the existence of bias and the possibility that it can influence the research study (Grbich, 1999). In qualitative research, owning one's subjectivity is

significant. According to Peshkin (1993) one's subjectivity is like a covering that cannot be removed, therefore, it is impossible for researchers to fully discharge their subjectivity or separate themselves from it. (Peshkin, 1993). The purpose of the subjectivity statement is not to release the researcher from their influence on the study, but rather it is to promote transparency of the study to the reader and to advocate awareness of the researcher's position. Therefore, for the purpose of this qualitative case study, I state my subjectivity in the following paragraphs in order to situate myself in relation to the research as it evolves.

I am a child of God, a human being, a woman, a daughter, a sister, an aunt, a friend, and a teacher. Daughter of two great teachers. My mom, an elementary school teacher, taught me caring about students. My dad, a high school teacher, taught me social justice. He was always fighting for the wellness of students, teachers, and the community. I am an Ecuadorian woman born and raised in the city of Riobamba, Calpi parish. I grew up in a large family where my parents taught us first to love God, then to respect each other and share. Loving, sharing, and respecting have been permanent actions in my life. I have a big family whom I love a lot including three sisters, two brothers, two sisters in law, one niece and two nephews.

I think my love and passion for being a teacher comes from them. As a teacher, I had the opportunity to meet so many people, from different backgrounds, cultures, languages, and social levels. In this teaching environment, I had the opportunity not only to learn from each other, but also to witness different inequalities in our education system, which I tried to help these through my own commitment and community engagement. The questions I asked myself were: how can I handle these situations and how can I help our students and society?

I received a traditional or teacher-centered education during all my educational levels: elementary, high school and college. It was a teacher-centered education because the teaching-

learning relationship was the teacher as the transmitter and the learner as the receiver of knowledge (Schiro, 2013). At the elementary level, for example, we did not have a library and the learning environment was characterized by punishment, based on the old saying: “La letra con sangre entra,” (The letter enters with blood). Meaning that students who did not learned the lesson or did not do the assignments correctly received punishment. Fortunately, that situation is no more. Nowadays, our children and our students are respected and protected under the law.

At the secondary level (high school) my education continued to be traditional with no punishment. It was traditional because the teacher dictated the content of the subject word by word and the students were required to memorize it. Of course, it took long hours to memorize the content. That was difficult and unproductive, because, in the long term, I forgot much of what I had learned. I had good grades, but not because I liked the subject, or I understood it, but because I worked so hard on memorizing content that unfortunately only lasted for a short period of time. Therefore, we were judged not for how much we understood, but for how much we could memorize. Additionally, I had to do a lot of assignments, including repetitions, but I was almost never assigned to read a book. Libraries were small and did not have a good variety of books like educational institutions have in other countries. The culture of reading was not cultivated in my country. In addition, computer technology was very rare. I used to do all my assignments by typing on a typewriter until I got to college when technology became popular with the arrival of businesses called internet cafes.

My college experience was still characterized by a vertical education; however, students had more freedom to speak, participate and make decisions in the University community. There were always at least one or two student representatives, elected by the students, on the board of directors for every department, college and for the whole university to represent the students’



voice. Programs of study at my university consisted of five years course work, plus at least two years of thesis research. I completed successfully my five years of course work and my thesis in two years. Therefore, after seven years of college, I received my doctorate in languages degree, with a concentration in International Cooperation.

During my undergraduate studies in Ecuador, I did not study to be a teacher, but a Doctorate in International Cooperation, degree that suggests working on international relationships. However, I always loved teaching and I was working as a teacher. Therefore, I decided to continue with Graduate school and pursue a Superior Diploma in Teaching English as a Foreign Language. There, I learned some methodologies to improve my teaching. Soon after that, I decided to pursue a Master's degree in Linguistics applied to English language learning, which I finished in the required four-year time period, consisting of two-year course work and a two-year thesis.

Finally, because the Ecuadorian government was offering scholarships to any professional who would apply and win a contest for a scholarship to study for a graduate degree, I applied. It was not easy, but I was awarded a scholarship to study for a Ph.D. in Curriculum and Instruction at Kansas State University, in Manhattan, KS, USA.

As mentioned before, my whole educational experience has been characterized by the features of the scholar academic ideology, in which students did not have a voice and in which the teacher was the owner of knowledge and the students were the recipients, whose memories needed to be filled (Schiro, 2013). Nevertheless, during the government of the economist Rafael Correa Delgado, education improved considerably due to huge investments in education. These included teacher's professional development, curriculum innovation, evaluations, scholarships,

and improvements of public and private educational facilities. As a result, the quality of education in Ecuador improved.

However, after my experience abroad, I believe that education in Ecuador is harder than in other countries and educational systems for many reasons. These reasons include: First, because we embrace a culture of memorization; second because we have limited books, libraries and resources; third, we have little technology in the classrooms; fourth, we have strictly regimented curricula; fifth, we have very rigid class schedules requiring students who fail in two or more classes to repeat the entire year or semester; sixth, a written monography is required for high school graduation; seventh, a minimum 2-year research thesis is required following 4 or 5 years of course work to graduate from College. Likewise, for a Master degree, after the two-year program of course work, we need to complete thesis research, which for most people can take more than 2 years. For all these reasons, I consider that the Ecuadorian educational system is more difficult and time consuming than in other countries.

My teaching experience started when I was at college. I would teach in the morning at different rural elementary schools from 7:30AM to 1:30PM and then go to class in the afternoon. Almost every school was far from my house, so, I had to take several busses to arrive to my destiny. I went to a different elementary school each day of the week and I taught 6 classes each day from first grade to seventh grade of Basic Education. Each class was 45 minutes long without any break between classes, so I had to quickly take my material with me from class to class as fast as possible. Over the five years of teaching at the elementary level, I got to meet a lot of students and teachers. This was my first teaching experience, which was very meaningful for me. I loved my students very much, but having a great number of students and a short time in which to teach them made it difficult to get to know them better. I was unable to give more

individual and meaningful attention to my students and that made me sad. Nevertheless, during this, my first teaching experience, I fell in love with the mission of teaching because I loved children, I felt their pure love, and I had a profound desire to help them.

Later, I started working at the high school level with teenagers, aged 12 to 18 years old. They had different interests and needs, more complicated lives, and different behaviors and moods. However, I still felt their love and kindness and I recognized the need to help them in a different context. I still had limited time to get to know and help them because I was still teaching more than 30 class periods per week. The level of content and extra curriculum activities with the institution also increased. I worked at the secondary level for another five years and at the same time I started working with young adults at a higher education Technological Institute for three years. At the Technological Institute the students' lives combined with family and work responsibilities were different; therefore, their interests and needs were also different.

Lastly, I got to work at college level in a public university in Riobamba City, Ecuador, where I worked with students from different majors and backgrounds. They were young adults, who were studying hard to get their undergraduate degree. I was in this job for another five years before I came to K-State.

After the first semester of my Ph.D. program, I became the graduate research assistant of the Teaching and Learning Center, where I had the chance to help organize training for graduate teaching assistants with teaching responsibilities. I also helped to organize workshops, trainings, and conferences for faculty at the University. During this experience, I had the chance to get know and listen to great faculty members from K-State and from other universities who spoke at the different events.

Later, I had the opportunity to teach Spanish to undergraduate students in the Department of Modern Language for two semesters. This experience was different from what I had before. Because of the course structure, the students and I were pressured to cover a lot of material every day in a short time. There were also a lot of assignments and other evaluations to complete and grade. Additionally, I volunteered to teach Spanish in the International Student Center basic language program for six semesters including this fall 2017. I decided to do this activity because I really love teaching.

Each one of my teaching experiences in Ecuador and at K-State has been unique and special in different ways. In each one of my jobs, I have met people with different personalities, interests and needs, and therefore, teaching and learning had to be adjusted to their different contexts. Even though, every experience has been challenging and demanding, I have enjoyed them all. Furthermore, it has been a great experience to work with people from different ages, social status, and academic levels.

Though every experience has been a rewarding one for me, I have always been concerned about how to become a better teacher. I wanted to know how to help my students learn better, how to make my classes active, dynamic, and fun, and how to create a safe environment where they can feel secure to interact, engage and participate, and develop their critical thinking and learning. This has always been a hard task, but I have always tried to find a way by being creative, innovative, incorporating new ideas, and learning new teaching skills.

For example, besides of my formal degrees of Doctorate in Languages, Diploma, and Masters, I also did a short degree in Expert in E-learning, where I learned to create interactive on-line classes. I learned how to make them dynamic, creative, and innovative by using a lot of resources from the Web. This was a very useful resource that I integrated into all of my face-to-

face classes. It was time-consuming but fun. It was innovative since I was able to use the laboratory of the Center of Foreign Languages. I used it to take students there and open the Moodle which contained the online resources, exercises, tests and other activities I developed in my on-line classes. They really enjoyed this experience because it was different from their other classes and because very few teachers in the University were actually using the online Moodle.

Thus, I have been continuously learning and sharing with others by attending different professional development workshops in my country. My wish to learn continues at K-State, where I attended as many teaching events as possible, including: The Teaching and Learning professional development, the Graduate School professional development, Modern Languages professional development, the Library workshops for graduate students, the Career Center workshops, the International Student Center workshops, some of the New Faculty Institute presentations, and others. I have also presented and attended at some conferences in Manhattan and outside Manhattan.

My fifteen years of teaching in Ecuador and my three years teaching Spanish at K-State have motivated me to always be looking for ways of improvement. My main purpose in conducting this research is to improve as a person and as a professional in order to help improve education in my country Ecuador and through education, help in the development of my country.

In order to improve education in my country, there are a number of aspects that need to be considered such as curriculum, salaries, budget, infrastructure, and others. However, I decided to focus my research on teachers, since they are at the center of the teaching and learning process and they are the ones who have personal contact with the students. Because of that direct contact with students, teachers can make a positive or negative impact on them. I personally want to learn how to be a good teacher and then I want to help the largest number of

teachers in Ecuador and those in rest of the world who would read my work. Thus, all my previous experiences have motivated me to do this qualitative case study.

As the researcher, I made some assumptions about the study. I assumed that all successful faculty members invited to participate in this study would agree to take part in it. I also assumed that all faculty members who voluntarily accepted the invitation to participate in this study would make high quality contributions and that they would answer all the questions accurately. Additionally, I assumed that faculty member participants would communicate their teaching experiences honestly and openly and that they would be willing to share their teaching philosophies and best practices generously with the audience. Finally, I assumed that my background, previous experience, and my great interest in this topic would guide this study and direct it to a unique, interesting and meaningful theory for all audiences.

### **My Teaching Philosophy**

My teaching philosophy is based on love and respect. It is grounded in constructionism epistemology because it is focused on the student's intellectual and personal growth. My teaching philosophy is characterized by progressivism- student centered because the student is at the center of the educational process. Additionally, it is characterized by reconstructionism because, while, I care about the students, I also care about their environment around them and the social problems. This is an education for social responsibility.

Although, I have received a teacher-centered education, since I started teaching I tried not to teach as I was taught, but as I wish I had been taught. I try to provide students with meaningful learning opportunities in which they can integrate theory with practice and in which they can learn by doing in an active way. While teaching, I also try to create a safe learning environment in which students can express and participate in a cooperative learning environment. I understand

that every student is unique and has their own skills and abilities. Therefore, I try to present input, assignments, and evaluation in different ways to address their different learning styles and encourage creativity.

I do not want to teach my students only to pass the course, but so that they can use what they have learned and apply it into their lives, and use their knowledge to produce something. My goal is for my students learn to learn. However, my teaching philosophy is a work in progress, always evolving, flexible, and adaptable to the needs and interests of my students and the society. Finally, I certainly believe that we never stop learning. As Dewey (1897) stated, learning is life itself. Consequently, I am in the process of learning.

### **Organization of the Study**

This qualitative case study is organized into five chapters: Chapter 1 presents the introduction, overview, statement of the research problem, purpose, and research questions. It provides an overview of the methodology as well. It also contains definitions of terms, limitations and significance of the study, and the researcher's bias.

Chapter 2, presents the literature review of the topics that inform this inquiry. Chapter 3 discusses the methodological framework that guides the research. Chapter 4 presents the interpretation and analysis of findings. And, Chapter 5 presents the discussion of findings, suggestions for future practice and suggestions for future research.

## **Chapter 2 - LITERATURE REVIEW**

### **Introduction**

This chapter provides an overview of relevant literature, research, and methodology in the area of study, which is teaching experiences, philosophies, and best practices in higher education. The literature review starts with a presentation of the theoretical framework of critical theory, which guides my research. Theory guides in analyzing and interpreting my data via my theoretical lens, as well as my research questions.

Next, the literature review continues with an overview of the background of philosophies and theories of education. The main philosophies of American education are presented as well as the theories of education in regard to the role of the student, the task of the teacher, the content of the curriculum, and the relationship to society.

Finally, the literature review presents research studies from peer-reviewed journal articles related to the best practices in a higher education. Both quantitative and qualitative studies are included.

### **Theoretical Framework: Critical Theory**

The theoretical perspective, “is a way of looking at the world and making sense of it. It involves knowledge, therefore, and embodies a certain understanding of what is entailed in knowing, that is, how we know what we know” (Crotty, 1998, p. 8). The theoretical framework for this study is critical theory grounded in Constructivism, because critical theory cares about social justice while abandoning obsolete, elitist and antidemocratic features of traditional concepts of education. While I am using the term “critical theory” originated in the Frankfurt School (Kellner, 1989), my vision of critical theory anticipates a much broader vision than the original version. My vision embraces general critical theory in education.



## **Origin of Critical Theory**

Some important scholars that have contributed to critical theory include Marx, Dewey with his pragmatism, and Freire with his critical pedagogy. Critical theory originated from the Frankfurt School in Germany in 1937. An essay was published by Max Horkheimer in the *Journal of the Institute for Social Research*, titled “Traditional and Critical Theory” and from that moment it has been designated as a school of thought (Ingram & Simon-Ingram, 1992).

The initial creators of critical theory were Max Horkheimer, Theodor Adorno, Jurgen Habermas, and Herbert Marcuse. Their perspectives were shaped by postwar Germany’s economic depression in the early 1930s, and examining the forms of domination and injustice (Kincheloe & McLaren, 2011). In the 1960s, critical theory was introduced to the United States, after the initial critical theorists had fled to America to escape from the Nazi persecution. It gained a wider acceptance in the 1970s and 1980s (Kim, 2016).

## **Definition of Critical Theory**

Kincheloe & McLaren (2011) stated that critical theory is a term which is often misunderstood. It is perceived by some people that the nature of critical theory is to disturb the “status quo”. Additionally, there is also fear about the possibility that critical theory can create “undeniably dangerous knowledge” (p. 286). Furthermore, it is mistakenly believed that critical theory is a Marxist and a communist idea. However, critical theory embraces the potential for true freedom because it is centered on the notion of social justice, liberation and the dialectic (Jay, 1996; Marcuse, 1992).

According to Kim (2016), critical theory is considered a “socio-cultural and political theory... It analyses “relationships of domination and subordination that create social inequality in society, focusing on notions of distribution, production, and reproduction” (Kim, 2016, p. 36).

For critical theorists, looking at the contradictions intrinsic in a society raises questions like what is happening in reality and what should be? And it is suggested that action should be taken, in compassion for the sufferings of others (Giroux, & Myrsiades, 2001).

### **Emphasis of Critical theory**

Thus, critical theory emphasizes individual empowerment and social transformation, that is, the need to develop critical consciousness in people as well as the need to change the existing social order (Weiler, 1988). While, critical theory examines common social problems around different social contexts and institutions like governments, communities, prisons, hospitals, churches, and more. The discussion centers around school as the main social institution. Therefore, educational researchers have used critical theory as an intellectual tool to analyze how schools function to preserve the existing social order (Kim, 2016).

### **Influence of Paulo Freire.**

In 1970, Paulo Freire published his book, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, which speaks to the need for a social justice model. Within critical inquiry, I empathize with the pedagogy of the oppressed of Paulo Freire (1970), because it illuminates a reality in education that has existed in his country, Brazil, as well as in many countries around the world. Paulo Freire stated that the oppressed, have not equal benefits of education and shares, therefore, they should educate themselves, and from that principle he developed the pedagogy of the oppressed (Freire, 1970).

### **Freire's Literacy Approach**

Dr. Freire was an academic who practiced in his life what he expressed in his writing, that reflection without action is empty verbalism (Freire, 1970). He proposed a new literacy approach to teach literacy. Freire's effective approach to solve Brazil's illiteracy problem was applied The Ministry of Education by carrying on a large – scale literacy campaign in 1963.

Freire suggested not to teach in the traditional way but to teach what is meaningful to the people. Freire's way of teaching to read and write was not to start from the alphabet and the teaching spelling of words chosen for them, but he spent time with the community learning to spell words chosen by them. That is, teaching words that have meaning for them and evoke responses in them. His method proved to be very successful, not only developing literacy but also developing critical awareness among peasants and workers.

Unfortunately, because of that, Freire faced constant attack from upper and middle classes in Brazil who were beneficiaries of the "status quo". Upper and middle classes enjoyed the domination of power and privilege because, illiterate people were not eligible to vote. Additionally, it was easy to manipulate those of the lower classes who did vote because of their lack of social and political awareness (Freire, 1970).

### **Conscientization**

The term that Freire proposed was conscientization, which is an awakening of or increase in consciousness. In this process of conscientization, Freire also uses the term 'critical consciousness', 'critical perception', or 'critical thinking' (a concept used very widely in education today), which he defines as "thinking which discerns an indivisible solidarity between the world and men" (Freire, 1972, p. 65).

"Critical thinking perceives reality as a process and transformation, rather than as a static entity. It is thinking which does not separate itself from action" (Freire 1972a, p. 64). Freire (1972b), states that "we are not only 'in' the world, but also 'with' the world that is essentially related to it (p. 51). Freire associated conscientization to the relationship between humans and the world, to the essential character of human beings, and to praxis, as a form of reflection in

reality. Freire unified his notion of conscientization and the understanding as what it means to be human.

Conscientization helps human beings to become equipped with creative imagination that embraces creative possibilities, so that they can see a human situation not only in terms of what it is but also in terms of what it can be. They can do something about their situation and indeed as human beings, they are called to do something about it, and out of the worse, to create something better.

As we continue to modify our environment through human activity, we continue to construct culture, which constitutes our human history. Animals have no a sense of history, but human beings do, as well as a sense of project (Freire, 1972). Ortega y Gasset (1964), also assert that human beings have history when they state that “human beings have no nature, what they have is history” (p. 41). Similar thought is also expressed by Freire (1972a) “Human beings must be seen as beings in the process of becoming, as unfinished, uncompleted beings in and with a likewise unfinished reality” (Freire, 1972a, pp. 56-57). Human beings move forward and look ahead. “For such beings, immobility represents a fatal threat. There is no history for men; there is history of men, made by men” (1972a, p. 101). We create our history.

### **Freire's Praxis**

Freire's understanding of praxis is that authentic action and reflection are inseparable “praxis cannot be divided into a prior stage of reflection and a subsequent stage of action. Action and reflection take place at the same time...It is reflection and action upon the world in order to transform it” (Freire, 1972a, pp. 99, 28). Freire (1972a) insists that when action and reflection are united, they illuminate each other. True praxis cannot be merely cerebral; it must involve action. Nor can it be limited to mere activism, but it must include serious reflection.

Freire (1972) argues that human beings are called to be subjects or actors, not only objects of their story. They are called to transform the world and to transform themselves. By doing this, they are developing cultural consciousness. They are not mere objects of their story but now they are giving direction, they are intervening in their situation, seeing possibilities of transformation (Freire, 1972).

### **The Third World**

Freire was concerned for the oppressed, the people upon whom, a system of oppression is imposed by power elites. Freire speaks 'as a man of the Third World' (Freire, 1972b, p. 17). However, when he left Brazil and went to the United States in 1967, he discovered that the third world is not a geographical concept but essentially socio-political in character. He learned that the blacks and other minority groups in the USA, constitute the third world within North America (Freire, 1972b). Therefore, Freire pursues conscientization and liberation for the oppressed peoples everywhere.

### **Oppression**

But conscientization is not easy because of the culture of silence. The oppressed, in their condition of oppression, have no voice and are excluded from taking any active role in the transformation of their society. They also adopt the myth of their own natural inferiority and they see themselves as the oppressor wants them to see themselves. This situation of oppression and exploitation generates lack of awareness, apathy, lack of self-respect and even fear of freedom. Therefore, as long as the oppressed remains immersed in their situation, they cannot engage in their own liberation and they need help to emerge from that struggle (Freire, 1972b).

Freire (1972a) maintains that people are not purely fighting for freedom from hunger but for “freedom to create and to construct, to wonder and to venture. Such freedom requires that the

individual be active and responsible, not a slave or a well-fed cog in the machine" (Freire, 1972a, p. 43). Freire (2006) states:

True generosity consists precisely in fighting to destroy the causes which nourish false charity. False charity constrains the fearful and subdued, the "rejects of life," to extend their trembling hands. True generosity lies in striving so that these hands—whether of individuals or entire peoples—need to be extended less and less in supplication, so that more and more they become human hands which work and, working, transform the world. (p. 45).

In this context, he rejects the donor-recipient approach that imposes their solutions for the people instead of finding solutions with the people.

### **Banking Education**

In addition, Freire (1972a) was against the kind of education that he called "Banking" (p. 47). In banking education, students are seen as empty repositories where the teachers deposit knowledge that resembles the teacher as someone who puts money into a bank. This, of course, has been a common approach to education and it serves the interests of the status quo and those who are its beneficiaries. Opposed to banking education, Freire (1976) proposed a methodology that is "dialogical, problem-posing and conscientizing" (p. 57). Freire's pedagogy of the oppressed is a dialogical education. It is a cultural action for freedom and Cultural Revolution, authentic revolution that can be affected only through dialogue, the 'sine qua non' of conscientization.

### **Problem-Posing Approach**

In problem posing, he "wants to place the oppressed in a consciously critical confrontation with their problems" (Freire, 1976, p. 16). According to Freire (1976), problem-posing approach requires critical thinking and he believes that, even though, the goals of critical inquiry such as just society, freedom, and equity, might appear utopian, they can lead to a more just society than the one we already have.

## **The importance of Dialogue**

For Freire (1976), without dialogue, which is action and reflection, there cannot be conscientization nor liberation. In the same way, a true dialogue cannot exist without critical thinking. Therefore, he believes that dialogue is a valid approach and those promoting dialogue need to be critical. Today in the twenty-first century, educators are currently talking about the need to teach our students to think critically. Consequently, critical thinking is a hot topic at faculty professional development even these days.

Significant critical theory philosophers like Marx, Gramsci, and Freire, who belonged to different historical locations, yet shared similar pedagogical perspectives, agreed that education was essential to creating more fully realized individuals, as well as a better society (Kellner, 2003). Thus, critical theory analyzes common social problems around different social scopes like governments, communities, prisons, hospitals, churches, and more. The discussion mainly centers around school as the main social institution. Consequently, it makes sense that I chose critical theory as my theoretical framework, because education is called to encourage people to take responsibility and action in confronting inequality and injustice in society as well as to help students find purpose in life.

## **Historical Background**

In order to promoting critical theory in education, it is necessary to examine the theory of the philosophy of education and to provide a historical background. This will indicate the changes that need to be taken and the pedagogies that can help at the present time.

## **Philosophies and Theories of Education**

### **Philosophy**

Philosophy is the love of wisdom (LeoNora & Gelbrich, 1999). According to O'Grady, (2005), "philosophy is a Greek creation or discovery and philosophy is a Greek word which comes from philos, which means lover, and Sophia, which means wisdom resulting in philosophy. Then philosophy is "the love of wisdom and philosophers are the lovers, or seekers, of wisdom and knowledge" (O'Grady, 2005, p. xvii).

### **Philosophy of Education**

Philosophy of education is a part of philosophy that directs the attention to educational problems as Noddings (2007) describes it, "philosophy of education is the philosophical study of education and its problems" (p. xiii). Similarly, philosophy of education, according to (Siegel, 2009), is a "branch of philosophy that addresses philosophical questions concerning the nature, aims and problems of education" (p. 3). The basic problems of education are related to questions about what are the proper aims of education, the appropriate criteria for evaluating educational efforts, authority, rights of students and parents, critical thinking and indoctrination issues (Siegel, 2009). Thus, philosophy of Education addresses philosophical problems and questions related to Education like teaching, learning, curriculum and many others.

In Western philosophy, philosophical questions related to education were highly addressed by outstanding philosophers. For instance, the first well known philosophers that stood out included Socrates, Plato, and Aristotle. Through the ages, traditional philosophers included Augustine, Aquinas, Descartes, Locke, Hume, Rousseau, Kant, Hegel, Mill (Siegel, 2009), and many others. Later, in the twentieth century, philosophers like Bertrand Russell, John Dewey, R. S. Peters, and Israel Scheffler appeared.



These philosophers were interested in investigating and illuminating concepts and questions crucial to education, based on epistemology. Epistemology is the theory of knowledge. It is a branch of philosophy concerned with the nature and origin of knowledge. Epistemology asks the question how we know what we know (epistemology, nd). Educational questions were philosophical, therefore, they required philosophical methods for their investigation (Noddings, 2007). Thus, education has always been a concern for philosophers.

The pursuit of philosophical questions related to education is dependent on philosophy. For instance, according to Siegel (2009) questions concerning the curriculum, like should all students be taught the same content? Depend on epistemology. Questions concerning learning, thinking, reasoning, belief, change of belief, and forces governing teaching, like should students be taught to reason? and should all students be taught in the same way? Depend on epistemology. Questions related to schooling, such as should schools be established as democratic communities? and do all students have the right to education? Generally, depend on epistemology. Questions concerning the aims of education and other aspects of education such as the interest of liberal education, indoctrination, moral and intellectual virtues, imagination, authenticity, and others, are of independent philosophical interest. For example, is it possible to avoid indoctrination? (Siegel, 2009, p. 4). Consequently, philosophy has positioned education as an essential focus of philosophical reflection.

### **Philosophical Perspectives**

There are three major branches of philosophy central to teaching: a) metaphysics, that focus on the nature of reality; b) epistemology, that focuses on the nature of knowledge; and c) axiology that focuses on the values by which one should live (LeoNora & Gelbrich, 1999).

## **World Philosophies**

At the metaphysical level, which focuses on the nature of reality, there are four metaphysical schools of thought, also called world philosophies that apply to education today:

1. Idealism
2. Realism
3. Pragmatism, and
4. Existentialism.

These four world philosophies are the roots from which various educational philosophies are derived. (LeoNora & Gelbrich, 1999).

## **Educational Philosophies**

At the epistemological level, the nature of knowledge, there are four major epistemological philosophies, also called educational philosophies:

1. Perennialism
2. Essentialism
3. Progressivism, and
4. Reconstructionism/Critical Theory.

These educational philosophies are related to one or more of the world philosophies mentioned above and are currently used in classrooms around the world. They are deeply focused on “what we should teach, that is to say, the curriculum aspect”. They (LeoNora & Gelbrich, 1999, p. 3).

## **Educational Philosophies**

### **Perennialism**

Perennialism is based on a holistic mode of thought. It has a conservative view based on realism. Its aim is to search for the truth. This philosophy declares that education is universal and does not change; the teacher in this philosophy is the master of ideas; the subject matter is based on the wisdom of the teacher; and the role of the student is knowing (Taylor, 2015).

## **Essentialism**

Essentialism is based on an atomistic mode of thought and has also a conservative view. It emphasizes learning skills and subjects that lead to higher levels of skill and knowledge. The role of the teacher is to be a trainer of skills. The subject matter is based on information and techniques, and the role of the students is behavior (Taylor, 2015).

## **Progressivism**

Progressivism is a problematic movement associated with pragmatism. It is project-oriented, a practical approach to problems where the teacher is the mediator of learning, the subject matter is based on problem solving, and the role of the student is knowing, doing and feeling (Taylor, 2015).

## **Reconstructionism**

Finally, Reconstructionism is a perspectival mode of thought, devoted to creating constructive social change. In reconstructionism, the teacher is the facilitator of creativity, the subject matter is based on expression, that is the action of making, and the role of the student is emotion, that is the action of feeling. Its purpose is to change the society and make the world a better place. In fact, Progressivism and Reconstructionism developed in opposition to Perennialism and Essentialism (Taylor, 2015).

## **Researcher's position**

In relation to the four major educational philosophies that have influenced education over the years, I identify myself with “Progressivism” and “Reconstructionism” because I care not only for the students in the classroom but also for social justice in the society where we live. I want to get to know my students, and put them at the center of the learning process as members of a society.

Progressivists educational philosophy believes that “education should focus on the whole child, rather than on the content or the teacher, students should test ideas by active experimentation. Books are tools, rather than authority” (LeoNora & Gelbrich, 1999, p. 4). Learning is active, not passive, and rooted in the questions from learners. The learner solves problems and derives meaning through his or her individual experience in the physical and cultural environment. Effective teachers provide experiences so that students can learn by doing.

The foremost proponent of Progressive education philosophy, established in America from the mid-1920s through the mid-1950s was John Dewey. John Dewey’s pedagogic is based on pragmatism and on instrumentalism. Experience represented the core concept of his philosophy. Dewey believed that education “is a process of living and not a preparation for future living.” (Dewey, 1897, para 9).

Among other arguments, Dewey (1897) also referred to social service in the following terms:

The individual who is to be educated is a social individual and that society is an organic union of individuals. If we eliminate the social factor from the child we are left only with an abstraction; if we eliminate the individual factor from society, we are left only with an inert and lifeless mass (Dewey, 1897, par 7).

Thus, Dewey (1897) believed that teaching and learning should happen in a classroom with the practice of true participatory democracy, where students and teachers alike work together and exchange of ideas in a genuine conversation for the sake of learning.

I also identify with reconstructionism from which critical theory derives, reconstructionism because it focuses on the social factor. It addresses social questions to create a better society and democracy, and the curriculum of education is characterized by social reform (LeoNora & Gelbrich, 1999). The founder of social reconstructionism was Theodore Brameld

(1904-1987), in reaction to the World War II. Other important representatives of social reconstructionism include George Counts (1889 - 1974) and Paulo Freire (1921-1997) (LeoNora & Gelbrich, 1999). Counts (1978) proclaimed that the medicine for every sickness that affect men is education and he also recognized that education was the means for preparing people to create a new social order. Freire (1993) author of the philosophy of the oppressed, promoted education and literacy in his country Brazil as a mean for social change. His philosophy encouraged conscientization and critical thinking to overcome domination and oppression.

### **Educational Theories**

Educational theories are in turn related to the world philosophies and to the educational philosophies. While there are a wide variety of educational theories around the world, in my theoretical framework, I am including the educational theories that are relevant to teaching and learning.

According to Moore (2012), “There persists a conviction that educational theory is unnecessary. It is often thought that all the would-be teacher requires is a knowledge of the subject and a confident manner” (p.1). Educational theory seemed to be needless for some teachers and removed from their classes as a simple theory. Educational theory is a theory contradicted with scientific theory, because scientists formulate theories that can be shown to be valid but educational theory does not. Then, educational theory does not operate like scientific theory, but it operates as a primarily practical theory (Moore, 2012).

### **Examples of Educational Theories pertinent to Teaching and Learning**

Some examples of educational theories related to teaching and learning include:

**a) Learning Theory**, featuring the historical and contemporary origins of learning.

- b) Instructional Theory**, which focuses on teaching and learning including relevant instructional theories.
- c) Curriculum Theory**, which outlines main theories and practices for designing curriculum.
- d) Classroom Management Theory**, which addresses classroom management and fundamental considerations for effective teaching and learning.
- e) Assessment Theory**, focusing on theories that argue the relationship between evaluation and student improvement. It focuses on standardized testing to measure student progress.
- f) Social Justice Theory**, which addresses epistemological and political perspectives in social justice, in a time when educators are called upon to deliver equity to a society characterized by cultural diversity; and
- g) Teaching and Education Delivery Theory**, focusing on how learners learn best (Irby, Brown, Lara-Alecio, & Jackson, 2013, p. xviii).

## **Theories of Learning**

Theories of Learning are concerned with the nature of learning or how learning occurs. The theories of learning provide structures for the instructional aspects of teaching and methods that are related to their perspective on learning. They are:

- a) Information Processing
- b) Behaviorism
- c) Cognitivism/Constructivism, and
- d) Humanism.

The first two theoretical approaches are transmissive, where information is given to learners. While, the second two approaches are constructivist, where learners have to make meaning from experiences in the world (LeoNora & Gelbrich, 1999, p. 4).

### **Researcher's position**

From the classification of theories of learning, I identify with cognitivism/constructivism, where learners are the constructors of their own knowledge from experiences in the world. According to constructivism, the learner can actively construct his or her own understandings of reality through interaction with objects, events, and people in the environment, and to reflect on these interactions. One representative of constructivism is Vygotsky, “who emphasized the shared, social construction of knowledge, believing that the particular social and cultural context and the interactions of novices with more expert thinkers (usually adult) facilitate or scaffold the learning process. The teacher mediates between the new material to be learned and the learner's level of readiness, supporting the child's growth through his or her zone of proximal development” (LeoNora & Gelbrich, 1999, p. 4).

### **Curriculum Theories/Ideologies**

Schiro (2013) presents four major curriculum philosophies or ideologies that have made history in American Education over the last century:

1. Scholar Academic
2. Social Efficiency
3. Learner Centered, and
4. Social Reconstruction ideology.

Schiro (2013) states that “for almost a hundred years, educators have been at war with each other over what the nature of the American school curriculum should be” (p. 1).

Unfortunately, we continue with similar discrepancies today.

### **Scholar Academic ideology**

Each ideology defends its own point of view. For instance, scholar academic educators view curriculum creation from the perspective of the academic disciplines. Educators teach what is determined by the discipline; each one defends their discipline as an integral part of the school curriculum. Furthermore, in the teaching relationship, the teacher is viewed as a transmitter and the learner as a receiver of the discipline’s knowledge.

### **Social Efficiency ideology**

Social efficiency educators promote an education that prepares students for life. It requires “to go out into the world of affairs and discover the particulars of which these affairs consist” (Schiro, 2013, p. 57).

### **Learner Centered ideology**

On the other side, learner centered ideology is concerned about all aspects of children, not just the academic information. Learning center promotes a learning that involves childrens’ social, intellectual, emotional, and physical development.

### **Social Reconstruction ideology**

And finally, for the social reconstruction ideology, education is a social process. Social reconstructionists are aware of social problems and social inequalities and they believe that education can create a better society (Schiro, 2013).



## **Researcher's position**

In relation to the above-mentioned curriculum theories or ideologies, I identify with learner centered, and social reconstruction curriculum ideologies, which in turn are closely related to Progressivism and Reconstructionism educational philosophies respectively. I identify with learner centered ideology because I am concerned about all aspects of children, where learning involves their social, intellectual, emotional, and physical development. I am interested not only in the academic discipline, but on the needs and concerns of the students.

I identify with the Social Reconstruction ideology too, because while education is a social process; I am aware of social problems and social inequalities and I believe that through education something can be done to create a better society. Social Reconstructionist educators view curriculum from a “social perspective”. They assume that “something can be done to keep society from destroying itself” (Schiro, 2013).

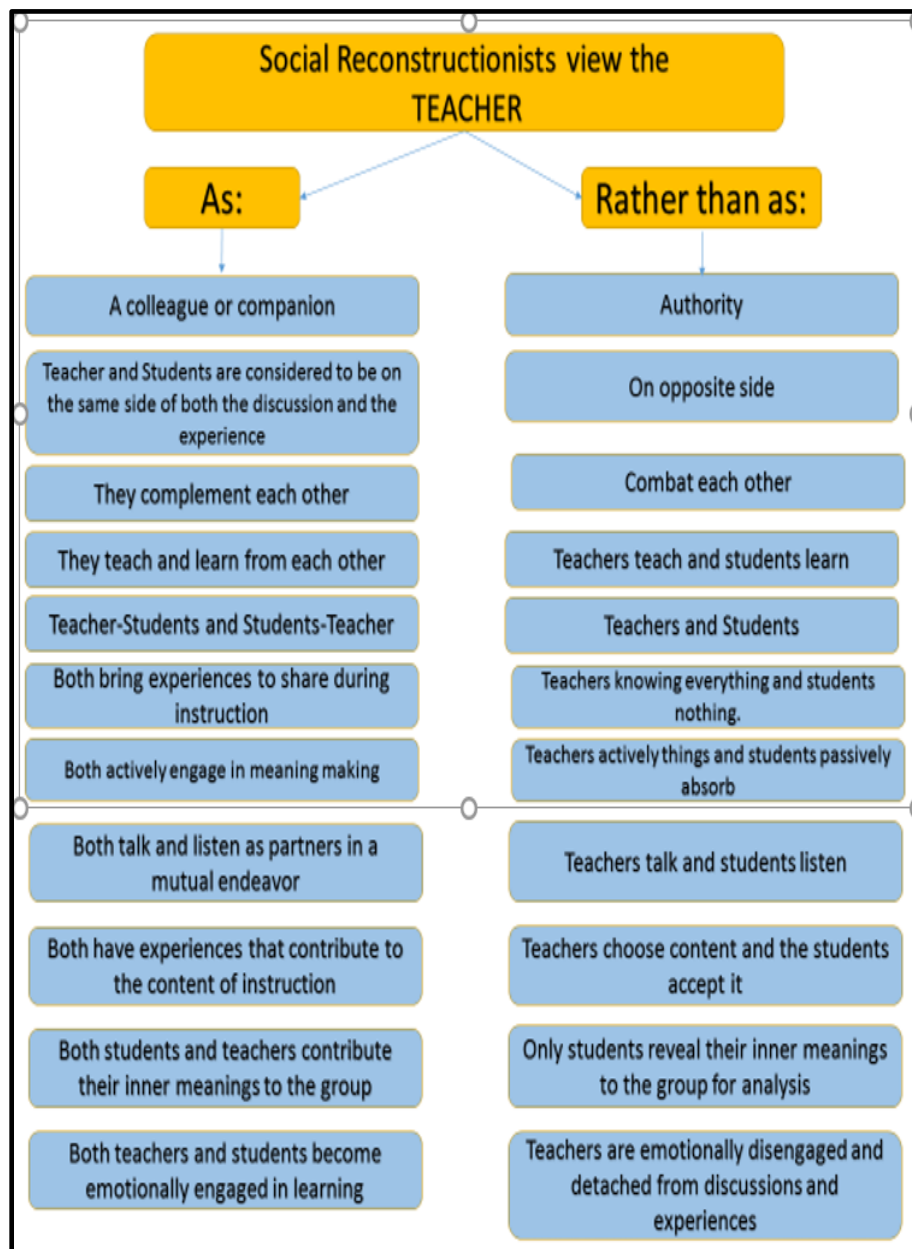
Furthermore, Social Reconstructionist educators believe that the hidden curriculum has a big influence on learners and all knowledge carries with it social values. Social Reconstruction Ideology formally began its influence on education in 1932 when George Counts attacked the learner centered ideology for not attending to our society's problems and the injustices done to its members asking, “Dare the school build a new social order” (Counts, 1978, p. 1).

For social reconstructionists and critical theorists, curriculum focuses on student experience and taking social action on real problems, such as violence, hunger, international terrorism, inflation, and inequality. Furthermore, rather than teaching as banking, in which the educator deposits information into students' heads, Freire saw teaching and learning as a process of inquiry in which students are able to invent and reinvent the world (Freire, 1993). In addition. Noddings (2005) affirms that learning experiences should be connected to prior knowledge as

well as to provide a meaningful direction for the future. Academics should not be at the center of education but rather, through themes of care, address the “continuity of place, continuity of people, continuity of purpose, and continuity of curriculum” (Noddings, 2005, p. 64).

In order to better describe the role of the teacher in the Social Reconstruction Ideology, I have designed a summary table that can be useful for every educator. See Table 1.

**Table 2.1. The Role of the Teacher in the Social Reconstruction Ideology**



© 2017. Monica Elva Vaca Cárdenas

Consequently, the characteristics of critical theory concerning the curriculum, is social reconstructionist and related to the theories of learning, critical theory is better described by constructivism. So, going back to philosophy, critical theory which is an Educational Philosophy within the epistemological frame is related to one or more of the general or world philosophies.

### **Previous Research**

Research studies were included if: (1) they were peer reviewed articles published in scholarly journals. (2) The study was related to best practices. (3) In teaching and learning. (4) In higher education or college or university. (5) In the USA. (6) The publication type was academic journal. (7) Finally, the article was published from 2010 to 2017. Both, quantitative and qualitative studies were included.

There are a limited but growing number of studies that focus on best practices in teaching and learning in higher education. Research on this area is generally related to implementing or evaluating a specific methodology, method, or strategy of a particular course or program. Unsurprisingly, the area of technology is one of the focal point for best practices studies.

### **Teaching Philosophies**

A teaching philosophy constitutes the vision and principles that guide the teaching profession. A definition from LeoNora & Gelbrich (1999) states “Your educational philosophy is your beliefs about why, what and how you teach, whom you teach, and about the nature of learning. It is a set of principles that guides professional action through the events and issues teachers face daily” (p. 1). Through the history of education, philosophers and educators develop theories, values and goals about the purposes of education and about how students need to be educated.

Conducted research on teaching philosophies show the importance of setting teaching philosophy statements. Hegarty (2015) explored the growing importance of teaching philosophy statements as a tool to positively impact teaching styles and methods. The article addressed the changing landscape of teaching at the college level with an emphasis on the growing importance of accountability. It also discussed how new and senior faculty are affected by the teaching philosophy statements, the approach that should be taken in writing a teaching philosophy statement, and the benefits of having a teaching philosophy statement. Finally, recommendations to faculty on the best way to introduce teaching philosophy statements were also postulated in this study.

Livingston, McClain, & DeSpain (1995) applied a second-generation study to assess the consistency between teacher's philosophies and educational goals. It was undertaken with graduate students enrolled in the Foundations of Education course. The project provided an opportunity for graduate students to reflect on, and to identify, their personal philosophies which were identified by the Philosophical Preference Assessment. Goals were determined by the graduate students and submitted to a panel of education and philosophy professors who classified the goals as being representative of the following schools of thought: perennialist, idealist, realist, experimentalist or existentialist. Results indicated that the graduate students overpoweringly considered themselves to be experimentalists and their most often advocated goal was to develop all students to their full potential.

However, teaching philosophy statements, according to Alexander et al. (2012) can be ubiquitous at a particular moment in our intellectual and professional lives because of the lack of historicizing about how they are prepared, how they are produced, and how they function. For instance, when searching for a job, the authors suggest re-establishing teaching philosophy

statements as living documents to multi-mediate, remediate, and use as a reflective space in the teaching careers. A background and context of teaching philosophy statements was provided, as well as a review of the limited existing work on this important genre, and an argument for why and how they might be attended, especially in light of today's digital tools and multimedia ways of representing work. Additionally, examples of teaching philosophy statements created with technology were presented in the second section of this manuscript.

Brinthaupt (2014) reported that faculty members traditionally develop a teaching philosophy statement as part of the job application process, for tenure reviews, or to encourage reflection. This paper proposed an alternative approach to develop teaching philosophy statements with students as the primary target audience, by distributing it to students at the beginning of a course, and collecting evaluative data from students about its efficiency at the end of the course. This study collected data from three faculty members who used this student-directed teaching philosophy statement approach and presented suggestions for the creation and use of teaching philosophies.

Reber (2011) applied a critical evaluation which examined assumptions about teaching and learning. He investigated the implications that follow from those assumptions, and considered alternative ideas about teaching and learning that might better fit educational objectives and practices. A four-step process was suggested to facilitate this form of critical analysis, to debilitate any conflicts of teaching philosophies that might take place between teachers and students, and to reduce the unwanted compromises that often occur.

Without doubt, a teaching philosophy influences how students are educated. A systematic view of philosophical thought and goals can provide a framework for the educator to gain insight

into the nature of instruction. Thus, educators are encouraged to critically evaluate their philosophy of teaching and to help students evaluate their implicit ideas about education as well.

### **Awarding Excellence in Teaching**

Universities around the United States, have many programs and awards to recognize educators who have demonstrated excellence in teaching and learning for their commitment to students and for their innovative classroom methods. Today, most universities are committed to recognizing excellence in teaching and learning. For instance, Kansas State University, created the Coffman Chair for University Distinguished Teaching Scholars in 1995, to highlight the university's commitment to excellence in undergraduate teaching and learning (Kansas State University, 2015).

Unfortunately, in the literature there are few articles related to excellence in teaching award recipients. Psychology for example, Amsel (2016) reported award winners of psychology. As well, Korn (2009) reviewed the development of a fund for excellence which provides financial support and teaching awards for teachers of psychology.

Furthermore, Medina (2011) published the profiles of college teachers who had been named as 2011 U.S. “Professors of the Year” by the Council for Advancement and Support of Education and the Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching. As well, Williams (2016) announced winners of the 2016 Teaching Tolerance Award for Excellence in Teaching conferred to teachers across the United States’.

According to Ritschel (2005), most of the award-winning teachers have demonstrated caring about their students. Caring is important. Excellent teachers are the ones who care about students.

While, there are a number of awards to recognize educators, there is a lack of research about the teaching experiences, philosophies, and best practices of those outstanding award winner professors. Specifically, there is no research about professors awarded the Coffman Chair for University Distinguished Teaching Scholars at Kansas State University for their commitment to students and innovative classroom methods.

### **Excellence in Teaching**

In the searching of excellence teachers, I came across with the description that Bain (2004) composed about Ralph Lynn:

When Lynn retired in 1974, more than one hundred of his former students who now held academic posts paid him tribute. One of them, Robert Fulghum, who later wrote a celebrated book claiming that he learned everything he needed to know about life in kindergarten, confessed that Ralph Lynn was the "best teacher in the world." Another student, Ann Richards, who became the governor of Texas in 1991, wrote that Lynn's classes "offered us a window to the world, and for a young girl from Waco, his classes were great adventures." They were, she explained some years after leaving the governor's mansion, like "magical tours into the great minds and movements of history (p. 1).

Bain (2004) defined outstanding teachers as the ones who “achieved remarkable success in helping their students learn in ways that made a sustained, substantial, and positive influence on how those students think, act, and feel” (p. 5). Based on this concept, definitely Ralph Lynn is a great example of an outstanding teacher.

Concern for excellence in teaching has always been present. When talking about public education, Cruickshank (1992) states that, the concern about quality of teaching in the United States has always existed. Hattie (2004) argued that excellence in teaching has a powerful

influence on the students' achievements. Not only in the United States but around the world, educational policy makers are making efforts to improve education and to increase the quality of teaching (Wang, Odell, Klecka, Spalding, & Lin, 2010).

There is a lack of consensus on defining what excellence in teaching involves (Kane, Sandretto, & Heath, 2004). Excellence in teaching is often related to test scores, that is, the relationship between the action of the teacher and standardized test scores of the students (Goe, Bell, & Little, 2008). However, Kreber (2002) observed that excellent teachers are those who can motivate their students, convey concepts, and help students overcome difficulties in their learning. In addition, excellent teachers understand how to encourage students to grow within and beyond the discipline they are teaching (Rossetti & Fox, 2009).

According to Warner (2016) excellence in teaching “is highly interactive and cooperative, building a community of learners working toward common purposes through caring and trusting relationships. It is reflective and flexible, constantly changing and adapting to new contexts and learners” (p. 25). Warner’s conceptualization of excellence in teaching comes from a broad survey of research and theoretical scholarship conducted in education. Additionally, excellence in teaching, according to Freire (2011) & Warner (2016) is inclusive of multiple perspectives and diverse cultures. From this point of view, excellent teaching must be culturally responsive (Wang et al., 2010) and furthermore, it must encourage action to address issues of power and social justice (Giroux, 1979).

The role of excellence is to be a connecting force that brings together students, faculty, administration, and society under a common goal. To achieve this common goal, it is reasonable that entities funding post-secondary education would want education to have as high a quality as possible (Warner, 2016).



However, excellence requires measurement. According to Readings (1996), excellence reflects a particular measurement of something, and that something can be measured.

Consequently, we cannot create excellence, but we can create concepts, ideas, guidelines, and performances that can be understood within the community, as excellent. When a university is committed to excellence, it does not mean it is committed to a specific thing, but it is committed to a particular measurement of the things that institutions created (Saunders, 2015).

Readings (1996) argued that “excellence is not a fixed standard of judgment, but a qualifier whose meaning is fixed in relation to something else” (p 24.). In such a way, excellence depends on the context. Two different things cannot be measured by the same criteria. For instance, “an excellent boat is not excellent by the same criteria as an excellent plane” (p. 24). Further, “a boat that was created for fishing in a small lake is different than a boat that was created to sail across the ocean. Neither of them would be excellent at accomplishing the other’s purpose” (p. 24). Another example can be an: An excellent typewriter that was created in 1868 was excellent and useful at that time, but with the innovation of technology it is no longer used. Thus, the understanding of excellence is continuously changing, according to the purpose, to the context, to the space, and to the time.

Saunders (2015), stated that “excellence is a measure, and any commitment to excellence necessarily requires mechanisms to measure the things that are aiming to be excellent” (p. 402). Since excellence is a relational measure, everything must be measured using a consistent and comparable system. According to Tam (2001) as cited by (Saunders, 2015), “excellent learning is understood through high grades, excellent teaching is understood through high course evaluations, excellent entering students have high SAT/ACT scores, and excellent institutions have large endowments and high national and international rankings” (p. 403). These are

indicators of complex processes, as they reduce the understandings of students and faculty to simple numeric expressions.

Even though schools are supposed to be about students and learning, today, schools are becoming more about test scores. The goal is to foster students to become “life-long learners”, not “lifelong test-takers” (Buckner, 2002, p. 215). In this context, Buckner (2002) defined a list of ten ways to maintain excellence in teaching despite the testing environment. The top ten list included aspects such as: “being accountable, crawling before walking, knowing test grammar, focusing on teaching, managing classrooms, being politically active, knowing pedagogy, educating the community, employing best practices, and keeping teaching goals in mind” (pp. 212-215).

The Future of Teaching (2014) presented a report from a group of U.S. educators, known as the Commission on Effective Teachers and Teaching that proposed a new philosophy of the teaching profession. It was led by teachers and promoted teaching effectiveness.

In another study, Owens (2016) described a project about excellence in teaching. The project represented the popular model of teacher-to-teacher collaboration and professional development, which offered a way to identify, share, and influence best practices. In a study that Bain (2004) conducted to between sixty and seventy teachers, the purpose of the study was to know what outstanding professors do and think that might explain their accomplishments.

In addition, Keeley, Ismail, and Buskist (2016) researched perspectives of master teachers on excellent teaching and how it differs from others. The results showed that excellent teachers place more importance on forming relationships with students and being prepared.

Finally, since excellence in teaching and learning is a goal of all educational institutions, it makes sense that they be committed to ensuring that such excellence in teaching and learning

exists. After all, excellence is a unifying goal of the University and we all should strive to be the best at what we do and be responsible to our students and society.

## **Best Practices**

In 1987, Chickering and Gamson identified seven principles to improve undergraduate education. Those good practices included: encouraging contacts between students and faculty, developing reciprocity and cooperation among students, using active learning techniques, giving prompt feedback, emphasizing time on task, communicating high expectations, and respecting diverse talents and ways of learning. (Chickering & Gamson, 1987). Additionally, on feedback, Youngeun and Anderson (2016) addressed the effectiveness of weekly writing assignment called self-directed learning with feedback (SelfFeed). SelfFeed helped students engage with lecture-based science courses, particularly in the United States. The study also mentioned the differences in the traditional classroom setting and the active learning classroom setting, as well as the two components of SelfFeed, that is, the lecture summary and the question and answer (Q&A) section.

In the transforming role of university, Myers (2003) study claims that collaboration among schools and some external partners can, improve student learning under certain conditions. If done well, learning-focused partnerships stimulate a sense of community responsibility for education.

However, Bok (2009) found dangerous conclusions when he examined how much progress students actually make toward their goals of undergraduate education. His research showed that students improved much less than they should in important areas such as writing, quantitative skills, critical thinking, and moral reasoning. Additionally, a large number of college seniors felt they have not made significant progress in speaking a foreign language, or learning

what they needed to know, despite the immensely increased resources, powerful technology, and hundreds of new courses. He also stated that colleges cannot be confident that students are learning more than they did fifty years ago; a powerful critique to undergraduate education. Consequently, in his last chapter, he describes the changes that faculty members can make to help students accomplish more.

Bain (2004) examined the thinking and practices of outstanding teachers. He and his team conducted research on between sixty and seventy excellent professors who belonged to medical school faculties and undergraduate departments in a variety of disciplines, including the natural and social sciences, the humanities, and the performing arts. The results and conclusions emerged from six broad questions including: What the best teachers know and understand; how do they prepare to teach; what do they expect of their students; what do they do when they teach; how do they treat students; and how do they check their progress and evaluate their efforts.

On teacher education, it is important to consider that teaching student-teachers is not the same as teaching them about teaching. Loughran (2013) in his self-study research of pedagogy for teacher education claimed that a pedagogy of teaching goes beyond a delivery of simple information about teaching. Student-teachers need to concentrate not only on learning but also on the form in which that teaching is conducted.

With the purpose to reflect on teaching, Murray (1995) suggested the use of teaching portfolios as a mode to assess, improve, and recognize good teaching. The researcher defined teaching portfolios as a gathering of materials to document teaching performance.

Some Evidence-Based approaches were also documented as best practices including: Evidence-Based Programming (EBP), Evidence-Based Teaching (EBT), and Problem-Based Learning (PBL).

In family life education, Ballard, Tyndall, Baugh, & Bumgarner Bergeson (2016) implemented Evidence-Based Programming (EBP) which is in high demand in family life education. The Positive Parenting Program (Triple P) was used to provide an in-depth case example of adapting and implementing EBP Framework for Best Practices in Family Life Education. The framework elements that guided this adaptation, included consideration of context and culture, program content and format, program design, and the role of the family life educator.

Malott, Hall, Sheely-Moore, Krell, & Cardaciotto (2014) analyzed best practices in university-level teaching constructed on the Evidence-Based Teaching (EBT) literature found in fields outside to counselor education. The finding included three aspects: promoting an effective learning environment, shaping intentional learning experiences, and assessing teaching effectiveness.

Lastly, Smith (2014) discussed Problem-Based Learning (PBL). Research into the best practices for basic skills education, national bridge programs, the new GED® assessment, and accelerated developmental education indicated that contextualized instruction was most effective when preparing adult literacy students for college and work. Nevertheless, "remedial pedagogy" with a sole focus on the technical aspects of basic skills, continued to dominate most basic skills instruction. Such a lack of engagement in teaching and learning may promote high attrition rates in basic skills programs. This paper recommends problem-based learning and concept mapping to promote student learning of basic and higher-order thinking skills. Lastly, on Problem-Based Learning (PBL), Smith (2014) recommended problem-based learning and concept mapping to promote student learning of basic and higher-order thinking skills.

On the area of pre-service, Bialka (2016) discussed the means to address the pre-service teacher's dispositions for teacher education programs. Topics included the nature of dispositions as the union of one's beliefs and actions which are strengthened through deliberate reflection, impact of morals and values on ways that dispositions are employed, and the impact of dispositions on the ability of students to succeed and on issues of retention.

Gehlert, Graf, & Rose (2014) outlined the roots of service-learning in counselor education and the natural fit of service-learning in this helping profession were also described. Moreover, the article presented ethical, theoretical, and empirical justifications for incorporating service learning in counselor training programs. Service-learning helped build multicultural competence, self-awareness, and understanding of counseling techniques and theories. It also served as a robust pre-practicum training tool for exposing students to real-life situations.

For first generation students, Lavender, Nguyen-Rodriguez, & Spruijt-Metz (2010) examined the impact of academic control-enhancing teaching methods on first-year college art student success and defined best-practice recommendations based on quantitative and qualitative findings. Results of this study suggested that understanding perceived academic control and incorporating that insight into classroom instruction can help college art faculty to more effectively support first-year students' adaptation to college, academic performance, mid-year retention, and matriculation to a second year.

In addition, Lewis & Harrison (2012) conducted a study on best practices of undergraduate teaching that promoted active learning, cooperation, and student–faculty contact. Their hypothesis argued that online delivery of the lecture prior to class meetings allowed more time in class to achieve their goals. There was a control group and a treatment group. The control group received a traditional lecture and PowerPoint presentation, and a treatment group received

online presentation of the same lecture script and PowerPoint presentation prior coming to class. The results showed that students in the treatment group scored significantly higher on most measures than the students in the control group.

In Social Studies, a multi-case study explored the impact of cooperating teachers (CTs) on the practices of preservice social studies teachers. Participants' written reflections, social studies teaching philosophies, lesson plans, and interview transcripts were examined to identify how field placements and cooperating teachers directly influence the autonomous decision-making practices of student teachers. (Tannebaum, 2016).

In Music, educators have showed concern about the extent to which partnerships strengthen excellence in music teaching and learning, instead of criticizing all partnerships as a threat to music education (Myers, 2003).

In history, Carey and Cooper (2016) analyzed educational assessment and pedagogical methodology in history education. The impact of the Tuning Project history education initiative is emphasized as well as the topics as aims and objectives for curricular design, best practices, and the role of history in a general liberal arts education.

Several studies on best practices in Mathematics have been carried out. For instance, Jones (2017) recommends using Dr. Moore's original method to teach students to think. Dr. Moore, developed a unique teaching method to teach his students to think like mathematicians. It was not designed to get mathematical knowledge, but to teach student to think. However, today, his method has been used to transmit mathematical knowledge instead, which was not Dr. Moore's objective. This article proposes that undergraduate students would be better served if they took at least one course using Dr. Moore's original method under his original goal (Jones, 2017).

Another study in mathematics described application of innovative practice of adult education in college math instruction. Adult learning principles provided the theoretical constructs and foundation of the practice reinforcing a learner-centered approach. Based on the six assumptions of Knowles' andragogy, curriculum was designed to provide college math students meaningful learning experiences, critical thinking skills, and application within the context of the classroom. Application, recognizing math anxiety in students, creativity, hands on learning, and incorporating characteristics of effective teachers were described as best practices in undergraduate math education. (Rodrigues, 2012).

Integrating areas is another way to apply good practice. Santillan, Jacobs, and Wright (2015) discussed planning, instruction, and assessment strategies for the integration of best practices in English language learner (ELL) and physical education (PE) instruction. Discussed strategies included strong communication and collaboration among physical educator with classroom teachers and ELL support staff.

Research conducted by Karshmer, and Bryan (2011), integrated best practices in Education and ACRL IL competency standards for higher education. A lesson plan that included pre-session videos, and in-library review, and opportunities for students to engage in active learning emerged. Overall students and instructors indicated positive experience, however, revisions for next semester were also suggested.

Finally, a number of studies or innovative methodologies or best practices are related to technology. In this area, a four-year project called Leveraging Educational Technology for Evidence-Based Practice (LET-EBP), was conducted to spread use of educational technologies in an undergraduate nursing program. 81% of the undergraduate nursing faculty participated in this project. The conclusion showed that through the integration of new educational technologies,



participants learned general aspects of instructional design and best teaching practices in a better or faster way (Hagler, Kastenbaum, Brooks, Morris, & Saewert, 2013).

Another study focused on Camtasia which is in an accessible technology for implementing Universal Design for Learning (UDL) principles in any classroom. UDL principles allow faculty to effectively design their materials and delivery of instruction to help students with diverse learning needs without changing their course content (Selvester, Mulholland, & Wong, 2006).

In addition, a website for best practices in teaching and technology was created to support faculty members. The project resulted from the request of faculty members who articulated having problems with identifying and implementing best practices at the connection of teaching and technology. The project was powered by WordPress and the process included the creation of custom taxonomies and post types, selection, and detailed customization of the educational institution theme (Rath, 2013).

At last, on eLearning, McGowan, Dickerson, and Lubejko (2015) analyzed problems that nurse planners and administrators needed to be aware in order to plan how technology-based education is most effectively delivered. Additionally, Periathiruvadi (2012), analyzed the progress of technology use in gifted education. This research found that gifted students expressed positive perceptions on using technology in the learning process.

## **Summary**

The theoretical framework for this study is critical theory grounded in Constructivism. Critical theory originated from the Frankfurt School in Germany in 1937, and was introduced to the United States in the 1960s. Critical theory embraces the potential for true freedom because it

is centered on the notion of social justice, liberation and the dialectic (Jay, 1996; Marcuse, 1992). Paulo Freire's *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* is an example of Critical Theory.

The background of critical theory is found in the philosophy of education, which is a part of philosophy that directs the attention to educational problems. Philosophy of education contains three major branches of philosophy central to teaching: metaphysics, epistemology and axiology. At the metaphysical level the world philosophies and educational philosophies that apply to education today appeared; and in turn, educational theories resulted from them.

Research shows that concern for quality of teaching has always existed (Hattie, 2004). It also shows the importance of establishing teaching philosophies (Hegarty, 2015), and many studies on best practices on the application of certain programs and methodologies have been published.

While there is research on best practices in higher education, there is lack of research on teaching best practices of successful awarded professors in undergraduate teaching and learning.

## **Chapter 3 - RESEARCH METHODOLOGY**

### **Introduction**

This chapter presents the purpose of this qualitative case study, followed by the research design. The chapter continues with a discussion of researcher assumptions, data analysis, and trustworthiness. The content is organized as follows: (1) rationale for the study, (2) research design of the study, (3) research purpose, (4) research questions, (5) theoretical framework, (6) methodology, (7) context of the study, (8) selection of participants, (9) institutional review board (IRB), (10) Data Collection Methods, (11) reliability and validity, (12) reciprocity and ethics, (13) data analysis, and (13) summary.

### **Rationale for the Study**

My work starts with a question that I want to answer. What are the best practices of successful professors in Higher Education? This is significant because if we can understand how professors describe their best practices, then other educators can evaluate, adapt those best practices to improve their own teaching and learning. By improving their teaching and learning, then they can offer quality education, and more importantly they can help our students to learn better and succeed. Therefore, the examination of such aspects of university distinguished professors' practices is the focus of this qualitative case study.

Research says that good teachers spend their lives empowering students to find their own inspiration and creativity, and, changing the lives of many students whom others had discharged as failures. As great teachers develop; they touch the lives of their students (Bain, 2004). However, for the most part their insights and teaching talents and practices are not documented.

It is important to document their good practices because good teachers can not only inspire students but, they can also inspire other teachers and everyone in the community. In the

same way that teachers wish to create in a classroom a collaborative learning environment, they also impact the community. By exploring their best practices, educators can create a collaborative teaching and learning environment among colleagues, where educators can share and learn from each other.

Historically, educators have always been looking for ways to improve their teaching and learning process. Researchers try to establish theories in order to help students learn and teachers teach better. This is a difficult task because the world is constantly changing, and educators need to be always innovating and creating too. Highet (1989) stated that “It is difficult to write a book on the art of teaching, because the subject is constantly changing. There are different ways of teaching in different countries of the world, at any one time” (p. 3). Furthermore, because each person is different, each group and generation need a different type of teaching. Therefore, innovation and permanent professional development is important in order to improve our teaching and learning practice and make it meaningful, engaging and fun.

To improve our teaching and learning practice, we can always learn from everybody and from other experiences; we can learn humbly from people with whom we share our lives and the world, because their stories can offer powerful tools for the renewal of “educational scholarship and practice” (Caracciolo & Mungai, 2009). Specifically, in my inquiry, I want to record and conceptualize the practices of award winning professors in order to document not just what they do and how they do it, but also how they think. I want to capture their thinking, beliefs, best practices, and if possible to capture their “magic”, so we can learn from them.

The criterion under which I chose my participants is the Coffman Chair for University Distinguished Teaching Scholars at a Kansas State University, because it is an award that promote excellence in undergraduate teaching and learning. In the USA, at University level,

good teaching is recognized through different kinds of awards. However, for the purpose of my study I picked the Coffman Chair because it recognizes professor for their, success in undergraduate teaching and learning. Selected professors are nominated for their commitment to students and innovative classroom methods. Unfortunately, there is a lack of research on experiences, philosophies and best practices of awarded professors. Consequently, the focus of my study is to examine these qualities.

### **Research Design of the Study**

According to Kim (2016), a research design is like building a house that requires to awake an artistic spirit. My research design is my plan of action that describes my choice for a methodology and methods that I will employ. According to Crotty (1998) what is needed in the research design is not only a description of the methodology but also an account of the rationale that provides for the choice of methods and the particular forms in which the methods are engaged. My research started by finding my interest. My interest is best practices in teaching and learning.

As well, according to Kim (2016) “A good research design begins with a good literature review... it is like a farmer plowing the soil to prepare for the planting of seeds” (Kim, 2016, p. 110). Likewise, Boote & Beile (2005, p.3) state that “A substantive, thorough, sophisticated literature review is a precondition for doing substantive, thorough, sophisticated research”. When reviewing the literature, I found that there was a gap on research about experiences, philosophies and best practices in teaching and learning of successful professors, in undergraduate higher education.

In the research process, there is not one only way of doing research. For instance, Crotty (1998) suggests moving from methods and methodology to theoretical perspective and

epistemology; however, other researchers move on the opposite way. The research design guides researchers, so they can move on their research on their own way, on the one that better fits their research purposes.

Creating a good and positive relationship with participants was also part of the research design (Connelly & Clandinin, 2006). According to Mead (1934), interaction is a component of social behavior, individuals acting together come to similar ideas about a given object through a process of continuous adjusting and readjusting within each individual's self.

This was a qualitative case study because it focuses on the context of people's experiences and the ways in which meaning is made out of their experiences (Bhattacharya, 2012). This qualitative case study was conducted to develop an in-depth understanding of the participants' narratives of their teaching experiences, philosophies and best practices.

In a qualitative research study, data is collected, analyzed and interpreted to get insight into a particular phenomenon of interest (Merriam, 2009). According to Crotty (1998), in qualitative research, it is necessary to listen, interpret, and retell participants' experiences in a meaningful way in order to get an in-depth understanding of the participants' narratives.

A qualitative, case study approach challenge researchers to "uncover the meaning of phenomenon for those involved" (Merriam, 2009, p. 5). Because different people have different perspectives and they live in different contexts, the meaning of their experience is different, too. People might have the same experience or opportunities, but, their perspectives of the same experience is different and unique for each one. Therefore, with this study, I did not pretend to find a final truth, but I wanted to discover meaning as it is described from the perspective of the participants (Crotty, 2008; Merriam, 2009). The narratives of the professors will help define the meaning of successful teaching across their disciplines.

## **Research Purpose**

The purpose of this qualitative case study is to examine teaching experiences, philosophies, and best practices of successful professors who were awarded the Coffman Chair for University Distinguished Teaching Scholars at Kansas State University in undergraduate teaching and learning.

## **Research Questions**

The overarching research question guiding this inquiry is:

How do successful professors awarded the Coffman Chair for University Distinguished Teaching Scholars at Kansas State University describe their teaching experiences, philosophies, and best practices in undergraduate teaching and learning?

The sub- research questions guiding this inquiry are:

1. How do award winning professors perceive their teaching experiences in undergraduate teaching and learning?
2. How do award winning professors describe their teaching philosophies?
3. What are the teaching best practices or innovative teaching strategies of the participants?

## **Theoretical Framework**

It is important that researchers ground their research in theory to position the investigation forward. In order to do that, researchers have to explore pertinent theoretical frameworks that can inform their research perspectives (Irby et al, 2013). As Crotty (1998) describes it, “We need to describe the epistemology inherent in the theoretical perspective, and therefore, in the methodology we have chosen” (p. 8) Therefore, defining our epistemology, theoretical perspective, methodology and methods helps us to secure and convince the audience

of the integrity of our research. Hence, this is a qualitative case study grounded in Constructionism as the Epistemology and Critical Theory as the theoretical perspective.

### **Epistemology - Constructionism**

Epistemology “deals with the nature of knowledge. It is concerned with providing philosophical grounding for deciding what kinds of knowledge are possible and how we can ensure that they are both adequate and legitimate” (Crotty, 1998, p. 8). The epistemology that informs my research is Constructionism.

Constructionism is an epistemology that opposes objectivism. While objectivism contends that knowing and learning are processes for representing and mirroring reality, constructionism contends that there is no objective truth waiting to be discovered. Crotty states that “Truth, or meaning comes into existence in and out of our engagement with the realities in our world. There is no meaning without a mind. Meaning is not discovered, but constructed” (Crotty, 1998, p.9). Thus, constructivism maintains that knowing is a process of actively interpreting and constructing representations of individual knowledge.

Additionally, constructionism differs also from subjectivism because in constructionism meaning is constructed out of something (the object), whereas in subjectivism, meaning is created out of nothing. Thus, meaning comes from an interaction between the subject and the object to which it is attributed (Crotty, 1998). According to the constructivism view, different people make different meanings of the same phenomenon. Crotty (1998) stated the following “In this understanding of knowledge, it is clear that different people may construct meaning in different ways, even in relation to the same phenomenon. In this view of things, subject and object emerge as partners in the generation of meaning” (p. 9). Thus, my epistemology is constructionism because it contends that learning is an active, constructive process.



## **Theoretical Perspective-Critical Theory**

Theoretical perspective is our view of the human world and social life within that world (Crotty, 1998, p. 7). My theoretical perspective is critical theory, which is a constructivist approach. Critical Theory is the theoretical theory of this qualitative cases study because it let me analyze my data in terms of critical reflection and power relationships between the faculty and the student to make interpretations. Because critical theory advocates the necessity to develop critical consciousness in people as well as the need to change the existing social order. It stimulates individual empowerment and social transformation (Weiler, 1988). Additionally, because reflection is an essential component of teaching and learning that allows people to become proactive of critical reflection before, during and after the experience instead of a reactive act (Dewey, 1933).

## **Methodology**

The methodology I used was a case study (Yin, 2014), because I wanted to focus on a certain group of people, in order to gain a depth understanding of their experiences. The certain group of people from whom I wanted to gain a depth understanding were university distinguished professors, recipients of the Coffman Chair for University Distinguished Teaching Scholars, at Kansas State University. The experience central point of my study were the teaching experiences, philosophies, and best practices of the successful professors in undergraduate teaching and learning.

A case study is “an exploration of a bounded system or a case (or multiple cases) over time through detailed, in-depth data collection involving multiple sources of information rich in context” (Creswell, 2007, p. 61). Case study is conducted to assist individual, group,

organizational, social, political, and related research with the understanding of a phenomenon (Yin, 2003).

By conducting case study research, researchers can explore a bounded system (case) or multiple bounded systems (cases) over time, involving multiple data sources and detailed data collection (Creswell, 2007). In this case, “multiple case studies can be used in most situations in preference to single case studies to achieve more robust results.

Hence, I selected case study because it provided the possibility to profoundly understand the participants’ experiences from the participants’ perspectives and points of view. This case study is a qualitative research with regards to the experiences of the teaching experiences, philosophies, and best practices of awarded professors in higher education, specifically in undergraduate teaching and learning.

### **Context of the Study**

This study involved faculty members from the departments of Psychological Sciences, School of Integrated Studies, Political Sciences, Horticulture and Natural Resources, Modern Languages, English, and Physics at Kansas State University. This University is located in the city of Manhattan, state of Kansas, in the United States of America.

According to the website of Kansas State University (2016), the main campus is located in Manhattan, Kansas called “The Little Apple”. The Little Apple is a classic college town with more than 56,000 residents. The university also has campuses in Olathe, the Polytechnic campus in Salina, and a Global campus for online/distance education. The Graduate School offers 73 master's degrees, 39 doctoral degrees, 4 educational doctoral programs, and 43 graduate certificates in multiple disciplines across campus. There are nearly 24,000 students from all 50 states and more than 100 countries. It offers more than 250 undergraduate majors and options.

This university has more than 475 student organizations and nearly 30 club sports. The university athletics boasts a total of 16 men's and women's sports in the Big 12 Conference. Kansas State University conducts practical research and delivers those results to all 105 Kansas counties to improve the lives of Kansans. Regarding financial aid, more than \$230 million in scholarships, grants, loans and work study is distributed each year through the Office of Student Financial Assistance.

This university has been continuously accredited by the Higher Learning Commission (HLC) of the North Central Association (NCA) of Colleges and Schools since 1916. Among its achievements, it is a national leader among public universities in the total number of Rhodes, Marshall, Truman, Goldwater and Udall prestigious scholarship winners and it is home to more national CASE/Carnegie Professors of the Year than any other public research university in America (Kansas State University, 2016).

### **Selection of Participants**

According to de Marrais (2004) there is not a definite rule about the number of participants required for conducting a qualitative research study. However, because qualitative research focuses on an in-depth understanding of participants' experiences, having a small number of participants is recommended. Therefore, the participants of this qualitative case study were seven professors in various departments.

Additionally, according to Creswell (2007), it is required that participants be identified with at least one factor of the criterion. The inclusion criteria in this qualitative inquiry are:

- a) To be an award recipient of the Coffman Chair for University Distinguished Teaching Scholars at Kansas State University, starting in the school year 2007-2008, and
- b) To be willing to participate.

Professors who are holders of the Coffman Chair for University Distinguished Teaching Scholars are publicly advertised in the webpage of the Office of the Provost and Senior Vice President. I sent an email to the most recent ten Coffman Chair awarded recipients inviting them to take part in this study and the ones who accepted were participants. They belonged to different majors such as: Psychological Sciences, School of Integrated Studies, Political Sciences, Horticulture and Natural Resources, Modern Languages, English, and Physics. This group served to emphasize the university's commitment to excellence in undergraduate teaching and learning.

### **Coffman Chair for University Distinguished Teaching Scholars**

The award from which participants were selected is called Coffman Chair for University Distinguished Teaching Scholars and it is coordinated by the Office of the Provost and Senior Vice President. It was created to highlight excellence in undergraduate teaching and learning as Kansas State University (2015) explains it:

The Coffman Chair for University Distinguished Teaching Scholars was created in 1995 to underscore Kansas State University's commitment to excellence in undergraduate teaching and learning. A faculty member acknowledged as a leading teaching scholar is appointed to the chair for one academic year. All who are selected to hold the chair retain the title of University Distinguished Teaching Scholar throughout their careers.

The purpose of this award is stated as follows:

Kansas State University has established the Coffman Chair for University Distinguished Teaching Scholars to symbolize the institution's commitment to excellence and provide leadership to the university community in the scholarship of teaching and learning at the undergraduate level. This commitment goes to the heart of our mission as a land-grant institution (Kansas State University, 2015).

The awarded faculty member holds the position for one academic year and this position brings good benefits as well as responsibilities.

Some of the benefits include (Kansas State University, 2015):

- A permanent addition of \$5000 to their base salary.

- Five-tenths release time from normal university responsibilities during the year of holding the position.
- A graduate teaching assistant.
- The assignation of \$2500 to support activities in the university during the year and \$1500 for personal discretionary funds.
- The title of Coffman University Distinguished Teaching Scholar for their whole career.

Responsibilities include (Kansas State University, 2015):

- a) To promote excellence in undergraduate teaching and learning at the university with different activities during the year.
- b) To do at least one public presentation to the university community.
- c) At the end of the experience, the Coffman chair distinguish scholar submits a summary report.

The Procedures for Nomination and Selection of the Coffman chair as it is stated in the Kansas State University (2015) website is the following:

- The provost will set a calendar for the submission and review of nominations.
- The nominating process begins at the departmental level. Each department may, if its members choose, nominate one person per year.
- Eligible candidates may be re-nominated.
- Departments forward nominations to their respective deans.
- Each college is limited to two nominations per year.

- The dean forwards the college nominations to the provost. Nominations should be submitted electronically in PDF format to the Provost's Office at: Provost Office University Awards ([provounivawards@ksu.edu](mailto:provounivawards@ksu.edu)).
- The provost will appoint an advisory panel, which will include six members selected from the roster of K-State's outstanding undergraduate teaching award recipients. Panelists will serve three-year terms.
- The panel will review the nominations from the colleges and make recommendations for the provost's consideration.
- The provost will review the recommendations and appoint the Coffman Chair for University Distinguished Teaching Scholars for the following year.

More information about the Coffman Chair University Distinguished Teaching Scholar is available in its official website (Kansas State University, 2015).

Before beginning my data collection, I met my participants to share with them a copy of my IRB, a legal document that allows me to conduct research. Through it, I mainly informed participants about the purpose of the study, the general methods of data collection, and their rights to drop the study at any point if they wish to do so. Finally, I asked them to sign an informed consent form.

**Figure 3.1 Coffman Chair University Distinguished Scholars 2007-2017**



© Kansas State University, used following a fair use evaluation. Retrieved from <http://www.k-state.edu/provost/enrichment/scholars/tsholders.html>.

The process in chronological order was:

- I presented my proposal and it was accepted by my committee.
- IRB approved my application to conduct research. (Appendix D).
- I sent an email to each prospect participant inviting them to participate in my research (Appendix F).
- I invited them to a first meeting where I could explain them the purpose of my study. In this opportunity I also provided them a copy of the IRB approval (Appendix D), demographic questionnaire (Appendix B), and the inform consent (Appendix G).
- After they completed and signed the forms, they gave it back to me to keep it a save place

- Additionally, I provided participants with a copy of the open-ended questions I was going to use in the interview.
- We set different times to conduct three semi-structured interviews at their convenient time.
- We set a time when they can provide me with some documents.
- I conducted three face-to-face interviews with each participant for a period of 60 minutes each time.
- During the first interview, I asked participants to talk about themselves and families.
- During the second interview, I asked participants about their teaching and learning best practices.
- During the third interview, I asked participants to talk about their relationship with their students.
- I tape recorded each interview and kept it in my files.
- I conducted most of the interview in the participant's office. Their office provided the a private, accessible and comfortable place for the participants and me as well as it was a place free of noise and distractions.
- I encouraged participants to share as much as they wish.
- I transcribed all the interviews.
- Participants participated in member check. I provided participants with a copy of the interview transcriptions, so they could make additions, and/or modifications to guarantee validity to my study and to ensure that they said what they meant to say.
- Finally, my advisors and committee acted as peer debriefers.



## **Institutional Review Board (IRB)**

Before I was authorized to collect data, I had to present successfully my proposal, and obtain permission from the IRB office to conduct research.

This study followed the Institutional Review Board (IRB) of Kansas State University to protect participants in this qualitative research:

- a. Participants signed an inform consent form (Appendix G) where they agreed to participate in this qualitative case study.
- b. Participants completed a demographic questionnaire.
- c. Participants were offered confidentiality and anonymity, but all of them preferred to be publicly known.
- d. Participants were asked to choose a pseudonym, but since they preferred to be known, they used their real names.
- e. Participants signed a release form authorizing the researcher to use and distribute the following materials: photographs, images, and other artifacts.
- f. All taped recordings were kept secured in the researcher's personal computer.
- g. All transcriptions of the interviews were also kept in the researcher's files.
- h. Data collection files will be destroyed after three years from the completion of this research.

## **Data Collection Methods**

The research methods are the techniques or procedures we plan to use, certain activities we engage in gather and analyze data. According to Crotty, to justify the research process, it is vital to describe the methods as specifically as possible (Crotty, 1998). For the purpose of this qualitative case study, I will use multiple data collection methods including demographic

questionnaires, semi-structured interviews (time line elicitation interviews, formal interviews, and photo elicitation interview), analysis of documents, and journaling.

### **Semi-structure Interviews**

Interviews were the main technique used for data collection. Semi-structured interviews included introductory interview, photo elicitation interview, time line elicitation interview. They will assist to understand the experience under investigation (Eyring, 1998). According to Fontana and Frey (2008), “interviewing is one of the most common and powerful ways in which we try to understand fellow humans” (p. 118). For that reason, I conducted interviews with my participants in an effort to gain an understanding of their experiences from their perspectives. For the purpose of the interviews, I prepared semi-structured open-ended questions in order to initiate a meaningful conversation and to create a good flow with my participants through dialogue. However, these semi-structured open-ended questions were not a straitjacket, but a foundation to engage my participants in the conversation. From their answers, I created follow-up questions driven by the conversation.

I conducted three types of semi-structured interviews including:

1. Time line elicitation interviews.
2. Formal interviews.
3. Photo elicitation interview

### **Time Line Elicitation Interviews.**

In the first interview, participants were asked to draw a time line of their life, and through it, they talked about themselves and their educational experiences.

The main question for the time line elicitation interview was:

Please, draw a time line that walks me through your educational and work experience.

All questions were opened-ended encouraging the flow of the conversation.

### **Formal Interviews.**

In the second type of interview I conducted, participants talked about their teaching and learning practice. The following excerpts are some examples of questions for the semi-structured interviews I used:

- How do you describe your teaching philosophy?
- What kind of innovative teaching method do you employ in your classes?
- How do you help and encourage students to learn in ways that make a positive influence on how students think, act, and feel?

As I mention before, to ease the dialogue, the protocol of the conversation contained all open-ended questions. Fontana & Frey (2008) recommend establishing a good relationship with participants to make them feel comfortable. Therefore, the interviews were designed to be as conversational as possible

### **Photo Elicitation Interview.**

In my third round of interviews, I applied photo elicitation technique. This technique is one of the most common forms of elicitation research and it has been applied in several areas such as sociology, education, communication, and anthropology (Harper, 2002; Taylor, 2002). Photo-elicitation increases the possibilities of producing a different kind of information and representation due to the pictures. Furthermore, it stimulates feelings, memories, and information.

I used photo elicitation in order to include photographs in the interview process and awaken my participants' feelings. In this context, participants were asked to share some meaningful pictures and through those pictures, they talked about themselves, their students,

their experiences, and their overall perceptions and motivations. Again, the conversation was driven by the participants' narratives and follow-up questions were also applied to further probe previous information.

The following are examples of the photo elicitation question that I used:

- Through your pictures, tell me about yourself.
- Through your pictures, tell me about the relationship between you and your students.

## **Journaling**

Journaling occurred periodically throughout the research process in order to consider the researcher's thoughts, ideas, and other contextual details. I constantly made use of my notes and personal artifacts. Researcher's journal notes were very useful to record initial data analysis, methodologies, and ideas for future research. Glesne (2011) stresses the importance of recording the different thoughts the researcher has while analyzing data. In addition, it is important to capture those analytical thoughts right at the moment that they occur (Glesne, 2011). Another benefit of journaling is to create reflection.

This process of meditation gave me the opportunity to reflect on my role as a researcher and how I was conducting research. I was constantly improving and elaborating better semi-structured open-ended questions, eliminating the unnecessary ones, and reflecting on what else I needed to know about my participants.

## **Bracketing**

As described by Creswell (2007) bracketing is becoming aware of personal assumptions, values, and beliefs. Bracketing was stated prior to each of the initial interviews in this study. This process assisted in the identification of my posture upon engaging in the interview process with each one of the participants. I conducted bracketing at all phases of my research process

trying to put myself on my participants' shoes. The application of bracketing impacted the process in a way of ensuring that my assumptions, values, and beliefs did not interfere with the participants'.

### **Analysis of Documents.**

Analysis of documents also occurred regularly. It consisted of analyzing existing documents that informed my research study, allowing for consideration regarding problems and ideas that emerged (Saldana, 2009). The following are the types of documents that were analyzed during the process:

- IRB (Institutional Review Board) application for research projects involving human subjects. The primary purpose of the IRB is to protect the rights and welfare of the human subjects.
- Inform consent.
- Interview transcripts
- Syllabus
- CV
- Teaching philosophies
- Pictures
- Other documents

### **Member checks.**

Goetz & LeCompte (1984) addressed internal validity by suggesting that the conclusions of the study are presented to the participants who are then asked to consider the findings of the research with regard to internal validity. I applied member checks with the participants to improve clarity on common understandings of meaning of an experience, (Bhattacharya, 2007; LeCompte, 2000). Member checks were applied after the interviews were transcribed in an effort to control distortions on the part of the researcher. I provided a printed copy of the interview transcripts to every participant and most of them did not do any change.

## **Peer-Debriefing.**

Additionally, I also applied peer-debriefing, which according to LeCompte (2000) is described as the researcher working closely with someone who has awareness of both the research and its design for improving the rigor of the study. For the purpose of my qualitative inquiry, the members of my committee served as the peer debriefers at the time I presented my proposal and finally when I presented my dissertation defense.

## **Reliability and Validity**

### **Reliability**

According to Bogdan & Biklen (1982), "Qualitative researchers tend to view reliability as a fit between what they record as data and what actually occurs in the setting under study" (p. 44). Setting a clear research design and methodology, enabled me to arrive to conclusions.

### **Validity**

According to Janesick (1994), "validity in qualitative research has to do with description and explanation, and whether or not a given explanation fits a given description" (1994, p. 217). Establishing validity was particularly important in this qualitative case study in order to control bias. In order to ensure reliability and validity I applied triangulation, member check, and peer-debriefing. Triangulation, implies a variety of data collection methods,

### **Triangulation**

"Triangulation is the process of using multiple methods, data collection strategies, and data sources to obtain a more complete picture of what is being studied and to cross-check information" (Gay, Mills, & Airasian, 2012). Likewise, Denzin and Lincoln (1994) described triangulation as the process of bringing multiple kinds of data to bear on a single problem or

issue. Multiple sources of evidence provided multiple views for the same phenomenon (Yin 2014).

In this study, triangulation supported findings through multiple sources of evidence. Additionally, the application of triangulations helped me to ensure validity of the study. Data triangulation was achieved by contrasting data from participants' demographic questionnaire; semi-structured interviews including: formal interviews, photo elicitation interviews, and time line elicitation interviews, documents, and field notes.

### **Control of Bias**

In order to control bias, I identified my background, awareness and acknowledgment of my personal values and beliefs to ensure validity and reliability of my study (Guba, 1978). I employed triangulation by the use of multiple sources of data collection. In addition, I applied member checks with participants to offer feedback after interviews were transcribed and findings and conclusions were identified. In this way, personal biases of the researcher will be limited (Bogdan & Biklen, 1982; Strauss & Corbin, 1998).

## **Reciprocity and Ethics**

### **Reciprocity**

I did not offer any monetary or tangible items for information in this study. However, participants remained in contact during the member checking process to provide feedback. At the end of the study they were delivered a copy of this study.

### **Ethics**

All collected data (electronic and hard copies) was stored in safe and completely protected formats in my personal computer, so that it is only accessible to me. This information will be kept for a lapse of three years and it will be destroyed after that. In addition, participants

signed an informed consent to agree with their participation, and they were aware that they could stop participating in the research at any time if they decided to do that, without any penalty.

### **Trustworthiness and Rigor**

I ensured trustworthiness and rigor in this study by applying triangulation, member check, and peer-debriefing. Furthermore, by expressing my subjectivity statement, I intend to monitor myself throughout the research process to increase my trustworthiness (Peshkin, 1988). Member checks were done with the participants, and peer debriefing were done with advisors. According to Spall (1998), peer debriefing “supports the credibility of the data...and establishes overall trustworthiness of the findings” (p. 280).

### **Confidentiality**

I offered participants anonymity to maintain confidentiality of data. However, all participants decided to be revealed. Nevertheless, all collected data (electronic and hard copies) were stored in safe and completely protected formats so that it is only accessible to me. After completion, I will maintain my collected data for a period of three years and then destroy it.

Participants signed an informed consent indicating their participation, and they were made aware that they could stop participating in the research at any time, without penalty.

### **Data Analysis**

According to Yin (2014) data analysis involves processes such as: “examining, categorizing, tabulating, testing, or otherwise recombining evidence, to produce empirically based findings” (p. 132). Data analysis according to LeCompte (2000) is defined as the way of obtaining results to answer the research questions. Consequently, the overarching research question guiding this inquiry is:



How do successful professors awarded the Coffman Chair for University Distinguished Teaching Scholars at Kansas State University describe their teaching experiences, philosophies, and best practices in undergraduate teaching and learning?

Anfara, Brown and Mangione (2002) argue that the process of data analysis is diverse, therefore, there is not a right way to do it. Likewise, Creswell (2007) claimed that there is not one single way to analyze qualitative data. Data analysis then is a changeable process in which the researcher tries to make sense of the information. Additionally, the approaches to data analysis done by qualitative researchers are considerably different from quantitative approaches (Yin, 2014; Creswell, 2007). While quantitative research depends on formulas, recipes, or tools, qualitative research depends on the researcher's own style along with sufficient evidence and careful interpretations (Yin, 2014). Therefore, while approaches are useful, the researcher needs to have an analytic strategy.

In order to choose the analysis method, I first tested a few data analysis methods such as: The four-step method suggested by Creswell (2013), the step-wise analysis that offers eight chronological steps (Moustakas, 1994), and the Constant Comparison Method: A Kaleidoscope of Data (Dye, Schatz, Rosenberg, and Coleman, 2000). At the end, I decided to use the Constant Comparison Method: A Kaleidoscope of Data (Dye et al, 2000) to analyze my research data

### **Constant Comparison Method: A Kaleidoscope of Data**

The metaphor of this method is a kaleidoscope. A kaleidoscope, as defined by Random House Learner's Dictionary of American English is an optic instrument to produce symmetric patterns in colored glass held at the end of a gyratory tube which continually changes patterns of shapes and colors as the tube is rotated (Word Reference, 2017).

First, I did a cross-case analysis of my twenty-four interviews using the constant comparison method to group common answers to common questions and analyze different perspectives on central issues (Dye et al, 2000).

The constant comparison method follows four stages:

1. comparing incidents applicable to each category
2. integrating categories and their properties
3. delimiting the theory
4. writing the theory

Therefore, I adapted these stages to analyze my data as follows:

### **Comparing Incidents applicable to Each Category.**

Categorizing is a fundamental part of the analysis process (Dye et al, 2000). At this step I did an inductive content analysis of my data by identifying, coding, and categorizing the primary patterns. Inductive analysis means that the patterns, themes, and categories of analysis "emerge out of the data rather than being imposed on them prior to data collection and analysis" (Patton, 1990, p. 406). The following is an example of the primary patterns I identified at this stage:

#### ***Categories:***

Why your Major  
Why become a Teacher  
Motivation  
Teaching Challenges  
Perseverance to keep in Education  
Main Lessons learned in Life  
Regrets  
Difficult situation  
Future Goals  
Teaching Strengths and Passions  
Organizing and balancing time  
Managing stress

## Influential Teachers

### **Integrating Categories and Their Properties**

According to Dye et al (2000), flexibility is necessary to accommodate data according to new observations and directions of the analysis. At this stage in my research, I began to select categories. Since developing categories is an ongoing process, I had to continually attempt to define and redefine categories by changing the criteria that I assigned to them.

After, I created a tentative list of categories, I found that some themes started to emerge. Later, I observed that some categories looked alike, consequently, by combining some categories, I created subcategories. This is an example of the categories and subcategories I identified at this stage:

#### **Category:**

Becoming a Teacher

#### **Subcategories:**

Why become a Teacher

Teaching Strengths and Passions

Anecdote of teaching experience

Teaching Persona

#### **Category:**

Difficulties in the Profession

#### **Subcategories:**

Time when you were unsure of becoming a professor

Support in teaching and learning

Difficult situation Teaching

Perseverance to keep in Education

Teaching Challenges

Regrets

### **Delimiting the Theory**

Refinement was an ongoing process throughout the whole data analysis (Dye et al, 2000).

Refinement was sometimes confusing, consequently, I had to do three rounds of refinement. As I was examining the relationship between categories, I found that certain categories were a better fit under other classifications.

### **Writing the Theory**

After reading and re-reading the themes, categories, and sub-categories, I observed that they were ready to inform my research questions.

### **Representing and Visualizing**

I followed Rodríguez Morales's (2011) chart to represent and visualize data analysis.

**Table 3.1 Data Analysis Matrix**

<b>Sources of data</b>	<b>Data Analysis Strategies Constant Comparison Method: A Kaleidoscope of Data (Dye et al, 2000)</b>	<b>Alignment to the Theoretical Framework - Critical Theory (Initial coding, categories and themes explored)</b>
Demographic Questionnaires	<ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>1. Comparing incidents applicable to each category</li><li>2. Integrating categories and their properties</li><li>3. Delimiting the theory.</li><li>4. Writing the theory</li></ol>	<p>CT1. Students and professors are called to transform themselves and the world</p> <p>Theme 1. Previous Experiences- In the students' shoes</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Influential People.</li><li>• Struggles as Students</li></ul> <p>Theme 2: Teaching and Learning Experiences- In the teachers' shoes</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Why your Major?</li><li>• Why become a teacher?</li></ul>

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Teaching Strengths and Passions</li> </ul> <p>Theme 3: Difficulties in the Profession</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Challenges in the teaching and learning practice</li> <li>• Mentoring support</li> </ul> <p>Theme 4: Knowing yourself</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Successful Professor</li> <li>• Organizing and balancing time</li> </ul> <p>CT2. Education as an engine for equality, democracy and a better society.</p> <p>Theme 5: Philosophical Perspectives</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Educational Philosophies</li> <li>• Educational Theories</li> <li>• Insights of their Teaching Philosophies</li> <li>• Importance of Education</li> </ul> <p>CT3. Power relationships between professors and students.</p> <p>Theme 6: Deciding the curriculum</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Curriculum and syllabus</li> <li>• Evaluating Students</li> </ul> <p>Theme 7: Innovative teaching pedagogies.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Coffman Chair</li> <li>• Other Practices</li> </ul>
<p>Semi-structured interviews:</p> <p>1. Time Line Elicitation Interviews</p>	<p>1. Comparing incidents applicable to each category</p>	<p>CT1. Students and professors are called to transform themselves and the world</p>

<p>2. Formal Interviews</p> <p>3. Photo Elicitation Interview</p>	<p>2. Integrating categories and their properties</p> <p>3. Delimiting the theory.</p> <p>4. Writing the theory</p>	<p>Theme 1. Previous Experiences- In the students' shoes</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Influential People.</li> <li>• Struggles as Students</li> </ul> <p>Theme 2: Teaching and Learning Experiences- In the teachers' shoes</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Why your Major?</li> <li>• Why become a teacher?</li> <li>• Teaching Strengths and Passions</li> </ul> <p>Theme 3: Difficulties in the Profession</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Challenges in the teaching and learning practice</li> <li>• Mentoring support</li> </ul> <p>Theme 4: Knowing yourself</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Successful Professor</li> <li>• Organizing and balancing time</li> </ul> <p>CT2. Education as an engine for equality, democracy and a better society.</p> <p>Theme 5: Philosophical Perspectives</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Educational Philosophies</li> <li>• Educational Theories</li> <li>• Insights of their Teaching Philosophies</li> <li>• Importance of Education</li> </ul> <p>CT3. Power relationships between professors and students.</p> <p>Theme 6: Deciding the curriculum</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Curriculum and syllabus</li> <li>• Evaluating Students</li> </ul>
-------------------------------------------------------------------	---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------	----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------

		<p>Theme 7: Innovative teaching pedagogies.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Coffman Chair</li> <li>• Other Practices</li> </ul>
<p>Analysis of documents:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Inform consent.</li> <li>2. Interview transcripts</li> <li>3. Syllabus</li> <li>4. CV</li> <li>5. Teaching philosophies</li> <li>6. Pictures</li> <li>7. Other documents</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Comparing incidents applicable to each category</li> <li>2. Integrating categories and their properties</li> <li>3. Delimiting the theory.</li> <li>4. Writing the theory</li> </ol>	<p>CT1. Students and professors are called to transform themselves and the world</p> <p>Theme 1. Previous Experiences- In the students' shoes</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Influential People.</li> <li>• Struggles as Students</li> </ul> <p>Theme 2: Teaching and Learning Experiences- In the teachers' shoes</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Why your Major?</li> <li>• Why become a teacher?</li> <li>• Teaching Strengths and Passions</li> </ul> <p>Theme 3: Difficulties in the Profession</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Challenges in the teaching and learning practice</li> <li>• Mentoring support</li> </ul> <p>Theme 4: Knowing yourself</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Successful Professor</li> <li>• Organizing and balancing time</li> </ul> <p>CT2. Education as an engine for equality, democracy and a better society.</p> <p>Theme 5: Philosophical Perspectives</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Educational Philosophies</li> <li>• Educational Theories</li> <li>• Insights of their Teaching Philosophies</li> </ul>

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Importance of Education</li> </ul> <p>CT3. Power relationships between professors and students.</p> <p>Theme 6: Deciding the curriculum</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Curriculum and syllabus</li> <li>• Evaluating Students</li> </ul> <p>Theme 7: Innovative teaching pedagogies.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Coffman Chair</li> <li>• Other Practices</li> </ul>
Journaling	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Comparing incidents applicable to each category</li> <li>2. Integrating categories and their properties</li> <li>3. Delimiting the theory.</li> <li>4. Writing the theory</li> </ol>	<p>CT1. Students and professors are called to transform themselves and the world</p> <p>Theme 1. Previous Experiences- In the students' shoes</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Influential People.</li> <li>• Struggles as Students</li> </ul> <p>Theme 2: Teaching and Learning Experiences- In the teachers' shoes</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Why your Major?</li> <li>• Why become a teacher?</li> <li>• Teaching Strengths and Passions</li> </ul> <p>Theme 3: Difficulties in the Profession</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Challenges in the teaching and learning practice</li> <li>• Mentoring support</li> </ul> <p>Theme 4: Knowing yourself</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Successful Professor</li> <li>• Organizing and balancing time</li> </ul>



		<p>CT2. Education as an engine for equality, democracy and a better society.</p> <p>Theme 5: Philosophical Perspectives</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Educational Philosophies</li> <li>• Educational Theories</li> <li>• Insights of their Teaching Philosophies</li> <li>• Importance of Education</li> </ul> <p>CT3. Power relationships between professors and students.</p> <p>Theme 6: Deciding the curriculum</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Curriculum and syllabus</li> <li>• Evaluating Students</li> </ul> <p>Theme 7: Innovative teaching pedagogies.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Coffman Chair</li> <li>• Other Practices</li> </ul>
--	--	-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------

## Summary

I started the previous chapter by presenting the rationale for doing this study. Later, I presented a detailed information about the research design, which contained a number of aspects in the process including, the rationale for the study, the role of the researcher, the selection of participants, and the processes of data collection and data analysis. The reliability and validity of the study as well as the ethical issues were also addressed. Finally, the data analysis process was explained thoroughly. Chapter 4 presents the findings of the research.

## **Chapter 4 - FINDINGS**

### **Introduction**

This chapter reports the results of this qualitative case study of the teaching experiences, philosophies, and best practices of university distinguished teaching scholars at Kansas State University. There are four sections: (1) demographic data from eight participants, (2) personal representation of each participant, (3) findings in relation with the research question and emerging categories and themes, and (4) summary.

The purpose of this qualitative case study was to examine teaching experiences, philosophies, and best practices of successful professors in undergraduate teaching and learning. For data collection I used multiple sources such as: demographic questionnaires, semi-structured interviews (time line elicitation interviews, formal interviews, and photo elicitation interview), analysis of documents, and journaling.

The demographic form was delivered to participants in a paper format, which they completed the same day when they signed the Informed consent. I conducted three face-to-face interviews with every participant. Semi-structured open-ended questions were conducted to every participant in a paper and electronic format. Each interview was 60 minute-long and was carried out at the participant's convenience place and time. The three interviews were designed to gain an understanding of their personal experiences as students and teachers, their teaching philosophies and their innovative teaching pedagogies. Interviews were recorded and later transcribed. All collected data has been stored in the researcher's personal files. In order to apply member check, participants received paper copies of the interviews transcript, but only two of them did some revisions.

I analyzed data using the constant comparison method: a kaleidoscope of data (Dye et al, 2000) which follows four stages: (1) comparing incidents applicable to each category, (2) integrating categories and their properties, (3) delimiting the theory, and (4) writing the theory. Participants were humble enough to share their personal and teaching experiences in their own words. Therefore, participants' contributions were very appreciated and valued, since every one of them invested time and effort to collaborate in the research process.

## **Demographics**

Table 4.1. and table 4.2. present the demographic data of the eight participants. It is organized as follows: (a) age, (b) gender, (c) ethnicity, (d) place of birth, (e) number of siblings in the family they grew up, (f) marital status, (g) marital status, (h) members of your current family, (i) academic rank, (j) department, (k) college, (l) classes they teach, (m) university where they obtained their Ph.D. degree, (n) number of years they have taught, (o) number of years they have worked at K-State, and (p) places they worked before K-State.

**Table 4.1 Demographic Data of Participants**

<b>Name</b>	<b>Dr. Patricia E, Ackerman</b>	<b>Dr. Donald A Saucier</b>	<b>Dr. John A Fliter Jr.</b>
Age	60	42	57
Gender	Female	Male	Male
Ethnicity/Race	Native American	White	Caucasian
Place of birth	Fort Riley, KS	Fall River, MA	Cleveland, OH
Number of sibling in the family you grew up	9	1	2
Marital Status	Married	Married	Married
Members of your current family:	2	Wife Two children	4
Academic rank	Professor	Full professor	Associate Professor
Department	School of Integrated Studies	Psychological Sciences	Political Sciences
College	K-State Polytechnic	Arts and Sciences	Arts and Sciences

Classes you teach	Expository Writing I & II Introduction to Critical Thinking Advanced Technical Writing Introduction to Literature Mastering Academic Conversations	Psychology 100, 110, 605, 557, 870, 802, 959, 550, DAS 199	POLSC 115, PLSC 401, POLSC 607, POLSC612, POLSC 614, POLSC 615, POLSC 670,
University where you obtained your Ph.D. degree	Kansas State University College of Education	University of Vermont	University of Maryland, College Park
Number of years you have taught	22	19	25
Number of years you have worked at K-State?	18	12	23
Places you worked before K-State?	Cloud County Community College	University of Kentucky	University of Maryland, University of North Texas

**Table 4.2 Demographic Data of Participants**

<b>Name</b>	<b>Dr. Kimberly A. Williams</b>	<b>Dr. Douglas Benson</b>	<b>Dr. Gregory J Eiselein</b>	<b>Dr. Christopher M. Sorensen</b>
Age	50	73	51	69
Gender	Female	Male	Male	Male
Ethnicity/Race	Caucasian	Anglo	White	Caucasian
Place of birth	Oklahoma City	Marysville CA	Twin Falls, Idaho	Omaha NE
Number of sibling in the family you grew up	2 brothers	4 First child	1 younger sister	2
Marital Status	Married	Married	Married	Married
Members of your current family:	Husband Daughter	4	4	3

Academic rank	Professor	Emeritus Professor	Professor	University Distinguished Professor
Department	Horticulture and Natural Resources	Modern Languages	English	Physics
College	Agriculture	Arts and Sciences	Arts and Sciences	Arts and Sciences
Classes you teach	HORT 570, HORT 377, HORT 600, HORT 625	All Spanish undergraduate and Graduate classes. Some beginning level of French	ENGL 287 Great Books ENGL 795 Literary Theory ENGL 470 The Bible	Astronomy The Physical World
University where you obtained your Ph.D. degree	North Carolina State University	University of New Mexico	University of Iowa	University of Colorado
Number of years you have taught	22	51	24	40
Number of years you have worked at K-State?	20	36	24	40
Places you worked before K-State?	University of Illinois (Professor)	Hastings College NE	N/A	N/A

## Personal Portrait 1: Dr. Patricia E Ackerman, “Passionate about Writing”



**Figure 4.1** Dr. Patricia E. Ackerman

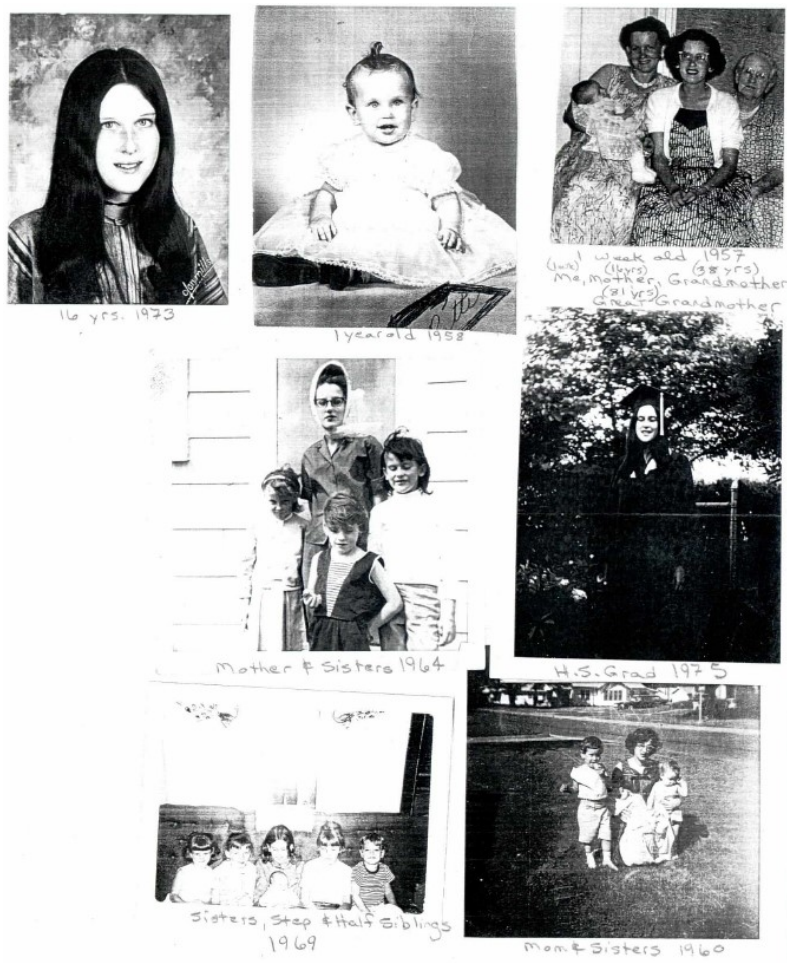
(Kansas State University, used following a fair use evaluation. Retrieved from <http://www.k-state.edu/provost/enrichment/scholars/tsholders.html>)

Dr. Patricia E Ackerman is a 60-year-old professor in the School of Integrated Studies, K-State Polytechnic. She has worked at K-State University for eighteen years and has a total of twenty-two years of teaching experience. Dr. Ackerman is the 2016-2017 Coffman Chair University Distinguished Teaching Scholar. She is the only professor in my study who teaches at the Polytechnic campus. However, because of her responsibilities as the Distinguished Scholar for this year, she visited the Manhattan campus several times and I was able to have her as a participant.

Dr. Ackerman was raised by a nineteen-year-old single mom with three children. In her childhood, Dr. Ackerman’s family moved around a lot, so the place where she always felt safe was at school. It was a place she gravitated to when there was a relocation or family drama. Dr. Ackerman was the first person in her family to attend college and complete a degree. She had two sisters. Her mother eventually got her GED and later remarried when Dr. Ackerman was nearly grown. Therefore, she had step brothers and sisters but for most of her childhood it was just her mom and her two sisters. Dr. Ackerman’s father left when she was three. He served in

the military and met her mom in Kansas when he was stationed at Fort Riley and that's where Dr. Ackerman was born.

Dr. Ackerman's first marriage lasted for 15 years and had two children, then she was single for eight years. Now she has been married for another 15 years, this year. She and her husband live on a farm, north of Abilene Kansas. She has two boys and two girls, two are hers and two are her sisters, who died.



**Figure 4.2 Images courtesy of Dr. Ackerman**

### **Education and Work Experience**

When her children were in high school and after a divorce, she decided to go back to school and get her master's degree. She was teaching some classes part-time for a community

college and one class for K-State. When a faculty member left a week before classes began in the fall of 2000, Dr. Ackerman was asked to assume the teaching load, which she did for two years.

While teaching at K-State, she stopped by Dr. Todd Goodson's office and asked what it would take to get a PhD. Dr. Goodson at the time was administering the Flint Hills Writing Project and he suggested that she get involved in that project and the National Writing Project. Over the course of that summer in addition to learning a lot, she earned some graduate credits that could be applied toward the PhD. So, she decided to make this the starting point for something bigger. She talked to her husband and explained to him that she was at a turning point. It was going to cost her family a lot of money and a lot of time in order to do this. Her husband's answer was: "Just do it, just do it." Finally, she said, "it has been a long journey, but it has been a good one". The whole family supported her. Her children were in college at that time, so, they did it together. She obtained her Ph.D. degree at Kansas State University.

**Personal Portrait 2: Dr. Donald A Saucier, "Someone who likes to have a lot of fun and who does things very enthusiastically"**



**Figure 4.3 Dr. Donald A Saucier**

(Kansas State University, used following a fair use evaluation. Retrieved from <http://www.k-state.edu/provost/enrichment/scholars/tsholders.html>)



Dr. Donald A Saucier is a 42 -year-old Full Professor in the Department of Psychological Sciences, College of Arts and Sciences. He has worked at K-State University for twelve years and has a total of nineteen years of teaching experience. Dr. Saucier is the 2015-2016 Coffman Chair University Distinguished Teaching Scholar.

Dr. Saucier grew up on a farm in Fall River, Massachusetts about 45 minutes southeast of Boston. When he was in the fifth grade, he moved to Dartmouth Massachusetts, from a city to a suburb. He stayed there until he went to college. He had only one sister, Teresa, who is about a year and a half younger than he is. He also had two step brothers, whom he saw once in a while, on weekends.

Dr. Saucier claims that they were kind of lower class. His mom at some point was on welfare and was a single mom for a while, before she married his stepdad. They lived in an apartment project in Fall River and then later moved to a house in Dartmouth. He and his sister used to play outside a lot and did a lot of things together. They rode bikes, played in the woods, and played a lot of sports. He said that “it was a lot of fun.” Dr. Saucier’s sister is still probably his best friend. She is still in Massachusetts, where she lives in a in a two-apartment house with his mom.

Dr. Saucier identified himself in a lot of different ways, as a husband, as a father, as a brother, as a son, and as a professor. He describes himself as someone who likes to have a lot of fun and who does things very enthusiastically. He says he is a good person and tries to have other people's best interests at heart. He also identifies himself as “pretty involved”. He likes to get in the middle of the things that he is doing and often says “yes” to a lot more things than he probably should. Dr. Saucier does not like to take risks but he likes to succeed in the things that he does because he likes to be in control.

Dr. Saucier talked about his family through several pictures from a family calendar. He showed me many pictures of his two kids. He stated that “They are amazing people and it's funny how both of them reflect on me and my wife”. Dr. Saucier loves to do physical activities with his children. One of the things he has always believed is that a person should be active intellectually and physically. So, he takes his kids to the playground and he likes to see his daughter doing a lot of physical activity. He commented that his children get along really well most of the time. But they really look out for each other and they take care of each other. Dr. Saucier loves the spirit that his children have. He loves his daughter's confidence even though it wanes at times. His son is much more confident, but he doesn't deal with the same gender dynamics at school as his sister. Dr. Saucier and his wife encourage their daughter to be strong, smart, and to achieve her goals.

Dr. Saucier and her daughter are not risk takers, but both like challenges. His son, however, is more of a risk-taker. His daughter really takes care of her brother. She reads to him and teaches him things. She loves to play school and gets frustrated if he doesn't want to play at the same time that she does. In a wedding picture, his son was the ring boy and her daughter was the flower girl. Dr. Saucier has a lot of special time with his son when his daughter goes to Girl Scouts or something else. Typically, they end up eating ice cream.

Additionally, Dr. Saucier showed me some pictures from a family vacations and pictures of their children's first day of class. His daughter and his son are very excited about school. His daughter stays excited about school, but his son feels like they make him sit still too much. I could see their enthusiasm reflected there. His kids love to draw as they're both fairly artistic. They also love to do things as a family on Halloween. They usually have a themed costume and the costume for last year was Star Wars characters. Occasionally Dr. Saucier and his son love to

dress as twins, so they had their Superman shirts on in one of the pictures. Several more pictures were about the Christmas holiday this year. His son is six years old and his daughter is eight. A wonderful family.



### **Figure 4.4 Images courtesy of Dr. Saucier**

#### **Educational and Work Experience**

Dr. Saucier went to Dartmouth High School, which is in southeastern Massachusetts, from 1988 to 1992. Then he went to Colby College, which is in Waterville, Maine, from 1992 to 1996. After that, he went to the University of Vermont for graduate work from 1996 to 2001 where he got his Ph.D. degree. After that, His first job was at the University of Kentucky, where he worked from 2001 to 2004. It was a non-tenure-track teaching position, so he started out as a full-time instructor. Later, he was promoted to a lecturer. Finally, he has been at Kansas State University since 2004, and In July he finished his 12th year and became a full professor. Congratulations to him.

#### **Personal Portrait 3: Dr. John A. Fliter Jr, “Passionate about teaching”**



**Figure 4.5 John A. Fliter**

(Kansas State University, used following a fair use evaluation. Retrieved from <http://www.k-state.edu/provost/enrichment/scholars/tsholders.html>)

Dr. Fliter is a 57-year-old Associate Professor in the Department of Political Sciences, College of Arts and Sciences. He has worked at K-State University for twenty-three years and has a total of twenty-five years of teaching experience. Dr. Fliter is the 2013-2014 Coffman Chair University Distinguished Teaching Scholar.

Dr. Fliter Dr. was born in Cleveland, Ohio. He commented that his dad passed away about eight years ago. He has a sister and a younger brother who were only a year apart. His brother's name was Jim and he passed away from cancer in 1986, a year after Dr. Fliter started grad school. They were very close, and it was a tough time. Dr. Fliter almost dropped out of graduate school, but his brother told him to stay in school, and so he did. His first book is dedicated to his brother.

Dr. Fliter identified himself as a white tall male. His father was a union member all his life. He was a printer and he didn't have any college education. So, he definitely thinks he has blue-collar-working-class roots. That has always been in his background, and in a way, that challenged him, because sometimes he felt like perhaps he cannot do things like go to graduate school and get a degree. But somehow, he managed to get through.

About his current family, his wife Leah is a lobbyist for the Kansas Association of School Boards. She works in Topeka, four to five days a week, and drives back and forth. Eric is his oldest son. He was only six months old when they came to Manhattan and he graduated from K-State last May. He got had a major in English with a minor in Political Science. He actually started in Political Science, then he decided to switch to English because he likes creative writing. David is the youngest. He was born in 1998, and he graduated from Manhattan high school. He is attending K-State with a major in History, as he shares his father's love of history. Dr. Fliter used to do stuff for the children in terms of History and they grew up really enjoying and loving History.



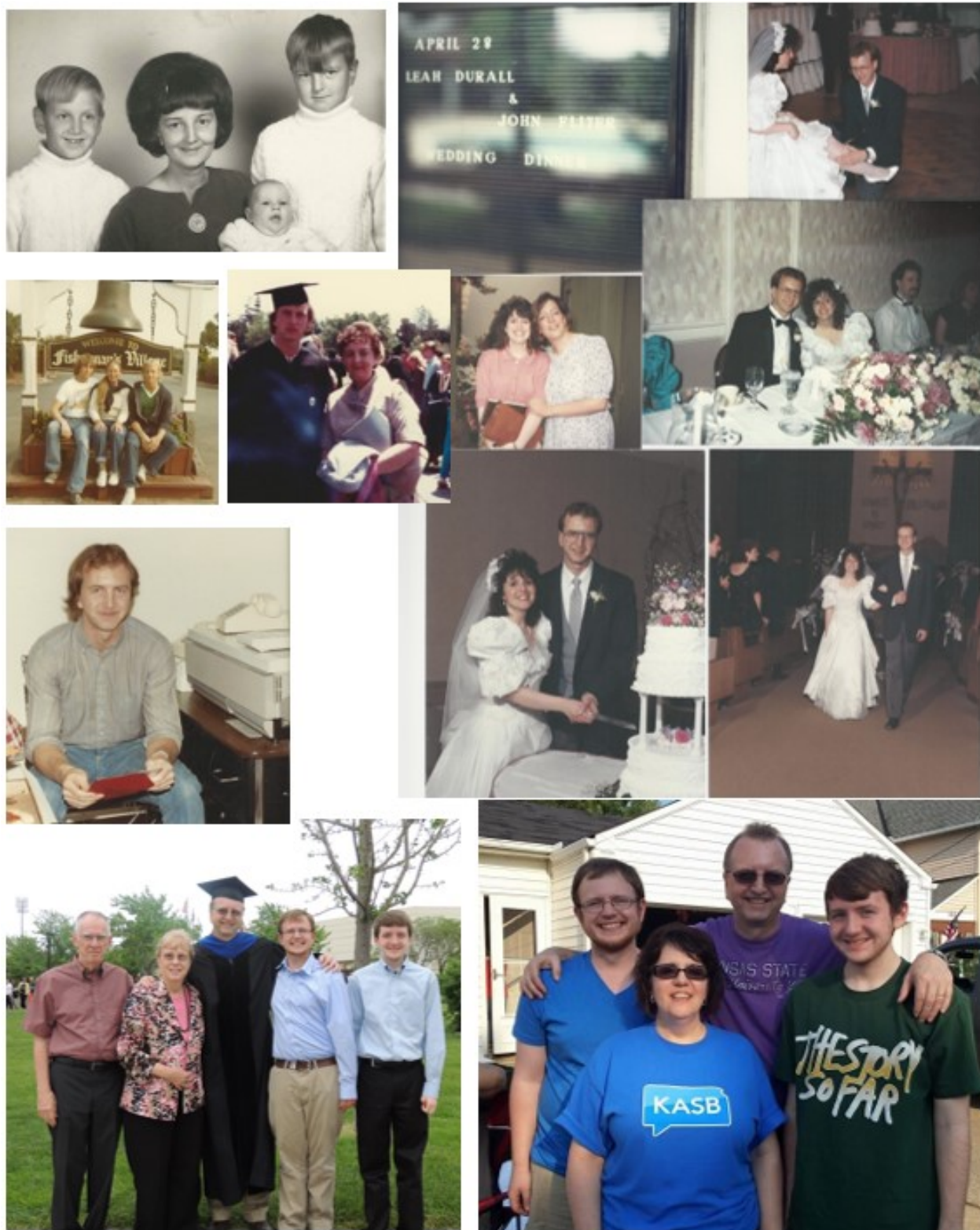


Figure 4.6 Images courtesy of Dr. Fliter

## **Education and Work Experience**

Dr. Fliter went to Catholic school for 12 years. He is the oldest in the family, and the first generation to go to college and go to graduate school. His parents did not really support Dr. Fliter intellectually, but they did financially. They made the sacrifices to send him to a parochial school for twelve years and gave him, the educational opportunity for college. To do well in college, he had to study hard.

Dr. Fliter left Ohio when he was 21. At He went to the University of Dayton his freshman year, he majored in electrical engineering. Even though engineers make good money and there's always a job, he had no idea why he chose that field. He had no interest in engineering and after his freshman year, he really hated it. He could not stand the physics and calculus. Dayton is an expensive private school and Dr. Fliter didn't know what to do. He didn't want to waste a lot of money trying to figure out what major he was going to do, so, he dropped out of school and his mom cried.

Then, he went to work in a body shop, for, two or three years because he was really interested in muscle cars and hot rods. That was part of his blue-collar roots and his working-class roots. He really enjoyed working with automobiles and with his hands. Dr. Fliter showed me the picture of his car, a Dodge Charger, which he had painted by himself. Dr. Fliter loved working on that car and driving it around. He enjoyed painting and working in cars. This is an important skill Dr. Fliter has. He explained that not too many professors know how to paint a car, as it's not something that most people in academia have. Unfortunately, Dr. Fliter sold his car before he went to graduate school because he needed the money.

Later, he moved to California with some friends and lived in San Diego for a year. Then he knew he had to get back to college because working at dead-end jobs just wasn't good enough.

When Dr. Fliter graduated at Cal State Northridge, he had a button that said, "Question Authority." He was kind of a radical in school and active in a lot of things, He was the vice Chair of a committee for solidarity for the people of El Salvador and he was an intern at the Central American refugee center in the San Fernando Valley. He was also active in Students Against Apartheid. They protested during his senior year and they took over the administration building. During that event, Dr. Fliter talked to a reporter from Los Angeles Times and the reporter published his statement that he was willing to be arrested for the cause. This was around ten days before he graduated, so he hoped his parents did not ever see the article. But in the end, he did not get arrested. (Link to the article: [http://articles.latimes.com/1985-04-27/local/me-12676\\_1\\_campus-protesters](http://articles.latimes.com/1985-04-27/local/me-12676_1_campus-protesters)) He also was involved in the sanctuary movement for Central American refugees. Thus, Dr. Fliter was a passionate student. He obtained his Ph.D. degree at the University of Maryland, College Park.

### **Personal Portrait 5: Dr. Kimberly A Williams, "I was born to teach"**

Dr. Kimberly A Williams is a 50-year-old Professor in the Department of Horticulture and Natural Resources, College of Agriculture. He has worked at K-State University for twenty years and has a total of twenty-two years of teaching experience. She is the 2010-2011 Coffman Chair University Distinguished Teaching Scholar.

Dr. Williams grew up in a small town in the center of the state of Kansas called Great Bend. She considers herself a hybrid farm kid. Her grandparents had a wheat farm that was about 20 miles from the town where she lived with her mom, dad, and two brothers. She was connected



to agriculture because her family helped her grandparents at the farm. She thinks that she fell in love with horticulture, which is her disciplinary area, because of being around plants. She always loved flowers.



**Figure 4.7** Dr. Kimberly A Williams

(Kansas State University, used following a fair use evaluation. Retrieved from <http://www.k-state.edu/provost/enrichment/scholars/tsholders.html>)

Dr. Williams's dad co-farmed the wheat farm with her grandfather, so they would spend much of the summer out there during the harvest, helping for about 12 hours a day.?

Regarding teaching, Dr. Williams was like a nerdy bookworm type, very studious. She always had her stack of papers, enjoying projects, reading and doing homework. She often says that "I was born to teach" because from a very young age, she was trying to convince her brothers to play school with her where she would be the teacher and they would be the students. So, she thinks that teaching was really a part of her DNA, a part of her makeup.

When Dr. Williams went through school, the subject that came easiest to her was language arts, called English at that time, including writing, grammar, and literature. She was a straight-A student, but subjects like chemistry were more difficult for her. She could do them, however, with a lot of hard work.

Her parents were supportive in every way. She and her brothers were adopted and adoption for them is “being so loved that they were chosen.” Dr. Williams remember her mom reading to them every night since they were little. While education was important to her parents, they did not have a college background, so they didn't really have a basis to recommend what classes to take. Nevertheless. her parents gave them freedom and support to choose what they wanted to do, and they found a way for them to do it.

Dr. Williams has two brothers. She is the oldest, her brother Greg is a year and a half younger than her and her brother Ryan is ten years younger than her. Dr. Williams is a first-generation college student. Her husband is also a university faculty professor, so education is clearly very important to her and her husband and it is their desire that her daughter will choose to pursue a college education as well.





**Figure 4.8 Images courtesy of Dr. Williams**

Dr. Williams identifies herself as a white female, Christian Roman Catholic. She also identifies with her faith; that is why her daughter goes to a Catholic school. In the community where she grew up, Great Bend, Catholicism was very strong. Her blood is half Iranian, half mixed Caucasian French. In academia, she identifies herself as a mom, a daughter, and a wife.

Her daughter Allison is 11 years old. Dr. Williams keeps a picture of her daughter when she was only four days old. She keeps it on her phone to remind her how fast time goes. Her husband is a professor in Entomology; who does extension work and research, working with greenhouse and cropping systems.

### **Education and Work Experience**

Dr. Williams graduated from Kansas State University with a bachelor's degree in Horticulture in 1988 and then she completed her Master's degree at North Carolina State

University in Raleigh in 1991, majoring in Horticultural Science with a minor in Botany (Plant physiology). Finally, she got her Ph.D. in 1995 from North Carolina State University, majoring in Horticultural Science with a minor in Soil Science.

**Personal Portrait 6: Dr. Douglas Benson, “Teaching is not teaching. Teaching language is facilitation”**



**Figure 4.9** Dr. Douglas Benson

(Kansas State University, used following a fair use evaluation. Retrieved from <http://www.k-state.edu/provost/enrichment/scholars/tsholders.html>)

Dr. Douglas Benson is a 73-year-old Emeritus Professor in the Department of Modern Languages, College of Arts and Sciences. He has worked at K-State University for thirty-six years and has a total of fifty-one years of teaching experience. He is the 2009-2010 Coffman Chair University Distinguished Teaching Scholar.

Dr. Benson was born in Marysville, California, which was near a military base, two days after D-Day, on the 8th of June 1944. D-Day was the 6th of June, the attack of Normandy in Europe. Dr. Benson commented, laughing that “my mother says that's why they attacked, and then I was born.” He has one brother and two sisters. His father was a Major, a dentist in the Army during World War Two. When his dad got out of the army after World War Two, the family moved to New Mexico, where his dad was a dentist in several different cities.

They moved to Taos in the northern part of New Mexico, which is a famous art colony. Taos is probably 70% Latino. Many of those generations do not speak Spanish, because at the schools, students were punished for speaking Spanish. Dr. Benson remembered growing up among all kinds of people, playing marbles, and playing on the playground. He spent a lot of time with both Latino friends and with indigenous friends. According to Dr. Benson, that was “a really really, a wonderful place to grow up.”

Dr. Benson cannot exactly describe his identity because his father was Anglo, “he was not just white but almost pink” and his family has also had a lot of Dutch, English, and Scottish background. He grew up Presbyterian, which is the Scottish denomination. From a very early age, he interacted with a lot of Hispanic people. His dad had people from Pueblo helping him all the time with trees or yard work. His mother had indigenous people of Pueblo who babysat with them when his mom was working with the church. So, Dr. Benson interacted with Hispanic kids from the people who worked for his parents and with kids from the Pueblo who were in the school.

Although Dr. Benson started to take Spanish class in junior high, he, his brother, and sisters heard Spanish all the time at home with the workers’ children and at school. They used it like a special code because his parents couldn't understand. He remembers his father knew three phrases: “Abra la boca,” “Diga A,” and “No me muerda.” (“Open the mouth,” “Say A,” and “Don’t bite me.”)

Dr. Benson affirms that they are a very close family. He and his wife are both from New Mexico, so they really believe in the value of a strong family, which is part of Latino culture. His children could get jobs far away, but they believe they must be a close family.





**Figure 4.10 Images courtesy of Dr. Benson**

#### **Education and Work Experience**

Dr. Benson went to New Mexico State University in 1962. Before he graduated in 1965 with a degree in Spanish and French, he got married. He then decided to go to the University of New Mexico to get his PhD in Spanish Literature. He started in 1965, finished the classwork, and as he was getting ready to work on his dissertation, he got a job. He went to work at Hastings College in Nebraska in 1969, where he worked for 11 years. Dr. Benson obtained his PhD degree in the University of New Mexico in 1974.

**Personal Portrait 7: Dr. Gregory J Eiselein, “I’m genuinely sincerely excited about the material I am teaching”**



**Dr. Gregory J Eiselein**

(Kansas State University, used following a fair use evaluation. Retrieved from <http://www.k-state.edu/provost/enrichment/scholars/tsholders.html>)

Dr. Gregory Eiselein is a 51-year-old Professor in the Department of English, College of Arts and Sciences. He has worked at K-State University for twenty-four years and K-State was his first job. He is the 2008-2009 Coffman Chair University Distinguished Teaching Scholar.

Dr. Eiselein is a first-generation student. He was born in Twin Falls, Idaho, and he has one sister, a stepbrother, and two stepsisters. Dr. Eiselein met his wife at K-State and they have two children, Tanya and Elliot.

In 1982, Dr. Eiselein was an exchange student in New Zealand for one year, from February 1982 to January 1983. He expresses that New Zealand is a beautiful place. He took a lot of pictures that year because New Zealand was different, for instance, because it has mountains and ocean. “There is no ocean in Idaho.” The best part of this experience was that Dr. Eiselein got very excited about learning and a sense of independence. He had host families and lots of opportunities and the chance to try new things. The best one was that this this experience “expands your whole understanding of how big the world is.” This was his first time on a plane

and the first time out of the country. Thus, it was a great experience for him, as he states, “it was life-changing.”



**Figure 4.11 Images courtesy of Dr. Eiselein**  
**Education and Work Experience**

After New Zealand, he went back to American high school. Soon he started to look at some universities, but he only applied to one, the University of Idaho. He went there, and he loved it. He majored in English because he could apply for one of the English scholarships. He graduated from the University of Idaho with a B.A. in History and English in 1987. In 1993, he finished his Ph.D. at the University of Iowa, where he specialized in American literature and critical theory. In his final year, while he was finishing his dissertation, he started applying for



jobs. He applied for to almost fifty schools and interviewed at six. He made campus visits to two and ended up getting one job offer, which was K-State.

Dr. Eiselein thought it was just a beginning and maybe he would go to other schools. However, he has been teaching at K-State for 24 years. He was as an Assistant Professor during his first five years. In 2008 he became professor and became a University Distinguished Teaching Scholar. In 2013, he won the CASE/Carnegie Kansas Professor of the Year award, and in 2015 he was named the Donnelly Professor of English. Dr. Eiselein teaches courses in American literature and culture, world literature, literary theory, and cultural studies.

**Personal Portrait 8: Dr. Christopher M. Sorensen, “I think of myself as a scientist”**



**Dr. Christopher M. Sorensen**

(Kansas State University, used following a fair use evaluation. Retrieved from <http://www.k-state.edu/provost/enrichment/scholars/tsholders.html>)

Dr. Christopher Sorensen is a 69-year-old University Distinguished Professor in the Department of Physics, College of Arts and Sciences. He has worked at K-State University for forty years and K-State was his first job. He obtained his Ph.D. degree at the University of Colorado. Dr. Sorensen is the 2007-2008 Coffman Chair University Distinguished Teaching Scholar.



**Figure 4.12 Images courtesy of Dr. Sorensen**

Dr. Sorensen was born in Omaha, Nebraska, on October 1, 1947. He has two sisters - one who is 8 years older than him and one who is 6 years younger than him. He had a very good

childhood. He was very happy, and he had wonderful parents and sisters. He sees himself as a scientist, intellectual, and physically active. He is grateful for what he has, and he tries not to pay so much attention for to what he does not have.

He spent his childhood doing experiments and reading science books. He taught himself electronics. As he said, “I did a lot of crazy things”. He used to take apart televisions and radios to remake them into other electronic devices.

Dr. Sorensen has been married for nearly 42 years and he has a daughter. He gets along very well with his daughter and with his sisters. He sees his sisters about once a year, typically some time nearly the end of the summer.

### **Education and Work Experience**

Dr. Sorensen went to Kindergarten in 1952. It was the beginning of the baby boom. The next year he went to a brand newly built school called Western Hills from for the first to sixth grade. Junior High school was broken into two parts: 7th grade was at a Junior High school. That was two and a half miles away from his house. From 8th to 9th grade, he attended another new school that was only a half a mile from his house, the Lewis & Clark Junior High. Then, from 10th to 12th grades, Dr. Sorensen went to Benson High school, which was a two and a half mile walk away. It was obvious that Dr. Sorensen wanted to be a scientist, so, he went to the University of Nebraska. Unfortunately, his grades in high school were not good enough to qualify for any scholarship. This was mostly because he was full of energy and he often got into trouble.

The University of Nebraska was sixty miles away, so he lived in the dormitory. He started in 1965 and graduated in 1969. When he was at this college as he says, “Fortunately, I changed myself”. Dr. Sorensen changed his study habits the first week of college. This was a

memorable event for him because at in high school he did not study. Her mom and he used to say that “an A student is never done with their homework and a D student is always done with their homework”. Fortunately, his mom had faith on in him. While Dr. Sorensen was not a serious student in high school, at in college things changed. The first week at college he arrived early, he saw met his friends and he came back to the dorm home the first Monday after class. He sat down, and everything was quiet, nobody wanted to party, and his roommate was studying. He thought to himself, “And now what I am going to do?”. Dr.Sorensen was not at home where he could go out and make his do science things, so he decided to study, too. He studied and got A’s mostly, He got getting good grades instead of the grades he had in high school. So, it was very fortunately that one Monday evening, there wasn't anything else for him to do.

Dr. Sorensen graduated in 1969. Three months after he graduated, on August 28 1969, he was drafted into the army. He went to the Vietnam War. At that time, he had been accepted to the University of Colorado for graduate school, but of course he couldn't go. He was serving served in Vietnam for exactly 9 months, 3weeks and a day and he came home in July 1971. Then he went to the University of Colorado, where he was re-accepted again without a problem because he was a veteran.

Kansas State University was his first job. He defended his thesis in November 1977, interviewed, was offered the position, and has been a professor at K-State ever since.

### **Findings in Accordance with Research Questions and Emerging Themes**

Data was analyzed by exploring teaching experiences, philosophies, and best practices in undergraduate teaching and learning.

The themes that emerged from data analyzing were organized as follow: (1) Previous Experiences- In the students’ shoes, (2) Teaching and Learning Experiences- In the teachers’

shoes, (3) Difficulties in the Profession, (4) Knowing yourself, (5) Philosophical Perspectives, (6) Deciding the curriculum, and (7) Innovative teaching pedagogies.

From those themes, emerging themes or categories developed.

**Table 4.3 Themes and Categories**

<p><b>Previous Experiences- In the students' shoes</b> Influential People. Struggles as Students</p> <p><b>Teaching and Learning Experiences- In the teachers' shoes</b> Why your Major? Why become a teacher? Teaching Strengths and Passions</p> <p><b>Difficulties in the Profession</b> Challenges in the teaching and learning practice Mentoring support</p> <p><b>Knowing yourself</b> Successful Professor Organizing and balancing time</p>
<p><b>Philosophical Perspectives</b> Educational Philosophies Educational Theories Insights of their Teaching Philosophies Importance of Education</p>
<p><b>Deciding the curriculum</b> Curriculum and syllabus Evaluating Students</p> <p><b>Innovative teaching pedagogies.</b> Coffman Chair Other Practices</p>

**Table 4.4 Research Questions, Themes and Categories**

Research Questions	CT Themes	Themes and Categories
<p><b>Research Question 1</b></p> <p>How do awarded professors perceive their teaching experiences in undergraduate teaching and learning?</p>	<p><b>CT1.</b> Students and professors are called to transform themselves and the world.</p>	<p><b>Previous Experiences- In the students' shoes</b> Influential People. Struggles as Students</p> <p><b>Teaching and Learning</b></p>

		<b>Experiences- In the teachers' shoes</b> Why your Major? Why become a teacher? Teaching Strengths and Passions  <b>Difficulties in the Profession</b> Challenges in the teaching and learning practice Mentoring support  <b>Knowing yourself</b> Successful Professor Organizing and balancing time
<b>Research Question 2</b>  How do awarded professors describe their teaching philosophies?	<b>CT2.</b> Education as an engine for equality, democracy and a better society.	<b>Philosophical Perspectives</b> Educational Philosophies Educational Theories Insights of their Teaching Philosophies Importance of Education
<b>Research Question 3</b>  What are the teaching best practices or innovative teaching strategies of the participants?	<b>CT3.</b> Power relationships between professors and students.	<b>Deciding the curriculum</b> Curriculum and syllabus Evaluating Students  <b>Innovative teaching pedagogies.</b> Coffman Chair Other Practices

## **Research Question 1: How do awarded professors perceive their teaching experiences in undergraduate teaching and learning?**

Theme CC 1:                Students and professors are called to transform themselves and the world.

Theme 1:                 Previous Experiences- In the students' shoes

Categories:

- Influential People.
- Struggles as Students

This section aims to bring professors back to their own experiences when they were students.

### **Previous Experiences- In the students' shoes**

#### **Influential People.**

To be person the person who they are today, successful professors had some people who had a great influence on them. Participants explain who were the most influential in their lives, who motivated and encouraged them.

Dr. Ackerman had extraordinary teachers in school, high school, and college, who showed her that the world was a bigger place than she realized:

I lived on my own, and I worked and paid my way for all my undergraduate degree. The sisters taught me that world was a bigger place than the small world that I lived in and It really fueled my desire to learn more. But if that school not been there I might not have gone to college. I didn't know how to enroll in college or get to college or live in the dorms. I didn't know how to do any of those things.

She did not have anyone to help her figure out how to go to college. Fortunately, there was a college in Salina called Marymount College, run by the sisters of Saint Joseph. She was fortunate to go there when she was seventeen. The sisters taught her what she needed to do to go to college.

For Dr. Fliter, his mom and dad were influential because of the sacrifices they made to send him to a parochial school, to give him a good education, and to raise him with the right values. Then, along the way, he has had professors and other people who have been a good role models.

For Dr. Saucier his mom had the greatest influence on his life. She trusted him and encourage him:

It was I think really transformative for me to see someone who's just being in your corner and not even able to provide that much information, but just kind of saying you'll figure this out, you'll figure this out, you're smart enough.

Sr. Saucier saw his mother's sacrifice and hard work for her children. His mom even took some courses in Community College and he remembers her reading some of the literature that she had to read for her classes to her children as bedtime stories. So, he learned from his mom the need for education, the need to self-improve, the need to sacrifice, and the need to work hard. It really resonated with him that his mom was there for her family.

Dr. Saucier was an honor student all through high school. He was in the talented program from fourth grade. So, the program always provided him with teachers to check in on him. For instance, his guidance counselor, his teachers, his coaches were always there for him:

I remember my football coach in high school he'd found out I wanted to go to college and he picked up the phone and called someone he knew there and said, "you need to get this kid and you need to make it work for him."

Another example is his track coach who was also his computer science teacher who gave him a lot of personal advice and one of the things that he remembers saying to him right toward the end of his senior year in high school is:

You know when you go to school remember to have fun sometimes too. He said you work hard, you work hard in the track, you work hard in the class, you work hard on the football field. But you got to remember that this is an experience you're never going to have again, and you have to appreciate that.

This teacher took a real interest in him. He would drive him home after practice sometimes if Dr. Saucier's parents could not get there to pick him up and provided support and advice.

Dr. Williams had great teachers too. One of them was her graduate mentor, Mary:

She was just present and in the job. It didn't occur to me that it would be unusual for a woman to do this kind of work you know. So, I didn't really learn that it would be unusual for me to teach horticulture at a university until much later, until it was much too late to reverse course.



Dr. Mary was a role model for Dr. Williams because she was the person who was working in the job that Dr. Williams has now, back when she was an undergraduate student at K-State University. Dr. Williams considers that Dr. Mary was one of the best teachers she had during her bachelor's degree program and made it possible for her to do this by first of all being a great teacher and by breaking through a lot of barriers.

For Dr. Benson, many people have been very influential, such as both of his parents. He has learned a lot from them. Her mother's using examples taught her children math and reading. With his father, Dr. Benson learned the power of people:

My father had already made arrangements to move my mother, me and my sister to Albuquerque to live with my aunt, but we didn't have to. So, that was when I first realized the power of the people. I was 6 years old and I remember to this day. I remember that procession, that protest.

Although Dr. Benson's father "was Anglo he was very widely loved in Taos." Taos, the town where Dr. Benson grew up, had only two dentists, Dr. Benson's father and Dr. Garcia for a town of 2,500- 3,000 people. Dr. Benson's father had already served in the World War II as a dentist in Marysville, California in 1951 and now he was working in Taos. But, in 1952 he received a letter asking him to report again to serve in the Korean War. Therefore, the Latino Hispano staged a protest in the plaza and wrote a petition for him that said: "We need him here. He has already served. We need him here please. Don't take him." 800 people signed that document and sent it to the government and one month later, a letter came back accepting the petition. For Dr. Benson, this experience was very remarkable.

For Dr. Sorensen, his parents had a great influence:

Mom was very smart, and she did not get the chance to go to college. My mom was very smart than she realized at mathematics, and my mom also taught me how to draw when I was very young. She taught me perspective. A child only draws 2 dimensional diagrams and I was probably 4 years old when I was drawing three-dimensional perspective and she taught me that.

His mom was also influential as she gave him one side of his personality. She was a very caring person and very giving. Dr. Sorensen would like to think that he is giving too. He thinks that he has his mathematical abilities from his mom who was very smart. Dr. Sorensen is very visually oriented and those early situations of his mom teaching him how to put something on a piece of paper, was really important for him.

In addition, his dad gave him the other side of his personality. He was influential for his respect for knowledge and for learning. For his approach to the idea that the best thing, humans can do is to use their mind instead of “brute force.”

Dr. Sorensen also recalled the principal of his school as influential too. He was troubled, therefore, the teachers punished him one way or another. Sometimes he got to sit at the principal’s office and he reflects that if she could not understand the way he was, perhaps she could be more inclined to penalize him, and Dr. Sorensen could be a different person today. Therefore, by now, he remembers her “kind touch.”

For most of the participants, their parents were the most influential people in their lives, as well as there were some great teachers who made an influence.

### **Struggles as Students**

In order to have a better understanding of participants’ experiences, I wanted to know participants described their struggles when they were students themselves in high school, or college. These activity makes them understand better their students.

Academically, Dr. Saucier had no problems:

I think being away at school and not having a job, and I had athletic grants to pay for a lot of my school. I was I member in the track team and then later in the football team too. I had to balance athletics and academics in order to make school work. But having those teachers who were there for me was really important...It was the social part. It was the money that my friends were spending on weekends that I didn't have.

Dr. Saucier had a good education in high school that he was very well prepared for college in ways that he didn't really appreciate it. He remembers, for example, his honors calculus class "it wasn't until about midway through the semester where I learned something new." Therefore, instead of being intimidated, he was well prepared as the result of going to an amazing public school. He had to balance his responsibilities as an athlete and as a student, fortunately, he had the support of teachers. However, the struggle was the social aspect that was more part of the adjustment. He recognizes that if he had not had those opportunities athletically, he probably would not have been able to go to a school.

For Dr. Benson there weren't really struggles, but he recognizes that the doctoral work was hard at the University of New Mexico.

Dr. Eiselein had two moments in his life where he felt some homesickness as he says: "It felt really bad like I thought I was gonna die." Fortunately, those moments were very short. The first time was in New Zealand after his first week there:

It was Sunday and I was writing letters home to people. There's no email in 1982. And it was a beautiful day in February in New Zealand. It is summer and it's gorgeous and I was writing a letter home, and I just started to feel like, oh this is terrible mistake and what am I doing, I miss everybody so much and I don't know what's going on around here. And it was just this part of this afternoon when I was writing letters and I cried you know. It's over I mean.

Fortunately, this event was for a short period of time and then it was over.

The second event was when he went off to college, which was the very next year in August of 1983. His dad drove him to the University of Idaho from Twin Falls. It was eight hours drive through the mountains and when they got there at a corner of the university, his father just dropped him off, took his suitcase out of the back truck, and drove off. It was less than

five minutes of homesickness, because some boys came walking down the hill and started a conversation with him. Again, that moment lasted only for a short time.

Another struggle Dr. Eiselein remarked happened after he returned from New Zealand:

It was so clear to me that school was unfair (this is proven in the research), because the academic achievement tracks family income. And unless you think that, rich people are just genetically smarter than poor people, that's a horrible thing. It is a disparity that we replicate in schools. For instance, I remember being a little kid and knowing that I was pretty smart, but I didn't get to be in the gifted talented program. And there were some kids, that I didn't think were that bright, but their parents were rich they were in the gifted talented program, and so just this. I had a bad attitude.

As mentioned before, Dr. Eiselein was an exchange student in New Zealand, but when he returned to the USA, he found high school here extremely boring and unfair. He thought the classes were boring for the most part, except for a couple teachers that he thought were “pretty cool”.

Dr. Sorensen served in Vietnam and he was there for nine months, three weeks, and a day, returning home in July 1971 when he went to the University of Colorado. Dr. Sorensen had to study very hard for the entrance that proved to be valuable. For doing this, he remembers he went to a nearby city where he rented a room for five and a half dollars. He stayed there for a week studying day night his old textbooks. He says: “I am not smart but driven.” At the end, he did very well at the entrance exam so, he did not have to go back and take any undergraduate classes. That was very important for him.

Adaptation was his struggle at that moment. War is a different world, and Vietnam is a different world. So, it was different than being in a college campus in a year full of hippies. It was just a different culture than being in the army. He stated:

And then even the study I did in the hotel room was very difficult and then get into my advanced classes to study and to work so hard day and night, I have been doing such different activities, so the first semester was very difficult to adapt.

However, he accomplished all his goals.

Another important consideration is that most of the participants were first-generation students.

Theme 2: Teaching and Learning Experiences- In the teachers' shoes

- Categories:
- Why your Major?
  - Why to become a teacher?
  - Teaching Strengths and Passions

## **Teaching and Learning Experiences**

### **Why your Major?**

Successful professors are good at what they do. Therefore, I wanted to know how they came to choose their major. Next the following findings:

Dr. Eiselein wanted to major in French, in economics, in history, in philosophy, and literature. Finally, he settled on history and English. "Somebody made a donation that created these scholarships for English students." Dr. Eiselein majored in English because he could apply for one of these scholarships and he also majored in History because he loved it. He thought both areas were a chance to study everything. He could always study the literature of something and he could always study the history of something.

Initially, when Dr. Eiselein was a junior, he took a law class that he loved. It was called constitutional law and he got really excited about it, He remembers he went to talk to the professor and said, "I love this class, it is amazing. I think I should go to law school and become a lawyer." The teacher was gruff and said as Dr. Eiselein describes it: "You don't want to go to law school. You don't want to be a lawyer." Dr. Eiselein, said, "I know, I think I do, I love this class." Then, Dr. Eiselein remember what he said exactly:

Most lawyers help people get divorced. The number of lawyers that get to go to the Supreme Court and argue these cases to change the direction of history are very few. What you love about this classes are all the big issues, the intellectual issues. You should go to graduate school, you should think about becoming a professor.

That answer was very motivating for Dr. Eiselein.

Dr. Sorensen wanted to be a scientist when he was four or five years old. His father was a chemist. He was a lead molder in Omaha and had access to chemicals.

When I was three years old, I wanted to be a farmer, when I was four years, I wanted to drive those steam local cars.... By the time I was five years old, I got interested in science. I remember my dad taking a bottle, putting vinegar on it and then baking soda, and did an experiment. I thought that was very cool.

Having a chemist as a father, who had medical equipment at home and doing his first experiments with him, were Dr. Sorensen's motivation to become a scientist.

The house where Dr. Sorensen grew up had a room where his mom kept the washing machine and the water heater. In that room his dad had a little work bench for tools and at the corner he set up a chemist place just for Dr. Sorensen. There, he started messing around with chemicals. He also had a couple of chemical books, which he read all and looked at the pictures. Soon, he got interested in Astronomy. Therefore, he wanted a telescope, but he could not buy one at that time. It was 1950 after the World War Two. So, he remembers, "Getting a catalogue and saving my money to buy lenses and other items to make a telescope." Finally, when he was eleven he and his father built a telescope.

When Dr. Sorensen was in junior high, he went to the public library and checked all kinds of science books. By reading a lot, he taught himself electronics too. He took apart tv, radios, and he remade them into electronic devices he wanted to make. He said: "I did a lot of crazy things."

All the participants did not know from the beginning the major they were going to choose. Some of them were very confused not knowing what major to choose or what to do. In addition, some of them started in one major and changed after they realized they did not like it. But at the end, all of them found their passion.

### **Why become a teacher?**

Different desires and interests motivated participants to want to become a teacher at different stages of their life. Participants shared some events that let them become a teacher.

Dr. Ackerman wanted to become a teacher when she was in high school. She thought she would go to Emporia State College after finishing high school and become a teacher. But, she did not live close to Emporia; she didn't have a way to get to Emporia; and she didn't know anything about going to college. "I just had no idea how to do it." The sisters of the high school where Dr. Ackerman studied guided her to accomplish her goals. Then, after she earned her English degree, she used it to work in community education and public relations jobs in a variety of fields for 20 years.

While, she always used her English and communication skills, she never taught English. Until "just by faith" someone at a community college asked her "Don't you have an English degree? We need someone to teach one class. Would you do that?" This happened in 1996. That is when she realized that teaching was what she needed to be doing all the time.

Dr. Saucier always wanted to be a psychologist. He joked:

You know early on, I wanted to be Batman, and then I wanted to be an astronaut, then center field for the Red Sox, and those kinds of things. And once those kinds of things went away, I wanted to be a psychological researcher. At one point in college, I thought, I want to be a school psychologist, I want to help people, I want to get them through things.

However, Dr. Saucier talked to some school psychologists and he noticed that they were “miserable burned-out people.” So, he realized that his emotional temperament would not work with being a school psychologist because “you only see kids during crisis and they're not necessarily being well treated by parents, by significant others, those kinds of things.” That would not be the way that he can do something good. The things that really caught his attention in college were social issues, social justice, issues of prejudice, and aggression.

Furthermore, he realized that he could probably do the most good by telling people about it. In addition, Dr. Saucier asserted that:

If you do some quick math and you look at the number of people who will benefit from say your publications versus the number having class, you don't have many more people in class. So, I'm very research productive.

Nevertheless, he added that there's no joy like being in a class with students. He considers that being a professor is “the greatest job in the world.” One of his colleagues says that “being a university professor in the United States is the world's best-kept secret, because if everyone understood how awesome it is, everyone would do it.” Dr. Saucier has always wanted to improve the way that people think to inform them about issues that had not been previously considered.

When Dr. Fliter went to Maryland, he just wanted to get a degree and work in Washington DC. Then, when he was offered a GTA position, he committed himself to the profession. “Okay, this is the life that I want to do.” He also looked at the faculty members at Cal State Northridge in Maryland and he thought “You know this isn't a bad life, you know, to read books, and to write papers, and to teach. I thought it was a pretty good life.” Thus, Dr. Fliter did not have a straight path and didn't go into college thinking he could become a professor. It happened in graduate school.



Teaching was always part of Dr. Williams' life. As she said: "I was born to teach." From a very young age, Dr. Williams was trying to convince her brothers to play school with her, where she would be the teacher and they would be the students. Later, when she was looking for a major for her undergraduate degree, "and seeing horticulture, and reading about how it included flowers." She said, "I think I'm gonna try that" but she always reserved the right to change her mind. When she got to K-State, she saw there was a female faculty member who was doing Floriculture. Then she thought she could teach Floriculture too. "That's what I want to do."

Something that really influenced Dr. Benson's teaching and he didn't know it at the time, was his mom. He recalls that he and his siblings would come home from school and his mother would be cooking. While she was cooking children were doing homework and she would mentally give them math problems saying "ok, here's the problem, and do this, and solve that." And she would be reading to them things they had written for English class and she would tell them: "Well that sounds good, but in the first paragraph you have two ideas and you did not explain the second." From that is where Dr. Bensons first got the whole idea about how to facilitate. "You can teach culture, maybe the history of Spain, you could teach chemistry, but you can't teach language. You have to do it." Dr. Benson believes that there is no way to teach language, but what teachers can do is to facilitate.

Dr. Eiselein thinks that part of his decision to be a teacher is that he did not want to stop learning, researching, and being involved in the field. During his second year at Iowa, he had to teach his first class. He remembers being "extremely nervous and over prepared." He had prepared an icebreaker community builder, so he told the students: "Okay everyone gets out a piece of paper and a pen. I want you to answer a couple questions." At that moment, everybody

in the class got out paper and get a pen. So, he thought “I can do this I can do this.” Dr. Eiselein affirms that teaching is never 100 percent perfect, but it is enjoyable to see people visibly learning.

Dr. Sorensen realized somewhere through his undergraduate and graduate career, that if he wanted to be totally independent, he had to go to Academia. He explains the reason why: “Because you can choose your own research direction. You can do that at national lab, there are a lot, but you have a boss. I have never been good with bosses, ask any of my sergeants in the army or ask all of my teachers.” Therefore, independence is one important factor for Dr. Sorensen. Additionally, he really likes teaching. Although he has never taught until he got to K-State, he had friends coming to ask him how to do things in physics, and after his explanation they were often nice to him saying that, “It was very clear.” That was a very positive feedback for him, and he had a feeling that he liked teaching.

### **Teaching Strengths and Passions**

Being a teacher requires to have some kind of strengths. In this section I present what are the participants’ strengths and passion.

Dr. Ackerman teaches language arts because her goals are to help students learn and to find meaning through language, through writing and through discourse. She is passionate about theory and writing pedagogy and teaching and learning. The reason is to first, keep learning more in those areas and second to help new faculty members to find ways to do that as well. A professor who was influential in her graduate degree was Dr. Goodson, and writing came also from him and his involvement with the National Writing Project. She stated that “The writing project believes that teachers of writing should be writers themselves.” Therefore, Dr. Ackerman tries to maintain a freelance writing career in addition to what she is doing in academia that, her

writing instruction is more authentic. The teaching strengths that she has developed are a way to engage students in discourse in the classroom, even resistant students.

Dr. Saucier's teaching strengths are to communicate well. He is enthusiastic, he uses a lot of humor, he is accessible, and he tries to make himself not only "a smart guy but a human person in front of the class." Dr. Saucier has an actual model for teaching he calls "trickle-down engagement." His students almost invariably describe him as "an energetic, passionate, funny, and caring." Those things are not by accident. Dr. Saucier tries to make a demonstration of that. He thinks that there are a lot of teachers that care, but they do not show that they care. So, he expresses it, "I'm gonna tell them I care, I'm gonna show them I care, and I'm gonna do that every single day."

Additionally, Dr. Saucier thinks he is not allowed to have a bad day in the classroom and he tries that every day. He remembers a famous baseball player who in his last play of his career ran as fast as he could, and when somebody asked him why he hustled like that. He answered, "Well there's someone who might not have seen me play before" So, Dr. Saucier, applies the same principle in his class by maximizing every class opportunity.

We should teach every class as if it were the only class opportunity our students have and make it meaningful. Every one of our classes should be the best.

Dr. Fliter's strengths and passions would include a number of things but the main one is organization. He is very organized. His students would always say "This class was well organized, and he was well prepared" in the teaching evaluations. Dr. Fliter believes that every faculty member and every professor should go into class well prepared, not just "winging it or just trying to live off notes from ten years ago." Therefore, Dr. Fliter always tries to keep things current and everything ready for class. He also tries to show concern for his students and treat

them as adults because they appreciate that. Additionally, Dr. Fliter tries to make sure the grading is as fair as possible, and he is very passionate about his teaching. He loves teaching. His students realize those strengths and passions because they say it in the teaching evaluations.

Being passionate about the subject matter and showing it. Be fair. Fairness is something all students expect. Organization and well preparation.

Dr. Williams' teaching strengths and passions include a very experiential learning, centered on hands-on project-based learning. That is why she loves being in the green house, labs, working with the flowers, and getting to teach students who are interested.

Dr. Eiselein claimed, "I want them to feel the kind of complex intellectual pleasures that come along with reading." He is genuinely excited about the material that he is teaching. He likes his students a lot, and he wants them to learn. Dr. Sorensen likes to think that he is good in explaining difficult concepts and that he can relate to people. He thinks the foundation of what he does is respect for his students and the belief he is fortunate to teach.

All the participants are passionate about teaching. Additionally, some of the teaching strengths and passion participants have mentioned have been recognized by students in the Teacher evaluations.

Theme 3: Difficulties in the Profession

- Categories:
- Challenges in the teaching and learning practice
  - Mentoring support

## **Difficulties in the Profession**

### **Challenges in the teaching and learning practice**

Teaching is not an easy job. Indeed, it is a very difficult profession. In this section I present the participant's experiences on their challenges, barriers, and struggles in their teaching profession.

According to Dr. Benson, the biggest challenges are helping the students who are having difficulties. A good technique is having students help each other. Recently, one of the biggest challenges Dr. Benson has found is to get millennial students to rewrite their compositions. They don't want to do that because they see it as an insult. Sometimes because they think that what they turned in is already perfect. "The simple fact is that no writer that I know is any good at all in the first draft and that's it." Dr. Benson faces difficulties by having students come together and help each other, and by having his office open for students to come any time to ask for help when they don't understand things.

One challenge for Dr. Eiselein when he first came to K-State was how to teach undergraduate students. "It wasn't a strength and I had to figure out how to do it." So, he worked on that. Another challenge is how to teach a diverse class where the differences have created difficulties. These differences could be about race, family income, political beliefs, intellectual commitments or values and principles that students bring into the class with them:

For instance, a student says well I'm a feminist and from a feminist perspective I see this. Just that word irritates or annoys another student who wants to be dismissive of that student's point of view. Other examples include when students says I'm a Republican or I'm a conservative, or I'm a Christian.

Then, the questions he has is "How do you do if you have a diverse class like that, how do you get them to work together and talk to each other?" The answer he gives himself is to build

community, to get students to not just defend their beliefs with evidence but also learn how to ask good questions. Additionally, be open to hearing different kinds of answers that sometimes can be hard for some students.

The main challenges included that students do not come to class to learn, millennial students do not want to rewrite their compositions, and how to teach in a diverse class where there are a lot differences and difficulties. Thus, students most of time do not come with the purpose of learning, but to check a box and to pass the class.

### **Mentoring Support**

In the teaching profession, professors have had some mentors who have created paths for them to follow, who have motivated them and supported them.

For Dr. Williams, mentors also played an important role. First, Dr. Mary and then the mentors she had as department heads and as full professors when she was an assistant professor, “who supported me and encouraged me.” Additionally, Dr. Williams had a colleague at another institution, University of Nebraska, who was further along in her career than Dr. Williams. They did a lot of work together and she believes she also certainly was a mentor that supported her through this relation.

For Dr. Benson, his parents were his mentors. Although his father wasn't home when Dr. Benson and siblings were doing homework, Dr. Benson watched his kindness with people. He watched him working with all kinds of people. It is interesting because Dr. Benson's father was a conservative- republican politically, but he was very liberal socially. He just couldn't understand why people were getting profiled.

Dr. Benson believes that he had mentors all the time. One of them was Dr. Bradley Shaw, who was the head of this department and they are very good friends to this day. “He really

helped me, he really supported me, and helped me become a good teacher. Another mentor was his first department head, Thomas O'Connor, who now is in New York, "he really supported me, we even taught classes together in poetry so yeah I learned a lot from him." And Dr. Lauren Alexander Lauren who just died in January this year. He influenced everybody in the state because he is the one who came up with those ideas for the National Endowment for the Humanities. Finally, his students, his wife, and his kids have also been his mentors.

Nobody is a great teacher when they start, but they need to learn with the experience. Participants have found mentors everywhere. The main mentors include departmental heads and colleagues. Additionally, students and family members were also mentors at least for one of the participants.

Theme 4:                      Knowing yourself

- Categories:
- Successful Professor
  - Organizing and balancing time

## **Knowing yourself**

### **Successful Professor**

In this section professors told me if they see themselves as a successful professor or not. They also explained the reasons why they think so.

Dr. Saucier thinks so:

I think so. I'm a full professor, a fellow of two professional organizations. I've won, I think every teaching award at the University that an arts and science professor can win and I'm getting better. I am consistently motivated to improve myself as a teacher, researcher, and a mentor so I write better now than I did two months ago. I teach better now than I did two months ago.

For what he has done and from external reinforcement, it suggests that he is successful. By his own standards, he thinks he is doing well. He does not think he has accomplished what he wants to accomplish yet, but he is making good progress.

Dr. Fliter said, “Overall I think so, maybe more on the teaching side than the research side.” However, Dr. Fliter has enough publications to be promoted to Associate professor. Right now, he is working to get promoted to full professor. That is his goal now. Additionally, his book is almost finished.

Dr. Ackerman emphasized that, “If Tevals are the standard by which we decide, then yes.” Her Tevals are consistently very high. She has also received numerous teaching awards, some nominated by students, some nominated by peers, and others by administration. She also asserts that it is always nice to know from your peers that “your teaching is appreciated that they're hearing from the students those things.” Dr. Ackerman is also involved in a lot of professional organizations and, from listening to what other students are doing it affirms that she is on the right track with her teaching.

Dr. Williams admits “Well, yeah. I like to think so. I don't know how all the ways that those things get evaluated and rewarded are. I think that I've been good at playing the game.” Thanks to some good mentors, Dr. Williams has recognized that there are benchmarks of accomplishments that need to be met for promotion, tenure, and recognition. So, she had great mentors early on in her career, who explained to her all those benchmarks.

She recognized that she needed to have a certain number of publications and she loved to teach. So, she found that she could get some grants related to teaching. With those grants she could do some research on teaching which is “the scholarship of teaching and learning,” That is



how she started doing that. Dr. Williams feels she has met other people's expectations while she has been very intrinsically rewarded and enjoyed the work she was doing very much.

Now she really enjoys mentoring younger faculty and not worry or trying to get more awards. She is more interested in being the person who tells her younger colleague, “Hey, you know, can I write a letter for you, or can I nominate you for this award or that recognition?” So, Dr. Williams hopes that there is a full circle of mentorship, whatever helped her to be successful, now she can pay it forward. She also believes that there is the culture at K-State of building each other up. She feels that is the culture here.

Dr. Benson had an interesting answer:

I feel so sorry for my first students and I feel sorry for every student in every past semester since then. Because, I can think of all the things I could have done better. So, I'm not even today where I want to be. But, my students come back, and they see me, and they talk about how they learned.

One of his students told him that “the most important thing he learned from him was that “when you start up, nothing is ever perfect.” Dr. Benson did not give a yes or no as an answer, but he told me about all the wonderful stories and things his students were doing.

Dr. Eiselein said:

Right now, yes. I do. I do see myself as a successful professor. I research and publish and the things I research and publish on are important, interesting, and meaningful to the world. As a teacher I feel like my students need me.

Dr. Eiselein feels his students need him, but he doesn't think that students from more prestigious universities like Harvard or Yale would need him. He sometimes believes that “some of my students, if they don't take my class, they might never get a chance to read or learn about what I'm gonna teach them.” When Dr. Eiselein teaches, he often thinks that for most of those students, this can be the last chance that they ever get to formally study, therefore, he wants them to leave excited about reading. He believes reading big complex books expand their mind. He

wants students to explore big issues, do well, be excited about reading, and build their confidence.

Dr. Sorensen also agreed saying, “Because, I have been a successful teacher and I know I am a good scientist.”

All participants generally see themselves as successful professors because they have been recognized by students, by colleagues, they have received teaching awards, they receive good teacher’s evaluation, and they are constantly publishing.

### **Organizing and balancing time**

Everybody knows that successful professors are busy. So, I wanted to know how they organize their time in a way they can handle family, work, research, teaching, and time for themselves.

Dr. Ackerman makes a lot of lists and she prioritizes. She admitted that she is fortunate to live in a quiet peaceful place that helps her to balance the life of university. Dr. Fliter is very well organized. He files things and puts everything in order.

Dr. Saucier laughed at me when I asked him this question, arguing that there's no balance. He said: “It's funny. This work-life balance kind of concept. One of my colleagues recently said work-life balance work is part of your life there's no balance.” One of the things that really helps him is his kids.

He loves to spend time with them and talk to them about work too. His eight-year old daughter would ask him questions about his work, “What are you doing in class today? He will answer, “I'm giving a test” She will say, “Is it a pretest or post-test?” In addition, Dr. Saucier will ask her daughter for advice before he gives a talk and she will give him good advice like “Make sure use words that they know, make sure you make eye contact, and make sure you

smile and all of these kind of things.” He and his wife always share with them their research and their teaching and they take them to research events on campus too.

For Dr. Williams this is one of the hardest things about choosing an academic career because there's no end to the possible work that she could do. She does the most urgent thing during the middle of the semester. Then, the teaching, class preparation and grading. However, her daughter is her priority. She needs time in the evenings and on weekends. When her daughter goes to bed Dr. Williams is still grading and working on a grant proposal. She said: “Thank goodness I have a twelve-month appointment, because nine months out of the year, I really am focused a lot on teaching and then the research.” During the summer is the time when she can write the publications. So, she makes priorities first.

Dr. Benson gave me a straight answer. “I didn't sleep much for fifty years. You know, when you're teaching, if you are teaching three classes per semesters and doing some research. I have published thirty articles on Spanish poetry, Chicano poetry, and teaching ... you have six hours of sleep or less for years and years.” Dr. Benson also commented that his wife has helped a lot. They cooked together, since they first were married in 1965. When he had the children at home, Dr. Benson made sure that he was home by four o'clock every afternoon to help with kids. But at night, after the kids went to bed, he was another two hours grading papers or reading for the class. Dr. Benson was working 70 hours a week including the weekends. But he always made sure that on Saturdays and Sundays he would work only for three or four hours and then they would go someplace with the kids and on Sunday morning, they would go to church. Again, he restates that his culture of prioritizing family comes from the Hispanic culture. He said the culture was all around them.

Dr. Eiselein also recognized that “it is hard” to balance his time. He showed me his schedule for the day, which was busy. He explained that since he got married and had his kids, it is different. The first part of his career was bachelor with no kids and he was not married. That condition allowed him to work a lot. If he needed to stay up at work to eight or nine o'clock to finish something, he could do it and he could also work on weekends. Now he has a one and a half year-old and a four and a half year- old. His wife is also a professor, meaning she is very busy as well. However, he loves what he is doing and that enables him to do some really hard work. “But it doesn't feel like hard work it feels like it's a joy.”

In terms of the balance, he sometimes suggests to his students that they need to figure out when they are most alert during the day, when they can do something, and when they cannot. When they are kind of tired and sleepy, then, they could do less difficult things. So, Dr. Eiselein thinks that balance is about scheduling, but smart scheduling.

Participants' suggestions include to make lists, prioritize, blocking off time for things that need to be done like writing, talk to your family about work and get advice, and smart planning.

## **Research Question 2: How do awarded professors describe their teaching philosophies?**

Theme CC 2: Education as an engine for equality, democracy and a better society.

Theme 5: Philosophical Perspectives

- Categories:
- Educational Philosophies
  - Educational Theories
  - Insights of their Teaching Philosophies
  - Good Character
  - Importance of Education

### **Philosophical Perspectives**

#### **Educational Theories**

Since there is a big variety of theories of education, I was interested in knowing which one's participants follow the most.

The theory that really resonates for Dr. Saucier is self-determination theory in terms of psychology. The intrinsic motivation, the personal choice, and the relevance. Working toward strengths and working to overcome weaknesses.

Additionally, theories such as cognitive theory, perception theory, and positive Psychology, which is not really a theory but a general approach. This approach believes that psychology has been taking a medical model for a long time in a way they find problems, then they fix them. However, the positive Psychology approach basically says that instead of fixing problems, just find things that work well and promote them. Therefore, Dr. Saucier said that he does not go in and try to fix things, but he goes in and tries to optimize them.

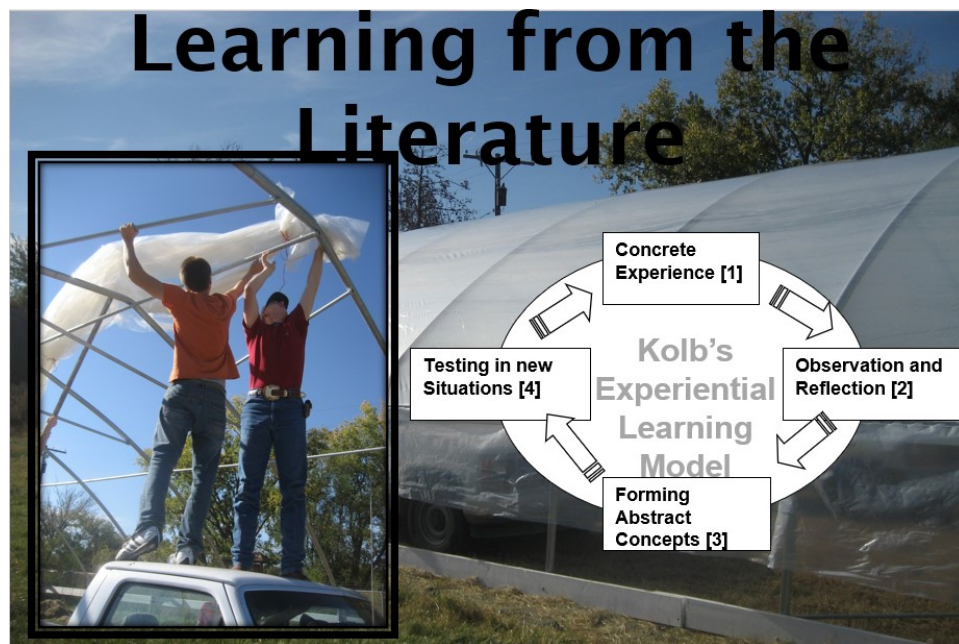
Dr. Williams likes Bloom's taxonomy. She appreciates the need to be moving students beyond memorization into application, problem solving, and critical thinking. She has spent a lot of time trying to learn how to write better questions and present information in ways that build on foundational knowledge.

Another important theory for her teaching is Kolb's Experiential Learning Model:

Until I discovered Kolb's model, I was really frustrated that I was doing so much within labs, having students grow different crops and do different things in the lab, but not ever really feeling they were closing the loop to speak, that they were really understanding what they were experiencing.

She likes Kolb's Experiential Learning Model because the courses she teaches are hands-on, very experiential, and with lots of labs. And, this model helped her to do more reflection and application.

**Figure 4.13 Kolb's Experiential Learning Model**



**Images courtesy of Dr. Williams**

Dr. Benson asserted: "I do whatever works at the moment." People say that the audio-lingual method is terrible, however Dr. Benson believes that for teaching pronunciation it's the

best thing. Even grammar translation, which is to teach the grammar and then have students translate from that language to their own language. Dr. Benson says that “It did not produce speakers at all, but they could read pretty well.” They are very old methods, but there are times when he used them to teach grammar.

In terms of language teaching, Dr. Benson assures “there's probably nothing that I don't use.” However, this does not mean that he does whatever he thinks at the moment, but, he thinks very consciously about what kinds of structures, what kinds of methods, and what kinds of activities will best work for a particular goal. Additionally, Dr. Benson identifies with connectionism theory.

Dr. Benson mentioned that another factor is input. If students get lots of input, the students are going to be there, whether you use it or not. Then if they have the chance to interact with other people who are either native speakers or not, but really communicate. Then they receive feedback on what they understand and what they don't understand.

Dr. Eiselein has two favorite educational theories. He said, “The one theory is I think that learning is social, that students don't learn well isolated or alienated or apart from other people they work.” He asserts that students learn well in a community or in a group. This notion that learning is social comes from theorists such as John Dewey and Lev Vygotsky. His second theory is the Pragmatic Psychological Approach of William James to teaching and learning. This theory taught him that he cannot use students' voluntary attention, he cannot plead and beg with them to pay attention to him with phrases like, “Please concentrate and pay attention.” But, it is necessary to tap into their involuntary intention, make them so interested and curious that they just want to pay attention without feeling like it is an effort.

## **Insights of their Teaching Philosophies**

In this section participants share the highlights of their teaching philosophies.

Dr. Ackerman includes a great deal of active learning strategies. How she teaches may not be the same the next semester based on student feedback. She commented that there were successful new things that she learned this semester. Dr. Ackerman is interested in helping students to use communication as a process of learning not just as a product. It is more of a constructivist theory.

Dr. Sorensen said that his teaching philosophy is to respect students, build a bond with them, and let them know that you care about them.

There are two parts in Dr. Saucier's teaching philosophy. The first part is the "trickle-down engagement teaching philosophy," where teacher engagement leads to student engagement, and this leads to student learning. This means that if the teacher is engaged, the students will be engaged and that increased level of engagement will drive a level of student performance. Instructors need to let their students know that they're engaged, let the students know that the information is fantastic. Use this link (~5 minutes) to hear Dr. Saucier discussing his "trickle down engagement" teaching philosophy as part of SPOTLIGHT K-State in 2014: <http://www.k-state.edu/tlc/events/spotlight/v-saucier.html>.

The second aspect of his teaching philosophy is what he calls "my choice to learn philosophy" and this is that the instructor lets the students make decisions for themselves; it is focused on intrinsic motivation. In Dr. Saucier's classes, he does not have requirements, he offers opportunities. So, the student is not required to take the final exam, but Dr. Saucier is going to offer a final exam. And if the student does not want to take it, that's fine, he/she just misses the opportunity to earn those points. As well, students will ask, "So, I have to read these



chapters?” The answer will be “No, of course, you don't have to read these chapters, but I recommend it”. Dr. Saucier is a huge fan of letting students know on the first day of class that they don't have to be here. It is a decision student make and if they don't know why they have made that decision or they didn't make that decision, or it doesn't make sense to make that decision, then don't come back on the second day. “That's a waste of money and a waste of time.”

So, everything in Dr. Saucier's class is built in terms of opportunities and recommendations. Students are free to make the decisions they want. Some students think that they start with an A in a class and then they lose that A. For Dr. Saucier, they don't start with an A. They start with a zero and they accumulate points. In addition, Dr. Saucier lets students know the first day of class that he is going to give them a lot of opportunities to earn points over the course of the semester, there will be exams, there will be quizzes, and there will be papers. Those are the two highlights of his teaching philosophy. Use this link (~5 minutes) to hear Dr. Saucier presenting about his “choice to learn” teaching philosophy as part of the Annual Faculty Teaching Retreat in 2013: <http://www.k-state.edu/tlc/programs/fete/presentations/2013-rapidfirevideo.html#ds>.

Dr. Filter's teaching philosophy starts with respect for his students. creating a welcoming environment for the class, and using the syllabus as a teaching tool. Class preparation is also important for Dr. Fliter and preparation begins with the syllabus. He considers the syllabus as contract between the professor and the students. He explains everything that students are going to do and are responsible for. “I try not to leave questions left open, because I don't want to trick my students.” Dr. Filter's syllabi are very comprehensive and very detailed.

Additionally, his classes are designed to be challenging, interesting, and informative. He uses a variety of methods to achieve his teaching objectives, such as: Debates, Supreme Court simulations, and role plays. Dr. Fliter believes that teaching is more an art than a science and each professor brings to the classroom their life experiences.

Dr. Williams' teaching philosophy starts with enthusiasm and passion for the subject matter and for the students. Sometimes she takes a deep breath right before she walks into the room and draws out from deep within her a lot of enthusiasm that she might not necessarily be feeling at the moment. Her teaching philosophy is to take students beyond where they are. It is meeting them where they are and then taking them beyond that, which is thinking about Bloom's taxonomy.

The very first lab in Greenhouse Management, Dr. Williams tells her students that:

One of our goals for this class is to learn how everything is connected. If you change one thing in a production situation it impacts all of these other things. So, what makes greenhouse management really fun, interesting and challenging is that you learn the interconnections between all of these different subjects and so that, when one thing changes, you understand how it's going to impact everything else. And so that's how we start and then that's how we end.

In that way, Dr. Williams tries to weave connections between topics through not only an entire semester, but through an entire degree program. For example, they are finishing finals, and with the final, she is trying to use it as a teaching tool, not just to evaluate their learning but to show them connections that they might not have gotten up to this point.

Dr. Benson's teaching philosophy comes from a number of different people. Some of his former teachers, colleagues, and books he has read on language acquisition combined with his trusted pedagogy with language culture and literature. Dr. Benson believes that students are never going to learn if he lectures them. Doctor Benson asserts: "If, I'm the one who's doing what they had to do, then teaching is not teaching." So, he very rarely lectures. What he does is to put

students in groups. The idea is to show them just the grammar they need to do the next activity and to give them an activity immediately where they put into practice. And later on, they exchange information. So, for example students might describe their families. For that learning he will use the family tree using activities that actually are interesting and meaningful for their life experiences.

Basically, instead of the sage on the stage, the teacher guides by the side. Instead of lecturing, he lets them analyze literary texts or cultural texts or practice the language. Another part of his philosophy is to provide input interaction and feedback. “If you get lots and lots of input it's going to be there whether you use it or not.” Then, if students have the chance to interact with other people who are either native speakers or not, but really communicate, they will get feedback on what they understand and what they don't understand, and their language learning progresses. Teaching a language has been the most fun thing he has ever had in his entire 58 years of career because he did not only see his students progressing, but he got to learn things that they knew that he did not know.

Dr. Eiselein's teaching philosophy suggests that you have to find some way to capture and focus students' attention, “You can't rely on please pay attention to me.” You've got to tap into what's going on inside of them, changing or varying what you are doing. If you do the same thing class after class, they will get bored.

He recommends trying a variety of different pedagogical exercises and be attuned to what is helping your students to learn and what is not. He thinks that most learning or maybe all learning is done by the individual themselves. He mentioned Freire's pedagogy that talks about the banking model of education, where somehow the teacher opens the students' brain. And that

is not how learning works. All people have to figure out by themselves how to read difficult works of literature, learn how to interpret them carefully, and use evidence.

Other key components of Dr. Eiselein's teaching philosophy are motivation, connection to others, and feedback. It is important that students receive good feedback, clear, and specific. For example, "Here is what you did, here is how you could improve it, and here is how you could do it better."

Dr. Eiselein also thinks that we need to stay away from criticism and we need to stay away from praise. It makes students feel good when somebody says good job, but he thinks that it does not improve student's learning. Praise might keep students motivated for a while, but, he thinks what's more important is that they feel their teacher is with them, the teacher pays attention to what they do, and acknowledges what they do. His motto has been "presence, not praise." If the teacher is always saying "good job, or you're so smart." What if the students start believing that, "Oh I'm great; I don't even need to work hard anymore".

The way that students are going to learn most is not by the teacher praising how smart they are, they are going learn most when the teacher challenges and complicates things for them. The teacher could say, "Well, you could still do this better." Because with writing, you could always do better. It is one of those skills that can always be improved upon. So, he thinks that with high achieving students, the teacher wants to push and challenge them. The students who need positive reinforcement encouragement most are the students that are struggling, but you cannot lie to students either but be honest and let them know how they can improve.

Participants' teaching philosophies summarizes with teaching engagement, intrinsic motivation, respect for students, creating a welcoming environment, asking questions, Bloom's

taxonomy, making connections, facilitating, providing input, interaction, feedback, and showing presence.

### **Importance of Education**

The importance given to education is evident in this research. Therefore, I wanted to know if participants agree that education is important, and I wanted to know how participants explain the reasons why it is important.

Dr. Ackerman absolutely agreed. “Absolutely. I grew up in poverty and education changed my life. Education taught me that the world is a bigger place than the world I grew up in.” When students are trying to decide whether to stay in school or drop out of school, Dr. Ackerman tells them that their investment in their education is the only thing that no one can ever take away from them. They can lose people, they can lose possessions, get divorced, and bankruptcy, but their education is theirs forever. It has the power to raise people above all circumstances. Dr. Ackerman is an example of that.

Dr. Saucier agreed. He thinks that there are two reasons to get educated. One, is to get content and two, is to get skills. “It is learning to think; it's learning to communicate; it's learning to be a consumer of information; it's learning to get along with other people; and it's learning to be on a team.” All these are the kinds of things that education allows teachers to teach. Although, a lot of people can get those skills without going to college, he believes that college provides a really neat vehicle for doing a lot of things in a very short amount of time, in a very intensive way.

Dr. Fliter agreed too. He thinks education is important, not only in terms of what he does in the university, but also, he supports educational issues outside the university in terms of politics and policy. “My wife and I have been involved in education issues. She works in the

Association School Board, so, she is involved in public education.” Dr. Fliter thinks education is the tool for social and economic advancement. If you work hard and go to school, and get a degree; at long term, your salary and quality of life would get better. Unfortunately, obtaining a graduate degree for some people is out of reach this days because education is increasingly expensive, and we have a very competitive society, a credential society where, even having a bachelor's degree is almost not enough anymore. So, Dr. Fliter thinks that education is critical.

Dr. Benson states that “If we're not learning, we're not alive. It also helps us to become like a democracy. We really need to be educated and involved in what's going on here.” Freire talked about liberation and education.

Dr. Eiselein asserts that “If you've got some education it's easier to move jobs. If you don't have a college education, you can feel stuck.” He also believes that a reason for the inequality has been a lack of people with college degrees and demand dictates the salaries. So, salaries for college grads have been going up, but that has not been good for those who don't have a college degree. This does not mean that everybody needs a bachelor's or a master's degree, but, there are a lot of people who would do well at college that don't even get the opportunity.

Dr. Sorensen thinks that it is a shame that education is not more respected, “The way we pay our secondary teachers is improper; they should be paid more; they should be rewarded more. Those are the real heroes.” We shape the minds and the personalities of future citizens, so education is extremely important. Dr. Sorensen’s theme when teaching is “How we know what we know, for example how do we know that stars are distant suns?” The typical answer is that the scientists tell us. But that answer is a dogmatic approach, a belief approach. So, when Dr. Sorensen teaches astronomy, they go through the process of realizing by observation.

### **Research Question 3: What are the teaching best practices or innovative teaching strategies of the participants?**

Theme CC 3: Power relationships between professors and students

Theme 6: Deciding the curriculum

Categories:

- Curriculum and syllabus
- Evaluating Students

#### **Deciding the curriculum**

##### **Curriculum and Instruction**

My interest here was to know how participants choose or develop the curriculum to teach or how they design their syllabus.

Dr. Ackerman decides her syllabus based on how much worked in the past. "It's experiential but also through study and learning then trying new things and the thing students responded well to, of course keep those in there." She is constantly trying new things and adding new things. Additionally, by asking students what works and what doesn't work. So, it is an organic process of developing curriculum.

In order to decide the curriculum, Dr. Saucier asks two questions: "What do they need? and I think about where my class is in terms of the curriculum, what does it prerequisite for, or what are the learning objectives for that class?" Then he has to find ways to get all of that necessary information in there. The second question is "What leftover is really interesting?" So, he tries to fill it out with things that are really exciting, novel, and relevant for the students.

Dr. Fliter stated that the content of the course is pretty much determined, no matter who teaches it. There's a standard curriculum and content for that and it's often driven by the textbooks that you select. In US Politics for example, "Everyone is going to learn about the

Constitution, why we have the Constitution, federalism, you have to talk about Congress, the presidency in the courts, interest groups and political parties.” So, it is determined by the subject of the course and the textbooks that he decides to use. Because Dr. Fliter’s area is law, he tends to put a little more emphasis on civil rights and liberties.

Dr. Williams observed that “The starting point would be well established like industry, texts and so forth, but I think the most important thing that I bring to those decisions is my own experience with the greenhouse and flora crops production industries,” which is a continual professional development process for her. That arises from being very connected to the greenhouse industry. She explained, “I do you know educational trainings and write trade journal articles and things like that for industry publications.”

The whole horticultural unit has connections with the industry and work to get internships for their students. Dr. Williams serves on the selection committee of American Floral Endowment that has national internships and scholarships. And she is always bringing K-State students into there. Then, when K-State students get these internships, along with them comes funding for the adviser to travel to the internship production site. So, in that way Dr. Williams gets her travel paid to go visit her students on the internships “But more importantly than that, I get to learn about what's happening in the industry”. So, connections to the real world are really important for advising, for informing what she needs to adjust and adapt in her teaching. Because things change over time, one underlying goal that Dr. Williams has with her teaching is that she cannot just teach students based on her own past, what she learned. But, she has to teach them based on their future and the direction that things are moving, “Which of course is very different now than it was when I studied 20 years ago.” When Dr. Williams goes on a trip, she will come back all excited about some new thing that they're doing and that is how she makes adjustments.



Dr. Benson explained that now there are so many resources that we can tailor the kinds of teaching strategies, the kinds of educational philosophies, the methods, the techniques, and even the goals. We can tailor goals to the specific needs of the students. The first question he always asks when he is going to teach a new class is “What I want them to know at the end that's number one, number two is how are they going to do it at the end.” So not only what but also how. He also asks if they will have the language they need to be able to do that at the end.

For Dr. Eiselein, it depends on the class. For example, one of the courses he teaches is called American Literature, which is a history of American literature from its origins to the present. He explained that:

The course is a foundation for what a lot of English majors need to know to complete their degree...So, in that case I feel obligated to teach according to either the student learning outcomes or the content expectations of others for when my students leave that class.

A lot of courses have very specific learning outcomes and you have to decide what to teach according to that. He thinks it is important that students get excited about reading and care about what they've read, and that they feel confident. He wants them to read with pleasure and with understanding. And so, to do that he often engages them and makes them curious and provokes their thinking.

Dr. Sorensen affirms that it depends upon the class he is teaching. “But you always say to yourself what should these people know?” His motto with the lower level classes is not giving them so much information, but teaching in the process of science. What is really important is “How we know what we know.”

### **Evaluating Students**

Evaluation is a critical factor when teaching and there are a lot of ways to evaluate students.

Dr. Ackerman has exams, quizzes, and papers. She also assesses students' daily participation from a journal. Students keep a journal. "And that process whatever concept we're working on now, rather than me collecting a little assignment every day, I collect the journals twice a semester." Students get credit for every entry that is in there. In that way Dr. Ackerman is not grading little assignments every day. If they did them, they get the credit. If they didn't do them, they don't get the credit. That is their daily work score.

Dr. Saucier evaluates his students in a lot of different ways. "I love to see them apply or create but in my larger classes it's hard for me to do that." There are multiple choice tests in there, and Dr. Saucier declares: "it makes me feel bad it hurts me to my soul that logistically is what we have to do." Dr. Saucier also has a study guide assignment that he uses in a class where students have to think what is important through the material and create a study guide. They can only use one side of one sheet of paper and they don't get to use it on the exam. Dr. Saucier just wants them thinking about what is important. He also has a questionnaire that students will complete talking about their experiences in the class, about the textbook, what they liked or didn't like, the things that were most fascinating or least fascinating.

In terms of grading, Dr. Fliter uses grading rubrics in Constitutional Law. "Well I do use grading rubrics in constitutional law". His rubric has substantive requirements and stylistic requirements, which is for the research paper on a Supreme Court justice. Dr. Fliter types a substantial number of comments in order to give students a lot of feedback. There are nine justices on the court, so, he gets nine different papers. To give substantial feedback, Dr. Fliter has a standard comment format for some of the justices that he rewords for each student's paper. "Maybe they did emphasize this, or mention a case here and there. So, I don't have to create everything from scratch even if it still takes me 45 minutes to go through these papers each

paper.” The papers are anywhere from about eight to sixteen pages and he has 45 students, so it takes a while to grade them.

Dr. Fliter uses rubrics for all his constitutional law courses. However, in US Politics, because there are 110 students, he does not use rubrics. “Just it is, I think, just too time-consuming. I spend a lot of time on a rubric.” He just writes comments and give scores.

Dr. Fliter offers lots of flexibility for students. He has about 15 paper projects described in his U.S. Politics syllabus, and students are only required to write on two. So, he does not accept excuses:

If the grandfather dies one weekend okay fine don't do the paper for that weekend, do the next one”. But at some point, though they do have to hand one in. “I call them my no excuses paper projects. Because, you know I don't accept excuses they should get them done. If they don't want to do that's fine they lose the points.

If the students have procrastinated and do not hand the paper, they get a zero because Dr. Fliter is very clear about that. Students know they have five or six opportunities to write a paper and they know that all they have to do is write one paper. “If they do not do it, it will be their own fault”.

Dr. Benson evaluates students all kinds of ways. First of all, with exams but all depends on the class. For example, in a conversation class, students do three oral interviews or proficiency interviews at the beginning, middle, and end of the semester. That is fifth of their grade. Another fifth of the grade is to write little essays on the different topics. Additionally, another fifth of the grade is:

I watch them in class and give them watch for people every class, and then control over the course of a week and a half, I get a class participation grade, preparation and participation for every student in the class.

He also has group activities where students have to report on a class conversation. Each group has to present someplace in the Spanish-speaking world they already researched about. Dr.

Benson tells them to be tour guides and they will report all kinds of interesting things they have found in the world.

In order to eliminate worries about grades for the students, Dr. Eiselein has a clear grading policy. “This is how it works, you stick by it, and when students say please can you move my grade up or something? The answer is no. This is the grade, here's the grading policy.”

Dr. Eiselein let students revise written works:

If they do their best on an assignment and it doesn't quite work out and they fail or just don't do especially well, they can revise it, and I'll give them specific advice about how to revise it - to get a better grade”.

Dr. Eiselein thinks that this opportunity of revising makes them less anxious about grades.

Additionally, Dr. Eiselein uses rubrics that are tied to the learning outcomes for the assignment and for the course. He always has a spot where he can write an additional comment that might not be tied directly to those student learning outcomes, but he comments on something that needs work or they did great, but it's just not an expected part of the assignment.

Theme 7: Innovative teaching pedagogies

Categories:

- Coffman Chair
- Other Practices

### **Innovative teaching pedagogies.**

#### **Coffman Chair**

Because of their research in undergraduate teaching and learning, participants have been awarded. Following, participants describe their significant contributions to the scholarship of undergraduate teaching and learning that let them be awarded the Coffman Chair for University Distinguished Teaching Scholar Award.

Additionally, because these professors have showed interest on innovative teaching pedagogies and because they have inspired students, I call them heroes: Super “Critical Thinking” Hero, Super “Engagement” Hero, Super “Active Learning” Hero, Super “Experiential Learning” Hero, Super “Diversity” Hero, Super “First-Year” Hero, and Super “Physics studios” Hero.

### ***Super “Critical Thinking” Hero***

Dr. Ackerman is the 2016-2017 Coffman Chair for University Distinguished Teaching Scholars. Her Coffman chair was about facilitating dialogue in the university about critical thinking, “How we define it, how do we teach it, and how we assess it.” Working with the Faculty Exchange for Teaching Excellence, the Office of Assessment, and the Teaching and Learning Center, it involved bringing in a major international speaker. As well as developing activities and opportunities across the university for people to talk about critical thinking as one of the five undergraduate student learning outcomes.

Video- Dr. Patricia Ackerman - Critical Thinking: Voices at the Table: <http://www.k-state.edu/provost/enrichment/lecture/2016-17/ackerman.html>

### ***Super “Engagement” Hero***

Dr. Saucier is the 2015-2016 Coffman Chair for University Distinguished Teaching Scholars. His teaching philosophy focuses on motivation. He proposed the “Trickle-Down Engagement” model. Not just motivation on how students learn but motivation that teachers have to teach. Dr. Saucier examined student's intrinsic motivation and how to maximize that. “I think if students are learning because they want to, they see the relevance, and they see the value, they are going to learn better, and they are going to learn more.” He considers that it is a very simple model, which he explains in the following way:

Let's get teachers in front of their classrooms, letting their students know how much they want to be there, how great the information is, how interesting they find it, and then their students will be engaged, they will learn better.

Thus, the Trickle-Down Engagement model is what he proposed and tested for his scholarship of teaching and learning. After that, he has gone to a lot of conferences to tell people about it.

Video- Dr. Donald Saucier. Engage the Sage: Trickle Down Engagement in the College Classroom: <http://www.k-state.edu/provost/enrichment/lecture/2015-16/saucier.html>

### ***Super “Active Learning” Hero***

Dr. John Fliter is the 2013-2014 Coffman Chair for Distinguished Teaching Scholars. His contribution was the application of active learning through the creation of simulations, games, and role-playing exercises. These exercises included the production of simulated scenarios for problem-solving opportunities for the students. Simulations, games, and role-playing promoted the application of knowledge, improved critical thinking skills, and developed in students, decision making processes. Dr. Fliter has developed those active learning techniques to enhance undergraduate learning experiences.

Video- Dr. John Fliter - Games without Frontiers: Promoting Active Learning in the Classroom and Beyond: <http://www.k-state.edu/provost/enrichment/lecture/2013-14/fliter.html>.

### ***Super “Experiential Learning” Hero***

Dr. Kim Williams is the 2010-2011 Coffman Chair for Distinguished Teaching Scholars. Her focus was on scholarship of teaching and learning (SoTL) related specifically to her discipline of Greenhouse Management. Dr. Williams had a couple of case studies which were published and evaluated. She looked at student learning from the case studies versus students learning the information from a traditional lecture. Dr. Williams shared those case studies with

her colleagues “were available for other colleagues of mine in greenhouse management to use without having to put hundreds of hours of time into making them.”

Another area funded by SoTL was a grant project where she did a shared course development with the University of Nebraska. They used distance technologies to teach a graduate level plant nutrition and nutrient management course that was synchronous between the two sites. In other words, all the students were in classrooms at the different locations at the same time. They also did chats to reinforce student learning.

Dr. Williams enjoyed thinking and learning about how her students were learning so that she could change and adjust what he was doing in her classroom. As well she was learning from the literature by conducting scholarship of teaching and learning. It was very rewarding not only for those intrinsic reasons but also for extrinsic reasons, because it helped her to get grants and get refereed journal publications.

Video – Dr. Kim Williams - K-State's Vision 2025 and the Scholarship of Teaching and Learning: Sympatico or Discordant? <http://www.k-state.edu/provost/enrichment/lecture/2010-11/williams.html>.

### ***Super “Diversity” Hero***

Dr. Douglas Benson is the 2009-2010 Coffman Chair for Distinguished Teaching Scholars. He wrote a series of articles and did a number of different workshops in Nebraska Spain Mexico for the American Association. He also published two articles, one in the Kansas World Language Association Bulletin and the other, in Central States. His work focused on enhancing learning skills in a diverse learning environment and the characteristics of such an environment. Additionally, the project reinforced the undergraduate diversity curriculum at

Kansas State University by restructuring the Tilford Web Site with teaching resources for faculty and staff

Dr. Douglas Benson - The Tilford Group website: <http://tilford.k-state.edu/>

***Super “First-Year” Hero***

Dr. Gregory Eiselein is the 2008-2009 Coffman Chair for Distinguished Teaching Scholars. Kansas State University and many other United States universities have noticed the problem of the under-preparation of some students for college-level learning and the problem of attrition, particularly during the first year. Dr. Eiselein’s contribution was the creation of a First-Year Seminar program. Dr. Eiselein had been working on and talking with people about it for a couple years before that. He states that “The Coffman gave it a real boost, some attention, some resources to get started, help fund the pilot study and some other things.” Dr. Eiselein did a pilot study during his year as Coffman chair, he and his team continued it for a second year, and in 2010, they officially started the program.

Dr. Eiselein- Project: A Pilot Study of a First-Year Seminar Program: <http://www.k-state.edu/provost/enrichment/scholars/eiselein.html>

***Super “Physics studios” Hero***

Dr. Christopher Sorensen is the 2007-2008 Coffman Chair for Distinguished Teaching Scholars. Dr. Sorensen created the engineering physics studios.

He explains how the idea started:

That occurred because I came to realize that the laboratory sections which were two hours a week didn't work very well, and the kids hated them. And on the other hand, the students enjoyed the recitations. They were very constructive with regard to problem solving well received depending upon who the lecturer was.

This was in 1999 and for the ten and fifteen years before that, people had started talking about the idea that the lectures don't work, that the students just sit there, and they really don't learn



anything in the lecture. Now, “I don't necessarily believe that philosophy even to this day. I think the lectures have some purpose” However, Dr. Sorensen talked to a lot of physics education researchers told him the idea of teaching a studio where the teacher interacts with the students more directly than lecturing.

He liked the idea, but the question was “How do you teach the studio to 170 people at a time? We have 450 to 500 people go through engineering physics every year.” It occurred to Dr. Sorensen to teach two lectures plus two, two-hour studios per week. During the lectures, the professor introduced the topic for the first time. Then, the studios integrated problem solving with hands-on experimentation and also facilitated interactive teaching aspects that were lacking previously. Dr. Sorensen, with the help of six students who were hired for this purpose, developed 129 short laboratory demonstrations and experiments (lab-demos) in an effort to integrate problem solving and conceptual skills.

See the link about: Dr. Sorensen named 2007-08 Coffman Chair for University Distinguished Teaching Scholars: <https://www.phys.ksu.edu/newsletter/2008/sorensen.html>.

### **Personal Practices**

In spite of the fact that participants have demonstrated expertise in the areas mentioned above, I wanted to know what they consider to be their best teaching and learning practices to enrich what we have learned from them so far.

### ***Active Learning***

Dr. Fliter, Dr. Benson, and Dr. Eiselein mentioned that they apply active learning. Dr. Benson' examples of role-playing includes fashion shows and tourist guides.

Dr. Fliter uses a lot of active learning and critical thinking in his classes. His active learning activities include simulation and role-playing that have received great reviews from

students. “Kind of breaking things up and not just going in every day with a lecture.” Dr. Fliter will do a PowerPoint and the next day he won't. He will be old school with lecturing, and another day he will often start the class with a little discussion sheet. Sometimes he uses his discussion sheets to get them started on an issue and thinking about some topic, some questions. He tends to break things out, a video or two during the semester to mix things up and keep it interesting. Related to simulations and role-playing, in his U.S Politics in Constitutional Law, he will often give students a case situation or two where they have to be the judge. “How would they decide this, you have this problem.” At this point, it is usually just a short one-page exercise that is done in the first 20 minutes of class. It is not a complete simulation. So, he has those little judge-problem solving exercises. Then, as far as more comprehensive role-playing in both of his constitutional law classes, students play the role of a lawyer or a judge to Supreme Court justice.

POLSC 615 **Civil Rights and Liberties**  
(Spring 2017) **Dr. Fliter**

**Active Learning Exercise: Arguing over Fruits and Vegetables**

**Purpose:** Practice making an implausible argument on behalf of a client to reach a specific conclusion.

**Learning Objectives:** 1) Understanding why facts are essential for determining appropriate legal precedents under the doctrine of *stare decisis*; 2) Encouraging creativity in using argumentation to advocate for an assigned position/conclusion; 3) Learning how to selectively highlight certain facts to best support an argument.

**Description:** Students act as attorneys who are charged with persuading a court to reach the conclusion that a certain precedent should be followed in the outcome of the case at hand, while arguing that a competing precedent is inapplicable. To demonstrate the challenge of fitting a set of facts to a given precedent, student lawyers should devise arguments that their object (representing the facts in their case) shares more in common with one piece of fruit or vegetable (representing the favorable precedent) than another piece of fruit or vegetable (representing the unfavorable precedent).

**Directions:** There will be two students for each legal team. You will have 2-3 minutes to discuss and write down arguments for your position. Lawyers should use any features of your fruit or vegetable to make a convincing case. For example, note the size, color, shape, texture, taste, smell, seeds, pits, classification, growing region, calories, and use or function of your object as it relates to the court precedent.

Each legal team may select one person to make oral arguments or use a tag team approach. You will have two minutes to make your presentation. To begin your argument, use the traditional salutation for the Supreme Court: “Mr. (or Mrs.) Chief Justice, and may it please the Court.” Depending on class attendance, a court of five justices will preside over each case. Justices may ask brief questions during oral argument. The justices will take a few minutes to deliberate and announce a decision. This is an informal exercise that will not be graded. Let’s have some fun with it.

**Case #1:** (tomato, orange, granny smith apple)  
Favorable Precedent: Tomato  
Petitioner: Orange  
Respondent: Apple

**Case #3:** (sweet potato, cucumber, yellow squash)  
Favorable Precedent: Sweet Potato  
Petitioner: Cucumber  
Respondent: Yellow Squash

**Case #2:** (avocado, pear, mango)  
Favorable Precedent: Avocado  
Petitioner: Pear  
Respondent: Mango

#### **Figure 4.14 Images courtesy of Dr. Fliter**

Dr. Eiselein sometimes uses the barometer game. He asks students an opinion question and asks them to line up. He will say, “If you feel strongly this way, go over here, if you feel strongly that way go over there, if you're in the middle, or just place yourself kind of where we are.” This activity gives everyone in the room an immediate grasp on how the rest of the class has responded to a question. He likes that, once they move they're already involved in the conversation and if something unusual happens, he can ask the class “What's going on?” For him “It's a great way to get people who are hesitant to talk to talk.” Because, if they went to a particular place they probably had a reason and the teacher could ask why they are over there. Dr. Eiselein lets them move during the game. If they change their mind during the discussion, they can move, and it is interesting to see the class moving.

#### ***Asking questions – Conversation***

Dr. Saucier also applies asking questions. For his big lectures, he usually asks himself, “How can I make my lectures better?” Dr. Saucier likes to get students talking in his classes. He likes to ask his students questions and call for their opinions. Because he loves to ask questions, he does not have a right answer. For example: “I'll ask like you know what lobe of the brain you would give up if you had to give up one? There are four lobes of the brain” In this activity he has people who give up any of the four. He will ask them “Why?” And he says:

It's amazing to see how animated they get in this discussion, they've just learned what those lobes are, and there's, you need your frontal lobe, I don't know, I'd give up the occipital, I've already seen everything; blind people do fine, those kind of things.

It is all about of getting them interested in the material and to make a decision about the material. Additionally, he has students bringing their own examples. He will teach a concept or theory and he will ask students to “go out and use it, and tell me how you used it.” So, Dr. Saucier makes the class an intellectual community and not just a one-sided conversation.

Dr. Ackerman has a lot of research, a lot of writing, and a lot of discussions, where she might be involved or not. Additionally, her classrooms are very discursive. For grouping students, she has different techniques. One of them is using note cards with the students' critical information on them. She shuffles the cards and sort them into groups of the desired number of students.

Dr. Eiselein is good at advanced questioning that gets students to think critically, that gets them to engage with ideas or concepts that they've never thought of before.

Dr. Benson's best practices include, creating an environment where students feel safe talking with each other about topics that matter not just to the teacher but also to the students. Guiding them to become more interested people, who are more interested in the world. Dr. Bensons asserts that literature is a way to develop a sense of democracy in people. "If students read about all kinds of different people finding different solutions, then we begin to realize, number one that it's not only happening to us, and number two that people around the world have very different solutions." If we know those solutions exist, we can use them. For example, in the Spanish-speaking countries, the constant interaction of the extended family happens, "still on Sunday everybody gets together at Grandmas, and all that kind of things". That is not necessarily true in the Midwest because Grandma lives in California or Florida. Therefore, Dr. Benson engages students in conversations which usually includes cultural aspects.

### ***Experiential Learning***

Dr. Williams' best practices are mainly experiential because her classes are hands-on. She stated that "It doesn't matter if they just do it, they have to constantly be getting feedback from me about what's working and what's not." Having conversations all along the way is important and that is why she likes the numbers to be low enough so that she can interact with

every student in the class and give them feedback. However, students are at different places, some students who are already very skilled at doing crop production. Her goal with those students would be to take them to the next level. “But then I have other students in the same class who just don't get any of it, like they just don't understand, so then with them I'm just helping them build basic skills.” Therefore, a part of her philosophy is to meet where students are and then help them go beyond, with critical thinking.

Dr. Benson also agrees with having students practicing. He said, “I don't like to lecture with language learning. It is not as good as if you are teaching for example animal science class, where you have to absorb a lot of information.” As students practice, they stop making the same mistakes, but they make some others, because they are learning new things. For Dr. Benson it is about setting up a sequence of activities that gets them from where they are to where he wants them to be at the end of that semester.

One of the most innovative things he has learned from a colleague is “what you want to do is you want to look at where you want them to be at the end of the class or the end of an activity or at the end of this unit and then plan backwards. So, you take language, vocabulary, grammar, and all those things you plan, backwards, from that goal.” Additionally, Dr. Benson, lets his students pick their own conversation topics for debate. Different activities, because he believes good teaching is good facilitation.

### ***Lecture***

Dr. Fliter asserted that he combines lectures with other activities to give variety to his classes.

Dr. Ackerman also said that her class is diverse. “I diversify my classroom. There's some lecture but I create opportunities for students to teach and learn from one another.”

Dr. Sorensen thinks that lectures are good too, however he combines lecture with experiential learning when students are doing experiments in the studios. Dr. Sorensen calls his technique “peat and repeat,” which means you have to say it more than once. He thinks that the engineering physics studio is an example.

You give a lecture and you explain a topic for example Rolling Motion. Then, that night they have to work problems, that's the second time they have seen the topic. And then, they come to studio and they are going to see it again. They are going to do the experiment, and they're going to work some of the problems they couldn't work, right? So, there's four times in two days that you have repeated the topic. Then two weeks later you give them an exam. So, now they have to come back two weeks later and make sure they understand Rolling Motion. So, there you have done it now five times. And in a semester, you have a final exam, so, you see that repetition.

He thinks repetition is important from different points of view, in lecture, all by themselves studying at home, or perhaps working with peers. Different points of view. Sometimes, you can ask a question, and students could spend 15 to 20 minutes before they start making sense of the question because they just need some time to let it settle in their minds. That is why Dr. Sorensen thinks that lectures are good too. “They say, students only remember twenty percent of the lecture. Yeah that's probably all right but all of it's back there somewhere.” A day later, or an evening later, the ground is cultivated. “You might say even though the plants haven't grown yet, at least the ground was plowed.” The repetition of lecture can plow the ground.

### ***Socratic Method***

Dr. Ackerman's best practices also include “Socratic questions,” where she guides students through the process of self-discovery so that, they are not just learning from her, but learning together.

Dr. Eiselein stated that he is good at the Socratic Method, because, he is good at getting students to do interactive learning.

Dr. Sorensen as well uses the Socratic Method to ask questions to engender students to think about things.

### ***Story teller***

One of Dr. Saucier's best techniques is storytelling. Dr. Saucier asserted "Storytelling is one of the things when I come into a class I think about, what is the story for the day? Is the story going to be on developmental psychology?" He wonders how he is going to hook students and how he is going to engage them in the first couple minutes about:

Why this is going to be awesome, how can I force out other things that they're going to look forward to, how can I relate it to experiences that they've had, how I can relate it to famous events that have happened, and how I can use almost all of the vocabulary words to allow them to play roles in my story.

Dr. Saucier tries to make all students fit into this larger story. If students get that, they can contribute to the story, they know where the story is going, and they can ask questions that lead to the next part of the story. So, Dr. Saucier's preparation is based on thinking what the story is going to be. In that way, while, he is still teaching everything, he is also making it a lot easier for the students to remember.

Thus, variety is important. Successful professors use different techniques in their classes and each one of them requires preparation.

## **Chapter 5 - DISCUSSION**

### **Introduction**

This chapter includes: (1) Overview of the Research, (2) discussion and interpretation of findings, (3) recommendations for practice, and (4) recommendations for future research.

### **Overview of the Research**

#### **Research Purpose**

The purpose of this qualitative case study is to examine teaching experiences, philosophies, and best practices of successful professors who were awarded the Coffman Chair for University Distinguished Teaching Scholars at Kansas State University in undergraduate teaching and learning. It is an important examination of the perspectives of eight successful professors belonging to different content areas in order to document their best practices in teaching and learning undergraduate higher education.

#### **Research Questions**

The overarching research question guiding this inquiry was:

How do successful professors awarded the Coffman Chair for University Distinguished Teaching Scholars at Kansas State University describe their teaching experiences, philosophies, and best practices in undergraduate teaching and learning?

The sub- research questions guiding this inquiry were:

1. How do awarded professors perceive their teaching experiences in undergraduate teaching and learning?
2. What are the teaching best practices or innovative teaching strategies of the participants?
3. How do awarded professors describe their teaching philosophies?



## **Methodology**

This is a qualitative case study informed by Critical Theory as the theoretical theory. It is a case study because it allowed to conduct an in-depth examination of the cases of this qualitative study. (Yin, 2014). Critical Theory was the theoretical theory because it suggests the concept of social justice, liberation and the dialectic (Jay, 1996; Marcuse, 1992), as well as the need to promote critical consciousness and social transformation (Weiler, 1988). Freire (1972) claimed that human are called to transform the world and to transform themselves by developing cultural consciousness, intervening in their situations, seeing possibilities of transformation, giving direction to their lives. Thus, I am aware of the problems that affect the world such as wars, violence, hunger, poverty, and many others. But, I believe education is a means to achieve economic and social transformation, as well education in values can change the world.

## **Participants**

The participants selected for this qualitative case study were eight professors from various departments at Kansas State University who qualified to be participants under the following criteria: (a) was a recipient of the Coffman Chair for University Distinguished Teaching Scholars at Kansas State University, starting in the school year 2007-2008, and (b) be willing to participate.

Participants were first contacted via email. The potential participants were approached via e-mail with an invitation to participate. After they accepted, I requested a 10-minute appointment with each participant to explain to them the purpose of the study, make them sign a copy of the inform consent, fill the demographic form, and receive the semi-structure questions to be used during the interviews. I collected the forms in my personal folder and proceeded to set dates for the three face-to-face interviews for each participant.

On the selected dates, I conducted the three face-to-face interviews with every participant. Semi-structured open-ended questions were delivered to every participant in a paper and electronic format. Each interview was 60 minutes-long and was carried out at the participant's convenience place and time. According to Yin (2014), interviews are "one of the most important sources of case study evidence" (p. 110). The three interviews were designed to gain an understanding of their personal experiences as teachers, their teaching philosophies, and their innovative teaching pedagogies. Interviews were recorded and later transcribed.

The data collected was very substantial. I analyzed data using the constant comparison method: a kaleidoscope of data (Dye et al., 2000) which follows four stages: (1) comparing incidents applicable to each category, (2) integrating categories and their properties, (3) delimiting the theory, (4) writing the theory.

Participants were humble enough to share their personal and teaching experiences in their own words. Therefore, participants' contributions were very appreciated and valued, since every one of them invested time and effort to collaborate in the research process

Findings were presented in Chapter 4. Following are the discussion of the findings, recommendations for practice, and recommendations for future research.

### **Discussion and Interpretation of Findings**

In a changing world in which technological revolution is ongoing and demographic, economic, social, and political changes are taking place. Therefore, educators also need to innovate. In this context, higher education is called upon to support all areas of development. Brazdauskas (2015) invites higher education institutions to reinforce development by encouraging thinking and finding solutions for social and environmental challenges.

In addition to promoting twenty-first century skills, knowledge, and technology, educators also face daily challenges about how to make their class active, fun, interesting, and meaningful. They must continue to learn how to motivate and engage students, how to promote critical thinking, how to create a diverse and safe environment in which people are not afraid to share, how to enhance dialogue and not debate, and how to encourage social justice.

According to the National Commission of Teaching and America's Future (1996), there is a critical difference among what teachers know, what teachers can do, and what they can accomplish. "New courses, tests and curriculum reforms can be important starting points, but they are meaningless if teachers cannot use them productively. Policies can improve schools only if the people in them are armed with the knowledge, skills, and support they need" (p. 5). This suggests that teachers need not only curriculum reforms but also be equipped with tools and support.

While there is literature on theories and best practices in certain areas of education, there is a lack of analysis and research about the teaching experiences, philosophies, and best practices of outstanding award-winning professors. Therefore, it made sense to conduct this qualitative case study based on the evidence of the experience of eight successful professors at K-State.

Data collected from multiple sources enabled me to arrive at the following conclusions.

### **Research Question 1: How do awarded professors perceive their teaching experiences in undergraduate teaching and learning?**

- |             |                                                                                                       |
|-------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Theme CC 1: | Students and professors are called to transform themselves and the world.                             |
| Theme 1:    | Previous Experiences- In the students' shoes                                                          |
| Categories: | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Influential People.</li><li>• Struggles as Students</li></ul> |

The aim of this section was to bring professors back to their own experience when they were students. Participants shared their personal experiences, starting with their childhood to the present. The intention of the first theme was to create awareness in professors about the challenges students face by thinking back to their own experiences. The findings can create understanding and empathy. The second theme was about their experience as professors, how they chose their major, and the events that led them to become professors. The third theme dealt with difficulties and challenges in their teaching profession and what mentor support they have received. The last theme discussed whether participants see themselves as successful professors and why, and how they organize and balance their time.

### **Previous Experiences- In the students' shoes**

This section aims to bring professors back to their own experiences when they were students.

#### **Influential People**

Many people played an important role in the lives of the participants. For most participants, their parents were the most influential people in their lives, followed by teachers who also had a great impact on them. Those influential people touched participants' lives in a meaningful way.

For instance, mothers were influential because of the sacrifices they made, for always being there, and for pushing them to do lots of things. They were mothers who did not go to college but were smart enough to teach their children subjects like math and language. A father who was very well loved by the people of the town, showed by example the power people can have if they are united. Additionally, a dad was influential because of his respect for knowledge

and learning. It is important to note that even when parents could not help much, they were always there to support their children.

In addition, there were a lot of special teachers who were willing to look out for the participants. A football coach not only supported one participant, but he also made the connection to send him to college. The track coach gave advice and took the same participant home after the practice when a parent could not. Most teachers even shaped the participants' desire to be a teacher and, moreover, they influenced the teaching style that they use now.

A female professor, by being a good teacher and by breaking stereotype barriers was a role model, showing that a woman could be in an unusual position, too. A principal of the school who instead of punishing one participant, showed him a kind touch. Furthermore, people with more experience, and who have accomplished much, were still humble enough to share.

Influential people, as I called them, were role models, advisors, friends, and much more for the participants. Just by being present sometimes, or being very good at what they did, or by offering support and a lot of advice, these people made a difference in the lives of the participants. Having those people there for them, to check up on them and to care about them, was really significant for the participants at the high school and college level.

### **Struggles as Students**

Professors were students themselves. Some of the struggles participants experienced as students in high schools or college, are described below:

As students, they had to balance their personal life and academics with other activities in order to be successful. There were social aspects that challenged them such as money, but having those teachers who were there for them was meaningful.

One participant challenged himself to do things that he was not good at, such as artistic endeavors like drawing, music, and writing. He was very good at math and science, but they became boring for him. English, creative writing, drawing, and music, however, were difficult but interesting. It became part of his personality that he always wanted to be challenged, and that tendency remains today.

One of the participants who traveled abroad experienced what many students experience now: homesickness. He had two moments in his life when he experienced this. The first time was during the first week when he traveled to New Zealand as an exchange student. The second time was when he went off to college. Studies conducted with international students indicated that international students face a number of transitional adversities such as different food, new living conditions, new education systems, language barriers and some psychological issues, including stress, depression, homesickness, solitariness, isolation, anxiousness and confusion. (Yoon & Portman, 2004; Zhang & Dixon, 2003). However, it is important to mention that homesickness not only attacks people who travel abroad, but also people who move from one place to another unknown place, even within the same country.

Another challenge, related to the previous one, is adjustment. The same participant, after coming back from studying abroad, realized that school was unfair because academic achievement tracked family income. He thought that rich people were just genetically smarter than poor people. This is a disparity which is replicated in schools. He remembered being a little kid and knowing that he was smart, but he wasn't accepted for the gifted and talented program. However, there were some kids that he did not think they were that bright, but because their parents were rich, and they were in the gifted and talented program. He also found USA high school extremely boring. He experienced a period of adaptation and adjustment.

Another kind of difficulty in adaptation is the adjustment from war to college life. After serving in the Vietnam War, one of the participants came back for graduate school. He struggled to adapt during that time, since the war was a different world than being on a college campus. It was a different culture. A considerable amount of research has investigated the effects of stress on the psychological adjustment in domestic students in the United States (Dyson & Renk, 2006; Pritchard & McIntosh, 2003; Pritchard, Wilson, & Yamnitz, 2007)

Another circumstance to note is that most of the participants were first-generation students, meaning that they needed extra support. All participants experienced a process of adaptation in different contexts, such as adaptation in social life, adaptation in culture, and adaptation in life style. Although participants experienced struggles in high school or college, all of them succeeded because they worked hard.

These were experiences that the participants shared about themselves. They may serve as a reminder to teachers to take into consideration that students might have these kinds of struggles or many other types. It creates empathy.

Theme 2: Teaching and Learning Experiences- On the teachers' shoes

- Categories:
- Why your Major?
  - Why to become a teacher?
  - Teaching Strengths and Passions

## **Teaching and Learning Experiences**

### **Why your Major?**

Choosing a major, it is not usually a straight path. Most of the participants started on a different road before finally finding their way. Unexpected things happened, and again here we can identify influential people who motivated them to find their direction.

One of the participants, for example, when he went to College his freshman year, he majored in electrical engineering. He knew that engineers make good money and there's always a job. However, after his freshman year, he realized, he had no idea why he chose that field, he had no interest in engineering and he really hated it. He could not stand the physics and calculus. The college he went was an expensive private institution and he didn't know what to do. He did not want to waste a lot of money, so, he dropped out of school.

Another participant also had no idea of what to do with his life. He mostly just thought about finding a way to make money and he assumed that meant he should be a business major. So, he enrolled in business when he first started, but later he disliked it and found it boring. This is a reality that happens to many students today, too. Students are in the process of finding themselves and what they want to do.

The only model this student had at that time was his Spanish teacher. He wanted to be like him and become a teacher. He did not necessarily plan to be a Spanish teacher, but some kind of teacher. It is clear, then, that teachers make a great impact on students. They are role models, advisors, and sometimes they are their heroes.

The same student, just taking a required Anthropology class, was sitting in this class, going through a breakup, and feeling that he just wanted to get out of there. Instead he found his passion in that class. He wanted to leave, but he found this specific class offered him the chance to travel. That was the original attraction and then he was driven by other things. He realized that he has always been interested in the big questions of life and what it is all about, how to find meaning in life, and how to live a good life. Anthropology allowed him to pursue all of those questions. This participant chose this major because he liked the subject and the professor's way



of presenting it to the class. Many of our students might have the same dilemma, not knowing what to do with their lives.

Professors need to be honest with students about their majors. One of the participants, for example, when he was a junior, took a law class that he loved. He got really excited about it. He remembers that he went to talk to the professor to let him know that he loved his class and he wanted to go to law school and become a lawyer. But the teacher was honest with him and told him this: “Most lawyers help people get divorced. The number of lawyers that get to go to the Supreme Court and argue these cases to change the direction of history are very few. What you love about this classes are is all the big issues, the intellectual issues” He also said: “You should go to graduate school, you should think about becoming a professor”. This answer was very motivating for the participant. Finally, he majored in English and history because he could always study the literature and the history of something.

The professor was not driven by pride, but he was truthful to tell the participant about career and future job possibilities. Students need to know what is happening in the work environment, what are the opportunities, and the realities when they are trying to choose a major. Sometimes as students we cannot see the whole picture and we need to hear the perspective of a professor to see it.

One of the participants wanted to be a scientist from an early age. Actually, when he was three years old, he wanted to be a farmer, when he was four years, he wanted to drive those local steam cars, and by the time he was five years old, he got interested in science. His father was a chemist, which helped him to have access to chemicals. He and his dad did the first experiments together. Having a chemist as a father who had medical equipment at home, motivated the participant to become a scientist.

One of the participants, right out of high school, went to University and majored in electrical engineering. But he had no idea why. He knew engineers make good money and there is always a job, but he never showed any interest in engineering. After his freshman year, he really hated it. He could not stand the physics and the calculus. He did not know what to do and he did not want to waste a lot of money trying to figure out what field he wanted to study. So, he dropped out of school and went to work in a car body shop for a couple of years.

Thus, most participants did not know from the beginning the major they were going to choose. They were very confused, not knowing what to do. Some of them started in one major and changed after they realized they did not like it. But in the end, all of them found their passion. And this is one of the missions we have as educators, to help our students find their passion and guide them as they plan for their one and only life.

### **Why become a teacher?**

Hansen characterizes teaching as a vocation, which "comprises a form of public service to others that at the same time provides the individual a sense of identity and personal fulfillment" (Hansen, 1995, p. 2). Teaching can be characterized as work, as a job, as a career, as an occupation, and as a profession. However, as a vocation, it goes well beyond income and survival; it guarantees personal autonomy and personal significance.

Different desires and interests motivated participants to become a teacher at different stages of their lives. Some participants always wanted to be teachers and others became teachers later. Some participants, after the opportunities they had to teach, realized that teaching was their passion and the life that they wanted. It was while they were teaching that these participants found the joy and conviction that teaching was their passion.

The desire of doing something good and helping people was a main motivation to become a teacher. The things that caught the attention of one of the participants, for example, were social issues, social justice, issues of prejudice, and aggression. He wanted to help make people aware of these issues.

One of the participants recognized that she was born to teach, because from a very young age she wanted to be a teacher and she would even play school with her brothers, where she would be the teacher and they would be the students. The participant always had a sense of teaching and she couldn't imagine not pursuing this profession.

Teaching is facilitating; it is putting obstacles in the students' way so that they can solve problems they face in their lives. In addition, teaching is not about being perfect, but about the joy that comes from seeing students get excited about learning, about sharing, and realizing that the world can be a much better place.

What is clear is that all of these professors share a passion for teaching. Successful professors really love to teach and create relationships with their students. They relish being in the classroom interacting with students and they agree that being a professor is the greatest job in the world.

### **Teaching Strengths and Passions**

Being a teacher requires having special strengths and passions.

Successful teachers:

- Help students to learn and to find meaning
- Engage students inside and outside the classroom
- Involve students in dialogue
- Communicate well

- Are enthusiastic
- Incorporate humor
- Are accessible
- Are humble, not the smart guy, but a human person in front of the class
- Care about students
- Personal life not affecting the classroom environment
- Maximize every class opportunity
- Love and respect students
- Are well organized and well prepared
- Show concern for students and treat them as adults
- Are passionate about the subject matter and they show it.
- Are fair.
- Help students become better learners and not just learning the material in a class
- Constantly asking question to students.
- Make connections.
- Be creative.
- Provide learning experiences integrating hands-on project-based learning.
- Show excitement about the material they are teaching.
- Empathize with students

Thus, I believe, we should teach every class as if it were the last or the only opportunity our students have and make it as meaningful as possible. We should make of each one of our classes the best.

Theme 3: Difficulties in the Profession

Categories: 

- Challenges in the teaching and learning practice
- Mentoring support

## **Difficulties in the Profession**

### **Challenges in the teaching and learning practice**

Teaching is not an easy job. Indeed, it is a very arduous profession in which there are many challenges. One of the hardest challenges is that most of the students come into the classroom thinking education is just a box to check. They are not really coming to learn or think about learning. Wanting to learn and choosing to learn are the most important part of learning.

If students don't want to learn, even if they get an A in a class, that does not mean they have learned. According to Kumaravadivelu (2003), teaching is purposeful, it cannot automatically lead to learning because learning is primarily a personal disposition controlled by the person who is learning. A motivated student is someone who cares about learning and pursues his/her own learning.

Furthermore, becoming a great learner is associated with having a sense of self-efficacy. It involves dealing with a lot of interferences and distractions. According to Zimmerman (2000), self-efficacy is sensible to changes in the context of students' achievement to interact with self-motivated learning processes. It has become a predictor of the motivation and learning of students. It is also about accepting ourselves, loving ourselves, and being able to get back up when we get knocked down. Those are the key attitudes that a student must acquire to be successful. But, this is difficult to do within the context of a traditional schooling environment. It is extraordinarily challenging.

Another big challenge is trying to help students who are having difficulties. A good technique can be having students help each other in the class. In addition, successful professors have open office hours for students to support students with their problems and needs.

Another challenge some professors find is teaching a diverse class where the differences have created difficulties. These differences could be about race, family income, political beliefs, intellectual commitments or values and principles that the students bring into the class. The solutions can be as diverse as the students, such as:

- To build community
- To get students to defend their beliefs with evidence.
- To learn how to ask good questions.
- Be opening to hear different kinds of answers that sometimes can be hard for some students to receive.
- Create from the beginning a safe environment of respect for all students.
- Create a culture of dialogue, not debate. Dialogue gives enrichment to a diverse class.

Freire (1976) promoted dialogue. But this dialogue cannot be mechanized where the rules guiding the sharing of experiences become the main object. Freire (1976), proclaimed that without dialogue, which is action and reflection, there cannot be conscientization (awareness) nor liberation. That is, true dialogue cannot exist without critical thinking. The dialogue referred by Freire was a dialogical teaching.

### **Mentoring Support**

In the teaching profession, professors have had some important mentors who have created paths for them to follow. They recognize that mentors have motivated them, supported

them, and helped them to become good teachers. In addition, they helped them to achieve special teaching awards.

Mentors can be found everywhere; they can be your friends, your colleagues, your teachers, your bosses, your parents, your siblings, and even your students. Mainly, mentor teachers are very important and crucial in the career of new professors. According to Kolman, Roegman, and Goodwin (2017), mentors and mentees maintain a personal and caring relationship for an effective teaching experience. Part of this relationship includes the mentor providing a friendly environment and emotional support throughout the teaching experience. Hence, mentoring is a relational process, mentors reach mentees and vice-versa. Mentoring can make possible the beginning of a successful career, because a good beginning can guide someone on the path to achievement. A mentor teacher can have an amazing impact with their colleagues. Besides, it is important in education that professors support each other.

We need to take into account that nobody is a great teacher when they start, but they become great teachers as they learn through all their experiences. Besides, professors who have been working at an institution for some time can be mentors for newer ones. Departmental heads play an important role in mentoring new faculty members, too. Additionally, having colleagues helping each other is very beneficial for the wellness of the institution.

Theme 4:                      Knowing yourself

- Categories:
- Successful Professor
  - Organizing and balancing time

## **Knowing yourself**

### **Successful Professor**

The participants see themselves as successful professors. They self-recognize, validate and motivate to improve themselves as teachers, researchers, and mentors. They assert that they are getting better each day. They write better now than they did before. And they teach better now than they did before. So, it is a permanent state of mind and self-efficacy.

In addition, from external reinforcement and from self-imposed standards, they see that they are doing well and that they are becoming more successful. External recognition such as, teacher evaluations, affirmation from colleagues, and teaching awards demonstrate that the participants are truly effective. Additionally, they see themselves as effective professors because their research and their publications have become important, interesting, and meaningful to the world.

Teaching reflection is extremely important. The idea of teachers as reflective practitioners was originally proposed by the educational philosopher John Dewey in the early twentieth century. Dewey made a distinction between action that is routine and action that is reflective. Routine-action is directed by an uncritical belief in tradition, and obedience to authority, whereas reflective action is driven by a conscious consideration (Dewey, 1933). In Dewey's view teachers were not seen as passive transmitters of knowledge but as problem-solvers.

Later, Dewey's concept of reflection was expanded to the concept of reflective practitioner. This concept distinguished two interlinked forms of reflection: reflection on action and reflection in action. Reflection on action occurs before and after a lesson, as the teachers evaluate their teaching afterwards. Reflection in action occurs while teaching, on the ongoing



process. When something unexpected occurs, the teacher adjusts the teaching immediately (Kumaravadivelu, 2003). It is also important to reflect about what they want for their career, what their goals are, and how to best achieve them. It is important as well to reflect about what they want for their students.

One of the participants saw himself as more successful in the teaching side than the research side, while the other professors did not make any distinction. It is imperative to find a balance. We do not wish professors to be stressed because they have to produce publications, or must try to write a book in order to be promoted. Those are important goals, but they should not interfere with the teaching mission.

However, professors also need to hear that they are appreciated from students and colleagues, and that they are doing an exemplary job. They recognize that they have had great mentors early in their career, who demonstrated to them important benchmarks and requirements they needed to succeed. They have received support from many mentors and now it is time to pay it back. Today, they can be mentors for younger professors, write letters for them, or nominate them for awards or recognitions. This is to advance the culture of building each other up. By creating the culture of collaboration and scaffolding where everybody supports each other, the whole program and the whole university becomes stronger. According to Ainsa (2017), the metaphor of scaffolding can be applied to the interventions that professors make within the proximal development of the learner.

### **Organizing and balancing time**

Organizing time is a key factor for successful professors. Their commonality is that they are all well-organized. There are different techniques to develop these organization skills.

Mainly, successful professors do what they love; they teach, research, and spend time with family. They keep a strict schedule by separating work from family responsibilities.

They also prioritize, doing the most urgent thing first. Generally, summer is the most effective time for professors to write publications. So, they set priorities. Unfortunately, successful professors work many arduous hours which include working most weekends and there are many conferences they must attend.

However, successful professors love what they do, which enables them to see joy in their hard work. They maximize their time by taking advantage of their most productive time of the day. Therefore, balance is about scheduling, but it should be smart scheduling.

## **Research Question 2: How do awarded professors describe their teaching philosophies?**

Theme CC 2: Education as an engine for equality, democracy and a better society.

Theme 5: Philosophical Perspectives

- Categories:
- Educational Philosophies
  - Educational Theories
  - Insights of their Teaching Philosophies
  - Good Character
  - Importance of Education

### **Philosophical Perspectives**

#### **Educational Philosophies**

None of the professors mentioned any kind of educational philosophy; however, they mention some theories in their areas on which they base their teaching.

## **Educational Theories**

Since there is a wide variety of theories of education, I was interested in knowing which theories the participants apply the most. The participants mentioned some theories and some models applicable for their teaching.

The theory of self-determination in terms of psychology was mentioned, which is the intrinsic motivation and the personal choice. It involves working toward strengths and working to overcome weaknesses. According to Deci and Ryan (2008), Self-Determination Theory (SDT) focuses on human motivation, personality, and optimal functioning. It emphasizes not only the amount of motivation, but different types of motivation. SDT helps to consolidate a good amount of work in positive psychology, which deals with positive emotions.

Additionally, Psycho theory was mentioned, which is not really a theory, but a general approach. This approach states that psychology has been taken as a medical model for a long time in which problems are found and then solved. However, the positive Psycho approach basically says that instead of solving problems, the emphasis is upon just finding things that work well and promoting them. This can be applicable to education by not trying to fix students' problems, but by helping them to find their capabilities and optimizing them.

Student development theory deals with how the person changes over time. Students are in this process of development during the college time, but they are each at a different stage. One of these theories is Identity Development, which refers to development and self-concept. According to Jones, Kim and Skendall (2012), identity development is valuable to higher education for designing creative and inclusive learning environments that include diverse perspectives (p. 699). There is a strong connection between narratives and identity development. The process of

identity development includes narratives that explore personal journeys manifested by principally challenging life events (McLean, Syed, & Shucard, 2016)

For teaching purposes and for student outcomes, Bloom's Taxonomy is used. It includes the need to be moving students beyond memorization and into application, problem solving, and critical thinking. According to Chen and Wu (2003), Bloom's taxonomy has been considered as the most appropriate reference in the analysis of teaching objectives. Anderson and Krathwohl (2001) outlined a revised version of Bloom's Taxonomy of Educational Objectives, which is divided in two dimensions: (1) the knowledge dimension and (2) the cognitive process dimension. The knowledge dimension includes: (a) factual knowledge, (b) conceptual knowledge, (c) procedural knowledge, and (d) metacognitive knowledge. The "cognitive process dimension includes six categories: (1) remember, (2) understand, (3) apply, (4) analyze, (5) evaluate and (6) create.

Kolb's experiential learning model is also used for helping students understand what they are experiencing. It encourages them to do more reflection and apply it to their future. According to Sugarman (1985), Kolb's Model of Experiential Learning integrates two dimensions related to types of involvement: (1) concrete-abstract dimension and (2) active reflective-dimension. This model does not use hierarchy but a cyclical process of effective learning, which includes four stages: (1) concrete-experience, (2) reflective-observation, (3) Abstract-Conceptualization, and (4) Active-Experimentation.

Concerning the theories of Language acquisition, the participant in this area uses most of them, even the traditional ones because he believes they are still useful. For instance, the audio-lingual method, which was a terrible method, can be helpful for teaching pronunciation. Grammar translation, which is to teach the grammar and then have the students translate from

that language to their own language. This method did not produce speakers at all, but students can learn to read much better. And finally, connectionism, a theory that says that the brain has all these neural processors, but they are useless until the brain begins to build the connections. The only way that the brain can build the connections is by creating your own content in the language, by forcing the brain to pull those things together at different times.

In summary, language acquisition started between in the 1960s and 70s with the audio-lingual method. The government, university professors and high school teachers discovered that at the same time that the method produced people with great pronunciation, they couldn't say anything original because it was just repeating and doing grammar exercises.

Then there were several different versions of the communicative methods, like the direct method. In this method, the teacher is still leading. It was better because the students were able to answer, and it wasn't just memorization or repetition. But there were minimal grammar exercises. Another method was the Silent method, and many more methods have followed. It wasn't until the early 1980s that we really began to understand from the behavioral psychologists how students acquire language.

Since then, the method has gone through a number of different evolutions. One of those is the connectionism theory. The architecture of the connectionist mind is based on artificial neural networks, which are complicated systems formed by simple processing units. These units perform a function analogous to neurons and are related to each other by connections, which have different strength and generate complex parallel computing systems (Crespo, 2007). A large number of neurons are activated at the same time to complete the information, working simultaneously. It became more evident that if we didn't have students do it themselves, they

were not going to learn, and they were not going to become communicative because the goal is not grammar. Grammar has a helping function, but the goal is communication.

So, if students are not given opportunities to communicate in class with each other and with native speakers, they are not going to accomplish the goal of communication. Input is very important. If students get ample input, the students are going to own it, whether they use it or not. Then if they have the chance to interact with other people who are either native speakers or not, they will truly communicate.

### **Insights of their Teaching Philosophies**

It is important to clarify that a teaching philosophy is unique for each person. What works for one professor might not work well for another. In addition, we need to understand that a teaching philosophy is not static, it is always evolving. It is a dynamic process which is constantly changing.

Thus, all professors care about students and want them to succeed. This is not a recipe, but is good advice to adjust one's teaching philosophy to the context as needed. Based on the personal teaching philosophies of participants, a teaching philosophy might integrate the following characteristics:

- A teaching philosophy starts with enthusiasm and passion for the subject matter and for the students.
- It contains a great deal of active learning strategies that can be modified based on student feedback.
- It contains activities to scaffold and then construct the learning over time.
- Showing respect for students, building a bond with them, and let them know that the teacher cares about them.

- It applies the “trickle-down engagement teaching philosophy”, where teacher engagement leads to student engagement, and this leads to student learning. This means that if the teacher is engaged, the students will be engaged. And that increased level of engagement will drive a level of student performance. Instructors need to let their students know that they are engaged.
- Applying intrinsic motivation by letting the students make decisions for themselves.
- Offering opportunities rather than making requirements.
- The instructor is organized, enthusiastic, and engaged.
- The instructor is well prepared.
- Creating a welcoming environment for the class, using the syllabus as a teaching tool.
- Showing clarity in the syllabus, because the syllabus is like a contract between the professor and the students.
- Designing classes that are challenging, interesting, and informative, by using a variety of active learning activities.
- Bringing to the classroom the instructor’s life experiences.
- It suggests to the professor to become a learner himself, so, he can understand students as learners.
- Instructors ask questions, make connections, and are creative.
- Meeting students where they are and then take them beyond.
- Weaving connections between topics through not only an entire semester, but through the entire degree program.
- Facilitating learning and set up obstacles that students have to get through to learn.
- Including literature and culture from around the world.

- Providing a great amount of interaction and feedback.
- Finding ways to capture and focus student's attention.
- Create motivation by tapping into student's interests, changing or varying activities.
- Trying a variety of pedagogical exercises and being attuned to what is helping students to learn and what is not.
- All learning is done by the individual themselves. It is not a banking education. Freire's (1970) pedagogy of the oppressed talked about the banking model of education, where the teacher opens the students' brain and tries to fill it. And that is not how learning works. All people have to figure out by themselves how to learn.
- It is important that students feel the teacher is present, the teacher is with them, the teacher pays attention to what they do, and the teacher acknowledges what they do.

Most of the characteristics of the participants' teaching philosophies leans towards Progressivism philosophy of American Education. According to Taylor, (2015), progressivism is a practical approach to problems where the teacher is the mediator of learning, the subject matter is based on problem solving, and the role of the student is knowing, doing and feeling.

Finally, this list of suggestions is not a generalization or a formula, but good advice for educators to adjust it to their context and refine it as needed.

### **Importance of Education**

The beginning and the end of this work is about improving education because I believe education is a means to develop good character, social justice, and wellness. The importance given to education in this research is evident and it fits well with my theoretical perspective which is critical theory. Because critical theory supports education, but an education for everyone, in which everyone is the actor of their story. Freire (1972) stated that human beings



are called to be subjects or actors, not only the objects of their stories. They are called to transform the world and to transform themselves. By doing this, they are developing cultural consciousness. They are not simple objects of their stories, but now they are giving direction, intervening in their situations and seeing possibilities of transformation.

The best investment we can make is the investment in education. It's the only point that no one can ever take away from us and it is one of the few elements that can really change the world. Additionally, educated people are more empathetic and better decision makers.

Participants believe that education is the tool for social and economic advancement. If students work hard, go to school, and get a degree, in the long term, their salary and quality of life will be better. Unfortunately, obtaining a graduate degree for some people is currently out of reach these days because education has become increasingly more expensive, and we live in an unequal world. It is a shame that teachers are not well recognized around the world. They are the real heroes because they shape the minds and influence students for their whole life.

Dewey (1897) said that education "is a process of living and not a preparation for future living" (p. 78). Therefore, if we are not learning, we are not alive. Freire (1972) talked about liberation education. I am not saying that everybody needs to have a graduate degree. There are a lot of people who would do well at college, but they do not have the opportunity. Education is a way to give people consciousness and understanding so that they will know something is wrong and they will make a difference wherever they are. Definitely, education can facilitate collaboration to create a better society. Of course, no one person can change much in the world, but collectively, we can make the world better together.

### **Question 3: What are the teaching best practices or innovative teaching strategies of the participants?**

Theme CC 3:	Power relationships between professors and students
Theme 6:	Deciding the curriculum
Categories:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Curriculum and syllabus</li><li>• Evaluating Students</li></ul>

#### **Deciding the curriculum**

##### **Curriculum and Instruction**

Curriculum is all the experiences students have under the guidance of teachers. When designing the curriculum, professors need to consider that education should respond to changes in the environment and we must learn to cope with different resources for today's problems (Oliva & Gordon, 2013).

For the purpose of this research, professors design their own syllabus (syllabi?). Their syllabus is experiential but they also are trying new things. Before designing the syllabus, professors need to find out what the students' interests and needs are. Then they ask what the prerequisites for these needs are, or what the learning objectives for that class are. After that, professors have to find ways to include all of that necessary information. Then the new question will be whether it is relevant for the students.

When deciding on the syllabus, the previous considerations are important as well as considering where students are and where they are going. What would be the best for them at this moment in their life? The recommendation is to include relevant material from industry, texts and the teacher's own experience. Learning about what's happening in the industry is important to make connections to the real world.

In summary, the important question to ask is “What do I want them to know at the end?”. But not only what do I want them to know, but also how I want them to learn it. So, after finding the interests and needs of students, we need to look at the needs and interests of the industry or society, and then elaborate objectives or learning outcomes.

### **Evaluating Students**

Evaluation is a critical factor. Some professors evaluate students with the traditional exams, quizzes, and papers. However, they will also evaluate daily participation. One of the professor makes students create a study guide. For the study guide, students can only use one side of one sheet of paper, but they do not get to use it on the exam. This is a tool for making students think about what is important of the class. He also has a questionnaire that students will complete, writing their experiences in the class, about material in the textbook, about what they liked or did not like it and the things that were most fascinating or least fascinating. It is important not only to evaluate the content, but also make students think about the content.

Some professors use rubrics. Rubrics are used to evaluate active learning assignments such as role-playing, simulation, and also to evaluate papers. It is essential that professors also provide substantial comments and feedback. One of the participants offers lots of flexibility for students by providing options. For instance, the professor offers as many as 15 possibilities for paper projects and the students are only required to write on two of them. Thus they can make their own choice.

Evaluation requires a lot of creativity and changes in methods every semester. When evaluating language classes, for example, students do three oral interviews or proficiency interviews at the beginning, middle, and end of the semester. Another kind of evaluation is to

write little essays on the different topics. Participation in the class is an everyday activity as well.

In order to eliminate worries about grades, the evaluation policy must be clear. It is a good idea to let the students revise written works. If the first assignment is not especially well done, the students can revise it. But when for doing that, the teachers need to provide feedback and specific advice about how to improve it to get a better grade. This opportunity of for revising written works makes students less anxious about their grades.

Theme 7: Innovative teaching pedagogies

Categories:

- Coffman Chair
- Other Practices

### **Innovative teaching pedagogies.**

#### **Coffman Chair**

In order to contribute to the scholarship of undergraduate teaching and learning, participants worked in the following areas as part of being awarded the Coffman Chair for University Distinguished Teaching Scholars.

#### ***Critical Thinking***

To foster critical thinking, some of the activities included:

- Facilitating dialogue in the university about critical thinking, “how we define it, how do we teach it, and how we assess it”.
- Bringing in a major international speaker.
- Developing activities and opportunities across the university to talk about critical thinking as one of the five undergraduate student learning outcomes.

### ***Engagement***

Engagement is related to motivation. This is not just motivation on how students learn, but motivation that teachers have to teach. Intrinsic motivation was examined and how it can be maximized. If students are learning because they want to, because they see the relevance, and because they see the value; then they are going to learn better and they are going to learn more.

The trickle-down engagement model was proposed to increase motivation and engagement. In this model, when the instructors are in front of the class, they need to let their students know how much they want to be there, how great the information is, and how interesting it is to them. They find it. Then their students will be engaged, and they will learn better.

### ***Active Learning***

The application of active learning through the creation of simulations, games, and role-playing exercises was proposed. These exercises included the production of simulated scenarios for problem-solving opportunities for the students. According to Krain and Shadle (2006), simulations provides students a representation of a real environment in which interactions take place. Games include competency with established rules to win and involve luck. Finally, role playing, gives students the opportunity to play the role of a character at different given situations. Simulations, games, and role-playing promote the application of knowledge, improved critical thinking skills, developed development in students, decision making processes, and enhanced undergraduate learning experiences.

### ***Experiential Learning***

I looked at the student learning in some case studies versus students learning the information from a traditional lecture. Another initiative was a grant project with the University

of Nebraska funded by a Scholarship of Teaching and Learning (SoTL). The objective was to use distance technologies to teach a graduate level course in a synchronous way. In other words, all the students were in classrooms at the different locations at the same time. They also did chats to reinforce student learning. These experiences allowed the professor to observe, learn, and determine how the students were learning in order to make changes and adjustments to the classroom instruction. SoTL gave opportunities to teachers to conduct scholarship studies on their own teaching.

### ***Diversity***

The focus was to enhance learning skills in a diverse learning environment and to improve the characteristics of such an environment. The project reinforced the undergraduate diversity curriculum at Kansas State University by restructuring the Tilford Web Site with teaching resources for faculty and staff.

Today we can find different denominations for approaching Diversity in Education, such as Multicultural pedagogy, culturally relevant pedagogy, or Culturally Responsive pedagogy/teaching. According to Banks (1993), multicultural education is an anti-racist education that centers on the integration of content, on the process of construction of knowledge, equity pedagogy, and on the empowering of school cultures and social structures.

Unfortunately, diversity and culture has been ignored in the teaching and learning process. There is an attitude of cultural blindness based on different notions, such as: The notion that education has nothing to do with culture and heritages. Students need to get knowledge and skills to meet high standards of academic excellence, rather than wasting time in notions of cultural diversity. And the notion that students need to forget about being different and learn to adapt to the USA society (Gay, 2010).

However, we need to consider that we live in a cultural environment where people have diverse backgrounds. Therefore, we need to practice the notion of multicultural education or culturally responsive teaching. Considering that “teaching is most effective when ecological factors, such as prior experiences, community settings, cultural backgrounds, and ethnic identities of teachers and students, are included in its implementation” (Gay, 2010, p. 22). Our teaching experience is enriched when we include in our content and methodology personal narratives and cultural stories.

### ***First-Year***

Kansas State University and many other United States universities have noticed the problem of the under-preparation of some students for college-level learning and the problem of attrition, particularly during their first year. Therefore, a Pilot Study of a First-Year Seminar Program was presented.

### ***Physics studios***

Engineering physics studios were created. The idea came because students had two hours a week of laboratory which didn't work very well, and the students hated them. This was in 1999 and for the ten and fifteen years before that, people had started talking about the idea that the lectures don't work, that the students just sit there, and they really don't learn anything in the lecture. Dr. Sorensen did not necessarily believe that philosophy, even to this day, because he thinks lectures have some purpose. However, after talking to a lot of physics education researchers who brought the idea of teaching studios where the teacher interacts with the students more directly than lecturing, he applied the idea. The studio integrated problem solving with hands-on experimentation and facilitated interactive teaching, aspects that were lacking previously. With the help of six students who were hired for this purpose, 129 short laboratory

demonstrations and experiments (lab-demos) were developed in an effort to integrate problem solving and conceptual skills.

### **Best Practices**

Some methods or techniques are interrelated. Some share common characteristics or complement each other. For example, when using Experiential learning, it also includes using critical thinking, conversation, and working in groups. Importantly, each one of them requires a lot of preparation. Participants considered the following to be their best teaching and learning practices.

### ***Active Learning***

Active learning is a process in which where students participate in activities that promote discussion and analysis by using different approaches such as problem-based learning, cooperative learning, simulations, role-playing, and others.

Some examples of active learning include:

- Discussion sheets.
- Supreme Court justice
- Role-playing where students play the role of a lawyer or a judge.
- The barometer game to express opinion and later lead to conversation.

Those activities involving motion and action are useful for the students' brains. When we get students to move around, their brains work better and it keeps them from falling asleep.

### ***Asking questions – Conversation***

The technique of asking questions let allows students to get involved in the conversation and it increases motivation and interest in the topic and develops critical thinking and active learning.



Examples of activities include:

- The model: asking questions, making connections, and trying new things.
- Making students ask questions about something that is burning inside them.
- Questions for decision making: What lobe of the brain would you give up if you had to give up one? This activity will create a lot of interaction and decision making.
- Socratic questions, where the teacher can or cannot be involved.
- Analysis of poems in Spanish.

### ***Experiential Learning***

According to Boggs (2013), he believes that experiential education pedagogies such as service-learning “can transform teacher education” (p. 32). Certainly, theory without practice is empty and that students learn better by doing it. Therefore, we need to provide learning opportunities for our students because they learn better by doing.

Some examples of experiential learning include:

Growing crops in the greenhouse.

Speaking in the target language with classmates.

Speaking in the target language with foreigners.

Traveling to another country – Study abroad program.

Role-playing

### ***Lecture***

Lecture is a common way for teachers to provide content in higher education. Youngeun and Anderson (2016) engaged students in lecture-based science courses to address the effectiveness of self-directed learning with feedback (SelfFeed). This study noticed differences in the traditional classroom setting and the active learning classroom setting, as well as the two

components of SelFeed: the lecture summary and the question and answer (Q&A) section.

Students learn better if they have the opportunity to interact.

An example of a lecture is:

Lecture with a combination of studios called “Peat and Repeat”

### ***Socratic Method***

The Socratic Method is also known as Socratic discussion. It is a form of “teaching by asking questions, by leading discussions, by helping students to raise their minds up from a state of understanding less to a state of understanding or appreciating more” (Adler, 1982, p.29).

### ***Story teller***

Storytelling technique is a two-way interaction between the teacher, who is the story teller, and the students, who are the listeners. The interactions of the students add meaning to the story. It is an interactive, cooperative, and coordinated effort.

Thus, I think with creativity every educator can integrate different techniques, since most of the time are interconnected. For example, when using Experiential learning, it also includes using critical thinking, conversation, and working in groups. When using role-plays, it requires the use of critical thinking, creativity, imagination, problem solving, active learning, group work, and more.

## **Recommendations for Practice.**

First of all, it is important to recognize that this research cannot be generalized. This means that what works well for a one professor does not necessarily work well for every other professor. This consideration is made because every instructor and student are unique and different. We all have different personalities, different gifts, different subject matter, different

approaches, different goals, and different contexts. Consequently, readers can determine for themselves what will work well for them.

Based on the theoretical framework of Critical Thinking, students and professors are called to transform themselves and the world by taking responsibility. Both professors and students have the same power to make a change in the world, considering that education is an engine for equality, democracy and a better society.

The findings showed that teaching is about learning from each other, loving your students, bringing our own personality into the classroom and finding your own gifts, skills, strengths, passions, and creativity in your own practice. At the same time, always caring about students and their environment and knowing that we all can always improve.

Great teachers love both their field or discipline and their students. In everything it is important to like what we do and to have fun at the job. It starts with teacher engagement and motivation. Every person might have different problems because of the human condition, but when we are in the classroom, we might give ourselves the enjoyment of being in the moment and making sure that we as well as the students are enjoying it. If students see that motivation and engagement, they are going to do much better.

Teaching is not only about knowledge and pedagogy, it is about people; it is about creating relationships. We bring our personality into the classroom. Therefore, we need to be and feel comfortable with ourselves; then students will be comfortable with us. We need to update ourselves, organize our time, avoid distractions, and discover our gifts, skills and passions, add some creativity, and put time and effort into the teaching and learning process.

There are some characteristics that excellent teachers have in common such as: enthusiasm, passion about the class, caring about students, loving students and respecting them.

Every day is a chance to make a good impact on someone else. Every moment is an opportunity to make it as valuable as we can.

We need to remember that we learn from each other and we need each other. We also need to remember that we can always improve. What we did our first year of teaching has nothing to do with what we are going to do in thirty years of teaching. Additionally, we need to recognize that we are going to make mistakes, but we need to learn from those mistakes.

Finally, we need to make sure that our students are the first thing in our minds, as a lot of information is there. And we need to be alert that the information is not the goal of the class, but rather the means to get them to where they need to be. I understand the impact that education can have in shaping society and I believe that education in values can change the world.

Thus, this qualitative case study contributes to the understanding of teaching experiences, philosophies, and best practices of successful professors in undergraduate teaching and learning. Furthermore, this study benefit of educators, students, administrators, researchers, and every person involved in education with practical applications for excellence in teaching and learning.

### **Recommendations for Future Research**

While the findings in this qualitative research study are meaningful for every person concerned about teaching and learning, different kinds of further research can be conducted about this important topic.

A first recommendation is that future research needs to be done on the experiences of the students. What are the students' perspectives of the teaching and learning process with successful professors?

A second recommendation is to explore how the professors' teaching philosophies influence the way professors teach and evaluate students.

A third recommendation is to examine how teaching philosophies influence the relationship among students and professors.

A fourth recommendation is to compare teachers' perspectives and students' perspectives concerning the achievement of students' learning outcomes.

A fifth recommendation is to explore the effectiveness of educational theories, how many of them are really known and applied by educators, and the effectiveness they have in the teaching and learning process.

And the last recommendation is to conduct observations to the classes successful professors teach, where different variables can be compared.

## References

- Adler, M. J. (1982/2013). The Paideia proposal. In Flinders, D. J. & Thornton, S. J. (Eds.). *The curriculum studies reader*, (4th ed.). New York, NY: Routledge
- Agee, J. (2009). Developing qualitative research questions. A reflective process. *International Journal of Qualitative Studies in Education*, 22(4) 431-447.
- Ainsa, T. (2017). SOS: Observation, Intervention, and Scaffolding towards Successful Online Students. *Education*, 138(1), 1-8.
- Alexander, P., Chabot, K., Cox, M., DeVoss, D. N., devossda@msu.edu, Gerber, B., Perryman-Clark, S., Wendt, M. (2012). *Teaching with technology: Remediating the teaching philosophy statement*. *Computers & Composition*, 29(1), 23-38.
- Amsel, E. (2016). 2016 teaching excellence award winners. *Teaching of Psychology*, 43(4), 267-275.
- Anderson, L. W., & Krathwohl, D. R. (2001). *A Taxonomy for learning, teaching and assessing: A Revision of Bloom's educational objectives*. New York, NY: Addison Wesley Longman, Inc.
- Bain, K. (2004). *What the best college teachers do*. Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press.
- Ballard, S. M., Tyndall, L. E., Baugh, E. J., & Bumgarner Bergeson, C. (2016). *Framework for best practices in family life education: A case example*. *Family Relations*, 65(3), 393-406.
- Ballard, S. M., Tyndall, L. E., Baugh, E. J., & Bumgarner Bergeson, C. (2016). *Framework for best practices in family life education: A case example*. *Family Relations*, 65(3), 393-406.
- Banks, J. (1993). Approaches to multicultural reform. In J. Banks and C. Banks (Eds.), *Multicultural education: Issues and perspectives*. Boston: Allyn & Bacon.
- Bhattacharya, K. (2007). *Introduction to qualitative methods in education: A student handbook*. Corpus Christi, TX: Bhattacharya.
- Bialka, C. (2016). Beyond knowledge and skills best practices for attending to dispositions in teacher education programs. *Issues in Teacher Education*, 25(2), 3-21.
- Bias, R. G. 1., Marty, P. F. 2., & Douglas, I. (2012). Usability/User-centered design in the schools: Justifying a teaching philosophy. *Journal of Education for Library & Information Science*, 53(4), 274-289.
- Bogdan, R., & Biklen, S. K. (2007). *Qualitative research for education: An introduction to theories and methods*. (5th ed.). Boston, MA: Pearson Education.

- Boggs, G.L. (2013). Teacher education as partnership: Service-learning and the audacity of listening. In V. Jagla, J.A. Erickson, & A. Tinkler (Eds.). *Transforming teacher education through service-learning* (pp. 31-50). Charlotte, NC: Information Age Publishing.
- Bok, D. (2009). *Our underachieving colleges: A candid look at how much students learn and why they should be learning more*. Princeton University Press.
- Bonwell, C., & Eison J. (1991). *Active learning: Creating excitement in the classroom*. Washington, DC: ASHE-ERIC Higher Education Report 1,
- Boote, D., & Beile, P. (2005). Scholars before researchers: On the centrality of the dissertation literature review in research preparation. *Educational Researcher*, 34(6), 3-15.
- Brazdauskas, M. (2015). Promoting student innovation-driven thinking and creative problem solving for sustainability and corporate social responsibility. *Journal of Creativity and Business Innovation*, 1, 75-87.
- Brinthaupt, T. (2014). Using a student-directed teaching philosophy statement to assess and improve one's teaching. *Journal of Faculty Development*, 28(3), 23-28.
- Buckner, A. (2002). Teaching in a world focused on testing. *Language Arts*, 79(3), 212-215.
- Caracciolo, D. & Mungai, A. M. (2009). *In the spirit of ubuntu: Stories of teaching and research*. Rotterdam, The Netherlands: Sense Publishers.
- Carey, E., & Cooper, T. (2016). *Bewitched, bothered, and bewildered: Our experiences with assessment and the tuning project*.
- Chen, Y. H., & Wu, Y. Y. (2003). *Testing and assessment*. Kaohsiung, Taiwan: FuWen.
- Chickering, A. W., & Gamson, Z. F. (1987). *Seven principles for good practice in undergraduate education*. AAHE Bulletin.
- Clandinin, D. J. (2007). *Handbook of narrative inquiry*. (Ed. ed.). Thousand Oaks, Ca: Sage.
- Clandinin, D. J., & Connelly, M. (2000). *Narrative inquiry: Experience and story in qualitative research*. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.
- Connelly, F. M., & Clandinin, D. J. (2006). Narrative inquiry. In J. L. green, G. camilli, & P. Elmore. *Handbook of complementary methods in education research* (3rd ed., pp. 477-487). Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum.
- Counts, G. S. (1978). *Dare the school build a new social order?*. Southern Illinois: University Press.
- Crespo, A. (2007). *Cognición humana: mente, ordenadores y neuronas*. Madrid: Ramón Areces.

- Creswell, J. W. (2007). *Qualitative inquiry and research design: Choosing among five approaches*. (2nd Ed.). California: Sage Publications, Inc.
- Crotty, M. (1998). *The foundations of social research: Meaning and perspective in the research process*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Crotty, M. (2008). Domestic violence intervention: Women survivors and their families. *Psychology of Women Quarterly*, 32(3), p336-337
- Cruikshank, D. (1992). *Be good! Start by being clear the clearing house*, 65(5), 311–314.
- Cutler Merritt, J., & Intolubbe-Chmil, L. (2014). Everyone has humanity in them: Multidimensional teaching and learning through philosophy-based discussion. *Journal of Community Engagement & Higher Education*, 6(2), 1-11.
- Daniels, H. & Bizar, M. (2005). *Teaching the Best Practice Way: Methods that Matter, K-12*. Portland, ME: Stenhouse Publishers
- Daniels, K. N., Patterson, G., & Dunston, Y. (2010). Rules of engagement: A service learning pedagogy for pre-service teacher education. *Journal for Civic Commitment*, 15, 1-16.
- Darling-Hammond, L. (2010). *The flat world and education: How America's commitment to equity will determine our future*. New York, NY: Teachers College Press.
- Deci, E., & Ryan, R. (2008). *Self-determination Theory: A Macro theory of Human Motivation, Development, and Health*. *Canadian Psychology/Psychology Canadienne*, 49(3), 182-185.
- deMarrais, K. (2004). Qualitative interview studies: Learning through experience. in K. deMarrais & S. D. Iapan (eds.), *Foundations for research: Methods of inquiry in education and the social sciences*, (pp.51-68). Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates.
- Denzin, N., & Lincoln, Y. (1994). *The handbook of qualitative research*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Dewey, J. (1897). *My pedagogic creed*. *School Journal*. 54 77-80 Retrieved from <http://dewey.pragmatism.org/creed.htm>.
- Dewey, J. (1933). *How We Think*. Chicago: Henry Regnery.
- Dewey, J. (1933). *How we think: A restatement of reflective thinking to the educative process*. Boston, MA: Heath.
- Dye, J. F., Schatz, I. M., Rosenberg, B. A., & Coleman, S. T. (2000). Constant Comparison Method: A Kaleidoscope of Data. *The Qualitative Report*, 4(1), 1-10



- Dyson, R., & Renk, K. (2006). Freshmen adaptation to university life: depressive symptoms, stress, and coping. *Journal of Clinical Psychology*, 62, 1231-44.
- Epistemology. (n.d.). *The American Heritage® New Dictionary of Cultural Literacy*, Third Edition.
- Eyring, M. (1998). How close is close enough? Reflections on the experience of doing phenomenology. in de Marrais, K. (ed). *Inside Stories*. Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum.
- Fineburg, A. C. 1. & Amsel, E. (2015). 2015 teaching excellence award winners. *Teaching of Psychology*, 42(4), 275-281.
- Fontana, A, & Frey, J. H. (2008). The interview: From neutral stance to political involvement. In N. K. denzin & Y. S. lincoln (eds.), *Collecting and interpreting qualitative materials* (pp. 115-160). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Forest, D. E. 1. & Kimmel, S. C. 2. (2016). Critical literacy performances in online literature discussions. *Journal of Education for Library & Information Science*, 57(4), 283-294.
- Freire, P. (1972b). *Cultural Action for Freedom*, Penguin, Harmondsworth.
- Freire, P. (1972a). *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, Penguin, Harmondsworth.
- Freire, P. (1993). *Pedagogy of the oppressed*. New York: The Continuum Publishing Company.
- Freire, P. (2006). *The pedagogy of the oppressed*. New York, NY: The Continuum International Publishing Group, Inc.
- Freire, P. (1976). Education: The Practice of Freedom, *Writers & Readers*. Publishing Cooperative, London.
- Freire, R 1970. *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*. New York: The Seabury Press.
- Friere, Paulo (1970). *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*. New York: Continuum Books.
- Fullan, M. G. (1993a). *Change forces: Probing the depths of education reform*. London: Falmer Press.
- Gay, G. (2010). *Culturally Responsive Teaching: theory, research, and practice*. New York, NY: Teacher College Press.
- Gay, L., Mills, G., & Airasian, P. (2012). *Educational Research: competences for analysis and applications*. Jersey city, NJ: Pearson Education.
- Gehlert, N. C., Graf, A. D., & Rose, L. A. (2014). Benefits and best practices: Service-learning in counselor education. *Currents in Teaching & Learning*, 7(1), 37-49.
- Gehlert, N. C., Graf, A. D., & Rose, L. A. (2014). Benefits and best practices: Service-learning in counselor education. *Currents in Teaching & Learning*, 7(1), 37-49.

- Giroux, H. (2001). Theory and resistance in education. *Towards a pedagogy for the opposition*. Westport, CT: Bergin & Garvey.
- Giroux, H. A. (1979). Review: Paulo Freire's approach to radical educational reform. *Curriculum Inquiry*, 9(3), 257–272.
- Giroux, Henry A. & Myrsiades, Kostas. (2001). Critical Education or Training: Beyond the Commodification of Higher Education. *Beyond the Corporate University: Culture and Pedagogy in the New Millennium*. Lanham, MD: Rowman and Littlefield, 1-12.
- Glass, R. D. (2001). On Paulo Freire's philosophy of praxis and the foundations of liberation education. *Educational Researcher*, Vol. 30, No. 2(American Educational Research Association), 15-25.
- Glesne, C. (2011). *Becoming qualitative researchers: An introduction*. (4th ed ed.). Boston, MA: Pearson.
- Goe, L., Bell, C., & Little, O. (2008). *Approaches to evaluating teacher effectiveness?: A research synthesis*. Washington, DC:
- Goetz, J. P., & LeCompte, M. D. (1981). Ethnographic research and the problem of data reduction. *Anthropology and Education Quarterly*, 12, 51-70.
- Goetz, J., & LeCompte, M. (1984). *Ethnography and qualitative design in educational research*. New York: Academic.
- Hagler, D., Kastenbaum, B., Brooks, R., Morris, B., & Saewert, K. J. 1. (2013). Leveraging the technology du jour for overt and covert faculty development. *Journal of Faculty Development*, 27(3), 22-29.
- Hagler, D., Kastenbaum, B., Brooks, R., Morris, B., & Saewert, K. J. 1. (2013). Leveraging the technology du jour for overt and covert faculty development. *Journal of Faculty Development*, 27(3), 22-29.
- Hansen, D. T. (1995). *The Call to Teach*. New York: Teachers College Press.
- Harper, D. (2002). Talking about pictures: A case for photo elicitation. *Visual Studies*, 17(1), 13-26.
- Hattie, J. (2004). It's official: Teachers make a difference. *Educare news*, 144(february), 24–31.
- Hegarty, Niall, J. (2015). The growing importance of teaching philosophy statements and what they mean for the future: Why teaching philosophy statements will affect you. *MPAEA Journal of Adult Education*, 44(2), 28-30.
- Hight, G. (1989). *The Art of Teaching*. New York, NY: Vintage Books.

- Howard, J. (2015). Discussion in the College Classroom. *Getting your students engaged and participating in person and online*. First Edition. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.
- Ingram D., & Simon-Ingram, J. (Eds.). (1992) *Critical theory: The essential readings*. St. Paul, MN: Paragon House.
- Irby, B., Brown, G. H., Lara-Alecio R., Jackson, S. A. ((2013).). *The handbook of educational theories*. Charlotte, NC: Information Age Publishing, Inc.
- Jaeger, E. L. 1. (2013). Teacher reflection: Supports, barriers, and results. *Issues in Teacher Education*, 22(1), 89-104.
- Janesick, V. (1994). The dance of qualitative research design: Metaphor, methodolatry, and meaning. . In N. denzin & Y. lincoln (eds.), *Handbook of qualitative research* (pp. 105-117). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Jay, M. (1996). *The dialectal imagination: A history of the Frankfurt school and the institute of social research, 1923-1950*. Los Angeles, California: University of California Press.
- Jones, S. L. 1. (2017). A different perspective of the teaching philosophy of RL Moore. *International Journal of Mathematical Education in Science & Technology*, 48(2), 300-306.
- Jones, S.R., Kim, Y., & Skendall, K. (2012). (Re-) Framing authenticity: Considering multiple social identities using autoethnographic and intersectional approaches. *Journal of Higher Education*, 83(5), 698-723.
- Kane, R., Sandretto, S., & Heath, C. (2004). An investigation into excellent tertiary teaching: Emphasising reflective practice. *Higher Education*, , 47(3), 283–310.
- Kansas State University. (2015). Office of the provost and senior vice president. *Coffman chair for university distinguished teaching scholars*. Retrieved from <http://www.k-state.edu/provost/enrichment/scholars-fellows.html>.
- Kansas State University. (2016). *About K-state*. Retrieved from <http://www.k-state.edu/about/>
- Karshmer, E., & Bryan, J. E. (2011). Building a first-year information literacy experience: Integrating best practices in education and ACRL IL competency standards for higher education. *Journal of Academic Librarianship*, 37(3), 255-266.
- Keeley, J. W., Ismail, E., & Buskist, W. (2016). Excellent teachers' perspectives on excellent teaching. *Teaching of Psychology*, 43(3), 175-179.
- Kellner, D. (2003). Toward a critical theory of education. *Democracy & Nature*, 9(1), 51-64.
- Kellner, Douglas (1989) *Critical Theory, Marxism, and Modernity*. Cambridge, UK and Baltimore, Md.: Polity Press and John Hopkins University Press.

- Kim, J. (2016). *Understanding narrative inquiry: The crafting and analysis of stories as research*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage. (JK).
- Kincheloe, J. L., & McLaren, P. (2011). Rethinking critical theory and qualitative research. In K. Hayes, S. R. Steinberg & K. Tobin (Eds). *Key works in critical pedagogy* (pp. 285-326). Rotterdam, The Netherlands: Sense Publishers.
- Kolman, J., Roegman, R., & Goodwin, A. (2017). Learner-Centered Mentoring: Building from Student Teachers' Individual Needs and Experiences as Novice Practitioners. *Teacher Education Quarterly*, 44(3), 93-117.
- Korn, J. H. (2009). Development of the fund for excellence in the teaching of psychology. *Teaching of Psychology*, 36(1), 42-45.
- Krain, M. and Shadle, C. J. (2006). Starving for knowledge: An Active Learning Approach to Teaching about World Hunger. *International Studies Perspectives* 7(1): 51-66.
- Kreber, C. (2002). Teaching excellence, teaching expertise, and the scholarship of teaching. *Innovative Higher Education*, 24.
- Kumaravadivelu, B (2003). *Beyond methods: Macro strategies for language teaching*. New Haven and London: Yale University Press.
- Lavender, R., Nguyen-Rodriguez, S., & Spruijt-Metz, D. (2010). Teaching the whole student: Perceived academic control in college art instruction. *Studies in Art Education*, 51(3), 198-218.
- Lavender, R., Nguyen-Rodriguez, S., & Spruijt-Metz, D. (2010). Teaching the whole student: Perceived academic control in college art instruction. *Studies in Art Education*, 51(3), 198-218.
- LeCompte, M. D. (2000). *Analyzing qualitative data. Theory into practice.*, 39(3), 147-154.
- LeoNora M., & Judy Gelbrich. (1999). *Module one: History and philosophy of education. Philosophical perspectives*. Retrieved from <http://oregonstate.edu/instruction/ed416/module1.html>
- Letizia, A. (2013). Battle for the enlightenment: Neoliberalism, critical theory and the role of circumventual education in fostering a new phase of the enlightenment. *Journal for Critical Education Policy Studies (JCEPS)*, 11(3), 164-193.
- Levine, A. (2005). *Educating school teachers*. Washington, D.C.: Education Schools Project.
- Lewis, J. S. & Harrison, M. A. (2012). Online delivery as a course adjunct promotes active learning and student success. *Teaching of Psychology*, 39(1), 72-76.
- Lewis, J. S., & Harrison, M. A. (2012). Online delivery as a course adjunct promotes active learning and student success. *Teaching of Psychology*, 39(1), 72-76.

- Livingston, M. J., McClain, B. R., & DeSpain, B. C. (1995). Assessing the consistency between teachers' philosophies and educational goals. *Education*, 116, 124-129.
- Loughran, J. (2013). *Developing a Pedagogy of Teacher Education: Understanding teaching and learning about teaching*. New York, NY: Routledge.
- Loughran, J. (2013). *Developing a pedagogy of teacher education: Understanding teaching & learning about teaching*. Routledge.
- Lukenchuk, A., Jagla, V. M., & Price, T. A. (2013). Critical discourse analysis of service-learning perspectives and models: *Transforming teacher education*. Charlotte, NC: Information Age Publishing
- Macintyre Latta, M. (2013). *Curricular conversations: Play is the (missing thing)*. New York, NY: Routledge.
- Malott, K. M., Hall, K. H., Sheely-Moore, A., Krell, M. M., & Cardaciotto, L. (2014). Evidence-based teaching in higher education: Application to counselor education. *Counselor Education & Supervision*, 53(4), 294-305.
- Marcuse, H. (1992). One-dimensional man. (2nd ed). *Introduction by Douglas Kellner*. Boston, MA: Beacon Press.
- Martinez M. & McGrath D. (2014) *Deeper Learning: How Eight Innovative Public Schools Are Transforming Education in the Twenty-First Century*. New York, NY: The New Press
- Mayhew, K. C., Edwards, A., & Dewey J. (2007). *Dewey school: The laboratory school of the University of Chicago, 1896-1903* AldinePublisher.
- McGowan, B. S. 1., Dickerson, P. S., & Lubejko, B. G. (2015). The rise and stall of eLearning: Best practices for technology-supported education. *Journal of Continuing Education in Nursing*, 46(7), 292-294.
- McGowan, B. S., Dickerson, P. S., & Lubejko, B. G. (2015). The rise and stall of eLearning: Best practices for technology-supported education. *Journal of Continuing Education in Nursing*, 46(7), 292-294.
- McLean, K.C., Syed, M., & Shucard, H. (2016). Bringing identity content to the fore: Links to identity development processes. *Emerging Adulthood*, 1-9.
- Mead, G. (1934). *Mind, self, and society: From the standpoint of a social behaviorist*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Medina, B. (2011). Professors of the year are awarded for honing their teaching skills. *Chronicle of Higher Education*, 58(14), A10-A10.
- Merriam, S. (2009). *Qualitative research and case study applications in education*. San Francisco: Josey-Bass publishers.

- Miles, M., & Huberman, A. (1994). *Qualitative data analysis*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Money, A., & Coughlan, J., Jane-Lisa. (2016). Team-taught versus individually taught undergraduate education: A qualitative study of student experiences and preferences. *Higher Education*, 72(6), 797-811.
- Moore, T. W. (2012). Educational Theory. *An introduction*. New York, NY: Routledge Library Editions.
- Murray, J. P. (1995). The teaching portfolio: A tool for department chairpersons to create a climate of teaching excellence. *Innovative Higher Education*, 19, 163-175.
- Myers, D. E. (2003). Quest for excellence: The transforming role of university-community collaboration in music teaching and learning. *Arts Education Policy Review*, 105(1), 5-12.
- National Center on Education and the Economy (U.S.). (2007). *Tough choices or tough times: The report of the new commission on the skills of the American workforce*. San Francisco, CA: John Wiley & Sons.
- National Commission on Teaching and America's Future (1996). *What matters most: Teaching for America's future?* New York.
- Noddings, N. (2005). *The challenge to care in schools: An alternative approach to education* (Second ed.). New York: Teachers College Press.
- Noddings, N. (2007). *Philosophy of education*. Boulder, CO: Westview Press.
- O'Grady, P. F. (2005). *What is philosophy? Meet the Philosophers of Ancient Greece*. Ashgate Publishing Ltd.
- Oliva, P. F. & Gordon, W. R. II. (2013). *Developing the Curriculum* (8th ed.). Boston: Pearson.
- Ortega y Gasset, J. (1964). Obras completas vol. 6, 6th Ed. *Revista de Occidente*, Madrid.
- Owens, B., & Strahan, D. (2016). Expanding excellence. *Journal of Staff Development*, 37(3), 20-24.
- Owens, B., & Strahan, D., strahan@email.wcu.edu. (2016). Expanding excellence. *Journal of Staff Development*, 37(3), 20-24.
- Patton, M. Q. (1990). *Qualitative evaluation and research methods* (2nd ed.). Newbury Park, CA: Sage.
- Periathiruvadi, S., sitaperi@gmail.com, & Rinn, A. N. 1. (2012). Technology in gifted education: A review of best practices and empirical research. *Journal of Research on Technology in Education*, 45(2), 153-169.
- Peshkin, A. (1993). The goodness of qualitative research. *Educational Researcher*, (22)2, 23-29.

- Price Jr., Bryan S.1, bprice@bcps.org. (2012). Zero margin for error: Effective strategies for teaching music to students with emotional disturbances. *Music Educators Journal*, 99(1), 67-72.
- Pritchard, M. E., & McIntosh, D. N. (2003). What predicts adjustment among law students? A longitudinal panel study. *Journal of Social Psychology*, 143, 727-45.
- Pritchard, M. E., Wilson, G. S., & Yamnitz, B. (2007). What predicts adjustment among college students? A longitudinal panel study. *Journal of American College Health* 56, 15-21.
- Rath, L. (2013). Development of a knowledge base for incorporating technology into courses. *Journal of Educational Technology Systems*, 42(2),
- Ravitch, D. (2010). *The death and life of the great American school system: How testing and choice are undermining education*. New York, NY: Basic Books.
- Readings, B. (1996). *The university in ruins*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.
- Reber, J. (2011). The under-examined life: A proposal for critically evaluating teachers' and students' philosophies of teaching. *College Teaching*, 59(3), 102-110.
- Reyes, Sh. A. & Crawford, J. (2012). Diary of a Bilingual School. *How a constructivist curriculum, a multicultural perspective, and a commitment to dual immersion education combined to foster fluent bilingualism in Spanish- and English – speaking children*. First Edition. Portland, OR: Diversity LearningK12 LLC.
- Ritschel, L. (2005). Lessons in teaching hope: An interview with C. R. Snyder. *Teaching of Psychology*, 32(1), 74-78.
- Robinson, K. (2015). *Creative schools: The grassroots revolution that's transforming education*. New York, NY: Penguin Random House.
- Rodrigues, K. J. 1. (2012). It does matter how we teach math. *MPAEA Journal of Adult Education*, 41(1), 29-33.
- Rodríguez Morales, A. (2011). *Factors that foster Latina, English language learner, nontraditional student resilience in higher education and their persistence in teacher education*.
- Rossetti, J., & Fox, P. G. (2009). Factors related to successful teaching by outstanding professors: An interpretive study. *Journal of Nursing Education*, 48(1), 11-16.
- Rust, F. O. C. (2010). Shaping new models for teacher education. *Teacher Education Quarterly*, 37(2), 5-18.
- Saldana, J. (2009). *The coding manual for qualitative researchers*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.

- Santillan, Y., Jacobs, J. M., & Wright, P. M. (2015). Integrating best practices in ELL classrooms with quality physical education instruction. *JOPERD: The Journal of Physical Education, Recreation & Dance*, 86(3), 51-53.
- Saunders, D. B. 1., (2015). Resisting excellence: Challenging neoliberal ideology in postsecondary education. *Journal for Critical Education Policy Studies (JCEPS)*, 13(2), 391-413.
- Schiro, M. S. (2013). *Curriculum and theory: Conflicting visions and enduring concerns* (2nd ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.
- Selvester, P. M., Mulholland, R., & Wong, P. (2006). *Camtasia: A tool for universal design learning*. *College & University Media Review*, 12(2), 9-17.
- Shenton, A. K. (2004). Strategies for ensuring trustworthiness in qualitative research projects. *Education for Information*, 63-75.
- Siegel, H. (2009). *The oxford handbook of philosophy of education*. Oxford, New York: Oxford University Press.
- Simpson, R. D. (2001). From adequacy to excellence: Honoring the scholarship of learning and teaching. *Innovative Higher Education*, 26(2), 83-86.
- Simpson, R. D. (2001). From adequacy to excellence: Honoring the scholarship of learning and teaching. *Innovative Higher Education*, 26(2), 83-86.
- Skinner, B. F. (1976). *Walden two*. Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice Hall.
- Slaughter, S., & Rhoades, G (2004). *Academic capitalism and the new economy: Markets, state and higher education*. Baltimore, MD: The Johns Hopkins University Press.
- Smimou, K., kamal.smimou@uoit.ca, & Dahl, D. W. 2. (2012). On the relationship between students' perceptions of teaching quality, methods of assessment, and satisfaction. *Journal of Education for Business*, 87(1), 22-35.
- Smith, R. O. (2014). Beyond passive learning: Problem-based learning and concept maps to promote basic and higher-order thinking in basic skills instruction. *Journal of Research & Practice for Adult Literacy, Secondary & Basic Education*, 3(2), 50-55
- Smith, R. O. 1. (2014). Beyond passive learning: Problem-based learning and concept maps to promote basic and higher-order thinking in basic skills instruction. *Journal of Research & Practice for Adult Literacy, Secondary & Basic Education*, 3(2), 50-55.
- Smith, T. (2008). Fostering a praxis stance in pre-service teacher education. In S. kemmis & T. smith (eds), *Enabling praxis: Challenges for education* (pp. 65-84). Rotterdam, The Netherlands: Sense Publishers.



- SNYDER, C., BESOZZI, D., PASKA, L., & OPPENLANDER, J. (2016). *Is flipping worth the fuss: A mixed methods case study of screen casting in the social studies classroom*. Retrieved from <http://search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&db=eft&AN=119642002&site=ehost-live>.
- SO, S. (2011). Case study research: Design and methods by YIN, ROBERT K. *Modern Language Journal*, 95(3), 474-475.
- Spall, S. (1998). Peer debriefing in qualitative research: Emerging operational models. *Qualitative Inquiry*, 4(2), 280-292.
- Spencer, L. G. 1. (2015). Engaging undergraduates in feminist classrooms: An exploration of professors' practices. *Equity & Excellence in Education*, 48(2), 195-211.
- Spradley, J. P. (1980). *Participant observation* / James P. Spradley. New York, NY: Holt, Rinehart and Winston.
- Straquadine, G. S., & Cano, J. (1987). Graduate students' viewpoint on recognizing excellence in teaching. *Agricultural Education Magazine*, 60, 11-13.
- Strauss, A., & Corbin, J. (1998). *Basics of qualitative research: Techniques and procedures for developing grounded theory*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Corwin.
- Sugarman, L. (1985). Kolb's model of experiential learning: touchstone for trainers, students, counselors, and clients. *Journal of Counseling & Development*, 64264-268.
- Tagore, R. The Parrot's training. Retrieved from [http://www.kireetjoshiarchives.com/teachers\\_training/good\\_teacher/parrots----training.php](http://www.kireetjoshiarchives.com/teachers_training/good_teacher/parrots----training.php)
- Tam, M. (2001). Measuring quality and performance in higher education. *Quality in Higher Education*, 7(1), 47-54.
- Tannebaum, R. P. (2016). Cooperating teachers' impact on preservice social studies teachers' autonomous practices: A multi-case study. *Journal of Social Studies Research*, 40(2), 97-107.
- Tannebaum, R. P. 1., TannebaumR.@Merrimack.edu. (2016). Cooperating teachers' impact on preservice social studies teachers' autonomous practices: A multi-case study. *Journal of Social Studies Research*, 40(2), 97-107.
- Taylor, E. W. (2002). Using still photography in making meaning of adult educators' teaching beliefs. *Studies in the Education of Adults*, , 34(2), 123-139.
- Taylor, K. A. (2015). Philosophies of education. EDCI 813 philosophy of American Education. *Manuscript*.

- The United Nations. (1948). *The universal declaration of human rights*. Retrieved from <http://www.un.org/en/documents/udhr/>
- Turner, D., turned@drexel.edu, & Gorichanaz, T., gorichanaz@drexel.edu. (2016). Unsorting ourselves: A critical role for LIS education. A short communication. *Journal of Education for Library & Information Science*, 57(4), 325-328.
- Tyler, R. W. (1949/2013). *Basic principles of curriculum and instruction*. Chicago, IL: The University of Chicago Press.
- Van, d. H., Houtveen, A. A. M. 1., & Van, d. G. (2016). Fostering effective teaching behavior through the use of data-feedback. *Teaching & Teacher Education*, 60, 444-451.
- Virginia Journal of Education. (2014). The future of teaching. Education digest. Prakken Publications, 79(7), 15-18.
- Vlachopoulos, D. (2016). Assuring quality in E-learning course design: The roadmap. *International Review of Research in Open & Distance Learning*, 17(6), 183-205.
- Wang, J., Odell, S. J., Klecka, C.L., Spalding, E., & Lin, E. (2010). Understanding teacher education reform. *Journal of Teacher Education* , 61(5), 395–402.
- Wang, J., Odell, S. J., Klecka, C.L., Spalding, E., & Lin, E. (2010). Understanding teacher education reform. *Journal of Teacher Education.*, 61(5), 395–402.
- Wariboko, N. (2009). The Principle of Excellence. *A framework for Social Ethics*. Plymouth, UK: Lexington Books.
- Warner, C. K. 1. (2016). Contested definitions of excellent teaching. *Journal of Thought*, 50(1), 20-36.
- Weiler, K. (1988). Women teaching for change. Gender, class, and power. South Hadley, MA: Bergin & Garvey.
- Williams, J. (2016). And the winners are. *Teaching Tolerance*, (54), 57-58.
- WordReference (2017). *Random House Learner's Dictionary of American English*.
- Yamamoto, K. (1969). *Analysis of teaching: Another look*. in K, (ed.), 355–366. Boston, MA: Houghton Mifflin.
- Yin, R. K. (2003). *Case study research: Design and methods* (3rd ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Yoon, E., & Portman, T. (2004). Critical issues of literature on counseling international students. *Journal of Multicultural Counseling and Development*, 32, 33-45.
- Youngeun Choi, & Anderson, W. J. (2016). Self-directed learning with feedback. *Journal of College Science Teaching*, 45(1), 32-38.

- Zhang, N., & Dixon, N. D. (2003). Acculturation and attitudes of Asian international students toward seeking psychological help. *Journal of Multicultural Counseling and Development*, 31, 205-223.
- Zimmerman, B. J. (2000). Self-Efficacy: An Essential Motive to Learn. *Contemporary Educational Psychology*, 25(1), 82-91.

# **Appendix A - INTERVIEW PROTOCOL**

## **Prior to face-to-face interviews**

Debriefing. Prior to the interviews each participant individually was invited to participate in to an initial face-to-face meeting to be informed on the following:

1. The purpose of the research
  - I. K
2. The procedures of the research
  - I. Primary sources of data collection
    - i. Demographic questionnaire
    - ii. Three face-to-face interviews
  - II. Member checking
    - i. Participants will have the opportunity to review transcripts, make additions, and/or modifications to ensure the validity of the transcript ant that they said what they meant to say
    - ii. Initial coding of transcripts
3. The risks, if any, and benefits of research
  - I. Risks
    - i. There is no predictable risk for participating in this study
  - II. Benefits of research
    - i. Contribution to limited research on best practices of successful professors
    - ii. Opportunity for educators to improve their teaching and learning practice at higher education
4. The voluntary decision to withdraw from the research at any time

- I. Participants can withdraw their consent and stop participating in the research at any point if they decide to do so, without penalty

5. Confidentiality

- I. Anonymity to protect confidentiality by using pseudonyms was offered as an option.  
But, each one of the participants preferred to use their own names.

6. The procedure to obtain written consent

Both researcher and participants signed two copies of the consent form, one for researcher and another one for each participant. The participants also received a copy of the interview questions for the three face-to-face interviews.

**7. Conclusion of first meeting**

At the conclusion of this meeting:

- I. Thank the participant
- II. Schedule first face-to-face interview

## Appendix B - DEMOGRAPHIC QUESTIONNAIRE

### PRIOR TO INTERVIEW

1.	Participant's pseudonym or Professor's name:	
2.	Age:	
3.	Gender:	
4.	Ethnicity/Race:	
5.	Place of birth:	
6.	Number of sibling in the family you grew up:	
7.	Marital Status:	
8.	Members of your current family:	
9.	Academic rank:	
10.	<b>Department:</b>	
11.	College:	
12.	Classes you teach:	
13.	University where you obtained your Ph.D. degree	
14.	Number of years you have taught	
15.	Number of years you have worked at K-State?	
16.	Places you worked before K-State?	

## **Appendix C - OPEN-ENDED LIFE NARRATIVE**

Before we begin with the first interview, there are a few points that I want to make sure that you are aware of.

First, you need to know that your participation in this qualitative case study is voluntary and that you can withdraw from it at any time without penalty.

Second, you may refrain from answering any questions at any time.

Third, I offer you confidentiality and anonymity to protect your identity. You can choose

Fourth, the three face-to-face interviews will be audiotaped to capture your exact answer to the questions.

Finally, I will try to maintain a time limit of up to 60 minute-long for each interview. But, it is ok if you need to interrupt the interview for any reason.

First interview: Life Narrative (about 60 minute-long)

Date:

Participant's pseudonym/name:

Time of interview: Begins: Ends:

1. Please tell me about yourself, where did you grow up?

## Appendix D - IRB APPROVAL



University Research Compliance Office

TO: Dr. F. Todd Goodson  
Curriculum and Instruction  
261A Bluemont Hall

Proposal Number: 8713

FROM: Rick Scheidt, Chair   
Committee on Research Involving Human Subjects

DATE: 03/21/2017

RE: Approval of Proposal Entitled, "Teaching Philosophies and Best Practices: An examination of University Distinguished Teaching Scholars' Perspectives and Experiences at Kansas State University."

The Committee on Research Involving Human Subjects has reviewed your proposal and has granted full approval. This proposal is **approved for one year from the date of this correspondence, pending "continuing review."**

APPROVAL DATE: 03/21/2017

EXPIRATION DATE: 03/21/2018

Several months prior to the expiration date listed, the IRB will solicit information from you for federally mandated "**continuing review**" of the research. Based on the review, the IRB may approve the activity for another year. **If continuing IRB approval is not granted, or the IRB fails to perform the continuing review before the expiration date noted above, the project will expire and the activity involving human subjects must be terminated on that date. Consequently, it is critical that you are responsive to the IRB request for information for continuing review if you want your project to continue.**

In giving its approval, the Committee has determined that:

- ☒ There is no more than minimal risk to the subjects.  
☐ There is greater than minimal risk to the subjects.

This approval applies only to the proposal currently on file as written. Any change or modification affecting human subjects must be approved by the IRB prior to implementation. All approved proposals are subject to continuing review at least annually, which may include the examination of records connected with the project. Announced post-approval monitoring may be performed during the course of this approval period by URCO staff. Injuries, unanticipated problems or adverse events involving risk to subjects or to others must be reported immediately to the Chair of the IRB and / or the URCO.



## **Appendix E - INTERVIEW QUESTIONS**

### **Interview # 1**

4. Through your pictures, Tell me about yourself. Where did you grow up?
5. Through your pictures, tell me about your current family.
6. Who has had the greatest influence in your life to be the person you are today?
7. Please, draw a time line that walks me through some events that let you become a professor.
8. Why did you want to become a professor?
9. What has your experiences in undergraduate teaching and learning been like?
10. Do you see yourself as a successful professor? Why?
11. What are your teaching strengths / passions?

### **Interview # 2**

1. Describe your significant contributions to the scholarship of undergraduate teaching and learning that let you to be awarded the Coffman Chair for University Distinguished Teaching Scholar Award.
2. Please, describe the theory / theories of Education you apply in your teaching and learning practice.
3. How do you choose and decide the curriculum or what to teach?
4. Please, describe the highlights of your teaching philosophy.
5. What do you consider to be your best teaching and learning practices? Please explain in detail what kind of innovative teaching pedagogies, methodologies, approaches, methods or techniques you use to teach?

### **Interview # 3**

1. Through your pictures, tell me about the relationship between you and your students.
2. Through your pictures, explain your instruction and experience.
3. What do you think are your best skills and qualities an excellent teacher should have?
4. How do you manage your time for teaching and research?

## Appendix F - E-MAIL OF INVITATION

Dear Dr. ...,

Cordial greetings from Monica E. Vaca-Cardenas. I am a doctoral candidate in the Department of Curriculum and Instruction at K-State and I am working on my doctoral research titled, “Teaching Philosophies and Best Practices: An Examination of the Experiences, Philosophy and Pedagogy of University Distinguished Teaching Scholars at Kansas State University”. The research proposal has already been approved by my committee and by the University Research Compliance Office with the Proposal Number: 8713 (IRB approval is attached). Therefore, I can start collecting my data.

This email is to kindly request your collaboration as a participant in my research dissertation. Since you are the 2016-2017 holder of the Coffman Chair for University Distinguished Teaching Scholars. It will be a great honor to have you as a participant.

For this qualitative study, I will conduct 3 interviews and analysis of documents. If you would be willing to participate, please let me know when I can visit your office to provide with more detail information about the research, sing an Inform Consent, and answer to any question you might have.

Thank you very much for your attention and I look forward to hearing from you.

Sincerely,

**Mónica E. Vaca-Cárdenas**

Ph.D. Candidate-Department of Curriculum and Instruction

Kansas State University

Email: [monivcec@ksu.edu](mailto:monivcec@ksu.edu)

# Appendix G - PARTICIPANT CONSENT FORM

## KANSAS STATE UNIVERSITY

### INFORMED CONSENT TEMPLATE

PROJECT TITLE:	"Teaching Philosophies and Best Practices: An Examination of the Experiences, Philosophy and Pedagogy of University Distinguished Teaching Scholars at Kansas State University"		
APPROVAL DATE OF PROJECT:	3/21/2017	EXPIRATION DATE OF PROJECT:	3/21/2018
PRINCIPAL INVESTIGATOR: CO-INVESTIGATOR(S):	Dr. Todd Goodson Monica Elva Vaca-Cardenas		
CONTACT AND PHONE FOR ANY PROBLEMS/QUESTIONS:	Dr. Todd Goodson Associate Professor and Chair Department of Curriculum and Instruction 261 Bluemont Hall 785-532-5904 tgoodson@k-state.edu  Mónica Elva Vaca-Cárdenas Ph.D. Candidate Student Department of Curriculum and Instruction Phone: 785 8443595 Email: monivcec@k-state.edu		
IRB CHAIR CONTACT/PHONE INFORMATION:	Rick Scheidt, Committee Chair (785) 532-1483 rscheidt@ksu.edu		
SPONSOR OF PROJECT:	College of Education, Curriculum and Instruction, SENESCYT (sponsor in Ecuador)		
PURPOSE OF THE RESEARCH:	The purpose of this qualitative case study is to examine experiences, teaching philosophies, and best practices of successful professors who were awarded the Coffman Chair for University Distinguished Teaching Scholars at Kansas State University in undergraduate teaching and learning. It is an important exploration and documentation of the perceptions of successful professors in relation to their experiences in undergraduate teaching and learning and the ways they describe their teaching philosophies and their best practices including effective teaching methodologies in education.		
PROCEDURES OR METHODS TO BE USED:	I will use multiple data collection methods including formal interviews, photo elicitation interviews, time line elicitation interviews, analysis of documents, and journaling. The type of questions for the interviews will be semi-structured open-ended questions which in turn will create follow-up questions driven by the conversation.		
ALTERNATIVE PROCEDURES OR TREATMENTS, IF ANY, THAT MIGHT BE ADVANTAGEOUS TO SUBJECT:			

LENGTH OF STUDY: one year

RISKS ANTICIPATED: There are no anticipated risks for this project

BENEFITS ANTICIPATED: The findings of this study will inform researchers, professors, and educational authorities with practical applications for excellence in teaching and learning, at national and world level.

EXTENT OF  
CONFIDENTIALITY: I will provide confidentiality and anonymity by protecting the participant's identity with pseudonyms. As well as, I will encrypt any other specific details such as names, addresses, and others. However, for the participants who would like not to be anonymous, I will reveal their names and other identifying details.

All the collected data including electronic and hard copies will be stored in safe and completely protected formats so that it is only accessible to me. After completion of my research, I will maintain my collected data for a period of three years and then I will destroy it.

For the records, participants will sign an informed consent indicating their participation and their understanding that this dissertation will be made public for everybody through K-Rex Thesis and Dissertation and through other forms of publications.

Additionally, I will have participants conduct member checks to ensure trustworthiness of information.

IS COMPENSATION OR MEDICAL TREATMENT AVAILABLE IF INJURY OCCURS: n/a

PARENTAL APPROVAL FOR MINORS: n/a

TERMS OF PARTICIPATION: I understand this project is research, and that my participation is completely voluntary. I also understand that if I decide to participate in this study, I may withdraw my consent at any time, and stop participating at any time without explanation, penalty, or loss of benefits, or academic standing to which I may otherwise be entitled.

I verify that my signature below indicates that I have read and understand this consent form, and willingly agree to participate in this study under the terms described, and that my signature acknowledges that I have received a signed and dated copy of this consent form.

(Remember that it is a requirement for the P.I. to maintain a signed and dated copy of the same consent form signed and kept by the participant)

Participant Name: \_\_\_\_\_


Participant Signature: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Witness to Signature: (project staff) \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

## Appendix H - RELEASE FORM

(Date)

Monica Elva ~~Vaca~~ Cardenas  
1600 Hillcrest Drive V12  
Phone: 7853237987  
Email: monivcec@ksu.edu

Dear Dr. ....  


I request permission to use the following material: photographs, images, and other artifacts.

Copyright Holder(s): \_\_\_\_\_

By agreeing to this I WISH TO USE THIS MATERIAL IN THE FOLLOWING MANNER:

I am pursuing a doctoral degree from Kansas State University and I am conducting my dissertation. The material will be included in my dissertation and all data from my dissertation will be published in different locations in print, electronic, and any other format.

I will clearly identify your name as the author or owner of the material.

Distribution: In print, electronic, and any other medium.

Duration of use: Unlimited

Thank you for your prompt consideration of this request. For your convenience, a release form is provided below.

Sincerely,

Monica ~~Vaca~~-Cardenas

### RELEASE FORM (Please Select One):

- ☐ Permission is granted for the use requested above.
- ☐ Permission is not granted for the use requested above, for the following reason(s):