Villa College

Research Digest

ISSUE 4 (APRIL 2021)

VC Research Digest provides updates on current and ongoing research projects of Villa College staff and students, and provides fresh research ideas and snippets to help expand the horizon of research and inquiry.

EDITORIAL

RESEARCHER'S PARADIGM: WHAT COLOUR ARE YOUR GLASSES?

For many novice researchers, the concept of research paradigm is often something that is baffling to comprehend, elusive to articulate, and challenging to apply. Oftentimes, given its inscrutability and untamed behaviour, researchers ignore it at their own peril.

In academic research, a paradigm is the framework or point of view, which maps out the way of looking at the phenomenon being studied. As defined by Kuhn (1970), a paradigm is "the set of common beliefs and agreements shared between scientist about how problems should be understood and addressed". Thus, the paradigm defines the researcher's worldview and the lens through which the researcher looks at the world. It also recognises the assumptions and beliefs through which the researcher engages with the research problem. The paradigm also helps frame the problem and determines the most appropriate methodological approach and tools as well as the analysis that would fit the research problem.

The research paradigm constitutes four essential components, i.e., ontology, epistemology, axiology, and methodology. Let's say one wants to research on the phenomenon of happiness and then see how the elements of research paradigm can be applied in such a research.

Ontology is how the author views the nature of reality related to the research problem. In essence, ontology helps researchers to recognise the nature and existence of objects they are researching. While the philosophical explanations of ontology can be onerous, the simplest approach could be to think of a concrete or abstract reality. Using this framework, happiness is decidedly an abstract reality.

Epistemology deals with how we can know something. It defines how the researcher frames their research in order to discover knowledge. Again, if we were to use a simplified approach, epistemology can take the perspective either that the reality is independent of the mind (positivist), or that the reality is constructed in our minds (interpretivist) approaches. For our example of happiness, it is reasonable to assume that happiness is a subjective experience of the individual and does not have an independent existence outside the mind that perceives it.

Axiology defines the value systems that the researcher is applying as well as the ethical issues that need to be considered. How much of value we attribute to evaluating and understanding concepts of right and wrong behaviour relating to the research are determined from an axiological point of view. In our example of happiness, axiological stance will determine the value we attribute to what the individuals report as subjective wellbeing and their feelings, in addition to the ethical considerations related to what we can and cannot know about an individual without violating their privacy.

Methodology addresses aspects of research design, methods, approaches and procedures that are most appropriate for a given problem. This is where the researcher asks the question "how should I go about doing this research?". If we are to do a research on happiness, this is where the researcher identifies the best type of data, data collection and analysis methods.

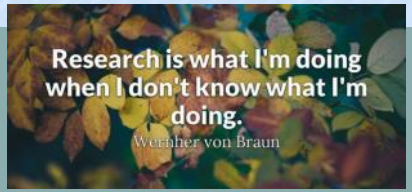
Although not always necessary to be explicitly stated in your research article or dissertation, I would advise all researchers (including student researchers) to pay attention to identifying and applying a specific research paradigm in their research work.

References

Kuhn, T. (1970). Postscript 1969. In T. Kuhn, The structure of scientific revolutions (2nd ed., pp. 174-210). Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Dr. Ahmed Shahid

Editor (VC Research Digest)



IN THIS ISSUE

PUBLISHED BY

Institute for Research and Innovation

Villa College

EDITORS

Editor: Dr. Ahmed Shahid

Sub-editors: Dr. Fazeela Ibrahim

Dr. Sheema Saeed

A Guide to Thematic Analysis: A Commentary

Dr. Aishath Nasheeda

Senior Lecturer, Faculty of Educational Studies, Villa College

This commentary is based on one of the most acclaimed articles in qualitative psychology – the work by Braun and Clarke (2006) demonstrating the use of Thematic Analysis (TA) in psychology. In their article, Braun and Clarke (2006) described what thematic analysis is, a six-phase guide to doing thematic analysis, and potential pitfalls to avoid when conducting thematic analysis.

TA is a method for analysing patterns in qualitative data. While it has been a popular strategy to analyze qualitative data, TA allows flexibility and provides a rich and detailed account of data. TA offers a more accessible form of analysis for early qualitative researchers. TA can be used within different theoretical frameworks and can be a realistic method that examines how real life events, meanings, and experiences are the effects of a range of discourse functioning within society. Thus, TA is vital to reflect reality as well as to unpick the surface of reality.

Guide to Thematic Analysis

Phase 1 – Familiarizing with data

It is vital to immerse oneself in the data to the extent that one is familiar with the depth and breadth of the content of the collected data. Immersion includes active reading – searching for meanings, patterns, and so forth. It is ideal to read through the data at least once before beginning to code. Note taking or marking ideas for coding is a good way to get things ready. Once this is done, we can begin a more formal coding process. Coding continues to develop throughout the entire analysis.

Phase 2 – Generating initial codes

Phase 2 begins with an initial list of ideas about the data. It often involves the production of initial codes from the most basic segments of raw data or information that were meaningful. The process of coding is part of the analysis. Coded data is different from the unit of analysis – themes which are much broader. Hence, themes are generated in the interpretive analysis of data phase. Thus, coding depends on whether the themes are going to be theory driven or data driven. In data driven coding, themes will depend on data. However, if the study is theory driven, the data might be approached with specific questions in mind that the researcher wishes to code around.

Phase 3 – Searching for themes

This stage begins only after the initial coding. In this phase, codes are sorted into different themes, by considering how different codes maybe combined to form an overarching theme. Visual representations such as tables, mind maps are useful in sorting out the codes into themes. In this stage, the relationship between different codes, themes and different levels of themes (sub and main themes) are analysed. At this stage, there might be codes that does not fit into any theme. In such a case, a temporary "miscellaneous" theme can be generated, as it is still too early to discard any codes or themes without revisiting the data set at this stage.

Phase 4 – Reviewing themes

There are two levels in this stage – reviewing and refining. Reviewing themes includes reading all the collated extracts and considering if each theme is coherent with the other. If there is no coherence, then it is time to rework the theme and create a new theme and discard them from analyzing. Refining involves validating the individual themes by re-reading the entire data set. This is to ascertain whether themes are in accordance to the data set and to code any additional data that has been missed in earlier stages.

Phase 5 – Defining and naming themes

This stage is about identifying what is interesting about the themes and why. In this stage, we can write a detailed analysis and identify the story of each theme. It is important to relate the overall story to the research questions. While writing the story, sub-themes needs to be taken into account as these provide structure to complex themes and demonstrates the hierarchy of the meaning within the data.

Phase 6- Producing the report

Phase 6 involves the final analysis and write up. The write up includes the discussion of the story of the data in a concise, coherent, logical, non-repetitive and interesting way. Choosing vivid examples will be helpful in capturing the essence of the point without complexity. The extracts used in the write-up need

FROM THE WORLD OF RESEARCH

A Review of Using Machine Learning Approaches for Precision Education

Hui Luan and Chin-Chung Tsai

ABSTRACT

In recent years, in the field of education, there has been a clear progressive trend toward precision education. As a rapidly evolving AI technique, machine learning is viewed as an important means to realize it. In this paper, we systematically review 40 empirical studies regarding machine-learning-based precision education. The results showed that the majority of studies focused on the prediction of learning performance or dropouts, and were carried out in online or blended learning environments among university students majoring in computer science or STEM, whereas the data sources were divergent. The commonly used machine learning algorithms, evaluation methods, and validation approaches are presented. The emerging issues and future directions are discussed accordingly.

Luan, H., & Tsai, C.-C. (2021). A Review of Using Machine Learning Approaches for Precision Education. Educational Technology & Society, 24 (1), 250–266.

Read on… https://www.jstor.org/stable/10.2307/26977871

to be embedded within the analytical narratives that move beyond description of the data and make a justifiable argument in relation to the research question.

Potential pitfalls to avoid when doing thematic analysis

- Failure to analyse the data – as thematic analysis moves beyond just presenting themes to illustrative analytical points that supports specific content.
- Using the data collection questions a.k.a interview schedule as the themes
- Weak or unconvincing analysis with too much overlap with no coherence – weak analysis stems from one or two extracts for a theme
- Mismatch between data and the analytical claims that are made.
- Mismatch between the research question and the form of thematic analysis (data driven or theory driven)

To read the full article click

Helpful Articles

- Teaching thematic analysis
- A Thematic Analysis Investigating the impact of Positive Behavioral Support Training on the Lives of Service Providers: "It Makes You Think Differently"
- What can "thematic analysis" offer health and wellbeing researchers?
- Thematic analysis

References

Braun, V., & Clarke, V. (2014). What can "thematic analysis" offer health and wellbeing researchers? In *International Journal of Qualitative Studies on Health and Well-being* (Vol. 9). Co-Action Publishing. https://doi.org/10.3402/qhw.v9.26152

Braun, V., & Clarke, V. (2006). Using thematic analysis in psychology. *2006*, *3*(2), 77–101.

Clarke, V., & Braun, V. (2017). Thematic analysis. *Journal of Positive Psychology*, *12*(3), 297–298. https://doi.org/10.1080/17439760.2016.1262613

Clarke, V., & Braun, V. (2013). Teaching thematic analysis. *Psychologist*, *26*(2), 120–123.

Walsh, R. S., McClean, B., Doyle, N., Ryan, S., Scarborough-Lang, S. J., Rishton, A., & Dagnall, N. (2019). A thematic analysis investigating the impact of positive behavioral support training on the lives of service providers: "it makes you think differently." *Frontiers in Psychology*, *10*(OCT). https://doi.org/10.3389/fpsyg.2019.02408

Teaching Tips Part 2: Teach like you don't need the money...

David Mingay

Visiting Lecturer, Faculty of Educational Studies, Villa College

Following on from the article in the last issue of the Digest, here are a few more ideas for spicing up lectures and enhancing student learning.

The syllabus

Depending on the course level, there should be room to allow students to decide some of what you and they cover. First years will have less flexibility here — there are key concepts which they will only know are key once you've told them — but more advanced students might be encouraged as a group to develop their own interests, with you as their guide. Perhaps the last meeting before the long break could be devoted to them answering the question: "What would you like to study next academic year?"

Active students

I'm sure we're all familiar with these:

- Think/pair/share.
- Debates.
- Jigsaw activities.
- Fishbowl discussions.
- Concept mapping.
- Polls and clicker-style questions.
- Class presentations.
- Peer teaching.

From my experience, students like these, but only in moderation — they get bored with them if they have to do them too often. Also, they know they're discussing with or being lectured to by someone who knows less than you, and they might start to resent you for not imparting your own superior knowledge.

Laptops in lectures: Discourage them! It's not just a 'kids today...things were better in my day' complaint — all the research suggests that when students take notes with a pen and paper they understand and recall the information from lectures better than if they input it into a laptop. They can type them up later to reinforce the information.

Emotions

Unsurprisingly, we're more like to be engaged and remember things if emotions are involved. We're not automata. I expect the main emotion students experience is fear, having invested all their time and money on a course which they may — hopefully not, of course — fail. That's not what I mean here though. Here are some positive emotions which are good for learning.

- *Suspense*: Like any good whodunit, academics are always trying to find the answers to pressing problems. (Well, not always — I met someone at Edinburgh University once whose specialism was 14th Century Italian table manners. Surprisingly fascinating, but not exactly life-threatening if he never got to the bottom of it.) If you can present the quest for knowledge like a murder mystery, what warm-blooded student isn't going to be engrossed?
- *Surprise*: If our research only ever supported the obvious, it wouldn't really be worth doing. My own research on driving and risk-taking was based on a counter-intuitive finding, which led to a theory that journal reviewers at the time said was about as believable as the Bermuda Triangle. Fortunately, research from others led a change in opinion to the point where the theory is now described as being 'obvious' and 'common sense'.
- *Humour*: If you don't have your own good jokes, 'borrow' them from elsewhere!
- *Enthusiasm*: I remember my own good and bad lecturers from my undergraduate days. One bad one used to drone on for an hour while gazing, as though in a dream, out of the window. The one I found most inspiring and memorable, on the other hand, used to charge about the stage, waving his arms around excitedly, as though he'd just discovered something new, and it was the first time he'd ever given a lecture on it.

Uncannily, while I was writing this article, I received an email from a mature student I taught about 15 years ago which makes me think I must be doing something right!

Hi David, I remember your vast and infectious enthusiasm with pleasure. I didn't stay in psychology, but went on to apply the scientific mindset I learned with you in my old subject:

trees. I regard it as a triumph of the transferability of the scientific method, and am now working towards a PhD on the strength of these ideas. Thanks David. Very best, Toby

Random ideas

- *Video yourself* to see what you look like. If you don't like what you see, change it!
- *Watch others* give lectures and learn what to do...and what not to do! Years ago, I went to see one of Britain's leading psychologists, Hans Eysenck, give a lecture on IQ. He spent the whole hour turned away from the microphone, reading from his slides. We couldn't hear him, and we couldn't see what the slides said because the font was tiny. It was terrible!
- *Take risks and try new things* — but tell the students what you're doing, so they'll forgive you if it falls flat!
- *Build a community of learners*: Learn their names; Give everyone a chance to contribute, either to the whole group, or to a smaller group if they're a bit shy; Use whole group projects — the great American psychologist, Stanley Milgram, used to send groups of his students out into the streets of New York to do strange things and see how the public reacted — the team spirit that developed was apparently quite magical.
- *Be approachable*: we're all busy, all the time, but if it weren't for the existence of students, we wouldn't have a job. I quite like them, anyway, to be honest, so I'm happy if they want to speak with me!
- *Set high standards*: But show you appreciate they aren't there yet. One of my catchphrases is "Very good. Next time, do it even better."
- *Enjoy silence*: If you ask the group a question, give them time to think. Don't necessarily let the person who puts their hand up first answer. Don't always tell the first respondent whether they're right or wrong — ask the rest if they agree.
- *Use stories*: We're brought up from an early age to enjoy stories — stories which involve real people doing real things. Tell them your story. Ask them about theirs. Tell stories about the eminent people in your field. It's not just anthropologists who have exciting lives — the story of why statistician William Gosset had to publish his famous t-test under a pseudonym is fascinating.

Remember: Sprezzatura!

Next time, I'll be looking at a few ideas to make testing more interesting for you and for your students.

More details and readings at: http://thejoyofconcrete.org/lectures

FROM THE WORLD OF RESEARCH

Women in Business and Management in Thailand: Transforming High Participation Without EEO

Natenapha Wailerdsak (Yabushita)

ABSTRACT

Thailand has no equal employment opportunity (EEO) laws or mandatory women's quota system as seen in developed countries. The only exception is a provision in the Thai Constitution that states that men and women shall enjoy equal rights. Despite this, the country has one of the world's highest number of women in management positions. It is generally held that Thai society has given women the opportunity to progress at the same rate as men within the workplace. Given this background, this paper examines the factors behind the high participation rate of Thai women in business and management without the support of institutional EEO legislation and mandatory state regulation from the supply side. It argues that, as Thailand transforms into a super-aged society, gender equality strategies, particularly non-discriminatory employment opportunities and work-life balance measures, should be consistently provided to ensure sustainable and inclusive growth.

Source: Wailerdsak, N., 2020. Women in Business and Management in Thailand. Journal of Southeast Asian Economies, 37(2), pp.163-180.

Read on… https://www.jstor.org/stable/10.2307/26938871

Mentoring and Reflective Practices in Teaching Practicum of Undergraduates

Aminath Suha

Lecturer, Centre for Foundation Studies, Villa College

Zahra Mohamed

PhD candidate, The University of Waikato

Mariyam Nihaadh

Senior Lecturer, Faculty of Educational Studies

Fathimath Warda

Senior Lecturer, Faculty of Education Studies, Villa College

Introduction

Reflection is regarded as one of the imperative skills to be inculcated in student teachers to enable them to reflect on and inquire into their practices throughout their journey as a teacher. The foundation for reflective practice is best laid during teacher education programmes. The use of reflection in teaching practicum coupled with mentoring from supervisors could be pivotal in providing both experienced and novice teachers the support necessary to learn and grow personally and professionally.

Even though the importance of reflective practices in the teaching practicum is emphasized in the international literature (Cooper & Wieckowsk, 2017; Jones & Ryan, 2014; Zahid & Khanam, 2019), there seems to be a paucity of research published in the Maldivian context that focused on reflection (Ali, 2013) or teaching practicum (Rasheed, 2017). Furthermore, previous studies conducted in the Maldives have overlooked the aspect of reflection and mentoring process in the practicum. Hence, the present study aims to explore the effectiveness of mentoring and reflective practices on the successful completion of teaching practicum of undergraduate students.

The findings of this study could provide a significant contribution to the existing literature on reflective practices and mentoring in teaching practicum. It may provide invaluable information to teacher education institutions both in the Maldives and around the world to reform the current teaching practicum procedure to enhance the practicum experience of student teachers.

Literature

Reflection or reflective practice has become a very popular area of discussion in the literature on teacher education (Maharsi, 2019; Sharafi & Rokni, 2014; Wright, 2010). Reflection has its roots in the concept of 'reflective thoughts' by Dewey (1910). He defined reflection as "active, persistent, and careful consideration of any belief or supposed form of knowledge in the light of the grounds that support it and the further conclusions to which it tends" (Dewey, 1910, p. 6). One of the most frequently used models for reflection in teacher education is Schön's (1983) model that encompasses two aspects of reflection known as *reflection-in-action* and *reflection-on-action*. While reflection-in-action is guided by tacit knowledge that occurs within the time of practice, the latter is a reflection on the practice once the action has been completed.

In addition to reflection, the availability of effective guidance by a mentor has proven to be essential in developing the quality of teaching practice for student teachers (Becker, Waldis & Staub, 2019; Hennissen & Crasborn, 2014). This form of mentoring involved collaborative lesson planning and constructive feedback and reflection during lesson conferences. Furthermore, a study done by Mena, Hennissen & Loughran (2017) shows that mentoring roles such as summarizing and questioning, and the roles of being an encourager and imperator led to the overall improvement of practice in student teachers. Hence, mentoring and instructional coaching are essential facets for supporting student teachers during their teaching practice.

Literature in the Maldivian context indicates that student teachers face many issues in their practicum concerning classroom management, inadequate support from stakeholders, and coordination and cooperation among the key players (Rasheed, 2017). Obstacles are not only faced by student teachers in their practicum, but also by novice teachers. According to Ali (2013), beginning teachers face challenges related to time management, high workload, parent-teacher relationship, and lack of resources. Most of these challenges faced by student teachers and beginning teachers can be minimized through mentoring by the cooperating teachers (CTs) and the implementation of reflective practices.

Methodology

This is a collaborative action research (CAR) that aims to explore the effectiveness of mentoring and reflective practices in student teachers' successful completion of their practicum. According to Sagor (1993), CAR can be used when the phenomenon under study is related to the process of teaching and learning and if the phenomenon is within the practitioners' scope of influence. Thus, this study is a collaborative effort of practitioner-researchers who intend to explore and improve the practicum experiences of their students. Teaching practicum is an important component of all teaching programmes offered by the Faculty of Educational Studies at Villa College. This includes teaching programmes at the diploma, undergraduate, and postgraduate level. All the students supervised by the researchers will be invited to participate in this action research. Purposive sampling will be used to select 12 student teachers based on demographics such as gender, age, teaching experience to ensure participants are from diverse backgrounds.

Data for this qualitative research will be collected from a variety of sources. One of the main sources of data is weekly reflective tasks completed by the participants during weeks 2-6 of their practicum. Focus group interviews with the participants conducted in the mid-practicum and at the end of practicum via Google meet/Zoom will also provide rich descriptions of their experiences. While participants will be provided prompts to facilitate reflection and inquiry into their own experiences in the Viber groups created for them, these academic discussions will also be used as data for this research. In addition, mentoring sessions conducted online by the researchers for the participants will also be recorded and transcribed for this study. Finally, the practicum portfolio submitted by the participant as partial fulfilment of their teaching practicum will also provide additional data for the current study.

Given that data collected for this research is qualitative, they will be analyzed using NVivo. This process involves importing both written and audio/video files to NVivo, transcribing the audio and video recordings, and generating common themes and patterns through coding, sorting and triangulating data. The themes that emerge will be used to report findings related to the impact that mentoring and reflective practices had on the teaching practicum of the student teachers who participated in this study.

Ethics approval for the study was granted by the Research Ethics Committee of Villa College (2020/E-023). Participation in this study is voluntary. Participants will be communicated of their right to withdraw when gaining informed consent from them. While the anonymity of the participants will be ensured using pseudonyms when reporting the findings, the data collected will be used cautiously to ensure they do not reveal the identity of the participants.

Expected Findings

This study is expected to provide insights into the effectiveness of mentoring and reflective practices on the successful completion of teaching practicum. Consequently, the findings may shed light on some of the practices used by the student teachers and their supervisors in the process of mentoring and reflection that could enhance the practicum experience of the students. It may also provide information about the kind of support sought by the student teachers (mentees) and the assistance offered by the teaching practicum supervisors (mentors) in their mentoring process. The assistance required may be related to lesson planning, subject content knowledge, classroom management, teaching strategies, or practicum procedures among others. The opportunity to reflect on and inquire into their practices may help uncover the challenges they faced during practicum.

References

Ali, A. (2013). Maldivian secondary teachers' reflections on their first year of teaching: Enabling factors, perceived problems and proposed solutions. *The Maldives National Journal of Research, 1*(1), 33-56.

Becker, E. S., Waldis, M., & Staub, F. C. (2019). Advancing student teachers' learning in the teaching practicum through content-focused coaching: A field experiment. *Teaching and Teacher Education*, *83*, 12-26.

Cooper, L. D., & Wieckowski, A. T. (2017). A structured approach to reflective practice training in a clinical practicum. *Training and Education in Professional Psychology*, *11*(4), 252-259.

Dewey, J. (1910). *How we think.* Boston: D.C. Heath & Co.

Hennissen, P., & Crasborn, F. J. A. J. (2014). *Training mentor teachers for effective supervision: The impact of the SMART programme* (Doctoral dissertation, Fontys Hogescholen).

Jones, M., & Ryan, J. (2014). Learning in the practicum: Engaging pre-service teachers in reflective practice in the online space. *Asia-Pacific Journal of Teacher Education*, *42*(2), 132-146.

Maharsi, I. (2019). Pre-service teachers' reflective practices through teaching practicum E-portfolios. In

Proceedings of the 2019 5th International Conference on Education and Training Technologies (pp. 125-129).

Mena, J., Hennissen, P., & Loughran, J. (2017). Developing pre-service teachers' professional knowledge of teaching: The influence of mentoring. *Teaching and Teacher Education*, *66*, 47-59.

Rasheed, S. (2017). *The practicum in teacher education in the Maldives: Current practices, issues and future directions* (Doctoral dissertation, Faculty of Education, Maldives National University).

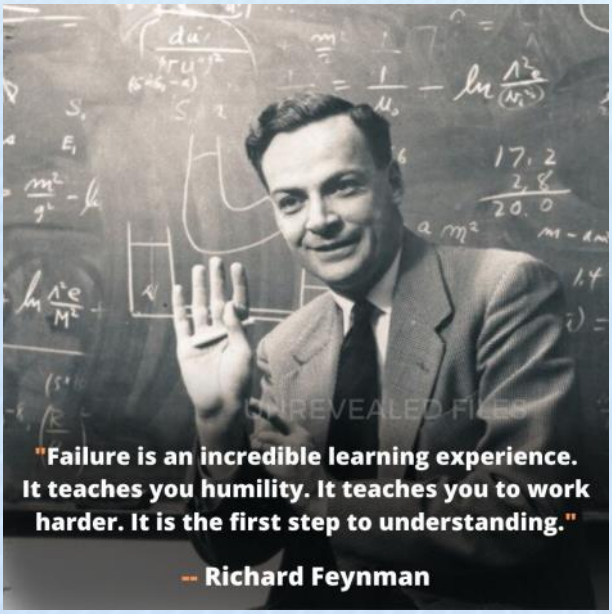
Sagor, R. (1993). *How to conduct collaborative action research*. ProQuest Ebook Central https://ebookcentral-proquest-com.ezproxy.waikato.ac.nz

Schon, D. (1983). *The reflective practitioner: How professionals think in action.* New York: Basic Books.

Sharafi, S., & Abdolmanafi, J. A. (2014). The effect of reflective teaching on pre-service teachers' learning and teaching development in a learner-centred situation. *International Journal of Language Learning and Applied Linguistics World*, *5*(4), 49-58.

Wright, N. (2010). Twittering in teacher education: Reflecting on practicum experiences. *Open Learning: The Journal of Open, Distance and E-Learning*, *25*(3), 259-265.

Zahid, M., & Khanam, A. (2019). Effect of reflective teaching practices on the performance of prospective teachers. *Turkish Online Journal of Educational Technology-TOJET*, *18*(1), 32-43.



FROM THE WORLD OF RESEARCH

The Ontological Ground of Business Ethics

Conceição Soares

ABSTRACT

In this article we shall argue that the analysis of the ontology of exchange in which our human life is based, is crucial to understand the place of ethics in the business world. Otherwise, ethics is only seen in a prescriptive or normative way. The normative way of looking to reality is a crystallization of time and history and a distortion of our understanding of human life. As human beings we are social beings and our lives are built by interchanges and interactions of all kinds which presuppose the interplay with others in relations of reciprocal esteem and estimation. The question concerning business and companies does not arise for a lone human being, but only in human beings' practical interrelations. Our quest is first and foremost to see these interrelations and the specificities of these interrelations in the business world in order to improve our life together. It is important to appreciate these issues clearly because it is only from a deep understanding of reality that we are in a position to assess which practices are to be valued and which are to be kept out of the business world. To do so, my reasoning is based upon the work of Michael Eldred namely his understanding of the phenomenon of the ontology of exchange (*whoness/persons*) as the structure of social intercourse in contrast to the ontology of production (*whaness/things*). By sketching the socio ontological outlines of these, it will be possible to see what kind of ethics could the developed in the business world.

Source: Soares, C., 2018. The Ontological Ground of Business Ethics. Revista Portuguesa de Filosofia, 74(2/3), pp.385-408.

Read on… https://www.jstor.org/stable/10.2307/26509990

Procrastination will be the death of me

Mohamed Shafy Rasheed

Research Assistant, Institute for Research and Innovation, Villa College

Procrastination can be defined as and is mostly associated with delaying a decision or delaying acting upon a decision (Siaputra, 2010). It is something that you may see happen every day. Maybe because you are teachers, you get to see this too often, and maybe you are a walking, talking example of a procrastinator. Who knows!

At one point in your lifetime, you have probably met a person who has lamented or cried about their procrastinatory behavior. If you cannot recall any, then perhaps you are the culprit.

Teachers and procrastinators

As teachers, from time-to-time, students seek us as their saviors to lend a deadline extension for their assignment projects. In some cases, perhaps, you may have received emails or text messages asking to explain a particular section of the assignment, just a day or two before the deadline. In some instances, but on rare occasions, I have seen students email me after the deadline, asking how much marks will they lose for any late submissions!

I wonder what the reasons could be behind this behavior. There may be so many, but one could only wonder. Is it because they did not see any value in the work they were delaying? Did they calculate the probability of being successful? Did they consider their sensitivity to delaying to completing the task? Did they ever regret the procrastination they did or were they never remorseful?

Temporal Motivation Theory

To understand a procrastinator's mind, the easiest explanation is the temporal motivation theory by Piers Steel. This theory is a combination of well-established theories which includes cumulative prospect theory, need theory, hyperbolic discounting, and expectancy theory (Steel, 2011). The theory establishes that time is a critical and motivational factor leading the procrastinator to enact upon the deadline due (Lamia, 2017). The theory determines how motivated you are basing on four different elements.

The first element to consider is expectancy. This is the probability of success thought out by a person. In other words – self-efficacy. It can be defined as a person's own judgmental projection of how well or poorly they can cope with any given situation they face (Bandura, 1995). It is built around their skills and various circumstances or restrictions they have faced before. Expectancy from a student perspective can be shaped by the curriculum taught, the teacher's fundamental role, and the student's ability to understand the content delivered.

The second element to consider is value. This is considered as the benefit a person can get out of an outcome – such as the completion of the assignment project. In other words, it is the reward the person is certain to receive once the decision is made or the action is completed regarding the situation they face. For a student, the reward or value they seek from completing an assignment can be passing the module that leads to graduation.

Then comes impulsiveness. Have you ever wondered, sometimes when you go on to do a bit of research about a topic you are working on, and then the next thing you know, you are scrolling through top 10 conspiracy theories that covered up Alien invasions on Earth? Or perhaps when you are searching for a nice template for your presentation, you then wander and stumble upon the docuseries on Netflix about the World's biggest art heist! As if we are Alice in Wonderland! Well, impulsiveness is a person's sensitivity to delaying a decision or action. It deals with how much of a threshold you have over your urges to get side-tracked from the actual work that you must complete.

The final element is delay itself. Delay in the sense the time you forgo to complete the given task. This is pretty much shaped by how sensitive you are to delaying your tasks and decisions. It is deep-rooted to the impulsive nature to wander away from the deadlines.

These four elements measure the significance of time – the time that makes you pop your head out like a meerkat from the alternative reality you are living at, and then kicks in the panic mode. There are only two options a person can face when the panic button is triggered. Our urges to fight or flight kicks in when the panic hits hard. Either we go ahead to complete it or prolong further to engage in every other activity than what is required to be done.

Say, for example a student is given one month to complete the assignment. The options the student may go through are studying and socializing (distantly of course – I hope). Let us say the student enjoys having a good time socializing but there is a need to get good grades from the modules. In this situation, the reward of studying is not relevantly immediate. So, at the start of the 30-day period, the motivation to study is lower than the motivation to socialize. But as the deadline looms closer, from weeks to days, the motivation to complete the assignment surpasses the motivation to socialize.

Why do people wait till the last minute to do something?

Meeting resistance of any manner whether if it is mental or physical can be considered as a causal factor as to why people are not proactive. It can be any repelling negative force which distracts and prevents people from doing things. To be precise, such resistance usually cannot be seen, touched, or smelled but are cognitively felt.

Ask yourself: is your work a battle to be won? Sometimes we need to understand how delusional we are about the tasks to be completed. In most of the cases, the work to be done is almost never as difficult or painful we make it out to be. Is it because people despise doing the work in a methodological manner? Or are people just too comfortable with being disorganized?

Optimal state of consciousness

It is quite important to create time to focus our brains to kick into flow (Kotler, 2014). This is referred to as the state of mind where you become fully immersed in an activity. In other words, it is the optimal state of consciousness where you are fully absorbed by the work or activity you do, where yourself vanishes, time flies and your performance are at peak levels.

To reach an optimal state of consciousness, you will need to release dopamine. Dopamine is a chemical neurotransmitter made in your brain which plays a pivotal role in how you feel pleasure and how you think and plan activities (Wise, 2004). When this neurotransmitter is released, your brain expects a reward. If you can reorganize how, you work and if you can associate that with attaining pleasure, then the mere anticipation may be enough to raise dopamine levels.

If you can achieve optimal state of consciousness, you are then liberated, and you can therefore act without hesitation by fully immersing into the activity. That leads to free flowing of creativity to be released and anticipation of reward is increased as well. With that, taking steps toward risks becomes easier and less frightening and that pushes you on toward the boundaries of your peak productivity levels. Moreover, you can enhance this, by bringing some form of novelty into your lifestyle. Bringing a bit of unpredictability and complexity into your life can help you value yourself more in the environments that you survive, whether if it is mental or physical in nature. You can achieve it through reading, of course. Go to new places, read a book. Novelty of a place can trigger dopamine. Would work wonders.

Breakdown the task to activities

So, what can you do to enter an optimal state of consciousness when writing an article or an assignment, perhaps? First, you need to breakdown the tasks to specific individual activities. You can ask for help as well; from a friend, a colleague, or anyone from the IRI.

One way of inducing creativity flow when writing is by gamification. Check out the *Habitica* app available from their website and on your app stores (Habitica, 2021). This app is a free habit-building and productivity app that treats your real life, like a game. It has in-game rewards to motivate and punishments to reinforce you, and a strong social network to inspire you to form, or to be honest – to reform, the habits and productivity levels of yourself. The app is available on both Android and Apple devices with over 4 million 'Habiticans' as they say, "striving to improve their life, one task at a time" (Habitica, 2021).

Another way you can keep the flow ongoing, is by setting rewards to finish sub-tasks. There are two ways of rewarding that you can go for once you complete a task. It can be either low-density fun or it can be high-density fun.

An example of low-density fun is, say you have a paper due for the Research Digest by the end of this week. You are tirelessly working on it, finishing section by section. After finishing every section, you are rewarding yourself with a treat. It can be a cup of coffee, or a spoonful of ice cream or anything little that significantly can bring you joy. By setting smaller rewards it will lead toward anticipating a bigger finale of reward to be received – by finishing the paper in the end, of course.

On contrary, if you set high-density fun activities to reward yourself it can prove to be quite risky. Say after completing a section of your paper you deem that you are entitled to watch a movie on Netflix. While watching the movie you may fall asleep or move on to watch a marathon of Game of Thrones possibly. If you set high-density fun rewards, chances are that it will lead you back to procrastination. So, what is the balance in between low-density fun versus high density fun activities?

Impulsiveness: avoid distractions

There is an app called *Cold Turkey* available on MacOS and Windows platforms (Cold Turkey Software, Inc, 2021). This is the ultimate website blocker which makes it impossible for you to drift into inefficient websites, once you lock it. This can certainly stop you from wandering into 'multiple dimensions' that leads you closer to the ever impending doom of the deadlines.

Here is a secret that I found as the most beneficial to avoid distractions, and when fighting impulsiveness. Knuckle-down and start with the most difficult, the most unpleasant thing on your to-do list. This can be anything! It can be reading through various literature, or working on the methodology of your paper. It can even be looking for the motivation to start writing the paper. But if you follow with it, it would be a definitive start to the work you are committing to, or rather that you have been afraid to commit to.

One easy way to control yourself from fully depleting your ego is, using the Pomodoro Technique. This is a time management technique developed by Francesco Cirillow back in 1980s. The Pomodoro Technique (Cirillo, 2018)

accustom you to breakdown your work into intervals using a timer, separated by short breaks. These intervals were traditionally up to 25 minutes in length, however I prefer taking it up a notch to 50 minutes. Each of these breaks you take is called a *pomodoro*. Here are the basic steps into how you can proceed with this technique:

1. Decide upon the task that needs to be completed.
2. Set the timer (traditionally used to 25 minutes).
3. Work on the task, without any interruptions or distractions.
4. Stop your work when the timer goes off.
5. Identify the sequential number of times (or checkmarks) the timer went off – whether if it was the first time for example.
6. If you have less that four checkmarks, you can take a short break between 3 to 5 minutes and then return back to start again from step 2; otherwise you can go forward with the final step.
7. After you receive four checkmarks or four *pomodoros* you can take a longer break between 15 to 30 minutes. Come back again and reset the checkmark count (your timer) to zero and then start again with step 1.

Before going ahead with the task, calculate how much time you would specifically need to work in completing that task. Also, it is not always required for you to be constantly engaged working on a specific task that you are doing at every interval.

Each *pomodoro* interval can be divided into three sections:

1. Recapping the work done before the break. This will help you to get the point of reference of which you were working on and 'recalibrate' yourself into the task activity.
2. Next is to immerse yourself in completing the task, and do keep in mind, to be a master at this technique you will need to discipline yourself to shun away any distractions that you may come across.
3. Lastly, when nearing the time limit, make time to review the work you have done so far. Reviewing can help you find any errors or mistakes that you can revise.

This technique can be absolutely beneficial for you as it can help you create a sense of urgency in the work you do. It helps you to manage your time and productivity in a joyous manner thus helping you to release those dopamine that you seek as rewards. At the end of the day, it helps you to plan out the timeline to complete a task by basing it upon your skills and capabilities.

A final touch up – reasons to reap benefits

Well, the biggest step you can take to stop procrastinating, is to put-off putting things off! Use apps such as *Habitica* and *Cold Turkey* to reform and develop habits that can enhance your skills and capabilities that can help you meet the deadlines of the projects you are managing.

Knuckle-down and start with the most difficult task that you find from the activities that you have to complete. This is how 'Zeigarnik effect' is put into work to overcome procrastination (Burke, 2011). Take the leading step, no matter how small or big it is. Once you start on your work, it will open the flow of your thinking pattern, and will implant a voice in your mind that will always nudge you about the task until you finish it at the end of course.

It is important to therefore visit the reasons behind why you are doing the task or certain activities. Ask yourself. What is the benefit from completing it? What is the reward you get?

Lets get motivated to do more, to write more! We, the IRI – are always here to lend you a helping hand.

References

Bandura, A., ed., 1995. Sources of efficacy beliefs. In: *Self-efficacy in changing societies.* Cambridge university press, pp. 3-5.

Burke, W. W., 2011. A perspective on the field of organization development and change: The Zeigarnik effect. *The Journal of Applied Behavioral Science,* 47(2), pp. 143-167.

Cirillo, F., 2018. *The Pomodoro Technique: The Acclaimed Time-Management System That Has Transformed How We Work.* Crown Publishing Group.

Cold Turkey Software, Inc, 2021. *Get Cold Turkey.* [Online] Available at: https://getcoldturkey.com/ [Accessed 22 April 2021].

Habitica, 2021. *Habitica.* [Online] Available at: https://habitica.com/static/home [Accessed 22 April 2021].

Kotler, S., 2014. *The rise of superman: Decoding the science of ultimate human performance.* Houghton Mifflin Harcourt.

Lamia, M., 2017. *What Motivates Getting Things Done: Procrastination, Emotions and Success.* Rowan & Littlefield.

Siaputra, I. B., 2010. Temporal motivation theory: Best theory (yet) to explain procrastination. *Anima Indonesian Psychological Journal,* 25(3), pp. 206-214.

Steel, P., 2011. *The Procastination Equation: How to stop putting stuff off.* Murdoch Books.

Wise, R. A., 2004. Dopamine, learning and motivation. *Nature reviews neuroscience,* 5(6), pp. 483-494.

Want to submit an article to VC Research Digest?

We wish to publish at least one issue of VC Research Digest every two months. Hence, we invite all academics and students of Villa College to submit their papers/articles as soon as they are ready. There are no submission deadlines. We will review the submissions in the order they are received.

All submissions will be received through an online platform, as below.

Submissions to the VC Research Digest should meet the following guidelines:

- Be between 700-850 words in length
- If a completed research project, it must at minimum include:
  - ◊ Research title
  - ◊ Research background and problem statement (including lit. review)
  - ◊ Aims and Objectives
  - ◊ Research question/hypothesis
  - ◊ Methodology
  - ◊ Findings
  - ◊ Conclusions
- If an ongoing research project, it must at minimum include:
  - ◊ Research title
  - ◊ Research background and problem statement (including lit. review)
  - ◊ Aims and Objectives
  - ◊ Research question/hypothesis
  - ◊ Methodology
  - ◊ Expected findings and implications
- Articles on research methods should focus on any one (or few) aspects of high quality research and provide in-depth and practical insights
- Contributors can also forward links or details of significant research articles published in refereed journals to be included in the Research Mesh section.
- Submissions can be in either English or Dhivehi.

Submit your papers/ articles by going to this link.

https://forms.gle/sTCZBJmcqcfT86Qo7

Or by scanning this QR code

FROM THE WORLD OF RESEARCH

Turkey's Management of COVID-19: Measures and Strategies of Health Policies

Fahrettin Koca

ABSTRACT

Pandemics and related problems have been an import-ant public health issue throughout history and will continue to be so in the future. Soon after its outbreak in Wuhan, China, in December 2019, COVID-19 was declared as a global pandemic which caught many countries unprepared with exceptions. Turkey was one of them. Having worked on plans and preparations for a possible pandemic since 2004 the Turkish Ministry of Health performed well in curbing the initial spread of the virus after its entrance into the country and has played an important role in Turkey's successful fight against COVID-19 since then. Turkey's successful management of the crisis has been marked by its idiosyncratic approach to the crisis and the robustness of its healthcare syttem which have helped taking COVID-19 pandemic under control and preventing its devastating consequences.

Source: Koca, F., 2020. Turkey's Management of COVID-19. Insight Turkey, 22(3), pp.55-66.

Read on… https://www.jstor.org/stable/10.2307/26956176

Institute for Research and Innovation
Villa College
Male' Maldives
Email: iri@villacollege.edu.mv
Email: researchdigest@villacollege.edu.mv
Website: http://www.villacollege.edu.mv
VC Research Digest: http://www.villacollege.edu.mv/qi/public/research/research-digest