

# Athens Journal of Humanities & Arts



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# Athens Journal of Humanities & Arts

*Published by the Athens Institute for Education and Research (ATINER)*

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- Dr. Stephen Andrew Arbury, Head, [Arts & Culture Unit](#), ATINER, Professor of Art History & Director of the RU Art Museum, Radford University, USA.

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The current issue is the first of the ninth volume of the *Athens Journal of Humanities & Arts (AJHA)*, published by the [Arts, Humanities and Education Division](#) of ATINER.

Gregory T. Papanikos  
President  
ATINER



## Athens Institute for Education and Research

*A World Association of Academics and Researchers*

### 13<sup>th</sup> Annual International Conference on Visual and Performing Arts 6-9 June 2022, Athens, Greece

The [Arts & Culture Unit](#) of ATINER is organizing its 13<sup>th</sup> Annual International Conference on Visual and Performing Arts, 6-9 June 2022, Athens, Greece sponsored by the [Athens Journal of Humanities & Arts](#). The aim of the conference is to bring together academics and researchers of visual and performing arts, and other related disciplines. You may participate as stream leader, presenter of one paper, chair of a session or observer. Please submit a proposal using the form available (<https://www.atiner.gr/2022/FORM-ART.doc>).

#### Academic Members Responsible for the Conference

- **Dr. Stephen Andrew Arbury**, Head, [Arts & Culture Unit](#), ATINER and Professor of Art History, Radford University, USA.
- 

#### Important Dates

- Abstract Submission: **14 February 2022**
- Acceptance of Abstract: 4 Weeks after Submission
- Submission of Paper: **9 May 2022**

#### Social and Educational Program

The Social Program Emphasizes the Educational Aspect of the Academic Meetings of Atiner.

- Greek Night Entertainment (This is the official dinner of the conference)
- Athens Sightseeing: Old and New-An Educational Urban Walk
- Social Dinner
- Mycenae Visit
- Exploration of the Aegean Islands
- Delphi Visit
- Ancient Corinth and Cape Sounion

#### Conference Fees

Conference fees vary from 400€ to 2000€  
Details can be found at: <https://www.atiner.gr/2021fees>



## Athens Institute for Education and Research

*A World Association of Academics and Researchers*

### 7<sup>th</sup> Annual International Symposium on Religion & Theology 23-26 May 2022, Athens, Greece

The [Humanities & Education Division](#) of ATINER is organizing its **7<sup>th</sup> Annual International Symposium on Religion & Theology, 23-26 May 2022, Athens, Greece**. The aim of the conference is to bring together academics and researchers of Religion, Theology and other related disciplines. You may participate as stream leader, presenter of one paper, chair of a session or observer. Please submit a proposal using the form available (<https://www.atiner.gr/2022/FORM-REL.doc>).

#### Important Dates

- Abstract Submission: **31 January 2022**
- Acceptance of Abstract: 4 Weeks after Submission
- Submission of Paper: **25 April 2022**

#### Academic Member Responsible for the Conference

- **Dr. William O'Meara**, Academic Member, ATINER & Professor, Department of Philosophy and Religion, James Madison University, USA.

#### Social and Educational Program

The Social Program Emphasizes the Educational Aspect of the Academic Meetings of Atiner.

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More information can be found here: <https://www.atiner.gr/social-program>

#### Conference Fees

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Details can be found at: <https://www.atiner.gr/fees>



## **Repetitions and Variations: The Embodied Cultural Memory of Ballet**

*By Melonie B. Murray\**

*The corporeal practice of ballet training, comprised of visual and aural input along with kinesthetic awareness and sensation, serves to transmit and reify a specific form of embodied knowledge. Passed from generation to generation and body to body, from at least mid-19<sup>th</sup> century Europe to its current global representations, systems of ballet training and modes of ballet performance have moved through history and geography continually enacting and reenacting a legacy of repertoire rife with collective/cultural memory and meaning. Ballet training methodologies and choreography have evolved significantly, yet well-established vocabulary, syllabi, curricula, and repertoire continue. Given the continually evolving yet perennial nature of ballet, theories from the field of performance studies provide an interesting lens through which we might examine classical ballet and its repertoire. This article contributes to the existing academic literature by framing ballet as a living culture – an ever-evolving, self-perpetuating, way of life - rather than as a purely historical or aesthetic topic. By engaging with performance studies theorists to explore notions of culture, tradition, ritual, orature, and repertoire, this article encourages further investigation of ballet through a variety of lenses.*

*A ballet dancer enters a spacious airy dance studio prepared for the ritual of daily ballet class, exhibiting a deference not only for the space but for the history and discipline of the art. The voices of the dancers already in the space are hushed in respect. The atmosphere is filled with the ghosts of dancers past, ancestors that assisted in the dissemination of this repeated embodied tradition. The dancer embraces this heritage and, as generations of dancers have done before, assumes first position, checks the nobility of her alignment in the mirror, places her left hand on the barre, and begins with a plié.*

The corporeal practice of ballet training, comprised of visual and aural input along with kinesthetic awareness and sensation, serves to transmit and reify a specific form of embodied knowledge. Passed from generation to generation and body to body, from at least mid-19<sup>th</sup> century Europe to present-day global representations, systems of ballet training and modes of ballet performance have moved through history and geography continually enacting and reenacting a legacy of repertoire rife with collective/cultural memory and meaning, simultaneously perpetuating and reifying certain hierarchies and ideologies.

Despite a pervasive view that ballet was crystalized into a perfected “classical” state at some point along its historical path, the art form of ballet

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has evolved continually since its inception. While initially a European cultural construct, ballet's physical practice and artistic production has travelled around the globe, adapting and evolving for suitability in its new environments, yet remaining somehow uniquely itself and recognizable as ballet. Ballet training methodologies have continually developed and changed, from the earliest ballet treatises written and illustrated by the early Italian dancing masters<sup>1</sup> to the well-established vocabulary, syllabi, and curricula connected to 18<sup>th</sup>-century ballet masters such as Enrico Cecchetti<sup>2</sup> and Agrippina Vaganova,<sup>3</sup> which are still followed as pedagogical foundations for developing technical and artistic skills. More current iterations, such as American Ballet Theatres's National Training Curriculum,<sup>4</sup> incorporate scientific study and contemporary information from the realms of medicine and psychology. And, while new choreographers, such as Annabelle Lopez Ochoa<sup>5</sup> and Alexei Ratmansky,<sup>6</sup> expand the limits of the established ballet vocabulary and the growing body of ballet repertoire continues to evolve incorporating new socio-cultural attitudes, the traditional classical ballets, such as *Swan Lake* and *The Sleeping Beauty*, are enduringly re-produced and celebrated as a meaningful part of the heritage of ballet culture.

Given this continually evolving yet perennial nature of ballet, theories from the field of performance studies - particularly those theories that deal with culture (Williams), tradition (Hobswam), ritual (Turner, Bell), and repeated embodied practices (Roach, Taylor) - provide an interesting lens through which we can examine ballet, specifically in terms of how knowledge is produced and communicated, and how a collective/cultural memory specific to ballet practitioners is cultivated and perpetuated. The concept of repetition, in particular, is noteworthy as it serves a role in cultural continuity while the variations within the repetition offer opportunities for subversion, reinvention, and evolution.

To frame this discussion, it is worth noting that I consider ballet a living culture—that is, an ever-evolving, self-perpetuating, way of life. This belief is interwoven throughout both my academic work and my lived experience.

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1. For example, Domenico da Piacenza's *De la arte di ballare et Danzare* (1445) and Carlo Blasis's *Traité élémentaire, théorique, et pratique de l'art de la danse* (1820).

2. C. W. Beaumont and S. Idzikowski, *A Manual of the Theory and Practice of Classical Theatrical Dancing (Méthode Cecchetti)* (London: CW Beaumont, 1922).

3. A. Vaganova, *Basic Principles of Classical Ballet* (Courier Corporation, 2012).

4. American Ballet Theatre, *National Training Curriculum*. Retrieved from: <https://www.abt.org/training/teacher-training/national-training-curriculum/>. [Accessed 12 April 2021.]

5. AnnabelleLopezOchoa.com, Retrieved from: <http://www.annabellelopezochoa.com/www.annabellelopezochoa.com/Welcome.html>. [Accessed 12 April 2021.]

6. American Ballet Theatre, *Alexei Ratmansky*. Retrieved from: <https://www.abt.org/people/alexei-ratmansky/>. [Accessed 12 April 2021.]



Having stated this conviction, I willingly acknowledge the complexity of that assertion and its fraught nature. I agree with cultural studies theorist Raymond Williams, who reasoned that *culture* is one of the most multifaceted and complicated words in the English language, and I lean on Williams's assertion that culture "indicates a particular way of life, whether of people, a period, a group, or humanity in general."<sup>7</sup> Williams's use of the phrase "way of life" is echoed by cultural theorist Judith Hamera when she argues that the practice of dance technique might become a "way of living" within communities of dancers.<sup>8</sup> Further, cultural anthropologists Daniel G. Bates and Fred Plog define culture as "a system of shared beliefs, values, customs, behaviors, and artifacts that the members of a society use to cope with their world and with one another, and that is transmitted from generation to generation through learning."<sup>9</sup> With these notions of culture in mind, we can recognize that culture is not just what is shared among contemporaries, it is also what is preserved and perpetuated through generations. And these explanations of culture support the notion of ballet as living culture.

It is also notable that, as with all cultures, there are injustices ingrained in ballet culture that are worthy of critique. A pervasive whiteness and Eurocentric sensibility and aesthetic has been perpetuated for centuries, traditional ballet performs narrowly defined binary genders, representations of race and ethnicity are highly problematic, and there are historical and ongoing concerns regarding how systemic hierarchies perpetuate power imbalances. These systemic injustices are interwoven in the fabric of ballet culture, and we are only recently beginning to unflinchingly acknowledge these injustices and shoulder the burden of remedying them. This article, and my framing of ballet as a living culture, is in no way intended to ignore or belittle these significant criticisms of ballet or elevate ballet above any other form of culturally constructed art form. Rather, I hope that exploring how we might view ballet through a variety of theoretical lenses will support further discussions about the continuing evolution and development of ballet.

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7. Raymond Williams, "Culture," in *Keywords: A Vocabulary of Culture and Society* (London: Croom Helm Ltd., 1976), 90.

8. Judith Hamera, *Dancing Communities* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2011), xi.

9. Daniel G. Bates and Fred Plog, *Human Adaptive Strategies* (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1990), 7.

## Tradition & Ritual

In an ongoing attempt to define what I mean by ballet as a living culture, I am repeatedly drawn to notions of *tradition* and *ritual*—terms that often overlap, bleed into one another, and are sometimes difficult to disentangle. Tradition and ritual are particularly significant to this discussion because they are repeated practices that represent cultural ideologies. I glean my conceptual understanding of tradition primarily from historian Eric Hobsbawm who argues that tradition is manufactured. Hobsbawm sees traditions as sets of practices that are symbolic or ritualistic in nature and invented with the purpose of perpetuating “certain values and norms of behavior by repetition, which automatically implies continuity with the past.”<sup>10</sup> So, traditions might be defined simply as a set of repeated practices that are valued by a culture or community and fulfill specific ideological functions. Ballet is certainly rife with repeated practices and cultural ideologies.

One example of tradition within ballet culture might be the formal dress code expected for ballet classes, particularly in Western cultures. Although not enforced in all ballet classroom settings, there is generally an expectation in conservatory ballet training for a specific dress code: female ballet dancers often wear pale pink tights and a black leotard (or a specific color leotard that represents a placement level), while male ballet dancers often wear black tights and a fitted white top. This practice perpetuates ideological functions in the following ways: First, by the unfettered display of physical bodies which reinforce notions of the body as an instrument or tool;<sup>11</sup> second, by the color-coded rankings and by students generally being dressed differently than the instructor which reinforces a hierarchy;<sup>12</sup> and third, gender-specific expectations for attire reinforce a binary performance of gender.<sup>13</sup> Each of these ideological

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10. Eric Hobsbawm and Terence Ranger (Eds.), *The Invention of Tradition* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012), 1.

11. Marcel Mauss, “Techniques of the Body,” *Economy and Society* 2, no. 1 (1973): 70-88; George Alexias and Elina Dimitropoulou, “The Body as a Tool: Professional Classical Ballet Dancers’ Embodiment,” *Research in Dance Education* 12, no. 2 (2011): 87-104.

12. Ann Daly, “Classical Ballet: A Discourse of Difference,” *Women & Performance: A Journal of Feminist Theory* 3, no. 2 (1987): 57-66; Julia Prest, “The Politics of Ballet at the Court of Louis XIV,” *Dance, Spectacle, and the Body Politick, 1250-1750* (2008), 229; Tamara Tomic-Vajagic, “The Dancer at Work: The Aesthetic and Politics of Practice Clothes and Leotard Costumes in Ballet Performance,” *Scene* 2, no. 1-2 (2014): 89-105.

13. Cynthia J. Novack, “Ballet, Gender and Cultural Power,” in *Dance, Gender and Culture*, 34-48. (Palgrave Macmillan, London, 1993), 34-48; Jennifer Fisher and Anthony Shay (Eds.), *When Men Dance: Choreographing Masculinities across Borders* (Oxford University Press, 2009); Melonie Murray, “Ballet’s Binary Genders in a Rainbow-Spectrum World: A Call for Progressive Pedagogies,” in *(Re)Claiming Ballet*, edited by Adesola Akinlaye (Intellect Press, 2021).

functions highlights an example of how ballet culture has, as of yet, neglected to align with 21<sup>st</sup>-century body and gender politics. Thus, these traditions are worth examining more critically.

The concept of ritual is intimately linked to the notion of tradition, and a sense of ritual within the activities of ballet culture is common. In the documentary film *American Ballet Theatre: a History* (2015), the opening narration by ballet historian Jennifer Homans reflects on the ritualistic nature of ballet:

If you're a dancer, and you stand at the barre every morning, in these positions which have been proscribed for over four hundred years . . . you go through this ritual, it's a ritual of repetition, it's a ritual of physical discipline.<sup>14</sup>

This is only one of many examples of how ballet dancers express personal experiences in which they focus on the ritualistic nature of ballet practice. Ritual, according to cultural anthropologist Victor Turner, implies a sacred nature in which essential and generic human bonds are recognized as defining characteristics of society. Turner discusses ritual as a means of navigating transitions, for individuals and collectives, through rites of passage. Within ballet culture, there are also rites of passage. Take for example, the celebration when a young dancer earns a first pair of pointe shoes. Or, the manner in which the American annual tradition of *The Nutcracker* ballet provides an opportunity for dancers to progress through the ranks of various roles – from a mouse, to a child in the Act I party scene, to a more technically advanced role in Act II's "Land of Sweets."<sup>15</sup>

Religious studies scholar Catherine Bell defines rituals as actions in which the conceptual orientations of beliefs, creeds, symbols, and myths might be expressed. By arguing that ritual consists of social praxis, a "strategic way of acting" that promotes a "particular cultural strategy," Bell approaches the concept of ritual as a means of exploring "cultural dynamics by which people make and remake their worlds."<sup>16</sup> When the study of ritual is applied to researching particular cultures, the rituals can be viewed as culturally produced texts; and the performative nature of these rituals makes them productive sites for analysis and interpretation.

If we adopt Bell's understanding of ritual and its implications, then we might look at the practice of *reverance* as a ritual practice. *Reverance* is typically a slow, follow-the-leader sort of exercise at the end of ballet class, which often includes some type of bow or curtsy to signify the end of the "performance."

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14. Ric Burns, *American Ballet Theatre: A History*. PBS. Retrieved from: <http://video.pbs.org/video/2365487888/>. 2015. [Accessed 14 May 2015.].

15. Jennifer Fisher, *"Nutcracker" Nation: How an Old World Ballet Became a Christmas Tradition in the New World* (Yale University Press, 2004).

16. Catherine Bell, *Ritual Theory, Ritual Practice* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009), 3.

As the term *reverance* implies, there is something reverential in the nature of participating in the formality of this exercise. As a student, I was taught that *reverance* was a significant moment for acknowledging due respect for the instructor, the accompanist, and the art form. Thus, *reverance* might be seen as fulfilling the role of ritual through an active performance of acknowledging power relations between teacher and student while reinforcing beliefs concerning the innate value of the lineage of classical ballet practice. While these examples are few, performed traditions and rituals are ubiquitous throughout ballet culture, and analyzing them further will help us identify, understand, and critique ballet's ideologies more clearly.

### Orature & Repertoire

Performance studies scholar Joseph Roach<sup>17</sup> claims that performance and collective memory are interdependent, simultaneously nourishing one another, as well as creating and re-creating one another. Further, Roach asserts that collective memory is cultivated and perpetuated through the performance of *orature*, which he defines as a "range of cultural forms invested in speech, gesture, song, dance, storytelling, proverbs, customs, rites, and rituals." In the study of culture, written texts are often considered inadequate or incomplete means of representation, and Roach argues that orature must be combined with literature for a truer representation or understanding of any cultural or historical reality. Insisting that literature and orature "have produced one another interactively over time," Roach argues for the importance of both and gives a compelling rationale for considering each correspondingly when studying cultures.<sup>18</sup> In this use of the term orature, we might consider all of the classical ballet canon, the traditional ballet class structure, the pedagogies and customs of ballet as part of ballet culture's orature.

Another performance studies scholar, Diana Taylor, follows Roach's line of thought, arguing against the traditionally accepted practice of valuing the concrete, tangible artifacts of the archive over the lived physical and repeatable practices of the *repertoire*. Taylor uses the term *repertoire* to describe "embodied and performed acts" that "generate, record, and transmit knowledge"<sup>19</sup> and argues that "embodied memory, because it is live, exceeds the archives ability to capture" the essence of performance.<sup>20</sup> Compellingly, Taylor expands her thoughts on the performed repertoire stating:

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17. Joseph Roach, "Culture and Performance in the Circum-Atlantic World," *Journal of Performativity and Performance* (1995): 45-64.

18. *Ibid*, 45.

19. Diana Taylor, *The Archive and the Repertoire* (Duke University Press, 2003), 21.

20. *Ibid*, 20.

The repertoire requires presence: people participate in the production and reproduction of knowledge by 'being there,' being a part of the transmission . . . the actions that are the repertoire do not remain the same. The repertoire both keeps and transforms choreographies of meaning.<sup>21</sup>

Roach's and Taylor's theories, in particular, provide a lens through which we can examine ballet, specifically in terms of how knowledge is produced and communicated, and how a collective/cultural memory specific to ballet practitioners is cultivated and perpetuated through embodied practices. The domain of classical ballet provides an interesting site for exploring how tradition and ritual contribute to the construction of an embodied collective/cultural memory that has been and continues to be perpetuated through the mechanisms of orature and repertoire.

I surmise that most ballet practitioners, as well as any others involved in the performing arts, would sympathize with Roach's and Taylor's assertions that the archive, with its tangible artifacts, is limited. After all, an abundance of literature exists in the areas of ballet pedagogy, ballet history, and the classical ballet repertoire; however, written materials are simply not adequate to effectively perpetuate the art form and practice of ballet. Texts provide theoretical insight, and are thus invaluable, but they cannot replace the physical experience of taking classes, rehearsing, and performing. The embodied knowledge of ballet practice is not learned primarily through words and texts, but rather through repeated physical bodily practices, by visual and aural input, and by kinesthetic awareness and sensation. The ancestral sense of communication passed down through generations is a vivid example of Roach's insistence on the importance of *orature* in cultural study. Collective/cultural memory is cultivated and perpetuated through human interaction and personal experience, through rehearsals, classes, performances, lectures, spoken and unspoken conversations, written and unwritten texts and practices. As ballet historian Jennifer Homans writes: "the ballet repertory is not recorded in books or libraries: it is held instead in the bodies of the dancers."<sup>22</sup>

## Repetition

In each of the concepts mentioned above—tradition, ritual, orature, and repertoire—*repetition* is a key concept. In his attempt to define the problematic term *performance*, Roach leans on Richard Schechner's use of the term "restored behavior" and proceeds to define performance as "that which can be

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21. Ibid.

22. Jennifer Homans, *Apollo's Angels* (New York: Random House: 2010), xix.

repeated, rehearsed, and above all *recreated*.”<sup>23</sup> The significance of repetition is crucial here. Roach writes: “...repetition is an art of recreation as well as restoration.”<sup>24</sup> In the world of ballet practitioners, the concept of repetition holds an almost sacred or spiritual connotation: the classical ballets are continually reconstructed and repeated; the repetition of daily classes are a must for attaining and maintaining physical endurance and skill; the daily ballet class itself has a specific order of exercises that build in intensity and seldom vary in the order of execution; and within the canon of ballet training, ballet dancers will repeat the exact same exercises an exorbitant number of times throughout a career. Compellingly, Roach troubles the idea that repetition is stagnant or devoid of variation by connecting the concept of repetition to the notion of imagination. He writes:

The paradox of the restoration of behavior resides in the phenomenon of repetition itself; no action or sequence of actions may be performed exactly the same way twice; they must be reinvented or recreated at each appearance. In this improvisatory behavioral space, memory reveals itself as imagination.<sup>25</sup>

As a dancer, there is something appealing about the notion of repetition resulting in, or being a result of, imagination; and this particular stance provides a persuasive argument against those who consider ballet mindless mechanical replication and mimicry. Ballet training demands the skill and precision of the human body, honed through years of repetition in an effort to master classical ballet technique. And, by applying Roach’s stance, one might comprehend that while the technique is difficult and rigidly structured, it is not a cage; rather, a solid technical foundation provides the dancer with a physicality that enables the artist to be expressive in ways that would be otherwise impossible.

One way we might apply this theory to ballet is by considering the classical ballet variation. Although Gail Grant, in the iconic *Technical Manual and Dictionary of Classical Ballet*, defines *variation* as simply “a solo dance in a classic ballet,”<sup>26</sup> this seems an oversimplification. Historically, ballet has been intricately linked to classical music, and *variation* is a term adopted from this musical influence. The Encyclopedia Britannica defines the musical term *variation* as “a basic music technique consisting of changing the music melodically, harmonically, or contrapuntally.”<sup>27</sup> Generally, a variation is played after a theme with the variation being slightly more ornate; in several cases there are many

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23. Roach, 46.

24. Roach, 61.

25. Roach, 46.

26. Gail Grant, *Technical Manual and Dictionary of Classical Ballet*. 3rd Revised Edition (New York: Dover Publications, 1982), 149.

27. Brittanica.com, Retrieved from: <https://www.britannica.com/art/musical-variation>. [Accessed 19 October 2017.]

variations upon a single theme, and a repeating structure supports the nature of the function. Put plainly, the word *variation* implies repetition.

In ballet, the term *variation* refers to a choreographic pattern, with a corresponding established piece of music, that may be physically manipulated by individual artists in terms of space, time, and energy. While each version of a particular ballet variation may have a standard choreographic plan, the term *variation* actually implies the freedom for different interpretations, allowing for Roach's assertion that the collective/cultural memory may be reinvented or reinterpreted through imagination. In fact, the artistry of individual ballet dancers is often evaluated by the manner in which they interpret the variations embedded in the canon of classical ballets. Moreover, variations are traditionally taught to a younger dancer by an older dancer that has performed the role, thus leaving the process inevitably open to changes and alterations. This fact also speaks to the notions of culture mentioned above in which there is an emphasis on the repertoire being passed from generation to generation. Homans writes that "even dancers with superlative memories are mortal, and with each passing generation, ballet loses a piece of its past."<sup>28</sup> As time progresses, each generation moves farther away from the point of origin, dancers' bodies and the technique evolve; change, adaptation, and variation are unavoidable.

Another meaningful usage of repetition is the practical way it can provide an obvious location for subversion. When we experience something repeatedly, even a slight variation from the previous version can hold significant meaning, and those slight variations can serve as mechanisms for pointedly critiquing existing ideologies and power structures. In the culture of ballet, this is perhaps most apparent in how choreographers re-invent and re-envision the classical repertoire.<sup>29</sup> Minor revisions have occurred repeatedly over the years in how the classical repertoire is restaged. One example is how numerous choreographers have adapted the closing scene of *Swan Lake*, shifting it from tragic to hopeful to tragic again, in the hopes of better relating to the audiences of their day. We have also seen choreographers completely re-envision full-length story ballets by changing the time and place of the setting, re-inventing characters, and re-writing synopses. Take for example the way that Matthew Bourne's *Swan Lake* (1995) replaced the traditional demurely pointe-shoe clad female swan *corps de ballet* with bare-chested male swans whose choreography was fierce, aggressive, and alluring, yet still birdlike. Bourne's version of the traditional story tackled themes of sexuality and gender with a contemporary sensibility.<sup>30</sup> Another

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28. Homans, xx.

29. For a fuller discussion see V. L. Midgelow, *Reworking the Ballet: Counter Narratives and Alternative Bodies* (Routledge, 2007).

30. T. Hecht, "The Phallic Swan Lake: A Semiotic Appraisal of Matthew Bourne's *Swan Lake*," *Theatre Arts Journal: Studies in Scenography and Performance* 1, no. 1 (2009): 60-75; K. G. Drummond, "The Queering of *Swan Lake*: A New Male Gaze for the Performance of Sexual Desire," *Journal of Homosexuality* 45, no. 2-4 (2003): 235-255.

significant example is Akram Kahn's *Giselle* (2016), in which the setting shifts from 17<sup>th</sup>-century European Romanticism to a 21<sup>st</sup>-century migrant worker community in the midst of a European refugee crisis. Expanding the existing libretto's issues of class and privilege to reflect contemporary concerns, Kahn also incorporated his own Indian dance background into the choreographic language of the work, thereby further complicating issues about how we compartmentalize national and cultural forms of expression. These are only a few example of the plethora of ways that repetition (and recreation) of the repertoire serve as a locus of subversion to the pervasive ideologies ingrained in ballet culture.

## Reverance

Despite its European roots, ballet technique has evolved into a global form of embodied, corporeal knowledge interwoven with a collective/cultural memory that extends geographically and temporally. Passed down from generation to generation, body to body, ballet moves through history and geography enacting and continually re-enacting a prescribed, and yet malleable and imaginative, repertoire. Considering the range of theoretical approaches discussed here, ballet provides a seemingly endless litany of interesting subjects for investigation. Traditional ballet customs are performed extensively and range from manners of dress and deportment to rituals for preparing shoes and applying make-up. Thinking more broadly, outside of the ballet community itself, signifiers of ballet are ingrained in our collective cultural memory: pink tights, tutus, pointe shoes, tiaras, swans, and fairies. These oratures are repeated, rehearsed, recreated, restored, and reinvented exponentially continuing the development of a multi-faceted collective/cultural memory.

Although ballet might seem a problematic locus of investigation - particularly given contemporary sensibilities and politics pertaining to race, gender, hierarchies, and elitism - contextualizing ballet as a living culture provides a framework for considering its complexities. Performance studies theories that grapple with notions of collective memory, tradition, ritual, orature, repertoire, and repetition, support a fresh examination of ballet practice as a means of transmitting embodied culture from one generation to the next. Acknowledging the meaningful functions of these practices opens up opportunities for inquiry and exploration into how the legacy and heritage of ballet perpetuates hierarchies, allows for subversive acts, and maintains a physical cultural practice through the body as living archive.

*The ballet class comes to an end. Mingled with the refined and regal ambiance is the musty aroma of sweat and effort. Accompanied by the strains of an adagio played on a lone piano, the dancers face the mirror and the ballet mistress. Stepping in unison, they perform graceful port de bras, sweeping curtseys, and elegant bows. The spirits of the great artists and teachers from*



*the past partake in the homage as the physical practice and living culture of the art form of ballet once again regenerates and endures.*

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Croom Helm Ltd., 1976.

## A Survey of English Majors' Attitudes towards Critical Thinking

By Mengying Zhang\*

*Based on the discussion of critical thinking and related studies, this study conducted a survey of 104 senior English majors in a university by using a questionnaire and applied Excel to analyze the data, and explored English majors' attitudes toward critical thinking. The study found that most English majors do not have a clear concept of critical thinking, but they acknowledge the importance of critical thinking in learning and hold high expectations to be trained in critical thinking. The study indicated that English major students' attitudes need to be taken into due consideration in the development of critical thinking.*

### Introduction

Critical thinking (CT) has become a buzzword which is of great significance in modern education. The so-called "spoon-feeding" instruction and rote training have been outdated instead heuristic teaching, so the students rather than teachers are situated in the center in the process of learning. In the context of new curriculum, students should dare to put forward critical and developmental opinions, and practical ability and innovative spirit should be developed among them. The last few decades have seen great changes in the approaches of education. As a certain level of proficiency in English becomes essential to become successful, it is crucial to equip students with certain abilities such as reasoning and analyzing, which is absolutely critical to acquire English as a foreign language. It is as a result of thinking critically that the students have the ability to apply their previous knowledge, evaluating and assessing their own thinking and changing their behavior.<sup>1</sup>

Language learning and critical thinking are intimately integrated. In fact, language learners who have developed critical thinking skills are capable of doing activities of which other students may not be capable. Mahyuddin et al<sup>2</sup> argued that language learners with critical thinking abilities are capable of using their thinking skills and of understanding language or its content, and finally become intellectually, physically, emotionally, and spiritually well-balanced. As

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1. Stephen P. Norris, "Synthesis of Research on Critical Thinking," *Educational Leadership* 43, no. 8 (1985): 40-45.

2. Rahil Mahyuddin, Zaidatul Akmaliah Lope Pihie and Mohd Majid Konting, "The Incorporation of Thinking Skills in the School Curriculum," *Kajian Malaysia* 22, no. 2 (2004): 23-33.

Brown argued, enhancing CT skills among language-learners should be the purpose of an ideal language program.<sup>3</sup>

As Paul Stapleton<sup>4</sup> claimed, the lack of CT skills appears to span in education around the world. Many schools have made documents that outline the educational aims in schools and regard CT as one of their goals, perhaps because of the pervasive concern over the deficient CT of their students. For example, in the UK National Curriculum, under a section entitled "Values, Aims and Purposes," it states, "[b]y providing rich and varied contexts for pupils to acquire, develop and apply a broad range of knowledge, the curriculum should enable pupils to think creatively and critically, to solve problems and to make a difference for the better."<sup>5</sup> However, in China, the research still mainly focuses on the measurement techniques of critical thinking, the investigation of critical thinking disposition, the application of critical thinking in teaching, and the cultivation of such abilities.<sup>6</sup> There are few studies investigating students' attitudes towards CT.

Whereas engendering CT in students is considered necessary, the actual understanding of the term remains unclear. At present, few studies have been done in the area of students' attitudes toward CT. To shed more light on this issue, with the purpose of providing recommendations and implications on the development of CT, this study is conducted to examine English majors' attitudes towards CT and its place in English language learning. This study consists of five parts. The first section introduces the current situation of CT. The second section reviews the definition of CT and the relevant studies abroad and in China. In the third part, the methodology of this study is introduced. The fourth illustrates the result and the discussion of the data from three aspects. The paper ends with the findings, implications and limitations of the study.

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3. H. Douglas Brown, "Some Practical Thoughts about Students- Sensitive Critical Pedagogy," *The Language Teacher* 28, no. 7 (2004): 23-27.

4. Paul Stapleton, "A Survey of Attitudes towards Critical Thinking among Hong Kong Secondary School Teachers: Implications for Policy Change," *Thinking Skills and Creativity* 6, no. 1 (2010): 14-23.

5. National Curriculum, *Values, Aims, and Purpose* (UKESSAYS, 1990).

6. 张文兰 (Zhang, Wenlan) and 刘斌 (Liu Bin) "信息技术与批判性思维研究的现状及启" (The Present Situation and Enlightenment of Information Technology and Critical Thinking Research), 《电化教育研究》 (E-education Research) 1, (2010): 25-30.

## Literature Review

### Defining Critical Thinking

CT has been elaborate in various ways and many definitions of it have been born depending on the different disciplines. Halonen<sup>7</sup> believed that, "critical thinking scholarship is in a mystified state and no single definition of critical thinking is widely accepted." Halpern<sup>8</sup> argued that CT is the use of those cognitive skills or strategies that increase the probability of a desirable outcome, while Facione<sup>9</sup> said that CT is a non-linear, recursive process in which a person forms a judgement about what to believe or what to do in a given context. As Ivie<sup>10</sup> put it, CT is the ability that enables individuals to establish clear and logical connection between beginning premise, relevant facts, and warranted conclusions. According to Astleitner,<sup>11</sup> critical thinking is a higher-order thinking skill which includes evaluating arguments, and is a purposeful, self-regulatory judgement which ends in interpretation, analysis, evaluation, and inference. Browne and Keeley<sup>12</sup> define CT as evaluating arguments based on logical principles.

Although there is no widely acknowledged and acceptable theoretical definition for CT, all these definitions have a great deal of common ground that CT has actually influenced almost every discipline and career because it is associated with abilities including problem resolving and decision-making.<sup>13</sup> Besides, many educators who are interested in CT believed that CT involves two aspects: skills and dispositions; skills (abilities) are the cognitive aspect and

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7. Jane S. Halonen, "Demystifying Critical Thinking," *Teaching of Psychology* 22, no. 1 (1995): 75-81.

8. Diane F. Halpern, "Teaching Critical Thinking for Transfer across Domains: Dispositions, Skills, Structure, Training, and Metacognitive Monitoring," *American Psychologist* 53, no. 4 (1998): 449-455.

9. Noreen C. Facione and Peter A. Facione, "Externalizing the critical thinking in knowledge development and clinical judgment," *Nursing Outlook* 44, no. 3 (1996): 129-136.

10. Stanley D. Ivie, "Metaphor: A Model for Teaching Critical Thinking," *Contemporary Education* 72, no. 1 (2001): 18-23.

11. Behdokht Mall-Amiri and Zahra Ahmadi, "The Relationship between EFL Learners' Critical Thinking and Metacognitive Strategie," *International Journal of Language Learning and Applied Linguistics World (IJLLAW)* 5, no. 1 (2014): 488-505.

12. M. Neil Browne and Stuart M. Keeley, *Asking the Right Questions: A Guide to Critical Thinking* (New Jersey: Prentice Hall, 2010).

13. Hamed Barjesteh and Reza Vaseghi, "Critical Thinking: A Reading Strategy in Developing English Reading Comprehension Performance," *Sheikhbahaee EFL Journal* 1, no. 2 (2012): 21-34.

dispositions (attitudes) are the affective aspect of CT.<sup>14</sup> Many educators are interested in the second aspect of critical thinking, so a broader perspective has been sought. As Perkins & Ritchhart<sup>15</sup> argued, "what makes a good thinker is now a question that must be answered as much in terms of people's attitudes, motivations, commitments, and habits of mind as in terms of their cognitive abilities." Siegel<sup>16</sup> has defined CT in the way that involves these two components: "the ability to assess reasons properly and the willingness, desire and disposition to base one's action and beliefs on reasons." He also emphasizes the disposition of critical thinkers who seek evidence for their beliefs and views as critical thinkers as those whom have the disposition to properly assess the force of reason, conceiving that critical thinking requires both the mastery of epistemic criteria that reason must meet in order to warrant claims, and the tendency or attitude to value and seek good reasoning. Supporting the importance of disposition, Norris<sup>17</sup> carried empirical research to test if disposition of critical thinking exists. Later according to the definition of CT- "reasonable reflective thinking that focuses on deciding what to believe and do,"<sup>18</sup> an intentional and motivational aspect of CT is underlined, which has been termed by other scholars as "critical thinking disposition."<sup>19</sup> In summary, critical thinking has two aspects. The first is the ability to analyze the information systematically so that the matter could be understood comprehensively and critically and the problems would be solved in a better way. The second is the attitude that desires to experience, to reflect and to seek the reasoning for the belief and action.

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14. Abdulmohsen S. Aloqaili, "The Relationship between Reading Comprehension and Critical Thinking: A Theoretical Study," *Journal of King Saud University-Languages and Translation*, no. 24 (2011): 35-41.

15. David Perkins and Ron Ritchhart, "When is Good Thinking?" In *Motivation, Emotion, and Cognition: Integrative Perspectives On Intellectual Functioning and Development* (eds.), David Yun Dai and Robert J. Sternberg (NJ: Erlbaum, 2004), 351-379.

16. Harvey Siegel, *Educating Reason: Rationality, Critical Thinking and Education* (New York: Routledge and Metheun, 1988), 23.

17. Stephen P. Norris, "Bachelors, Buckyballs and Ganders: Seeking Analogues for Definitions of 'Critical Thinker,'" in *Proceedings of the Forty-Eighth Annual Meeting of the Philosophy of Education Society* (ed.), H. A. Alexander (Urbana, IL: Philosophy of Education Society, 1992), 67-71.

18. Robert H. Ennis, "A Taxonomy of Critical Thinking Dispositions and Abilities," in *Teaching Thinking Skills: Theory and Practice* (eds.), J. B. Baron and R. J. Sternberg (New York, US: W H Freeman/Times Books/Henry Holt & Co., 1987), 9-26.

19. Diane F. Halpern, "Teaching Critical Thinking for Transfer across Domains: Dispositions, Skills, Structure, Training, and Metacognitive Monitoring," *American Psychologist* 53, no. 4 (1998): 449-455.

## Related Studies on Critical Thinking

### *Related Studies Abroad*

Considering the importance of CT in education, Shirkhani and Fahim<sup>20</sup> stated that learners who have developed CT skills were successful in accomplishing the activities that the other students may not be capable. Fisher<sup>21</sup> believes that students do not have enough thinking skills to handle the problems they might face in education or in their daily life.

Related literature revealed that the number of studies conducted to measure the attitudes of CT has increased in recent years. Stapleton<sup>22</sup> did a survey of attitudes toward CT among 72 Hong Kong secondary school teachers and concluded that while the teachers had some understanding of CT, it was narrow, and a precise understanding was lacking. Moreover, the participating teachers expressed strong support for the inclusion of CT in the curriculum, while showing a tendency for training in terms of how to instruct CT. Fatemeh and Abdorreza<sup>23</sup> conducted a survey of EFL teachers' attitudes towards critical thinking instruction, and appealed to teachers to realize the importance of teaching learners how to increase their ability to think critically. According to Kablin,<sup>24</sup> learners are in need of textbooks that evoke CT and teachers need to be trained to change attitudes toward CT instruction. In order to help learners to foster their CT and decision-making ability, it is necessary for teachers to educate themselves and be aware of their enormous responsibility in the classroom. Mahmoodi-Shahrehabaki and Yaghoubi-Notash<sup>25</sup> studied teachers' and learners' attitudes towards critical thinking skills in the Iranian EFL context. Both teachers and students show positive attitudes towards the new syllabus including critical

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20. Servat Shirkhani and Mansour Fahim, "Enhancing Critical Thinking in Foreign Language Learners," *Procedia* 29 (2011): 111-115.

21. Ali Malmir and Samad Shoorcheh, "An Investigation of the Impact of Teaching Critical Thinking on the Iranian EFL Learners' Speaking Skill," *Journal of Language Teaching and Research* 3, no. 4 (2012): 608-617.

22. Paul Stapleton, *A Survey of Attitudes towards Critical Thinking among Hong Kong Secondary School Teachers: Implications for Policy Change*, 14-23.

23. Fatemeh Asgharheidari and Abdorreza Tahriri, "A Survey of EFL Teacher's Attitude towards Critical Thinking Instruction," *Journal of Language Teaching and Research*, no. 2 (2015): 388-396.

24. Muhammad Kamarul Kabilan, "Creative and Critical Thinking in Language Classroom," *The Internet TESL Journal* 6, no. 6 (2000).

25. Msoud Mahmoodi-Shahrehabaki and Massoud Yaghoubi-Notash, "Teachers' and Learners' Attitudes towards Critical Thinking Skills: A Case Study in the Iranian EFL Context," *Journal of Applied Linguistics and Language Research* 2, no. 2 (2015): 93-106.

thinking skills. Yuya Akatsuka<sup>26</sup> did a study that is about students' awareness of CT attitudes and English speaking skills. He found the higher-order thinking skills (HOTS) can help improve the awareness of CT attitudes and acquire English speaking skills. Peng Lu<sup>27</sup> proposed "situational attitude and universal attitude of critical thinking might be considered as a new model to access critical thinking attitude." His study contributed to the development of CT in modern education.

These studies provide good example of research questions, research methods and research frameworks for this study, which help build up the basis of this study. On the basis of the foreign studies about the attitudes towards CT, it is necessary to conduct the survey to explore whether the differences exist when the characteristics of Chinese students are considered.

### *Related Studies within the Country*

The studies about CT in China are not as abundant as those abroad, especially studies about attitudes towards CT. And most of the studies are mainly about the cultivation of the ability of CT and the disposition of CT.

As Zhao Haiping and Yu Chunni<sup>28</sup> said, the cognition of CT and the disposition of CT are two independent aspects that should be highlighted in a critical thinking curriculum. Therefore, CT education should be strengthened by emphasizing the cultivation of CT ability and skills rather than only teach some basic knowledge. Huang Zhaoyang<sup>29</sup> and Gao Zhiyuan<sup>30</sup> concluded that students' disposition of CT is not very clear, so he suggested that characteristic cognition and emotion cultivation should be emphasized when the practice ability was taught. Li Xueshu<sup>31</sup> has argued that in order to cultivate students' critical

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26. Yuya Akatsuka, "Awareness of Critical Thinking Attitudes and English Language Skills: The Effects of Questions Involving Higher-Order Thinking," *Journal of Pan-Pacific Association of Applied Linguistics* 23, no. 2 (2019): 59-84.

27. Peng Lu, *Critical Thinking Attitude: An Exploration of Critical Thinking Construct*, PhD Thesis (Texas Tech University, 2019).

28. 赵海平 (Zhao, Haiping) and 于春妮 (Yu, Chunni), "护理本科生批判性思维认知技能和态度倾向性的相关性调查" (A Survey of the Correlation between Critical Thinking Skills and Attitudes of College Nursing Undergraduates,) 《护理研究》 (Nursing Research) 5 (2007): 1158-1162.

29. 黄朝阳 (Huang, Zhaoyang), "加强批判性思维教育 培养创新型人才" (Strengthen Critical Thinking Education and Cultivate Innovative Talents,) 《教育研究》 (Education Research) 5, (2010): 69-74.

30. 高志远 (Gao, Zhiyuan), "应用型本科大学生批判性思维倾向现状调查" (A Survey of the Current Situation of Critical Thinking Disposition of Applied Undergraduates,) 《高教探索》 (Higher Education Exploration) 2, (2013): 129-133.

31. 李学书 (Li, Xueshu), "批判性思维培养的思考" (Reflections on the Cultivation of Critical Thinking,) 《教育学术月刊》 (Education Research Monthly) 1, (2011): 13-15.



thinking, teachers should change teaching concepts and pay attention to their efforts to inspire critical thinking, focusing on psychological quality, and the development of critical thinking habits. With the rapid development of informational technology, its relationship with critical thinking is getting closer and closer. As Zhang Wenlan and Liu Bin<sup>32</sup> claimed, how to make informational technology promote the development of advanced thinking has become a central point of pre-information educational research. Research subjects need to pay more attention to the study on information technology and critical thinking.

Some studies in China are mainly about the development of CT skills. When it comes to CT teaching, most studies tried to illustrate the methods from two main aspects: students' requirement or ability, and the demands for teachers' performance. Very few studies focused on students' attitudes towards CT, though it is a significant foundation for CT development. Therefore, it is necessary to investigate the students' attitudes and their recognition towards CT so as to find more effective and practical methods to improve students' critical thinking.

## **Methodology**

### **Research Questions**

The present study investigates English majors' attitudes towards CT in the EFL context, endeavoring to explore the situation of CT development of college students. This study is to answer the following questions:

- 1) What are English majors' general attitudes towards CT?
- 2) Is there any difference of attitudes towards CT between normal English majors (who study English teaching to be pre-service English teachers) and non-normal English majors (who study the subject about business and translation in English)?
- 3) Is there any difference of attitude towards CT between art students and science students?

### **Participants**

As for the students who take English as their major in China, they mainly have two kinds of job prospects; they can choose to accept the professional training of being an English teacher or choose to learn the knowledge of business and translation. These two groups will have totally different subjects. In this study, 104 senior English majors (9 males and 95 females) from Ludong

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32. Zhang and Bin, "信息技术与批判性思维研究的现状及启示," 25-30.

University in China were selected randomly to explore their attitudes toward CT. They have learned integrated English professionally for two years. After that, they choose different kinds of training of English which involves education, business and translation. The students who choose to study English teaching are normal English majors that are undergraduate pre-service teachers, and the others are non-normal English majors who choose to study the subject about business and translation in English. Among them, there are 67 normal English majors, 37 non-normal English majors. Concerning the different subjects chosen in their high schools, 82 are art students and 22 are science students. They all have studied English for 13 years (since third grade in primary school), and they all have passed Test for English Majors Grade 4, so they are almost all on the same level of proficiency in English.

### **Instrument**

The survey instrument consisted of an eight-item Likert-style questionnaire adapted from a survey of EFL teachers' attitudes towards CT,<sup>33</sup> the reliability of which was 0.721. This index was higher than the minimum required (0.70), suggesting that the reliability of this questionnaire was acceptable. The instrument was the questionnaire with close-ended items, which are described by a five-point scale ranging from 'strongly disagree' to 'strongly agree.' The scores of item 4 to item 6 are reversed. The questionnaires explored (1) the participants' attitudes on the meaning of CT (Item 1 is related to this aspect); (2) CT's position in their learning process, especially in foreign language learning (Item 2 to item 7 show the importance of CT); and (3) the perceived need for training to enhance learning techniques in CT (item 8).

### **Data Collection and Data Analysis**

The main goal of this study was to explore English majors' attitudes towards CT. The main instrument used to collect the relevant data was attitude questionnaires which were distributed among 104 English majors including normal English majors and business English majors. Before administering the questionnaire to the main sample, the reliability that was the internal consistency within the questionnaire items was estimated. The process of the data analysis is as follows:

After ensuring the reliability of the questionnaires, they were administrated to the participants. Their anonymity was guaranteed and they were asked to complete the eight items and choose one of the options based on the five-point

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33. Asgharheidari and Tahriri, *A Survey of EFL Teacher's Attitude towards Critical Thinking Instruction*, 388-396.

Likert scale (1=strongly disagree, 2=disagree, 3=not sure, 4=agree, 5=strong agree). Then the data were analyzed and reported including mean, standard derivation, and the detailed analysis of each item which includes the frequency and percentage of the five levels of agreement. The findings of this attitude questionnaire were analyzed to determine the participants' attitudes towards CT instruction. The Excel software was used to provide a descriptive analysis of the closed items of the questionnaire. Items that produced mean scores most distant from the mid-point, 3, indicate the strongest viewpoints while those closest to 3 exhibit the weakest. The standard deviation reflecting the degree of dispersion was calculated to ensure the reliability of the experimental results. The process of analyzing the data is put in certain sequence: firstly the overall analysis, secondly the differences of attitudes towards CT between arts students and science students, and thirdly the differences of attitudes towards CT between normal English majors and non-normal English majors.

## Results and Discussion

### General Attitudes

As the results show, English majors do not quite demonstrate that they have a clear meaning of CT, while they do realize the importance of CT and have a strong desire to improve it with the teachers' training. As Table 1 shows, the total mean is 3.68, which means that in general students have positive attitudes towards CT. The positive attitudes can be analyzed from three aspects: firstly, the English majors' attitudes towards the meaning of CT, secondly CT's position in their learning process, especially in foreign language learning, and thirdly the perceived need for training to enhance learning techniques in CT. (What the items refer to can be seen in the Appendix.)

**Table 1.** Mean and Standard Deviations of Questionnaire Items

Items	M	SD
1	3.14	0.67433
2	3.85	0.65016
3	3.57	0.84491
4	2.25	0.77271
5	4.27	0.75338
6	4.13	0.81321
7	4.12	0.74139
8	4.13	0.88885
Total	3.68	0.68253

Source: Paul Stapleton (2011.)<sup>34</sup>

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34. Stapleton, 14-23.

Firstly, students are actually not sure that they have a clear idea of the meaning of critical thinking. They may just know the incomplete idea from the teachers, but did not learn any concrete and specific definition of CT from their textbook. As they do not know clearly what CT is and are therefore deficient in CT, more training and teachers' instruction are needed so as to lead the way to understand and improve CT. As Table 1 shows, the mean of item 1 is 3.14, which shows that English majors do not demonstrate their understanding of a clear definition of CT – this was equal to 71.2% (N<sup>35</sup>=74) of the total participants. Only 28.9% (N=30) believed that they know the meaning of CT. Their conception may be incomplete and narrow in many cases, which is similar to the statement in the interview conducted by Stapleton.<sup>36</sup> Basically, English majors do not have a specific definition of CT (Table 2).

**Table 2.** Item 1: I Have a Clear Idea of what the Term 'Critical Thinking' Means

Level of agreement	Frequency	Percentage
Strongly disagree	0	0
Disagree	16	15.4
Not sure	58	55.8
Agree	29	27.9
Strongly agree	1	1
Total	104	100

Source: Fatemeh Asgharheidari (2015).<sup>37</sup>

Secondly, learning CT is really important for English major students. Teachers did conduct some CT exercises into class, but perhaps teachers and students have all realized the important position of CT in the process of learning. The mean of item 2, item 3, item 6 and item 7 is 3.85, 3.57, 4.13 and 4.12, which shows that they agree with the ideas that CT is an important part of study. Except that, from another point of view, for item 2, 77.9% of the participants (N=81) show agreement to the importance of CT in learning. Yet, 3.8% of them (N=4) disagree with the item 2 and 18.3% of the students (N=19) cannot make sure whether CT skills are important or not. For item 7, there are 85.6% students (N=89) whom agree that CT is especially important in foreign language learning. Simply 4 of them (3.8%) disagree with the special function of CT in foreign language learning, meaning the majority of English majors realize the importance of CT and its significant position in foreign language learning. The minority of students in the sample (N=15/P=14.4% ) need to be inspired to show more initiative to know the benefit and function of CT so as to realize its importance in the process of

35. N=Numbers. It refers to the situation of frequency.

36. Stapleton, 14-23.

37. Asgharheidari and Tahriri, 388-396.

learning. In addition to item 3, 62.5% of the total responses (N=65) shows the agreement to the idea that teachers build CT exercises into most of their lessons, however 12.5% of students (N=13) disagree with this idea. For item 6, 86.5% (N=90) students disagree that it was not the job of teacher to teach CT in the classroom, and only 4 of them (3.8%) agree with this idea. The data indicate that the majority of respondents have learned some knowledge of CT in most of their lessons and approve of the crucial role of the teacher in the courses of teaching CT. Since the majority of students agree that CT is significant, more exercises and explanations of CT should be designed into the classroom, and teachers need to utilize appropriate learning materials and alternative methods that are appropriate to teach critical thinking skills. Steps should also be taken towards implementing the concrete measures so as to give CT a central role in the English curriculum.

From the above data, it is easy to find that English majors in general are not good at critical thinking and it is necessary to increase the role of critical thinking into the curriculum. They may not have learned the relevant knowledge about CT and do not have the confidence when it comes to that, but they find it important in their life and are quite willing to know more about CT. As Table 1 shows, the mean of the item 4 is 2.25 which shows that the students tend to agree with this idea. In terms of the frequency and percent, 71.1% of the students (N=74) agree that Chinese students in general are not good at CT. Only 6.8% (N=7) of the students disagree with this idea. The mean of item 5 is 4.27, which shows that they disagree with the idea that it is not necessary to increase CT into curriculum. Alternatively, 90.4% of the students reported that they felt that it is necessary to increase the role of CT into the curriculum. Only 2.9% of the students reported disagreement with that sentiment, which indicates that the majority of students are aware of their deficiency in CT and desire to learn relevant knowledge of CT in their curriculum. It also means that the English learning curriculum should be designed with the purpose to improve students' CT. As Stapleton<sup>38</sup> argued, regarding the curriculum they should be regulated and revised with the aims to explicitly illustrate the types and the ways to improve CT. CT should be given more focus than ever before after the effectual curriculum is implemented. Overall, English majors in general are not good at CT, but they become conscious of the importance of CT, which urges them to turn to teachers and a specialized curriculum (Table 3).

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38. Stapleton, 14-23.

**Table 3.** Frequency and Percentage of Attitudes towards CT

Level of agreement	Item 2		Item 3		Item 4		Item 5		Item 6		Item 7	
	F. <sup>39</sup>	P. <sup>40</sup>	F.	P.	F.	P.	F.	P.	F.	P.	F.	P.
Strongly disagree	0	0	1	1	1	1	42	40.4	34	32.7	0	0
Disagree	4	3.8	12	11.5	6	5.8	52	50	56	53.8	4	3.8
Not sure	19	18.3	26	0.25	23	22.1	7	6.7	10	9.6	11	10.6
Agree	70	67.3	58	55.8	62	59.6	2	1.9	2	1.9	58	55.8
Strongly agree	11	10.6	7	6.7	12	11.5	1	1	2	1.9	31	29.8

Source: Fatemeh Asgharheidari (2015.)<sup>41</sup>

Thirdly, English majors need more training from teachers about how to develop critical thinking skills. They don't have the ability to improve the CT skills by themselves as they do not know clearly what CT means. They cannot find a better way to improve CT effectively, so the teachers' assistance and guidance is important for them to enhance the ability to learn CT. As Table 4 shows, the students agree that they need more training from teachers (M=4.13). 84.6% students (N=87) agree that they need more training from teachers about how to teach CT. Simply 5.7% students (N=6) reported that they do not need training in CT. It indicates that the majority of students are eager for more training and the help of their teachers to learn how to improve their CT skills. Though students are not completely sure of the meaning of CT, they expressed unequivocal support for CT training in the curriculum and the strong desire for more training from teachers, which indicated that the specific direction on how to improve CT must be designed. As the key role of teachers, it is necessary for teachers to educate themselves ideally so as to help learners to foster their own CT and decision making ability. Overall, students expect their teachers to help them know more about CT and thus need more training to improve CT as they are not skilled in this area.

**Table 4.** Item 8: I Need More Training about how to Teach Critical Thinking Skills from Teachers

Level of agreement	Frequency	Percentage
Strongly disagree	2	1.9
Disagree	4	3.8
Not sure	11	10.6
Agree	49	47.1
Strongly agree	38	36.5
Total	104	100

Source: Fatemeh Asgharheidari (2015.)<sup>42</sup>

39. F.=Frequency.

40. P.=Percentage.

41. Asgharheidari and Tahriri, 388-396.

In general, these results are similar to one in the survey of EFL teachers' attitudes towards critical thinking instruction.<sup>43</sup> They all agreed that they are not good at CT in spite of the fact that CT is important for them. Maybe they realized that CT is making an enormous difference to learning and teaching, though they may have not accepted the training of CT. However, they have the different attitudes to item 1 and item 6. As for item 1, 82% of teachers thought they have a clear definition of what CT is, while 71.2% of students do not have a clear definition of CT. Maybe it is teachers' more abundant experience in higher education, which makes teachers know more about CT. While 90.4% of students showed their disagreement on item 6, 93.3% of teachers agreed that it is not the job of the teacher to teach critical thinking in the classroom. The one possible reason is that the teachers do not quite know how to teach critical thinking while the students do not know how to develop critical thinking, except for to turn to their teachers. It is also possible that teachers believe that handling the real problems outside the classroom is the better way to improve CT.

In conclusion, most English majors do not really understand what CT is, however, they consider it important that it should be taught by teachers and they had a strong desire for more training on how to develop CT. They think it is necessary to integrate CT into the curriculum, especially in foreign language learning.

### **Differences in the Attitudes towards Critical Thinking between Arts Students and Science Students**

As the results show, in general, the differences in the attitudes of CT are extremely small between art students and science students, but there are some differences existing in some aspects.

The vertical analysis is conducted to show the differences between art students and science students. In general, the science students ( $M=3.76$ ) have more positive attitudes towards CT than art students ( $M=3.66$ ). It is perhaps because they have been exposed to different exercises and requirements of different subjects in their process of study at high school. It is also possible that their different thinking patterns can also affect their attitude towards CT. As for the means of art students, 4.22 (item 5) is the highest score and 2.18 (item 4) is the lowest score. Compared to the art students, the science students have the highest score 4.45 (item 5) and the lowest score 2.50 (item 4). This means that the art students and the science have almost the same attitude towards item 4 and item 5. They all agree that Chinese students are in general not good at critical thinking and it is necessary to increase the role of critical thinking into the curriculum.

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42. Ibid.

43. Ibid.

Since the above paragraph shows the vertical analysis of attitudes towards CT, this paragraph introduces the horizontal analysis. By comparing each item in terms of the three dimensions, some differences are found in certain items. Firstly, in respect of the meaning of CT, art students are clearer about CT than those science students. As Table 5 shows, art students show more agreement on their understanding of CT ( $M=3.17$ ) compared to the mean of science students ( $M=3.05$ ). In their courses, the teachers may tend to lead them to analyze historical and political events so they know CT more familiarly. Secondly, as for items that show the importance of CT, art students and science students have different attitudes; the science students have more enthusiastic support in their feelings regarding the importance of CT. Regarding the role of CT as an important part of study, science students have a clearer awareness of the importance of CT. As Table 5 shows, the science students show the stronger agreement on the importance of CT for students in learning ( $M=3.95$ ) compared the mean of art students ( $M=3.82$ ). Except that, with regard to the proficiency of CT, art students show more negative attitudes than science students. As Table 5 shows, compared the mean of science students ( $M=2.50$ ), art students expressed more agreement on the idea ( $M=2.18$ ) that Chinese students in general are not good at CT. As well, concerning the necessity to emphasize the role of CT in the curriculum, the science students revealed stronger viewpoints. As Table 5 shows, the science students show the stronger disagreement over the idea ( $M=4.45$ ) that it is not necessary to increase the role of CT into the curriculum when it is compared to the mean of art students ( $M=4.22$ ). All in all, the science students have clearer and stronger consciousness to the importance of CT. As the feature of their course, they are lacking the knowledge of CT while it is important in language learning. Hence they are aware of the urgent need to learn CT. Thirdly, in respect to the need of training about how to learn CT skills, the science students expressed more agreement ( $M=4.27$ ) that they need more training from teachers to teach them CT skills when it is compared to the mean of art students ( $M=4.09$ ). As they realize the crucial role of CT, they require more training of CT from teachers so as to remedy their deficiency in CT.

All in all, the art students are surer of the definition of CT but as for the importance of CT, it has a higher position in the science students' point of view. The science students express a stronger desire to get more training for how to improve CT skills. In general, they all show a positive attitude towards CT.



**Table 5.** Attitudes towards CT of Arts Students and Science Students

Level of agreement	Arts students		Science students		Total	
	M	SD	M	SD	M	SD
1	3.17	0.68141	3.05	0.653	3.14	0.67433
2	3.82	0.68724	3.95	0.48573	3.85	0.65016
3	3.56	0.84762	3.55	0.73855	3.57	0.84491
4	2.18	0.75569	2.50	0.80178	2.25	0.77271
5	4.22	0.75357	4.45	0.5958	4.27	0.75338
6	4.15	0.78606	4.09	0.75018	4.13	0.81321
7	4.10	0.74717	4.18	0.73266	4.12	0.74139
8	4.09	0.93229	4.27	0.7025	4.13	0.88885
Total	3.66	0.78385	3.76	0.68253	3.68	0.76737

Source: Paul Stapleton (2011.)<sup>44</sup>

### Differences in the Attitudes towards Critical Thinking between Normal English Majors and Non-Normal English Majors

There exist some differences between normal English majors and non-normal English majors. The main reasons may be attributed to their different curricula and professional goals. For non-normal English majors, the ability of negotiating and operating international trade affairs is emphasized. In the process of the internship, non-normal English majors realize it is crucial for them to have the ability to handle problems flexibly by using English properly. Therefore, they pay more attention to how English language can be used to solve the real problems by using intercultural communication. For normal English majors, the ability of utilizing pedagogy and firm language knowledge is more important. With the goal of becoming a teacher, the normal English majors realize that they are in urgent need to improve their CT so that they can teach students to think in this manner in the future. Thus normal English majors and non-normal English majors have different attitudes towards each item of CT.

The differences of attitudes towards CT between normal English majors and non-normal English majors are analyzed from three aspects. Firstly, in regard to the meaning of CT, the non-normal English majors would be surer that they have a clear idea of CT. As Table 6 shows, the non-normal English majors express more agreement on the clear meaning of CT (M=3.3) in comparison to the mean of normal English majors (M=3.06). Secondly, concerning to the items that show the importance of CT, there exists the differences between normal English majors and non-normal English majors. In regards to the matter that whether teachers build CT explanations and exercises into most of lessons, the normal English majors more strongly approve. As Table 6 shows, the normal English majors expressed stronger agreement on this item (M=3.7) by comparison with the mean of non-

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44. Stapleton, 14-23.

normal English majors ( $M=3.3$ ). The teachers of normal students may build the CT exercises more frequently. Except that, concerning the necessity to emphasize the role of CT in the curriculum, the non-normal majors revealed stronger viewpoints. As Table 6 shows, the non-normal majors show the stronger disagreement over the idea ( $M=4.35$ ) that it is not necessary to increase the role of CT into the curriculum in comparison to the mean of normal students ( $M=4.22$ ). As well, in respect to the teachers' responsibility to teach CT in the classroom, the non-normal English majors show more agreement than normal English majors. As Table 6 shows, the non-normal English majors show more agreement on the responsibility of teachers to teach CT ( $M=4.3$ ) after making a comparison of normal English majors ( $M=4.04$ ). As for the importance of CT in foreign language learning, the non-normal students have more enthusiasm regarding the importance of CT. As Table 6 shows, the non-normal English majors show more agreement to the special function in foreign language learning ( $M=4.22$ ) in comparison to the mean of normal students ( $M=4.06$ ). All in all, the non-normal English majors expressed more agreement with CT's importance in the curriculum and in teachers' jobs, especially in foreign language learning. Thirdly, concerning the desire to get more training from teachers about how to learn CT skills, the normal English majors have the stronger desire to improve CT. As Table 6 shows, the normal English majors show a stronger yearning to get CT training from teachers ( $M=4.19$ ), in comparison to the mean of non-normal English majors ( $M=3.97$ ) — they show a more urgent need for the improvement of CT with the teachers' help.

On the whole, the students show positive attitudes towards CT. The non-normal English majors keep a more clear idea of what CT is and hold a stronger belief that the teachers and the relevant curricula are all important to develop CT. The normal English majors have the stronger desire to get more training about CT.

**Table 6.** Attitudes towards CT of Normal Students and Non-Normal Students

Level of agreement	Normal students		Non-normal students		Total	
	M	SD	M	SD	M	SD
1	3.06	0.71522	3.3	0.57081	3.14	0.67433
2	3.84	0.61784	3.86	0.71344	3.85	0.65016
3	3.7	0.72306	3.3	0.71344	3.57	0.84491
4	2.28	0.7549	2.19	0.81096	2.25	0.77271
5	4.22	0.83159	4.35	0.58766	4.27	0.75338
6	4.04	0.81264	4.3	0.66101	4.13	0.81321
7	4.06	0.87789	4.22	0.7124	4.12	0.74139
8	4.19	0.7564	3.97	0.95703	4.13	0.88885
Total	3.68	0.76455	3.69	0.74402	3.68	0.68253

Source: Paul Stapleton (2011).<sup>45</sup>

45. Stapleton, 14-23.

## Conclusion

### Major Findings

This study explores English majors' attitudes towards CT. After the analysis and discussion of the data, three main findings can be concluded. Firstly, most of the English majors were not really clear about CT, which implies a need to improve the understanding of the concept of CT among students. However, they do realize that CT is important for them to study, and especially to learn foreign language, and most of them express the need for more training in how to learn CT skills. Secondly, art students are clearer about CT, but CT has a higher position in the science students' point of view, and science students express the stronger desire to get more training on how to improve CT skills. Thirdly, non-normal English majors are clearer about CT and hold stronger viewpoints that improving CT plays an important role in English learning, while normal English majors hold a stronger desire to get more training about CT.

### Implications

The findings can be taken as indicators that the development of CT should take students' attitudes towards CT into due consideration. It is significant to know what they are interested in and what they need in the process of teaching CT. The development of CT skills and the attitude towards CT are both crucial. Furthermore, as teachers play a key role in the training of CT, they need to utilize appropriate learning materials and alternative methods that are appropriate to teach critical thinking skills. Moreover, it is necessary for teachers to educate themselves ideally so that they could have in-depth knowledge of critical thinking and understanding of how to incorporate this into their lessons. In addition, in order to improve teachers' capability for teaching CT, schools and institutions must provide them with required time and resources which are necessary for professional development to occur. Finally, teachers can utilize some approaches proposed by language experts to incorporate CT into the education process. For example, Ennis<sup>46</sup> proposed three approaches about how to foster CT attitudes in school: a general approach, an infusion approach, and an immersion approach. Yuya Akatsuka<sup>47</sup> stated the effectiveness of high-order thinking skills (HOTS) in the process of fostering CT attitudes.

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46. Robert H. Ennis, "Critical Thinking and Subject Specificity: Classification and Needed Research," *Educational Researcher* 18, no. 3 (1989): 4-10.

47. Y. Akatsuka, *Awareness of Critical Thinking Attitudes and English Language Skills: The Effects of Questions Involving Higher-Order Thinking*, 59-84.

## Limitations and Suggestions for Future Research

This study analyzes the understanding of critical thinking cultivation among English majors and provides valuable data support for the cultivation of critical thinking of English majors. This study mainly analyses the differences of attitudes towards CT between art students and science students, and the differences of normal English majors and non-normal English majors. Future research can further determine students' attitudes towards CT from other perspectives such as gender and grade. In addition, this study only uses the questionnaires as the instrument to conduct the survey, and future research can be combined with interview investigation to make further demonstration. Finally, the research subjects are English majors. The results are only suitable for the English majors' attitudes towards CT. Future research can further explore students' attitude towards CT by comparing to other majors, which can make the research results more universal.

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## Appendix

### Questionnaire

Dear Sir/Madam

Thank you very much for participating in this survey. The purpose of this survey is to study the attitudes towards critical thinking and critical thinking ability of English majors. All questions are not about right or wrong, nor are they assessments of your academic performance. Your careful and objective filling is very important for research! I hope you can finish this test patiently. The test does not involve personal privacy, only for scientific research. Thank you for your cooperation!

Gender: 1. male 2. female

Grade: 1. freshman 2. sophomore 3. junior 4. senior

You are 1. arts student 2. science student

*Please Choose your Degree of Agreement for the Following Items*

Items	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Not Sure	Agree	Strongly Agree
1. I have a clear idea of what the term "critical thinking" means.	1	2	3	4	5
2. Learning critical thinking is an important part of my study as a student	1	2	3	4	5
3. Teachers give us the training of critical thinking in many courses.	1	2	3	4	5
4. Chinese students in general are not good at critical thinking.	1	2	3	4	5
5. It is not necessary to increase the role of critical thinking into the curriculum.	1	2	3	4	5
6. It is not the job of the teacher to teach critical thinking in the classroom.	1	2	3	4	5
7. Critical thinking is especially important in foreign language learning.	1	2	3	4	5
8. I need more instruction from teachers about how to train critical thinking skills.	1	2	3	4	5





## **Tudor Coins as Bearers of Ideology of a Young Nation State**

By Natalya Davidko\*

*Sixteenth century England saw the conception and dissemination of a new ideology aimed at national consolidation and identity formation. Elaborated in philosophical and theological writings, Parliamentary acts and ordinances, underpinned by contemporary literature and art, the new ideology had one more potent but often overlooked vehicle of propagation – the Tudor money, a unique semiotic system of signs encoding in its iconography and inscriptions the abstract principles of the nascent ideology. The article argues for the significance of the political dimension of the coinage in question and suggests possible ideological readings of coins' visual design and their textual component. We also hypothesize that coin symbolism, literary texts professing national values and ideals, and visual art form distinct but inter-complementary domains (numismatics, pictorial art, and poetics) and function as potent tools of propaganda.*

### **Introduction**

The period this paper is concerned with is the Tudor age (1485-1603), which spans a century, is represented by five crowned monarchs and is marked by dramatic changes in all spheres of economic, political, religious, and cultural life. According to historical chronology, the 16<sup>th</sup> century marks the beginning of the Modern period in the history of England, which is characterized by the transition from feudalism to a new economic order accompanied by sweeping restructuring of industry and agriculture and consequent painful social changes. The distinguishing features of this period are consolidation of absolutism and imperial aspirations of the Crown that resulted in the subjugation of new territories and peoples. The epoch is imbued with a spirit of discovery that spurred the development of the Navy and brought to the fore new iconic figures like John Cabot, Sir John Hawkins, and Francis Drake. The period is known for proliferation of knowledge and education bolstered by the expanding print culture and the English Renaissance. The Protestant movement in England initiated and supported by the King split the country along religious lines for many decades, but at the same time became a theological validation of capitalism through entrenchment of religious individualism. All these developments make this epoch a unique and most impactful historical period and a fertile domain for uncovering undercurrent philosophical and theological doctrines that brought about the conception of an ideology of a young nation state within a new historical context. I seek to expose covert ideological structures and political

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implications of the Tudor coinage, which together with contemporary literature and art contributed to the indoctrination of public thinking.

### Theoretical Premises

The subject of money in the early modern period has attracted researchers of different schools with differing approaches. They addressed the questions of numismatic portraiture, described functions of money within a new economic and social context, studied its influence on the language of contemporary drama and poetry, examined how Tudor literature was shaped by economic thinking and examined how the age-old concept of value was transformed under the aggressive onslaught of materiality of gold and silver money.<sup>78</sup> Regrettably, coins as such bearing effigies of kings and queens as a stamp of royal power, endorsed by legends chosen personally by English sovereigns, were considered the scope of numismatics. In this article, the Coin with its iconography and symbolism is regarded as a meaning-saturated gestalt, on which converge politics, religion, and – art, all of which reflect the nascent ideology.

Money's significance goes far beyond its purely economic role as a medium of exchange and encapsulates social, political, ideological and cultural content because of its abstract, symbolic character. Recent economic theory suggests that "money indeed creates its own universe of knowledge ... and determines how we understand the world."<sup>79</sup> Some researchers go so far as to postulate that money culture is "at the root of the very structure of symbolization and representation that frame the way we make sense of the world."<sup>80</sup>

The focal interest of the current research is the complex concept of ideology – the commonly held conventions and beliefs that make up the dominant ideas of a society and belong to the superstructure alongside culture, literature, law, art, etc. Karl Marx revealed that changes in ideology and culture are predicated on

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1. To gain a better insight into the scope of themes addressed by researchers see: H. Farquhar, *Portraiture of the Tudor Monarchs on their Coins and Medals* (London: Harrison and Sons, 1908); B. Cook, *Angels and Ducats: Shakespeare's Money and Medals* (London: British Museum Press, 2012); A. Wong, "Uttering Angels and Minting Metaphors: Some Numismatic Tropes in Early Modern British Poetry," *British Numismatic Journal* 82 (2012): 121-132; P. Grav, "Taking Stock of Shakespeare and the New Economic Criticism," *Shakespeare* 8, no. 1 (2012): 111-136; D. Landreth, *The Face of Mammon: The Matter of Money in English Renaissance Literature* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012).

2. D. Valenze, *The Social Life of Money in the English Past* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), 58.

3. I. Capeloa and H. da Silva, *The Cultural Life of Money* (Berlin/Boston: Walter de Gruyter GmbH & Co KG, 2015), 7-11.

productive forces as “a certain mode of production, or industrial stage, is always combined with a certain mode of co-operation, or social stage, and this mode of co-operation is itself a 'productive force.’”<sup>81</sup> It is a productive force in a sense that it affects all constituents of the superstructure, especially perceptions of the world. According to Marx, “The ruling ideas are nothing more than the ideal expression of the dominant material relationships, the dominant material relationships grasped as ideas.”<sup>82</sup> It follows from this definition that with changes in the methods of production, previous ideology is ousted or exists on a 'residual level,' whereas new ideological content gradually takes hold of the minds of people implanting in them a new, ordered set of ideas, with the aim to achieve public prevalency.

Conventional venues of propagating ideas are, in the first place, literature and pictorial art, which willingly embrace a new figural system of symbols and tropes. In the Tudor age, church preaching, popular ballads, poetry, and of course drama, became the most efficacious media of communicating doctrinal messages. Unexpectedly, coins due to their ubiquity and capacity to reach any single person became instrumental in shaping and transmitting new ideological principles, so special care was taken by the monarchs of the visual aspect of coins, which requires on the part of a researcher attention to minute details of the coin design as any can be a bearer of significative value. “The essence of money resides not so much in its visible or material qualities as in numismatic engravings that are impressed into electrum ingots.”<sup>83</sup>

One of insightful approaches to the study of the evolution of nations' ideologies is Anthony Smith's 'ethno-symbolism' theory, which is concerned with the need to consider the accumulated heritage of symbolic resources (values, myths and symbols) involved in motivating ideologies; that means analyzing their symbolic dimensions which are integral to shared identity.<sup>84</sup> According to Smith, the creation of national identity can be achieved through the rediscovery of ancient myths, symbols, and memories and that “social reality is inconceivable outside of symbolism.”<sup>85</sup> Smith categorizes coins as 'community symbols' alongside with flags, hymns, crowns, and totems.<sup>86</sup>

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4. K. Marx and F. Engels, *The German Ideology*. Part One, with Selections from Parts Two and Three, together with Marx's "Introduction to a Critique of Political Economy." (New York: International Publishers, 2001), 50.

82. *Ibid*, 64.

83. M. Shell, *Art and Money* (London: University of Chicago Press, 1995), 4.

84. A. Smith, *Ethno-Symbolism and Nationalism: A Cultural Approach* (London and New York: Routledge Taylor & Francis Group, 2009), 16.

85. *Ibid*, 24-25.

86. A. Smith, *Myths and Memories of the Nation* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999), 16.

## Objectives and Material

The general goal of the research is to analyze changes in the ideology of 16th century England and expose its constitutive elements communicated through various venues among which coins are of special interest. The study aims to explore the following aspects of coins: 1) their pictorial design with special attention to how the signification process is organized through the visual; 2) legends inscribed by Tudor sovereigns as politicization of religion; 3) political and ideological messages of coins, and 4) the interconnectedness of the English coin system with other venues of propaganda. The list of coins for the study includes gold coins in which ideological content is most pronounced: *Sovereign, Angel, Crown, Noble/Royal*.

## Basic Elements of the Tudor Ideology

The English kingdom under the Tudors was in a state of transition, and hence turmoil and turbulence. Henry VII (1485-1509), the first Tudor king, put an end to the reign of the Plantagenet dynasty (the House of York) winning the battle of Bosworth (1485) and both virtually and figuratively picking up the crown of the fallen enemy (Richard III). He ended the War of the Roses and married Elizabeth of York. As a sign of reconciliation of the two houses, he designed the Tudor double rose (Figure 1); the cinquefoil became emblematic of the Tudors and featured on all coins issued in their time.



**Figure 1.** *The Tudor Rose*

Source: Wikipedia.

The rose and the King were poetized in the ballad *The Rose of England*:

In the midst of a garden there sprange a tree,  
And there vppon sprang the rose soe redd, ...  
This rose was faire, fresh to behold,  
Springing with many a royall lance;  
A crowned king, with a crowne of gold,  
Ouer England, Ireland, and of Ffrance.<sup>87</sup>

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87. F. Child (Ed.), *The English and Scottish Popular Ballads* (Boston: Little, Brown and company, 1860), 331.

Henry is believed to have created the English nation-state on the pattern of France's sovereign state under King Louis XI. According to Marx, the ruling class, when coming to power, uses ideology as an apologetic technique for justifying the existing state of affairs. The Tudors had to offer such political and ideological values that would gain pervasive acceptance and at the same time would meet a particular set of needs of the Crown, among which the most urgent was legitimization of their power.

### Apologia of Absolute Royal Power

Historians generally regard the appearance of absolute monarchy as instituted in the France of Louis XIV (1643-1715). But the famous words "L'état, c'est moi" ("I am the state") were pronounced a century after the Tudor kings – father and son – turned the idea of absolutism into reality. It should be also noted that J. Bodin's famous treatise *The Six Bookes of a Commonweale*,<sup>88</sup> in which he formulated the main principles of absolutism also called 'The Divine Right of Kings', was written in 1576 and published in English translation in 1606 after the political practice of unlimited centralized authority had been operating in England for more than half a century.

The origins of the concept of absolutism in England should be looked for in the works by Sir John Fortescue (1394-1479), especially his famous treatise *The Governance of England or Monarchia*<sup>89</sup> (ca 1471), in which he formulated principles aimed at the strengthening of the powers of the Crown and the reduction of the influence of the nobles. Though in his political views Fortescue was leaning toward limited monarchy, his writings exposing the evils which stemmed from Monarch's weakness (anarchical tendencies among the barons, the struggle of the aristocracy for the influence on the king, and many others which might lead finally to civil wars) proved to be the guidelines as to how to erect the edifice of absolutism and were dilligently followed by the first Tudor kings. The main distinction between 'absolute' and 'limited monarchy' lies in whose hands legislative and fiscal powers are. As Fortescue put it, "they differ in that the king may rule his people by such laws that he makes himself. And therefore he may set on them such charges and impositions as he wants himself without their consent."<sup>90</sup>

The Tudor kings were known for their ingenuity to extract revenue from their subjects, who had to pay "taxes, tallages, subsidies, scot, lot, and other

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88. J. Bodin, *The Six Booke of a Commonweale* (London: Impensis G Bifhop, 1606).

89. J. Fortescue, *The Governance of England* (London: Humphrey Milford, 1926).

90. Ibid, 109.

charges to the king's majesty and for the king's honor"<sup>91</sup>. This policy falls in with Fortescue's caution against the poverty of the Crown and his demand that the king should have for his expenditures more than the revenues of any lord; he stresses "the harme that comith off a Kinges poverté,"<sup>92</sup> which is a dishonor and belittles the glory of a king. What is more dangerous is that poverty may be the cause of King's diffidence and disloyalty on the part of his subjects because "his subgettes woll rather goo with a lorde þat is riche, and mey pay thair wages and expenses, then with thair kynge þat hath noght [nothing] in his purse,"<sup>93</sup> foreign princes included. Henry VII's parsimony was well-known. He turned his realm into "the golden hyll," spent great sums on jewels, and left to his son immense riches, which Henry VIII "dissipated by the prodigal expenses of the youthful monarch within several years."<sup>94</sup> In the same vein runs the policy of the resumption of lands alienated from the Crown in previous periods. In this way Henry VII eliminated the landed aristocracy, and Henry VIII wiped out Catholic ecclesiastical elite restoring Crown lands given away to monasteries.

The next postulate, which was later enunciated by Bodin, was that there may be no greater peril to a prince than to have an overmighty subject or subjects equipollent to him, who might "aspire to þe estate [power] of his prince"<sup>95</sup>. Bodin considered that nothing on the earth can be "greater or higher, next to God, than King's majesty."<sup>96</sup> He laid down the foundation for the ideology of the "Divinity of Royal Rights," stating that "they (rights) wholly and alone belong unto the king,"<sup>97</sup> are inseparable and are not to be divided or shared with anybody else. Richard II in Shakespeare's eponymous play believes that his right to the throne is "*Sacra Sacrorum*, of Sacred things the most Sacred," and God will be his protector. He, who is fighting a losing battle against Bolingbrook,<sup>98</sup> still believes that Angels will be on his side.

God for his Richard hath in heavenly pay  
A glorious angel; then if angels fight,  
Weak men must fall, for heaven still guards the right.<sup>99</sup>

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91. W. Cunningham, *The Growth of English Industry and Commerce During the Early and Middle Ages* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1910), 519.

92. Fortescue, 119.

93. Ibid.

94. R. Ruding, *Annals of the Coinage of Great Britain and its Dependencies*, volume 1 (London: Manning and Mason, 1840), 300.

95. Bodin, 128.

96. Ibid, 153.

97. Ibid, 155.

98. Richard's cousin, who removed him from the throne and became King Henry IV.

99. W. Shakespeare, *The Complete Works. Richard II* (London: CRW Publishing Limited, 2006), 219.

Long before his break with Rome, Henry VIII wrote about spiritual supremacy of kings and declared that “by the ordinance and sufferance of God we are king of England, and the kings of England in time past have never had any superior but God alone,”<sup>100</sup> by which he repudiated papal primacy. He also pronounced the English nation exempt from foreign jurisdiction.

Both Fortescue and Bodin believed that the exclusive right of monarchs was appointing and dismissing the great officers of state. The peril to the monarch was that “great princes and lords might be so occupied with their own matters, and with the matters of their kin that they may attend but litle, or not at all, to the Kyng's matters”<sup>101</sup>. He thought it feasible for the King to appoint yearly several lords at his discretion out of “the wisest and best disposed men that can be found in any part of this land, who would advise him on matters very difficult that might befall the king.”<sup>102</sup> All the Tudors practiced this policy and created a new nobility dependent on royal favor. In the tragedy *Richard III*, Gloucester,<sup>103</sup> is exasperated that “the nobility is held in contempt” and high positions are granted to people of low origin and doubtful merits: “... many fair promotions/Are daily given to ennoble those/That scarce, some two days since, were worth a noble”<sup>104</sup>

Henry VII built the strongest monarchy in the history of England based on the theory of divine rights and providentialism. His son, Henry VIII (1509-1547), subordinated the Church to the Crown, and forced Parliament to designate him “Protector and Only Supreme Head of the Church and Clergy in England.” He politicized Protestantism and used it as an instrument of war against Catholicism: after a long squabble with the Pope, and the latter's threats of penalties and excommunication, exhortations to repent and return to the papal jurisdiction, Henry composed the following answer: “We have, will, and shall, by all ways and means say 'Nay' and declare our 'Nay' in such sort as the world shall hear and the pope feel it.”<sup>105</sup>

The allegorical woodcut of *King Henry VIII of England Trampling on Pope Clement VII* by an anonymous painter fully reflects the spirit of the day. It shows Henry enthroned, sword raised in his right hand, trampling on a bearded figure of Clement VII. The papal cross and pallium (liturgical vestment) have fallen, and the tiara lies broken on the step of the throne (Appendix, Figure 9). Henry VIII made ecclesiastical body part of body politic and precluded any interference *ab extra*. The edifice of absolutism was complete.

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100. P. Ackroyd, *Tudors: The History of England from Henry VIII to Elizabeth I*. volume 2 (New York: Macmillan Press, 2013), 16.

101. Fortescue, 145.

102. Ibid, 146-147.

103. Richard Duke of Gloucester, later King Richard III.

104. Shakespeare, *Richard III*, 56.

105. W. Aubrey, *The National and Domestic History of England*, volume 2 (London: James Hagger, 1867), 440.

Henry VII looked back to the past for the justification of the legitimacy of his kingdom. He felt intuitively that he needed what Antony Smith calls 'a myth of common ancestry,'<sup>106</sup> whose pragmatic function consists in promoting a feeling of unity or harmony between members of a society, especially in the period of crises and rapid change.<sup>107</sup> From the deep past he extracted an old myth about Cadwaladr's<sup>108</sup> prophecy that "his stock should reign once more in the land." Whether it is a historical fact or a mythological fiction does not matter because myth-based truths "often have more influence than careful historiography."<sup>109</sup>

In addition, a new myth was created that Henry VII was greeted at the gates of Worcester with a poem:

Cadwallader's blood lineally descending,  
Long hath be told of such a prince coming.  
Wherefore friends, if that I shall not lie,  
This same is the fulfiller of the prophesy.<sup>110</sup>

Henry made ample use of the symbols associated with the Britons' king. The greyhound was Henry's badge at the battle of Bosworth Field, and he was fighting under the red dragon flag, which is believed to have been the ensign of Cadwaladr. Moreover, he transferred these symbols onto his coinage.

To demonstrate his absolute authority, Henry VII ordered "to make a new money of gold" according to his personal design (Figure 2). It was to excel all the current gold coins at its grandeur. The incentives for the introduction of a new coin were political rather than economic. The new ostentatious money called *the Sovereign*, a name that meant 'great, superior, ruler', had its aim to assert the Tudors' monarchical power and carried covert ideological structures of absolutism.

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106. A. Smith, 1999, 13.

107. D. Bidney, "Myth, Symbolism, and Truth," *The Journal of American Folklore* 68, no. 270 (1955): 384.

108. Cadwaladr was the last king of the Britons (655-682), to whom Henry claimed the direct lineage.

109. G. Grant, "The Song of Roland," in *Omnibus II: Church Fathers through the Reformation* (Pennsylvania: Veritas Press, 2005), 143.

110. H. Dobin, *Merlin's Disciples: Prophecy, Poetry, and Power in Renaissance England* (Stanford, Calif: Stanford University Press, 1990), 51.





**Figure 2.** Henry VII. Gold Sovereign

Source: Golden Art Treasures.

The coin featured the King seated facing on a low-armed throne with scepter and orb wearing a closed crown on the obverse; the reverse had the Tudor rose with a shield of the Royal Arms of England and France in the center and a crown with crosses and fleur-de-lis above. Besides clichéd political symbols (orb, scepter, crown), Henry added the greyhound and the dragon on the pillars of the throne and the portcullis of the House of Beaufort below the King's portrait emphasizing his genealogic linkage with ancient English kings. The portcullis is a symbol of the Beauforts (Henry's mother was a Beaufort), descendants from King Edward III of England (1312-1377). The coin performed a ceremonial function: in 1502, it was given as a diplomatic gift to ambassadors from Hungary, and in 1506 to the king of Castile and members of his household.

The pattern of an enthroned king with multiple symbols of royal power endured throughout the Tudor reign with variations depending on the immediate historical context. Edward VI contributed to the glory of the coin by issuing in 1551 a *piedfort* (double sovereign), a thick, heavy coin intended for ceremonial purposes. He also experimented with the portraiture introducing for the first time his half-length profile. He is pressing the sword hard to his shoulder and holding an orb (Figure 3) – both attributes emblemizing a strong sovereign power. We also see a substantial shift in the portraiture of the monarchs. Henry VII's representational image is replaced with a life-like portrait of Edward VI.



**Figure 3.** Edward VI. Gold Sovereign

Source: Coins UK.

Under Elizabeth I, the sovereign became a bullion coin, which functioned as a store of value or an investment rather than a medium of exchange and very soon became a "coin of honor" in the theatrical world; and the Queen got the

renown of a patron of the arts. If the Queen attended a performance and liked the play or an actor, she might present the playwright or the star with a sovereign. This greatly raised the social and professional status of the recipient.

Another coin that was meant to embody the divinity of the king and assert that kings were "lieutenants of the most mighty and immortal God on the earth for the welfare of other men"<sup>111</sup> was the *Angel* (Figure 4). According to semiotic theory, there are signs of great eminence, the so called sacramental signs, which are at once social and religious, whose sanctification is determined by social acceptance<sup>112</sup>. Biblical symbolism is dominant on the obverse of the coin, which depicts Archangel Michael, a warrior who fought against God's enemies, slaying the dragon, incarnation of sin; the reverse symbolizes temporal power and England's maritime glory featuring its main symbols – a ship bearing the royal shield and the rose.



**Figure 4.** Henry VIII. Gold Angel

Source: [coinupdate.com/history](http://coinupdate.com/history).

Introduced by Edward IV in 1465, for many years the angel had remained the only gold coin until Henry VII began to issue gold sovereigns, and approximately at that time the coin got a special status of the "Royal touch" piece. In the Middle Ages, kings were endowed with divinity and were believed to possess "miraculous powers of healing" by simply touching the suffering person.<sup>113</sup>

The 'Royal touch' myth had a sociological value; it referred to the rites of monarchical institutions. In England, the ceremony was well defined and observed by all the Tudors: prayer, laying on hands, making the sign of the cross, and gift giving (gold coin). Before the Tudors, the needy had received one penny. Henry VII increased the sum to six shillings and eight pence, which was the equivalent of the angel coin. The ceremony and the coin endued the king with divinity of being a conduit of God's healing powers.

At the beginning, the content of the ritual remained within Catholic thaumaturgies. The Reformation introduced some changes in the ceremony, not

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111. Bodin, 153.

112. J. Maritain, "Sign and Symbol," *Journal of the Warburg Institute* 1 (1937): 3-4.

113. M. Bloch, *The Royal Touch: Sacred Monarchy and Scrofula in England and France* (New York, NY: Routledge, 2015), 3.

many, very delicate, subtly aimed at enhancing the sacral nature of the monarchy. All intercessors such as saints or the Virgin Mary were removed, and the monarch got the holy bounty of healing (*charisma*) directly from the Lord.<sup>114</sup> It proved that the person performing the healing ceremony was sacrosanct. Thus the 'Royal touch' became a touchstone for checking the rightfulness of the king/ queen on the throne.

### Apologia of Maritime Supremacy

Since time immemorial, the sea surrounding the Isle had been venerated and worshiped because it insured the security of the island. Most eloquently the idea is expressed by Hastings<sup>115</sup> in *King Henry VI*, who believes that the only defence England needs against France is the English Channel:

Let us be back'd with God and with the seas  
Which He hath given for fence impregnable,  
And with their helps only defend ourselves;  
In them and in ourselves our safety lies.<sup>116</sup>

Under the Tudors, who understood that the way to power and wealth of an insular country was in naval supremacy, England became a maritime power number one. Starting with an insignificant number of mainly merchant ships, by the end of the century the Tudors had a fleet of 197 well-manned, well-armed ships that defeated the "invincible" Spanish Armada in 1588. Henry VIII founded royal dockyards, equipped his ships with cannons cast in England, set up a school preparing officers, combat marines, and sailors. The country lived up to the principle formulated in the previous century: "Cheryshe marchandyse, kepe thamyralte, That we bee maysteres of the narowe see"<sup>117</sup> [Value trade, exercise powers of the naval commander, so that we should be masters of the sea around us].

Old myths handed down through generations argue that the English are indigenously related to the Sea as they are an 'elect nation', direct descendants from *Neptune* and his favorite son "mightie *Albion*, father of the bold/And warlike

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114. S. Brogan, *The Royal Touch in Early Modern England: Politics, Medicine and Sin* (Rochester, NY: Boydell & Brewer Limited, 2015), 54.

115. A Yorkist and a supporter of King Edward, who helps Edward escape from captivity and convinces him to stop pretending to only be claiming his dukedom.

116. Shakespeare, *Henry VI*, 46.

117. G. Warner, (Ed.), *The Libelle of Englyshe Polycye, a poem on the use of sea-power* (Oxford: The Clarendon Press, 1926), xvi.

people which the Britaine Islands hold"; though he "was slaine [by Hercules], but that which is th' immortal spirit/Lives still."<sup>118</sup>

The greatest event of the century was, no doubt, the defeat of the Spanish fleet. About 55 ballads dealing with the Spanish armada appeared in the period between June 29 and November 27, 1588.<sup>119</sup> The ballads are permeated with the sense of national pride for English marines and their exploits in the face of superior enemy forces.

This mighty vessel  
was threescore yards in length.  
In her were placed  
a hundred cannons great.  
And yet subdued,  
with many others more:  
And not a ship of ours lost!<sup>120</sup>

The ballad ends with a patriotic call to "safeguard your native soil and think of your country's good, wherein you nursed were! And fear not in defense thereof, to spend your dearest blood!"<sup>121</sup>



**Figure 5.** Edward III. *The Gold Noble*

Source: baldwin.co.uk.

The coin that was meant to emblemize England's naval glory was the gold *Noble*. Introduced in 1354 during the reign of Edward III and minted for the last time under Edward IV (1442-1483), it was designed to commemorate the naval victory of Edward III over the French at Sluys in 1340 and had become a symbol of maritime valor. The coin features King standing in ship with upright sword and quartered shield. The reverse has an ornamental cross with *lis* and crowned

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118. E. Spenser, *The Faerie Queen*, volume I (London: Printed for J. Brindley, 1751), 361.

119. J. Mc Aleer, "Ballads on the Spanish Armada," *Texas Studies in Literature and Language* 4, no. 4 (1963): 602.

120. T. Deloney, *His Thomas of Reading and Three Ballads on the Spanish Armada* (New York: Taylor & Co., 1903), 188.

121. *Ibid*, 190.

lions (Figure 5). It is a rare case that a coin was berhymed in a poem by an anonymous author, who described in minute detail the impress on the obverse:

Within the shypp is shewyd there the sayl  
 And oure kyng of royall apparaylle,  
 Wyth swerde drawen, bryght, sharp and extente,  
 For to chastisen enmyes vyolente;  
 So shulde he be lorde of the see about  
 To kepe enmyes frowythine and wythoute,  
 And to be holde thorowgh Cristianyte  
 Master and lord environ of the see.<sup>122</sup>

[Within the ship is shown the sail/And our king in royal apparel/With the sword drawn, bright, sharp and long/ To chastise violent enemies/So that He should be the lord of the sea/To keep away enemies within and without/And to be held throughout the Christian world/Master and lord environ of the sea].

The coin was reinstated by Henry VIII as the *George noble* because the reverse for the first time carried the mounted St. George (Henry's favorite saint) slaying the dragon, one of the most prominent military saints and the patron saint of England (Figure 6). The revival of the noble falls in well with the ideology of naval supremacy.



**Figure 6.** Henry VIII. *George Noble*

Source: coins-of-the-uk.

Back in the 15<sup>th</sup> century, the *Rose Noble* was also called the *Royal*. Mary I reintroduced this name. She also redesigned the old picture placing herself on a ship with a sword and a shield, the letter M on the flag and the rose below.

There are several facts eloquent of the Tudors' reverential attitude to the Navy. It was demonstrated by Henry VIII in 1544 when he seized Boulogne. The Protestant army smashed down and burned the relics of the Catholic Faith. Despite Henry's personal distaste for the veneration of saints, he preserved and took back to England as a trophy of victory the statue of Our Lady of Boulogne featuring the Virgin and the Child Jesus in a boat hoping that it would be a guardian and protector of his mariners. Another fact is that when in 1574

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122. G. Warner, 1926, 44.

Elizabeth I granted a license to the city of Bristol to mint copper tokens,<sup>123</sup> her condition was that the coin should feature a ship on the obverse. Bristol was honored because it was the starting point of many voyages headed by glorified adventurers.

The coin is fraught with a multitude of political ideas: the figure of the king/queen in a ship and the accompanying signs on the gold noble symbolize the power of England exerted on the sea; England's preponderance over the once strong enemies; the necessity to maintain complete command of the sea and naval supremacy in the world; vindication of the new expansionist policy and some other.

### Apologia of English Imperialism

The development of the Navy went hand in hand with explorations of *terra incognita* and the acquisition of new lands. In this matter, Spain and Portugal had left all other marine states far behind. Nevertheless, in 1496, Henry VII formulated the imperialist ideology and laid down the foundations for the future colonialist policy by granting John Cabot<sup>124</sup> a patent of "full and free authority... to sail to all parts of the eastern, western, and northern sea... to find, whatsoever islands, countries, regions, or provinces in whatsoever part of the world placed, ... subdue, occupy and possess, [them] as our vassals."<sup>125</sup> Though the terminology used was manifestly feudal, the very idea belonged to a new (capitalist) world order. Cabot's expedition is the earliest known European exploration of coastal North America, and Cabot was the first European to cast anchor at "New Found Land," which led to the establishment of a colony there in 1549. Ships sailing under the British flag in pursuit of yet unclaimed lands, the establishment of British dominion over new territories rich in fruits, wood, ore, jewels, etc. were manifestations of the Tudors' imperialist ideology. To impose its will upon peoples outside England, the empire instituted various tools of control such as laws, royal decrees, parliamentary acts and ordinances, and economic measures among which money was an effective instrument.

At the beginning of the 16<sup>th</sup> century the Crown's imperial ambitions did not go beyond France, Scotland, and later Ireland; however, by the mid-century they evolved to a more expansionist policy underpinned by a philosophy of discovery.

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123. Private tokens for money as payment for small things were stamped by inferior tradesmen and were current in that city and ten miles about.

124. G. Caboto (1450-c. 1500), navigator and explorer of Italian origin living in England. The first Tudor Atlantic adventurer. Naturalized in England after his invaluable discoveries.

125. J. Hower, *Tudor Imperialism: Exploration, Expansion, and Experimentation in the Sixteenth-Century British Atlantic World* (Washington DC, 2013), 179-180.

Henry VIII cherished an idea of the Atlantic World. In 1530, the naval admiral Sir John Hawkins<sup>126</sup> made his way to Guinea and Brazil; in 1576, English ships reached the coast of Labrador and Baffin Island (Canada). The Tudors did not want to miss out on an opportunity to “partake in the expected treasure of the New World.”<sup>127</sup> In 1579, Sir Francis Drake<sup>128</sup> landed on the territory of today's California and claimed this area for the English Crown, calling it 'New Albion.' In 1583, the expedition sponsored by Sir Walter Raleigh<sup>129</sup> founded the first colony in North America named Virginia.

Approximately in the middle of the century, the language of British imperial ideology was being forged and such new terms appeared in writings as “Empire of greate Briteigne” or the “Empire of Briteigne,” colony, etc.<sup>130</sup> It is quite telling that under Elizabeth I all ordinances included a phrase that they were effective “within the queen's majesty's dominions.”<sup>131</sup>

Coin design changed respectively: Henry VII's closed crown was replaced with an imperial crown, which is a symbol of an empire England was becoming under the Tudors. The first Act of Supremacy (1534) read: “It is manifestly declared and expressed that this realm of England is an empire, and so hath been accepted in the world, governed by one Supreme Head and King having the dignity and royal estate of the imperial Crown of the same.”<sup>132</sup>

The heroes of the day were explorers and adventurers like the naval admiral Sir Walter Raleigh, Sir Hawkins known as England's *Nestor*, Sir Francis Drake called *Neptune*, who was most famously known for his circumnavigation of the world in a single expedition, from 1577 to 1580, and for his participation in the defeat of the Spanish Armada, as a vice admiral and second-in-command of the English fleet. A legend has it that during his expedition to Panama, Drake climbed a high tree in the mountains and became the first Englishman to see the Pacific Ocean. He remarked that one day an Englishman would be able to sail it – and it was he who became that Englishman. He died at sea on his voyage to Spanish America and was buried at sea, inspiring the poet to write:

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126. J. Hawkins (1532-1595), a naval commander and administrator, a merchant, shipbuilder, privateer, and slave trader.

127. W. Cunningham, *The Growth of English Industry and Commerce During the Early and Middle Ages*, 1910, 479.

128. F. Drake (1540-1596), naval officer, sea captain, privateer, slave trader, explorer of the Elizabethan era.

129. W. Raleigh (1554-1618), writer, poet, soldier, politician, courtier, spy and explorer. One of the most notable figures of the Elizabethan era.

130. D. Armitage, *The Ideological Origins of the British Empire* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), 36.

131. Ruding, 350.

132. P. Grierson, "The Origins of the English Sovereign and the Symbolism of the Closed Crown," *British Numismatic Journal* 33 (1964): 132.

England his hart; his Corps the Waters haue;  
And that which raysd his fame, became his grave.<sup>133</sup>

In order to perpetuate their authority in distant lands, the English were to be presented to the world as an imperial nation by right of their geopolitical position and distinctive hallmarks. A conceptualization of an imperial nation is offered in the book by Thomas Smith *A Discourse of the Common Weal of this Realm of England* first printed in 1581. The first condition is national consolidation: "Everye kingdome devided in it selfe shal be desolate."<sup>134</sup> A consolidated nation must be uniquely intelligent and have superiority of wisdom and polity chiefly through learning due to which it will have the sovereignty over the rude and unlearned nations. Outreach missions became a perfect camouflage for the idea of conquest: Among all nations in the world they that are "politique" and civil do master the rest of the world<sup>135</sup>. Historically, Smith justified the right of the British to rule the world by Roman legacy alluding to the conquest of Britain by the Roman Empire from 43 to 410 AD. Smith's writings were surreptitiously slipping into English minds the idea of an imperial monarchy and the right of possession of overseas riches.

The defeat of the Spanish fleet opened for British expansionism eastern routes. In 1600, Elizabeth I awarded a group of merchants the monopoly on trade with the East. Elizabeth I ordained "that no silver should be exported by her merchants but only such as should be coined with her effigies and picture on the one side, and the portcullis on the other"<sup>136</sup> because only her image must be known and respected by the Asians. So, special "money was made of a kind unknown to the British mint either before or since her time, for it was intended" for the East India Company<sup>137</sup> to demonstrate the power of the British wherever their money circulated. The coins (Figure 7) were not popular with local people, so another set of coins featuring the portrait of Queen Elizabeth I supplied with additional symbols – the Red Dragon, a ship that sailed on the first voyage and an image of a pepper leaf – were issued.

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133. R. Barnfield, *Poems 1594-1598* (London: Archibald Cosstable & Co., 1876), 84.

134. T. Smith, *A Discourse of the Common Weal of this Realm of England* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1929), 131.

135. *Ibid*, 22-23.

136. *Ibid*, 353.

137. *Ibid*, 354.





**Figure 7.** Elizabeth I. Portcullis Money

Source: [obsoletecoin.com](http://obsoletecoin.com).

Imperial ideas were taken up by the pictorial art and literature. After the defeat of the Spanish Armada, to commemorate the greatest sea victory of Elizabeth's reign, a portrait was painted by an unknown artist entitled *The Armada Portrait* (see Appendix, Figure 10). The Queen is depicted as the "Empress of the world." The painting is rich in symbolism: the imperial crown to the right of the queen; Elizabeth's hand resting on a globe, her fingers covering the Americas, which suggests her ambition to make England a world power; two pictures in the background, one depicting the quiet sea landscape representing English triumph (left) and the turbulent sea destroying the Spanish fleet (right); a massive gold figure behind the queen emblemizing riches that may be found in colonies.

### The Crown as a Symbol of Nationhood and Patriotism

The Crown as a royal headdress is a symbolic reification of the abstract idea of monarchical power, which makes it the most cherished and craved for object of kings, their heirs, and all kinds of pretenders to the throne. In the thematic content of Shakespearean history plays, the crown becomes a literary stock motif. In *Richard II*, the climax of the play is the dramatic scene when Richard is forced to resign his crown. He says, "My crown I am," and tells Henry to hold to the crown, too: "Give me the crown. Here, cousin, seize the crown;/Here cousin:/On this side my hand, and on that side yours."<sup>138</sup> Thus the symbolic concept of the 'crown' with deep rooted meanings of royal power, nationhood, and sovereignty had been formed by the time Henry VIII took up the reins of power.

For some time, Henry continued to issue gold sovereigns and angels. But because of the scarcity of gold bullion, some foreign coins were permitted to circulate in England. One such coin was the French *écus au soleil* (crown of the Sun). In 1526, it was decided to issue an English coin of the same value as it was considered unpatriotic to use foreign money. "And whereas the Crown of the Sun was a strange coin, the king thought fit that there should be a piece of gold of his own coin of the like fineness, weight, and goodness as the said crown of the

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138. Shakespeare, *Richard II*, 223.

Sun, to be called 'the Crown of the Rose,' and to be current in like manner"<sup>139</sup>. The name *Crown* prompted the design for Henry VIII's first English coins (Figure 8). Both obverse and reverse featured the Crown; the former had the Tudor rose topped by a large crown, the latter had a shield surmounted by a crown.



**Figure 8.** Henry VIII. Gold Crown

Source: Pinterest.com.

Foreign coins, especially brass coins, caused problems in the functioning of the monetary system. As Smith warned: "A coin made beyond the seas, like in all things to our coin, which they brought over in heaps; and when they see that [they were] esteemed as silver, they bring that for our commodities and give us brass for them"<sup>140</sup>. Royal proclamations tried to impress on people that the poor quality of foreign coins was fertile ground for forgery and fraud. In 1525, Henry VIII issued a proclamation for the valuation of foreign coins officially authorized in the realm; Elizabeth I repeatedly warned her subjects "not to receive any manner of foreign coin of gold or silver not being valued by public authority, on account of the great loss they might sustain."<sup>141</sup>

Literature of the time had its say in debunking foreign crowns. In the play *Henry V*, the King tries to inspire his "war-worn ruin'd band" to victory. In his speech before the battle, Henry mocks the gilded epaulettes of French commanders and resorts to the image of clipped coins.<sup>142</sup>

KING HENRY: Indeed, the French may lay twenty French crowns to one they will beat us, for they bear them on their shoulders. But it is no English treason<sup>143</sup> to cut French crowns, and tomorrow the King himself will be a clipper.<sup>144</sup>

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139. Ruding, 304.

140. T. Smith, 1929, 45.

141. Ruding, 344.

142. Clipping is the act of shaving off a small portion of a precious metal from coin for profit, considered equal to counterfeiting and was occasionally punished by death. The word 'crown' also means top of the head.

143. According to the law *Lèse-majesté* (to do wrong to majesty), it was considered treason to clip or counterfeit English crowns as they bore the monarch's image; French crowns did not come within the purview of the law.

144. Shakespeare, *King Henry V*, 295.

The disdainful attitude to French crowns becomes evident when it concerns venality and treason. After the Southampton plot is exposed, the King accuses the three conspirators that they were paid by France with 'treacherous crowns.' Addressing Lord Cambridge, one of the conspirators, he mentions the poor quality of French debased coins and compares them to the base motifs of traitors: "this man/Hath, for a few light crowns,<sup>145</sup> lightly conspired, to kill us here in Hampton."<sup>146</sup>

John Donne's scorn for *French crowns* is still more pronounced as he compares debased French coins to the 'French disease': the alloy contains less gold (pale), their weight is reduced (lean), coins are clipped (lame), debased coins are ruinous for the economy.

Were they but Crownes of France, I cared not,  
For, most of these, their naturall Countreys rot  
I think possesseth, they come here to us,  
So pale, so lame, so leane, so ruinous.<sup>147</sup>

### Legends as an Ideological Tool of Religious Politics

In this part, legends around the outside edge of all Tudor coins are analyzed. It is a specific genre, which in a compact and concise way conveys incontrovertible truths of predominantly religious content that in a given historical context acquired political significance marked by a personal touch. They were in Latin, not numerous, but easily read into and interpreted by the contemporaries. Inscriptions on the front traditionally named the sovereign and his/her dignities, for example, "Henry by the Grace of God King of England and France, Lord of Ireland." The legends on the reverse comprise mainly Biblical citations, excerpts from sermons and Scripture revealing a broad array of political allusions characteristic of the period at issue and the monarch on the throne.

Throughout the reign of Henry VII, the Catholic Church remained an integral part of the state power. Among the highest ranks of government the clergy presented a domineering force. Henry was devoted to the doctrine of the Roman Catholic Church, which becomes evident from the legends on his coins. The inscription "*But Jesus passing through their midst went His way*" was engraved on the first sovereign issued by Henry VII. It refers to Luke's description of Jesus' return to his native town where he was rejected and nearly killed. His moral power, inner staunchness, and the strength of his faith awed the angry mob, so Jesus left Nazareth by quietly going through the madding crowd and went to

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145. Debased coins which do not have enough gold in the alloy are lighter.

146. Shakespeare, *Henry V*, 289.

147. J. Donne, *Elegies*. Poems of John Donne, volume I (London: Lawrence & Bullen, 1896), 16.

Capernaum,<sup>148</sup> to preach and teach there. This Sentence of Scripture resonates with Henry's own vision of his predestination. He had to fulfill the challenging task of transforming England amidst baronial riots, abrasive relationships with Scotland and Ireland, plots and conspiracies inside and outside the country.

On gold Angels the legend read: "*By Thy Cross save us O Christ our Redeemer*" and on half-Angels "*Hail thou cross my only hope*" – suitable inscriptions for the healing coin. At the end of his life, when Henry VII minted silver *shillings* (*testoons*) and *groats*, probably assessing his achievements, he inscribed, "*I have made God my helper.*"

No other subject sparked so much interest in the ballads of that time as the struggle between Protestants and Catholics. It began during Henry VIII's reign, who began a Catholic, the "Defender of the Faith," and ended a Protestant. However, this change of faith was not an outburst of an outraged and spiteful person, who failed to obtain consent to divorce from the Pope. The break with Rome in the 1530s was preceded by a long history of English kings trying to assert king's sovereign power within the realm. In 1351 under Edward III, the Statute proclaimed "the Holy Church of England" as distinct from the pope of Rome. Richard II was declared the absolute emperor of his dominion. In 1485, the king of England was proclaimed answerable only to God and superior to the pope within his realm. Henry VII appointed bishops himself as he did not want any other sovereign power in his kingdom.<sup>149</sup>

One of the earliest ballads devoted to the dissolution of monasteries mentions the principles of Catholicism that Henry VIII wanted to do away with in a very scoffing way: "Their hearts were so rooted in the pope's laws ... They had false prophets ... Their hope was for help in their popish masse ... The vicars commanded them to stick to their Idolatry." The paeon ends with extolling the King, "All England rejoices at their overthrow/For only the Lord is our Kyng's victory."<sup>150</sup>

The new religion corresponded better to the spirit of the nascent capitalist economic system. Max Weber considered that the spirit of capitalism was inherent in Protestant religious values and was a basic tenet of Protestantism.<sup>151</sup> The fundamental principle and essence of Protestantism is religious individualism, which includes "the right of private judgment," (the need for personal decision), private prayer, and what is most important, "a relationship with God should be established in individual terms as well". The new religion is described almost in

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148. A town in Galilee.

149. P. Ackroyd, *Tudors: The History of England from Henry VIII to Elizabeth I*, 2013, 16.

150. H. Rollins (Ed.), *Old English Ballads 1553-1625* (Cambridge: the University Press, 1920), ix.

151. M. Weber, *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism* (London and New York: Routledge Taylor & Francis Group, 2005).

secular terms: "There can be a venturesomeness in Protestant life and thought ... new advances, new insights, new understandings of the faith,"<sup>152</sup> which may be regarded as the secularization of all ideals through Protestantism.

Though Henry VIII initiated changes in his religious policy, he was not a wholehearted Protestant, in large part, he remained within the parameters of the traditional devotional practices of Catholicism. His choice of legends on the coins issued in his time reflects his warlike spirit and pride in naval exploits. He added a new floral embellishment to the inscriptions: "By the grace of God, king of England and France, Lord of Ireland, *a dazzling rose without a thorn.*" This is a celebrated cliché from fourteenth-century Church Latin used in poetry versifying English military victories and glorifying English valor and maritime supremacy over the French. "*Anglia regna, mundi rosa, flos sine spina./Mel sine sentina, vicistibella marina.*" [Kingdom of England, rose of the world, flower without a thorn,/ honey without sediment,/ you have won the war at sea]<sup>153</sup>. This motif endured on the coins of all the Tudors. For the gold *George noble* Henry chose the last two lines of the stanza from a hymn by Prudentius:

The Cross dispels all darkness,  
All sin before it flies,  
And by that sign protected  
The mind all fear defies.<sup>154</sup>

In the context of national sovereignty, the English Reformation under Henry VIII was a movement against alien domination rather than a break with the religious doctrine.

Henry VIII's son was the first monarch to be raised as a Protestant. He tried to quicken the pace of his father's religious reforms, but his life was too short to complete them. The legends on the coins of Edward VI display a greater diversity than those of his father and grandfather, and testify to his profound knowledge of the Bible and deep faith, amazing in one so young. He adds to the already existing legends some of his own. On the half-sovereign of 1548, the legend reads, "*The shield of faith shall protect him*". This is a citation from the apostle Paul preaching about "the full armor of God."<sup>155</sup> In an extended metaphor based on

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152. R. Brown, *The Spirit of Protestantism* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1961), 11.

153. D. Carlson, John Gower, *Poetry and Propaganda in Fourteenth-Century England* (Cambridge: DS Brewer, 2012), 52.

154. A. Prudentius, *The Hymns of Prudentius* (London: J M. Dent & Co., 1905), 66- 67. A Roman Christian poet of the 4th century. He wrote hymns for daily use, festivals, and even for every hour of the day.

155. Interestingly, the same metaphor is used in a ballad in reference to Mary I and her war against Protestantism: "Our life is a warfare, the worlde is the field:/Her highnes

comparison drawn between religious people and Roman warriors, he mentions the belt of truth, the breastplate of righteousness, the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit. "Above all, take up the *shield of faith* with which you will be able to quench all the flaming arrows of the evil one"<sup>156</sup>. The shield of faith is an invisible shield that protects believers from evil. The legend asserts true faith received from God through His word as distinct from Catholicism full of superstitions, rituals, and idolatry. On half-sovereigns a line from psalms was inscribed: "*Thy word is a lamp unto my fee ... and a light unto my path.*"<sup>157</sup> The psalm implies that God's word dispels darkness and shows the way. In 1549, he chose for a legend a part of Solomon's Proverb: "*The fear of the Lord is the fountain of life to depart from the snares of death.*"<sup>158</sup> The meaning is that those who fear God and do not fall into traps of sin, will receive eternal life from the river of life, flowing out of the throne of God.

After Edward's death, many hoped that Mary would continue her brother's work to advance true faith.

Oure moast godly Queene  
That seekes our preseruasion:  
No doubt wil strongly buyld vpon  
Her brothers good fondacion.  
The ground worke hee hathe layde him selfe,  
And she is left a lon,  
To buyld he house, and fortresse vp  
Of trew religion.<sup>159</sup>

However, these hopes did not come to fruition. Being a zealous Catholic, Mary I tried to re-instate Roman Catholicism in England. Protestant religious legislation was repealed; Pope in Rome was re-instated as Head of the Church of England. She believed she was trying to redeem the country from religious destruction and persecuted faithful protestants as heretics. 300 people were burnt at the stake. Her aspirations are reflected in her legends. The legend on the sovereign was replaced with a line from Psalm 118: "*This is the Lord's doing and it is marvelous in our eyes.*"<sup>160</sup> This psalm is the Te Deum expressing gratitude to God for helping the righteous, for being their strength and salvation. Each line of the psalm is resonant with Mary's feelings and actions: "The Lord is with me; he is

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her army hath always at hande;/For Hope is her helmet, Faith is her shielde,;/And Loue is her brest plate, her foes to withstand" (Rollins, 14).

156. New International Version of the Holy Bible, Ephesians 6: 16-17 (Colorado Springs: International Bible Society, 1984), 830.

157. Ibid, Psalms 119:105, 439.

158. Ibid, Proverbs 14: 27, 458.

159. Rollins, 1920, xiii.

160. NIV, Psalm 118: 23, 436.

my helper. I look in triumph on my enemies."<sup>161</sup> She tried to restore the True Faith and do away with Protestants by "cutting them down" and "burning as thorns".

Many historians try to make out Elizabeth I to be a peacemaker and conciliator between Protestants and Catholics. True, she worked with the Privy Council to create a religious settlement that would unite the country into one Church. However, contemporary ballads testify to the contrary. She matched her half-sister in diligently persecuting heretics. Priests were allegedly condemned of treason, "not for their religion, as Papists persuade/But for haynous hie Treason whiche they did and intended", but the majority of priests were not guilty of any crime, apart from their religion.

In this our English coast much blessed blood is shed:  
Two hundred preistes almost in our time martered!<sup>162</sup>

Elizabeth brought in much secularism into religion. By a statute of Parliament she was made the Supreme Governor (not Head!) of the Church of England, a fully secular title. Another sign of secularization was the Protestant calendar that included such holy days as the Queen's birthday and the defeat of the Armada. Elizabeth I, though she introduced many new coins, did not change any of the legends. The only alteration was on the quarter angel where she added to her titles a short phrase "*Queen of the Faith*" thus combining spiritual and temporal authority.

The analysis of the legends shows the Tudors' reliance on religious texts resonant, in their view, with the historical moment, each claiming to have restored the true light of the gospel. In essence, the new religion with its emphasis on individualism and the abandonment of public rituals, submission of the Church to the secular authorities, served the ideology of the new formation – capitalism.

## Conclusions

Economic, political and religious changes roiled England in the 16<sup>th</sup> century as the young state embarked on a road of transformation and building a shared, national identity. In these processes ideology is of pivotal importance, it must offer a coherent picture which people will be willing to accept. Under the Tudors, ideology brought together several aspects: absolutism, imperialist mentality, martial spirit, religious individualism, and a feeling of elitism. They took efforts to

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161. Ibid, 436.

162. Rollins, 75.

link the incipient nation to its historical or mythological roots (Cadwaladr, Neptune, Albion), all while creating contemporary heroes (Drake, Cabot) and novel mythology.

The new ideology was in need of a multimedia venue of transmitting the ideas. In addition to philosophical writings, oral and written literary texts, and art, which combined their efforts in presenting the Tudors as an 'elect' dynasty and the English as an 'elect' nation, the contemporary coinage was built into the ideological paradigm to efficaciously disseminate new ideas.

Each gold coin was an artifact of excellence and had potent political resonances articulating sovereignty and absolutism (sovereign, royal, crown), naval supremacy (noble), imperialistic aspirations (India/portcullis money), and the divinity of regal power (angel). Under the influence of Renaissance art, numismatic portraiture moved towards realism imprinting recognizable, lifelike images of kings and queens.

Each coin was ideologically charged. Their iconography displays intensive use of emblematic content. Symbols stamped on the coins included royal insignia (orb, throne, crown), dynastic badges (greyhound, portcullis, red dragon), naval attributes (ship), symbols of Christianity (cross), which in combination with legends forged Englishness and national identity.

Most important, coins were a vehicle of fostering patriotism. In respect to money, it meant coins of the highest quality. There were several attempts to convince Elizabeth I of the necessity and advantages of copper coins on the model of Europe; a proclamation was prepared to this effect, but was never made public because Elizabeth would not hear of any metal other than gold and silver, which inspired Barnfield to write with pride:

Within the Coast of Albion ...  
Siluer and Golde, and nothing else is currant,  
In Englands, in faire Englands happy Land:  
All baser sorts of Mettalls, haue no Warrant."<sup>163</sup>

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163. Barnfield, 12.



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Appendix



**Figure 9.** *The Pope Suppressed by King Henry VIII (ca 1532)*  
Source: alamy.com.



**Figure 10.** *Elizabeth I. The Armada Portrait (1588)*  
Source: Wikipedia.



## Teacher Competencies in Oman: How Gender and Teaching Experience are Associated with Self-Assessment

By Muna Al-Bulushi\*, Sharifa Al-Said<sup>‡</sup> & Outi Lietzén<sup>†</sup>

Self-assessment plays an important role in teacher professional development. By using self-assessment, the present study investigates teachers' competences in the areas of teachers' professional qualities, knowledge and understanding, and professional skills. The data were collected by self-assessment of 368 teachers in Oman. Results show that female teachers surpassed their male counterparts in the three areas in terms of their attitudes towards cooperation with colleagues. Furthermore, the results show significant differences between teachers in professional skills in terms of feedback and assessment skills with regard to number of years of teaching experience. In the end, limitations are listed and further studies recommended.

### Introduction

In the 1970s and 1980s in Oman, there were severe shortages of teachers and school buildings. Due to insufficient number of schools and teachers, the Ministry of Education had to recruit young teachers who held lower level certificates and had not attended university or college after leaving school. Many teachers had only elementary knowledge about teaching and learning.<sup>1</sup> So poor teaching quality resulted in low academic achievements for pupils even after years of education. To improve the quality of school education, both pre-service and in-service programmes were implemented simultaneously.<sup>2</sup> Later on in the 1990s, the Omani educational system underwent several stages of reforms in preparing teachers with qualifications that met the needs of the new millennium. On one

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1. R. Al-Busaidi and Hussein Bashir, "Development of the Colleges of Education for Teachers in the Sultanate of Oman," *International Yearbook on Teacher Education, ICET* 1, no. 2 (1997): 172-183; Amira Al Shabibi and Heikki Silvennoinen, "Challenges in Education System Affecting Teacher Professional Development in Oman," *Athens Journal of Education* 5, no. 3 (2018): 261-282.

2. Al-Busaidi and Bashir, "Development of the Colleges of Education for Teachers in the Sultanate of Oman," 1997; Ministry of Education, *National Education for All* (Sultanate of Oman: Ministry of Education, 2014).

hand, the Ministry of Education started to provide teachers with short trainings in schools. On the other hand, teacher preparation programmes were expanded to train a larger number of pre-service candidates.

Regarding pre-service teacher education, there was a remarkable shift in training students to become future teachers. Training of teachers began in the 1970s, when the Ministry of Education opened Teacher Training Institutes (TTI). Later on, TTI was transformed and then called Intermediate Teacher Training Colleges (ITTC) in 1984.<sup>3</sup> The programmes offered 3 years of training for students who had just left grade 9 and were only 14 years old. Then this role moved to higher education institutes to provide training for graduates with secondary education level diplomas in 1986. Today, the Ministry of Higher Education governs teacher education and it was established as being separate from Ministry of Education between 1991 and 1995.<sup>4</sup> Currently, Sultan Qaboos University awards bachelor degree, Masters and PhD degrees in the College of Education.

There are about 56728 teachers in the eleven regions (Governorates) in Oman working under the Ministry of Education and 633970 students. Teachers' salaries are paid by the state. Regarding private schools, they have approximately 11155 teachers and about 126003 students enrolled in all regions. All teachers, educators, leaders, supervisors from government schools are trained in the Specialised Institute for Professional Training of Teachers (SIPTT) as in-service training programs.<sup>5</sup>

Moreover, since 2014, all novice teachers graduated from teacher programs join a one-year programme for new teachers provided by the SIPTT. After 3 to 4 years of teaching in a government school, despite their relative newness to the profession, teachers may register for the SIPTT specialist expert programmes. They then receive two years of professional development training. SIPTT programmes have been designed based on the knowledge provided by national and international studies: e.g., low student scores in TIMSS and PIRLS were the main impetus for the programmes for teachers in maths, science, Arabic and "Field 2" (Field 2 refers to teachers who teach both science and maths in grades 1-4 students (aged between 6 to 10 years) and refers to Cycle 1 school teachers

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3. Al-Issa, Ali S. and Ali H. Al-Bulushi, "English Language Teaching Reform in Sultanate of Oman: The Case of Theory and Practice Disparity," *Educational Research for Policy and Practice* 11, no. 2 (2012): 141-176; Mullis, Ina VS, Michael O. Martin, Chad A. Minnich, Gabrielle M. Stanco, Alka Arora, Victoria AS Centurino and Courtney E. Castle, *TIMSS 2011 Encyclopedia: Education Policy and Curriculum in Mathematics and Science. Volume 1: AK* (Amsterdam, The Netherlands: International Association for the Evaluation of Educational Achievement, 2012).

4. Mullis, Martin, Minnich, Stanco, Arora, Centurino and Castle, *TIMSS 2011 Encyclopedia: Education Policy and Curriculum in Mathematics and Science. Volume 1: AK*, 2012.

5. Ministry of Education, *The Annual Educational Statistics Book*, issue 50 (Sultanate of Oman: Ministry of Education, 2020).

teaching those subjects). SIPTT targets all school personnel ranging from supervisors, school leaders and senior teachers to newly assigned teachers.<sup>6</sup>

In SIPTT, educators get professional development training on different aspects that target their subject matter or work-related topics. Furthermore, all programmes consist of 21<sup>st</sup> century skills, higher order thinking skills, reflection, collaboration and up-to-date effective methods of teaching, instruction and practices. SIPTT has main principles in the programmes such as knowledge, qualities, values and professional skills that are embedded within its elements of training; face-to-face, online learning and work place learning tasks.<sup>7</sup>

One of the predicaments of teacher education in Oman is that, along with all higher education, the governance of initial preparation of teachers is in the Ministry of Higher Education, while the governance of schools and in-service training of teachers is governed by the Ministry of Education. The dual role governance of one institution (teaching in schools) requires very good cooperation and coordination of the two ministries and their officials. Each Ministry is established separately from the other, serving different groups and focusing on different aspects.<sup>8</sup> To explain more, the Ministry of education serves in-service teachers, trains them and prepare them for further professional developments, while the Ministry of Higher Education serves and prepares pre-service candidates to become teachers.

Today, new teachers are prepared in Sultan Qaboos University's College of Education, private institutions and colleges inside and outside Oman. They prepare candidates in four to five year programmes. Only about 15% of new teachers are graduated from Sultan Qaboos University, which is the only state university in Oman.<sup>9</sup> Government institutions and private institutions outside Oman are considered as useful resources in preparing new teachers. Also, inside Oman, private institutions prepare Omani teachers for teaching as well. For instance, private universities of Dhofar and Nizwa, and other government teacher colleges of education such as Rustaq provide training for candidate teachers.

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6. Al Shabibi and Silvennoinen, "Challenges in Education System Affecting Teacher Professional Development in Oman," 2018.

7. Ibid, 261-282; Al Jabri, M., Heikki Silvennoinen and David Griffiths, "Teachers' Professional Development in Oman: Challenges, Efforts and Solutions," *International Journal of Learning, Teaching and Educational Research* 17, no. 5 (2018): 82-103.

8. Al Nabhani, Maryam bint Belarab bin Mohammed, *Developing the Education System in the Sultanate of Oman through Implementing Total Quality Management: The Ministry of Education Central Headquarters-A Case Study*, PhD Dissertation (Glasgow: University of Glasgow, 2007).

9. Ministry of Education, *National Education for All*, 2014; Mullis, Martin, Minnich, Stanco, Arora, Centurino and Castle, *TIMSS 2011 Encyclopedia: Education Policy and Curriculum in Mathematics and Science. Volume 1: AK*, 2012; Al Shabibi and Silvennoinen, "Challenges in Education System Affecting Teacher Professional Development in Oman," 2018.

However, the quality of teacher preparation in Oman at teacher preparation programmes has been a matter of concern which has been pointed in several studies regarding the poor performance of graduates practically and linguistically as a result of insufficient training.<sup>10</sup>

Candidate teachers from SQU practise teaching at schools with cooperating teachers who give continuous help and support to the candidates. They spend a full semester in the schools from 7 am to 1 pm daily. However, College supervisors were criticized that they do not have appropriate practical skills to help teacher students cope with school environment. Thus, the students rated the sufficiency of teaching practicum as inadequate to moderately adequate to prepare them for school context.<sup>11</sup>

After graduation, the candidates are assigned into government schools and most novice teachers face a variety of practical challenges if not well-prepared through induction programme that can help soothe the process of coping at school environment. The main problem the new teachers face is "reality shock" immediately after being assigned in schools.<sup>12</sup> This reality shock has been a problem not only in Oman but also in other countries such as USA.<sup>13</sup> As a consequence of this shock, novice teachers often call for help and support from more experienced teachers despite the years spent on colleges and university courses.

Teachers' knowledge and training have been a real concern in several educational contexts across the world.<sup>14</sup> However, teachers who have received in-

10. Alkharusi, Hussain, Ali Mahdi Kazem and Ali Al-Musawai, "Knowledge, Skills, and Attitudes of Preservice and Inservice Teachers in Educational Measurement," *Asia-Pacific Journal of Teacher Education* 39, no. 2 (2011): 113-123; Al-Issa and Al-Bulushi, "English Language Teaching Reform in Sultanate of Oman: The Case of Theory and Practice Disparity," 2012.

11. Al-Issa, Ali and Ali Al-Bulushi, "Training English Language Student Teachers to Become Reflective Teachers," *Australian Journal of Teacher Education* 35, no. 4 (2010): 41.

12. Al Shabibi and Silvennoinen, "Challenges in Education System Affecting Teacher Professional Development in Oman," 2018.

13. Hoy, Anita Woolfolk and Rhonda Burke Spero, "Changes in Teacher Efficacy during the Early Years of Teaching: A Comparison of Four Measures," *Teaching and Teacher Education* 21, no. 4 (2005): 343-356.

14. Borg, Simon (Ed.), *Classroom Research in English Language Teaching in Oman* (Sultanate of Oman, Oman: Ministry of Education, 2006); Alarimy, Aisha Salim Juma, Azam Othman, Hairuddin Mohd Ali and Ismail Sheikh Ahmad, "The Quality of Training Programmes and Leadership Competencies among Educational Managers in the Sultanate of Oman," *Australian Journal of Business and Management Research* 5, no. 2 (2015): 1; Alkharusi, Kazem and Al-Musawai, "Knowledge, Skills, and Attitudes of Preservice and Inservice Teachers in Educational Measurement," 2011; Al Shabibi and Silvennoinen, "Challenges in Education System Affecting Teacher Professional Development in Oman," 2018; Roeser, Robert W., Ellen Skinner, Jeffrey Beers and Patricia A. Jennings, "Mindfulness Training and Teachers' Professional Development: An Emerging Area of Research and



service training show higher competence, higher levels of perceived skills, knowledge and attitudes toward different subject matter.<sup>15</sup>

Moreover, in-service training of teachers by the Ministry of Education previously involved more than 70 training packages that targeted new teachers and also more experienced teachers. They were divided into themes such as Oman's educational philosophy, teachers' rights, teaching methods, and providing teachers with printed manuals that they would need at work. Teachers had to go through the programmes in all regions and then cascade the training to other colleagues at schools based on regional training requirements.<sup>16</sup>

The history of education reforms and development in Oman show that there have been several projects to enhance teachers' professional development. e.g., the BA TESOL project targeted at enhancing professional knowledge and skills of a large number of Omani teachers based on research training programmes between 1999 and 2008.<sup>17</sup> Al Jardani's (2012)<sup>18</sup> analysis on teachers' perceptions on the training programme impact revealed that teachers benefited from the PRIT (a training course for primary English teachers) in supporting them to implement the new curriculum.

At higher education level, universities work in collaboration with the Ministry of Education to improve teacher and student performance by involving teachers in various projects, for example, the TAMAM<sup>19</sup> project, and Training Package for in-service teachers with collaboration from SQU professors. TAMAM aimed at creating professional communities of teachers, educators and university academics to work together in schools and solve a variety of educational problems via research and to lead school changes in different Arab schools.<sup>20</sup>

Practice," *Child Development Perspectives* 6, no. 2 (2012): 167-173; Alkharusi, Hussain, Said Aldhafri, Hilal Alnabhani, and Muna Alkalbani. "Educational Assessment Attitudes, Competence, Knowledge, and Practices: An Exploratory Study of Muscat Teachers in the Sultanate of Oman." *Journal of Education and Learning* 1, no. 2 (2012): 217-232.

15. Alkharusi, Kazem and Al-Musawai, "Knowledge, Skills, and Attitudes of Preservice and Inservice Teachers in Educational Measurement," 2011; Alkharusi, Hussain, Said Aldhafri, Hilal Alnabhani and Muna Alkalbani, "Educational Assessment Attitudes, Competence, Knowledge, and Practices: An Exploratory Study of Muscat Teachers in the Sultanate of Oman," *Journal of Education and Learning* 1, no. 2 (2012): 217-232.

16. Ministry of Education, *National Education for All*, 2014.

17. Borg, Simon (Ed.), *Researching English Language Teaching and Teacher Development in Oman* (Muscat, Sultanate of Oman: Ministry of Education, 2009); Borg, "The Impact of In-Service Teacher Education on Language Teachers' Beliefs," *System* 39, no. 3 (2011): 370-380.

18. Al Jardani, Khalid Salim Saif, "A Study of Educational Reform & Teacher Training in Oman," *International Journal of Applied Linguistics & English Literature* 1, no. 1 (2012): 64-69

19. TAMAM refers to the expression "everything is fine" and to the respective Arabic word 'tamam'.

20. Albulushi, A. and A. Ambusaidi, "Tamam in Oman: Bottom-Up Educational Change in Arab Schools," In *EDULEARN14 Proceedings*, 3216-3216 (IATED, 2014).

Such projects assist teachers in professional development and research for better education with the help of both schools and universities.<sup>21</sup> This idea is also similar to what is called "Japanese Lesson Study," where teachers decide on a goal to achieve and work towards achieving it. This approach is considered as a very important process to improve teaching practices of Japanese teachers.<sup>22</sup>

Inspecting teachers and evaluating them by an outside agent has often been used as a practice in the Omani context for years. This has been criticised as it may lead to low levels of motivation and satisfaction because of the evaluation system's lack of efficient implementation and vagueness of standards and criteria.<sup>23</sup> The use of self-assessments is still new to the Omani context, except to English teachers who used to write daily reflections at schools for assessing their own performance.

In this article the competence level of Omani teachers is examined by using the self-assessment method. The focus is on the association between gender and amount of teaching experience, and competence level. Before going into empirical findings self-assessment as a method and gender issues in Omani education are discussed.

### Self-Assessment as Method in Education

Self-assessment as a method to measure skills and competences of any profession has been a target of serious criticism. The main argument for not using self-assessment is its low reliability.<sup>24</sup> Are medical doctors, nurses, teachers, jurists, or members of any profession, capable of assessing their skills and competences, shortcomings and deficiencies? There are two important observations worth taking into account when evaluating self-assessment as a method. First, several studies have revealed regularities that can be predicted when using self-

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21. Ibid, 3216-3216; Yendol-Hoppey, Diane, Angela Gregory, Jennifer Jacobs and Martha League, "Inquiry as a Tool for Professional Development School Improvement: Four Illustrations," *Action in Teacher Education* 30, no. 3 (2008): 23-38.

22. Fernandez, Clea, "Learning from Japanese Approaches to Professional Development: The Case of Lesson Study," *Journal of Teacher Education* 53, no. 5 (2002): 393-405.

23. Alyahmadi, Hamed and Amal Al-Kiyumi, "The Consequences of Teacher Evaluation on Teacher Professional Development in Oman," *International Journal of Education and Research* 2, no. 4 (2014): 127-142.

24. e.g., Borgmeier, Chris, Sheldon L. Loman and Motoaki Hara, "Teacher Self-Assessment of Evidence-Based Classroom Practices: Preliminary Findings across Primary, Intermediate and Secondary Level Teachers," *Teacher Development* 20, no. 1 (2016): 40-56; Kilic, Didem, "An Examination of Using Self-, Peer-, and Teacher-Assessment in Higher Education: A Case Study in Teacher Education," *Higher Education Studies* 6, no. 1 (2016): 136-144.

assessment. Second, self-assessment is a skill that can be improved by training and practising. Thus, the reliability of the method can be enhanced.

Kilic<sup>25</sup> claims reliability and validity of self-assessments are controversial because there are processes that affect the precision of the assessment such as social and intellectual aspects. One interesting finding is the discrepancy between objective test scores (performance) and results from self-assessment. As cited,<sup>26</sup> differences between “good” students and “weak” students tend to be bigger in objective tests than in self-assessment. Thus, there is a tendency for high achieving students to underestimate their skills and for low achieving students to overestimate their skills. The actual performance of “high achievers” is better than their self-assessment would predict; and the actual performance of “low achievers” students tends to be lower than it could be expected by their self-assessment. That is the reason Kilic<sup>27</sup> doubted the reliability and validity of self-assessments as it is affected by factors such as students success and grade level. However, in the study conducted by Kilic<sup>28</sup> the researcher investigated the differences between teacher-assessment, self-assessment and peer self-assessment of pre-service teachers. The results revealed that peer-assessment of pre-service teachers were higher compared to teacher and self-assessment. Moreover, the results showed that pre-service teachers had realistic perceptions of their abilities without overestimating it or vice versa.

An important point that has been noticed in studies related to self-assessment, is how gender affects a person’s assessment of her/his competences, skills, confidence, and, e.g., career prospects in a profession. There are a number of studies showing that men tend to evaluate the level of their professional skills more positively than women. One of the major results in Blanch-Hartigan<sup>29</sup> meta-analysis on accuracy of self-assessment among medical students was that male students often overestimate their skills and female students underestimate their skills. Kalaian and Freeman<sup>30</sup> noticed in their study that male teacher candidates also at the beginning and at the end of their studies showed higher self-esteem in mastering teaching tasks than female teacher candidates.

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25. Kilic, "An Examination of Using Self-, Peer-, and Teacher-Assessment in Higher Education: A Case Study in Teacher Education," 2016, 137.

26. Ibid, 138.

27. Ibid, 137.

28. Ibid, 136-144.

29. Blanch-Hartigan, Danielle, "Medical Students' Self-Assessment of Performance: Results from Three Meta-Analyses," *Patient Education and Counseling* 84, no. 1 (2011): 3-9.

30. Kalaian, Hripsime A. and Donald J. Freeman, "Gender Differences in Self-Confidence and Educational Beliefs among Secondary Teacher Candidates," *Teaching and Teacher Education* 10, no. 6 (1994): 647-658.

However, despite the criticism, self-assessment also has its advantages. For example, McGiffen, and Accounts Commission for Scotland<sup>31</sup> indicated that in order to have continuous improvements in efficiency and effectiveness of any organisation, self-assessment is a crucial method. Self-assessment tools are considered by some as the most appropriate methods of data collection for certain purposes such as reflections and learning purposes.<sup>32</sup> Some researchers consider self-assessment as a way to professional growth and self-improvement as it is under full control of teachers in identifying their own abilities and beliefs.<sup>33</sup> Others view it from the perspective of power and educational policy revolution.<sup>34</sup>

Kilic<sup>35</sup> studied the importance of self-assessment in pre-service education. The results revealed that self-assessment usage allowed pre-service teachers to have realistic perceptions of their own abilities and make rational judgments. Moreover, self-assessments allowed pre-service teachers to feel confident in grading their own performance. Kilic asserted that using self-assessment in education enables pre-service teachers to examine their capabilities and teaching potentials.

Self-assessment is used for better understanding of one's own knowledge in a profession or in an organisation. It helps in professional development and encourages teachers' understanding of their own competence on their practices. It

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31. McGiffen, D. and Accounts Commission for Scotland, Edinburgh (United Kingdom), *Assess Yourself: Using Self Assessment for Performance Improvement* (Edinburgh: Account Commission for Scotland, 1998).

32. Avalos, Beatrice, "Teacher Professional Development in Teaching and Teacher Education over Ten Years," *Teaching and Teacher Education* 27, no. 1 (2011): 10-20; Blank, Rolf K., Andrew Porter and John Smithson, *New Tools for Analyzing Teaching, Curriculum and Standards in Mathematics & Science. Results from Survey of Enacted Curriculum Project. Final Report* (Washington, DC: Council of Chief State School Officers, Attn: Publications, 2001); Ross, John A., "The Reliability, Validity, and Utility of Self-Assessment," *Practical Assessment, Research, and Evaluation* 11, no. 1 (2006): 10.

33. Airasian, Peter W. and Arlen Gullickson, "Examination of Teacher Self-Assessment," *Journal of Personnel Evaluation in Education* 8, no. 2 (1994): 195-203; Alkharusi, Aldhafri, Alnabhani and Alkalbani, "Educational Assessment Attitudes, Competence, Knowledge, and Practices: An Exploratory Study of Muscat Teachers in the Sultanate of Oman," 2012; Alyahmadi and Al-Kiyumi, "The Consequences of Teacher Evaluation on Teacher Professional Development in Oman," 2014; Ross, John A. and Catherine D. Bruce, "Teacher Self-Assessment: A Mechanism for Facilitating Professional Growth," *Teaching and Teacher Education* 23, no. 2 (2007): 146-159.

34. McNamara, Gerry and Joe O'Hara, "The Importance of the Concept of Self-Evaluation in the Changing Landscape of Education Policy," *Studies in Educational Evaluation* 34, no. 3 (2008): 173-179; Towndrow, Phillip A. and Kelvin Tan, "Teacher Self-Evaluation and Power," *Teacher Development* 13, no. 3 (2009): 285-295.

35. Kilic, "An Examination of Using Self-, Peer-, and Teacher-Assessment in Higher Education: A Case Study in Teacher Education," 2016, 136-144.

can provide information on evidence-based classroom practices and in addition to that, it provides space to select topics for professional development.<sup>36</sup>

Moreover, self-assessment and reflection help teachers assess fundamental beliefs and assumptions about learning, learners, and teaching and contributes to the professional growth of teachers.<sup>37</sup> For instance, Avalos's study of different articles using different tools in education concluded that self-assessment tools reinforced the value of existing practices and strengthened beliefs about competence. Additionally, it created a common language for observation between researchers.<sup>38</sup>

In Oman, the College of Education at SQU uses self-assessment methods to measure candidate teachers' competency and proficiency in different areas.<sup>39</sup> The college gives candidate teachers an opportunity to self-assess their proficiencies in knowledge, skills, dispositions, technology, research and other skills and practices based on college goals and objectives using a form called 'candidate self-assessment'. The purpose of the form is to enable candidate teachers to identify their current level of proficiencies, while reassuring them that the results gained from the self-assessment tool do not affect their grade level or actual performance. Moreover, the form used throughout the preparation programme for tracking students' progress and improving their performance is completed with the assistance of their college supervisors. Part of the candidate teacher's responsibility is to write reflective papers, self-evaluation reports and to practise self-assessment of teaching in college seminars that take place every month during student teaching practice.<sup>40</sup>

Self-assessment has been used as a research tool in studies investigating the competence of pre-service teachers and in-service teachers. Al Kharusi et al.<sup>41</sup>

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36. Towndrow and Tan, "Teacher Self-Evaluation and Power," 2009; Borgmeier, Loman and Hara, "Teacher Self-Assessment of Evidence-Based Classroom Practices: Preliminary Findings across Primary, Intermediate and Secondary Level Teachers," 2016: 40-56.

37. Ross and Bruce, "Teacher Self-Assessment: A Mechanism for Facilitating Professional Growth," *Teaching and Teacher Education* 2007: 146-159; McCombs, Barbara L., "Self-Assessment and Reflection: Tools for Promoting Teacher Changes toward Learner-Centered Practices," *Nassp Bulletin* 81, no. 587 (1997): 1-14.

38. Avalos, "Teacher Professional Development in Teaching and Teacher Education over Ten Years," 2011: 10-20.

39. SQU Media (Sultan Qaboos University: College of Education Internationally Accredited, 2016). Retrieved from: <https://www.squ.edu.om/squmedia/Details-Page/ArticleID/4071/Sultan-Qaboos-University-College-of-Education-Internationally-Accredited>.

40. Field Experiences and Student Teaching Unit, *Handbook of Field Experiences and Student Teaching for Candidates, Cooperating Teachers and College Supervisors* (College of Education, Sultan Qaboos University, 2013).

41. Alkharusi, Aldhafri, Alnabhani and Alkalbani, "Educational Assessment Attitudes, Competence, Knowledge, and Practices: An Exploratory Study of Muscat Teachers in the Sultanate of Oman," 2012.

studied whether a pre-service programme has an influence on student or candidate teachers' knowledge, skills and attitudes to educational measurement. They were also compared to the more experienced teachers. Compared to in-service teachers pre-service teachers had higher level of knowledge of educational measurement than in-service teachers did, but lower level of skills and attitudes. On the other hand, it was found in this study that more experienced in-service teachers had higher level of knowledge about educational measurement than pre-service teachers. Melnick and Meister<sup>42</sup> investigated the differences between pre-service teachers and experienced teachers in communication with parents. Results revealed statistically significant differences in favour of more experienced teachers who reported more communication with parents and sent frequent reports to them. Experienced teachers indicated the use of different methods to communicate with parents while new student teachers needed more instruction and reported being less prepared to communicate with parents.

### Gender in Omani Education

In the Omani context, gender bias in self-assessment has been replicated among male students. Girls outperform boys in international comparisons<sup>43</sup> but at the same time boys are very confident about their skills in mathematics. One might expect to see gender effect also among Omani teachers. However, studies indicate to another direction. Consistently female teachers assess themselves more competent than male teachers.

Rassekh<sup>44</sup> studied differences between male and female in education and noticed that woman held a good proportion of positions in the Ministry of Education in Oman and that they surpass men in many aspects such as in employment, and in having a better caring role than male. Further, recent studies showed differences between male and female teachers in reporting their self-perceived competences. Alkharusi<sup>45</sup> and Alkharusi, Aldhafri, Alnabhani and

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42. Melnick, Steven A. and Denise G. Meister, "A Comparison of Beginning and Experienced Teachers' Concerns," *Educational Research Quarterly* 31, no. 3 (2008): 39-56.

43. Mullis, Martin, Minnich, Stanco, Arora, Centurino and Castle, *TIMSS 2011 Encyclopedia: Education Policy and Curriculum in Mathematics and Science. Volume 1: AK*, 2012.

44. Rassekh, Shapour, *Education as a Motor for Development: Recent Education Reforms in Oman with Particular Reference to the Status of Women and Girls* (Switzerland: International Bureau of Education, 2004).

45. Alkharusi, "Teachers' Classroom Assessment Skills: Influence of Gender, Subject Area, Grade Level, Teaching Experience and In-Service Assessment Training," *Journal of Turkish Science Education* 8, no. 2 (2011): 39-48.

AlKalbani<sup>46</sup> found differences between male and female teachers in reporting their competencies via self-reports. Alkharusi's<sup>47</sup> study revealed that female teachers reported themselves more competent than male teachers in writing test items, and communicating assessment results.

Likewise, Alkharusi, Aldhafri, Alnabhani and AlKalbani,<sup>48</sup> investigated the teachers' attitudes, competence and practices about educational assessment using self-report questionnaires. Results revealed gender difference in competence, and classroom practices, using alternative assessment methods, use of assessment criteria, analysing assessment results, and use of non-achievement factors in grading. Females quite consistently assessed themselves being more competent than their male counterparts. Female teachers felt more competent on ethics of assessment, communicate assessment, use of assessment standards and criteria than male teachers. In addition, female teachers showed more differences in using classroom tests for grouping students, motivating students, and upgrading students from one class to another. However, male teachers surpassed their female counterparts in analysing assessment results.

Women in Oman can have a special place to enter in political and economic activities smoothly. The government provides support to women so they can assist in improving the quality of life for the family and contribute to the community.<sup>49</sup> Thus, they are encouraged to work and be part of the country's development. In a study by Varghese,<sup>50</sup> the aim of this was to measure women's empowerment in Oman through identifying freedom of mobility of women in Oman. It was found that women in Oman are good decision makers and that in one of his Majesty's speech about women (His Majesty Sultan Qaboos bin Said, the ruler of Oman), his majesty emphasised to put women in different government portfolios so as to strengthen their roles and honour them.

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46. Alkharusi, Aldhafri, Alnabhani and Alkalbani, "Educational Assessment Attitudes, Competence, Knowledge, and Practices: An Exploratory Study of Muscat Teachers in the Sultanate of Oman," 2012.

47. Alkharusi, "Teachers' Classroom Assessment Skills: Influence of Gender, Subject Area, Grade Level, Teaching Experience and In-Service Assessment Training," 2011.

48. Alkharusi, Aldhafri, Alnabhani and Alkalbani, "Educational Assessment Attitudes, Competence, Knowledge, and Practices: An Exploratory Study of Muscat Teachers in the Sultanate of Oman," 2012.

49. Albelushi, Auhoud, "Gender Issues in Teacher Development: Career Choice and Commitment in Oman," *English Language Teaching Education Development* 8 (2004): 1-25; Karabenick, Stuart A. and Samira Moosa, "Culture and Personal Epistemology: US and Middle Eastern Students' Beliefs about Scientific Knowledge and Knowing," *Social Psychology of Education* 8, no. 4 (2005): 375-393.

50. Varghese, Thresiamma, "Women Empowerment in Oman: A Study based on Women Empowerment Index," *Far East Journal of Psychology and Business* 2, no. 2 (2011): 37-53.

## Research Problem, Methods and Data

The main aim of this article is to examine the competences of Omani teachers as assessed by teachers themselves. How do teachers assess their competence at present, and what are the differences in competences by gender, and teaching experience?

A self-assessment survey was used for collecting the data. The survey consisted of 109 mostly closed items (statements) supplemented with a few open-ended questions. The survey was divided into four thematic sections: (1) *competence and work* (51 items), (2) *impact of the training received* (25 items + two open ended), (3) *support needed* (18 items), and (4) *possibilities to use the new approaches and competence in the work* (12 items + one open ended). In this article the data on the first section will be used. The respondents had to identify the degree to which they agreed or disagreed on statements to assess themselves in their work competence. The study used a four point Likert scale: 1 = totally disagree... 4 = totally agree. The content of the survey was constructed through operationalisation of the professional standards set for Omani teachers and development goals of the newly introduced in-service training for teachers.

A total of 368 teachers responded to the survey after having attended in-service-training provided by the national Specialised Institute of Professional Training of Teachers (SIPTT). The data were collected in 2015 and 54% of the respondents were female. Teachers were asked about their teaching experience with a four point scale question, 1) 1-2 years, new teachers, 2) 2-7 years, 3) 8-12 years, and 4) over 12 years. Because there were only 15 respondents in the first group, the groups 1 and 2 will be combined in the analyses. 19.3% (N=71) had 1-7 years of teaching experience, 34% (N=126) and 47% (N=171) had over 12 years of teaching experience.

Principal component analysis was carried out for the three areas measuring teacher's competence (Table 1); a) *Professional qualities and values (PQV)*, b) *Professional knowledge and understanding (PKU)* and c) *Professional skill (PS)*. Some of the items in the questionnaire had to be left out from the model because of their too low correlations, 35 items were left in the final component analysis. Not all assumptions for parametric distribution were met, so that is why the results must be interpreted with some caution. Seven sum scores were constructed. A Cronbach's Alpha test was conducted to check the internal consistency of the instrument. Apart from one sum score, *Attitudes towards cooperation with colleagues and parents*, the assumptions for Cronbach's Alphas were met ( $\alpha > 0.6$ ). Cronbach's Alpha reliability of the three dimensions and for the overall instrument ranges from 0.53 to 0.93. Including also the sum score with Cronbach's Alpha below 0.6 is theoretically justifiable.



**Table 1.** *Principal Component Analysis*

<b>Item Codes</b>	<b>Measures and Questionnaire Items</b>	<b>Factor Loadings</b>
	<i>Please respond to what extent you agree with the following statements? Four-point scale from totally disagree (1) to totally agree (4)</i>	
	<b>Professional qualities and values</b> <i>Enhances the competence of students and colleagues</i>	
PQV1_1	My students concentrate on the learning activities	0.75
PQV1_2	I have the competence to put my development ideas on school development into practice.	0.71
PQV1_3	I have ideas on how to support building the school community.	0.67
PQV1_4	I have the competence to advance the collaboration of colleagues in my school.	0.64
PQV1_5	Collaboration with colleagues builds our competence.	0.56
	<i>Attitudes towards cooperation with colleagues and parents</i>	
PQV2_1	It is not difficult to get the parents interested in the children's learning.	0.78
PQV2_2	It doesn't take too much time and effort to inform the parents about the school activities.	0.68
PQV2_3	Collaboration with colleagues doesn't take too much time and effort.	0.54
	<b>Professional knowledge and understanding</b>	
	<i>Competence in supporting students' higher order skills and career skills</i>	
PKU1_1	I feel confident and competent to support students in developing their ability to analyse	0.82
PKU1_2	I feel confident and competent to support students in developing their ability to evaluate.	0.79
PKU1_3	I feel confident and competent to support students in developing their ability to create.	0.76
PKU1_4	I feel confident and competent to support students in developing their critical thinking and problem solving.	0.74
PKU1_5	I feel confident and competent to support students in developing their research and inquiry skills.	0.73
PKU1_6	I feel confident and competent to support students in developing their creativity and innovation.	0.66
PKU1_7	I feel confident and competent to support students in developing their self-motivation, resilience and adaptability	0.66
PKU1_8	I feel confident and competent to support students in developing their communication skills.	0.64
PKU1_9	I feel confident and competent to support students in developing their team work, collaboration and leadership skills.	0.61
	<i>Competence in supporting students' personal skills</i>	
PKU2_1	I feel confident and competent to support my students in developing their social and civic awareness.	0.77
PKU2_2	I feel confident and competent to support my students in	0.76

	developing their economic awareness.	
PKU2_3	I feel confident and competent to support my students in developing their global and multicultural awareness.	0.74
PKU2_4	I feel confident and competent to support my students in developing their scientific literacy and reasoning.	0.72
PKU2_5	I feel confident and competent to support my students in developing their environmental awareness.	0.67
PKU2_6	I feel confident and competent to support my students in developing their health, well-being and safety awareness.	0.66
	<b>Professional skills</b>	
	<i>Supporting students' individual needs</i>	
PS1_1	My students don't have a hard time understanding the learning objectives and the success criteria.	0.75
PS1_2	It is not impossible to constantly monitor the progress of all the students.	0.74
PS1_3	It is not difficult to identify the kind of additional support the student needs.	0.74
	<i>Feedback and assessment skills</i>	
PS2_1	It is not difficult to provide feedback that is both encouraging and explains students how they should improve.	0.77
PS2_2	My students don't have a hard time understanding how they could improve their learning.	0.77
PS2_3	It is not difficult to assess the effectiveness of my teaching methods.	0.83
PS2_4	It is not difficult to get enough feedback for developing my teaching.	0.77
	<i>Attitude towards own work</i>	
PS3_1	I am able to teach the curriculum content with the time reserved for it.	0.63
PS3_2	I have areas of development within my professional competence.	0.66
PS3_3	I am happy with my work as a teacher.	0.68
PS4_4	I look forward to develop my career in the field of education.	0.76
PS4_5	I would like to participate in further professional development activities.	0.84

Table 2 shows Cronbach's Alpha coefficients and descriptive statistics of the sum scores. Teachers assessed their competence to be highest in the sum scores Attitude towards own work ( $M=3.41$ ,  $SD=0.54$ ), Enhances the competence of students and colleagues ( $M=3.29$ ,  $SD=0.51$ ), Competence in supporting students' higher order skills and career skills ( $M=3.29$ ,  $SD=0.51$ ), and lowest in Attitudes towards cooperation with colleagues and parents ( $M=2.82$ ,  $SD=0.61$ ). Overall, teachers assess their competence in every sum score to be at least at moderate level.

**Table 2.** Cronbach's Alpha Coefficients and Descriptive Data of the Sum Scores

Dimension	No. of Items	Cronbach's Alpha	M	SD	N
<b>Professional qualities and values</b>					
Enhances the competence of students and colleagues	5	0.72	3.29	0.51	367
Attitudes towards cooperation with colleagues and parents	3	0.53	2.82	0.61	367
Overall	8				
<b>Professional knowledge and understanding</b>					
Competence in supporting students' higher order skills and career skills	9	0.93	3.29	0.51	367
Competence in supporting students' personal skills	6	0.83	3.17	0.54	367
Overall	15				
<b>Professional skills</b>					
Supporting students' individual needs	3	0.60	2.97	0.57	367
Feedback and assessment skills	4	0.80	3.07	0.61	367
Attitude towards own work	5	0.76	3.41	0.54	368
Overall	12				

### Differences according to the Background Factors

Before all the parametric tests in this section, normality tests were run to see that the assumptions for the tests were met. The range for the skewness and kurtosis values is set to reasonable range of  $\pm 2.0$ . If all the assumptions for parametric tests were not met the reliability of the result would be confirmed using nonparametric tests. Crosstabulation was made for individual items of each sum score in which the difference was significant also according to the nonparametric test to see what explains the difference in the sum scores. The share of those responding partially agree or fully agree were summed up and also the share of those answering fully agree was counted.

### Females Assess themselves More Competent than Males

Independent samples T-tests were run to determine whether there were differences in the competence sum scores between males and females, because not all assumptions for parametric tests were met (Table 3). A nonparametric Mann-Whitney's U-test was run to confirm the results. Females had significantly higher scores for *Attitudes towards cooperation with colleagues and parents* ( $T(365)=-3.779$ ,  $p<0.001$ ), *Competence in supporting students' higher order skills and career skills* ( $T(365)=-1.982$ ,  $p=0.048$ ) and *Supporting students' individual needs* ( $T(365)=-2.677$ ,  $p=0.008$ ). However, according to the nonparametric test the difference for the sum score *Competence in supporting students' higher order skills and career skills* was not significant, though close to significant ( $p=0.059$ ). Females had higher competence scores in other sum scores too, apart from the sum score *Feedback and assessment skills*.

**Table 3.** T-test for Teacher Competence Sum Scores according to Teacher's Gender

Dimension	Gender	M	SD	t	df	p	d*
<b>Professional qualities and values</b>							
Enhances the competence of students and colleagues	Male	3.23	0.55	-1.940	365	0.053	0.21
	Female	3.34	0.47				
Attitudes towards cooperation with colleagues and parents	Male	2.69	0.59	-3.779	365	0.000	0.42
	Female	2.94	0.61				
<b>Professional knowledge and understanding</b>							
Competence in supporting students' higher order skills and career skills	Male	3.24	0.52	-1.982	365	0.048	0.22
	Female	3.35	0.50				
Competence in supporting students' personal skills	Male	3.14	0.53	-0.960	365	0.337	0.11
	Female	3.20	0.54				
<b>Professional skills</b>							
Supporting students' individual needs	Male	2.89	0.53	-2.677	365	0.008	0.29
	Female	3.05	0.59				
Feedback and assessment skills	Male	3.10	0.63	0.975	365	0.330	0.10
	Female	3.04	0.60				
Attitude towards own work	Male	3.41	0.56	0.036	366	0.972	0.02
	Female	3.40	0.52				

Note: \*Effect size Cohen's d: 0.2 small, 0.5 medium, 0.8 large (Cohen, 1988).

As can be seen in Table 4, in the sum score *Attitudes towards cooperation with colleagues and parents* the share of females who have agreed with the items is remarkably higher than the share of males. The difference between males and females who have answered fully agree is 5.8 – 20.7 percentage points. Females assess themselves to be competent especially in cooperation with the parents (items PQV2\_1 and PQV2\_1). Also in the sum score *supporting students' individual needs* the difference lies in the large share of females answering *fully agree*. The big difference between females and males is consistent in every item of the sum score. Females evaluate themselves competent especially in teaching the students learning objectives and the success criteria (PS1\_1).

**Table 4.** Teachers' Attitudes towards Cooperation with Colleagues and Parents and Competence in Supporting Students' Individual according to Gender (%)

Item Code	Item	Gender	Partially Agree/ Fully Agree	Fully Agree
	<b>Attitude towards cooperation with colleagues and parents</b>			
PQV2_1	It is not difficult to get the parents interested in the children's learning	Male	65	21.2
		Female	81.3	41.9
PQV2_2	It doesn't take too much time and effort to inform the parents about the school activities.	Male	56.5	10.0
		Female	66.0	18.8
PQV2_3	Collaboration with colleagues doesn't take too much time and effort.	Male	61.2	16.5
		Female	69.5	22.3
	<b>Competence in supporting students' individual needs</b>			
PS1_1	My students don't have a hard time understanding the learning objectives and the success criteria.	Male	78.2	21.2
		Female	80.2	34.0
PS1_2	It is not impossible to constantly monitor the progress of all the students	Male	61.2	14.7
		Female	74.6	22.3
PS1_3	It is not difficult to identify the kind of additional support the student needs.	Male	81.2	21.8
		Female	86.8	29.4

### Teacher Competence Increases by Experience

A one-way ANOVA was run to determine whether there were differences in the competence sum scores between teachers according to their years of teaching experience according to Table 5. Because not all assumptions for parametric tests were met, also in this case a nonparametric test, Kruskal-Wallis, was run to

confirm the results. Tukey's HSD (honest significant difference) post-hoc –test was run to identify the differences between the groups. The difference was significant for the sum scores ( $F(3, 264)=10.369, p<0.001$ ) and *Attitude towards own work* ( $F(2, 365)=6.793, p=0.001$ ). The results of the nonparametric test were in the line with ANOVA. According to Tukey's HSD those teachers with more than 12 years of experience had significantly higher competence scores than those with less experience on both sum scores ( $p<0.05$ ).

**Table 5.** ANOVA for Teacher Competence Sum Scores according to Teaching Experience

Dimension	Years of Experience	M	SD	f	df	p	p <sup>2*</sup>
<b>Professional qualities and values</b>							
Enhances the competence of students and colleagues	1-7 years	3.30	0.54	0.326	2. 364	0.722	0.002
	8-12 years	3.26	0.52				
	12+ years	3.31	0.50				
Attitudes towards cooperation with colleagues and parents	1-7 years	2.96	0.58	2.754	2. 364	0.065	0.015
	8-12 years	2.75	0.56				
	12+ years	2.81	0.66				
<b>Professional knowledge and understanding</b>							
Competence in supporting students' higher order skills and career skills	1-7 years	3.35	0.49	0.998	2.364	0.370	0.005
	8-12 years	3.25	0.54				
	12+ years	3.31	0.50				
Competence in supporting students' personal skills	1-7 years	3.19	0.48	0.597	2. 364	0.551	0.003
	8-12 years	3.13	0.56				
	12+ years	3.19	0.55				
<b>Professional skills</b>							
Supporting students' individual needs	1-7 years	2.85	0.65	2.174	2. 364	0.115	0.012
	8-12 years	3.00	0.57				
	12+ years	3.01	0.52				
Feedback and assessment skills	1-7 years	2.98	0.61	10.369	2. 364	< 0.001	0.054
	8-12 years	2.92	0.58				
	12+ years	3.22	0.61				
Attitude towards own work	1-7 years	3.26	0.55	6.793	2. 365	0.001	0.036
	8-12 years	3.35	0.60				
	12+ years	3.51	0.46				

Note: \*Partial eta squared: 0.01 small, 0.06 medium, 0.14 large.

As the Table 6 shows, in the sum score *feedback and assessment skills* it is interesting that teachers who have 8-12 years of teaching experience feel the least competent in all of the sum scores. However, the difference is not so remarkable when taking into account how many have responded *partially agree* or *fully agree*. What is notable is that at least 30%, up to 51%, of the teachers with more than 12 years of teaching experience fully agree with all the items. They feel competent especially in giving feedback that is both encouraging and constructive and in assessing their own teaching methods (items PS1\_1 and PS1\_4). In the sum score *attitude towards own work* the share of the respondents having more positive attitude towards their work increases consistently by experience, teachers with more experience feel more competent. They have positive attitude especially towards professional development (items PS2\_4 and PS2\_5) and they are also happy with their work as a teacher.

**Table 6.** *Teacher's Feedback and Assessment Skills and Attitude towards Own Work according to Teaching Experience*

Item Code	Item	Experience	Partially Agree/ Fully Agree	Fully Agree
	<b>Feedback and assessment skills</b>			
PS1_1	It is not difficult to provide feedback that is both encouraging and explains students how they should improve.	1-7 years	71.8	28.2
		8-12 years	71.4	21.4
		12+ years	85.9	51.2
PS1_2	My students don't have a hard time understanding how they could improve their learning	1-7 years	66.2	18.3
		8-12 years	72.2	16.7
		12+ years	82.4	30.0
PS1_3	It is not difficult to assess the effectiveness of my teaching methods.	1-7 years	83.1	32.4
		8-12 years	84.9	24.6
		12+ years	90.0	46.5
PS1_4	It is not difficult to get enough feedback for developing my teaching.	1-7 years	73.2	26.8
		8-12 years	77.0	17.5
		12+ years	82.4	34.1
	<b>Attitude towards own work</b>			
PS2_1	I am able to teach the curriculum content with the time reserved for it.	1-7 years	81.7	39.4
		8-12 years	84.1	46.8
		12+ years	85.4	50.3
PS2_2	I have areas of development within my professional competence.	1-7 years	84.5	35.2
		8-12 years	86.5	38.1
		12+ years	94.7	49.1
PS2_3	I am happy with my work as a teacher.	1-7 years	74.6	38.0
		8-12 years	86.5	51.6
		12+ years	90.1	56.7

PS2_4	I look forward to develop my career in the field of education.	1-7 years	95.8	54.9
		8-12 years	92.1	64.3
		12+ years	97.1	77.8
PS2_5	I would like to participate in further professional development activities.	1-7 years	94.4	56.3
		8-12 years	86.5	58.7
		12+ years	92.1	67.3

## Discussion

The study aimed at investigating trained teachers' competencies in three main domains: professional qualities and values (PQV), professional knowledge and understanding (PKU) and professional skills (PS) through self-assessment questionnaire. Overall, teachers assess their competence in every sum score to be at least at moderate level.

In the first domain i.e., PQV, teachers reported themselves as highly competent in enhancing the competence of students and colleagues, while in PKU in supporting students' higher order skills and career skills and in PS, they reported having positive attitude towards own work. The training at the SIPTT has a particular goal to enhance the skills and performance of students, and especially improving students' 21<sup>st</sup> century skills, which cover higher order skills and career skills. Also giving feedback to teacher colleagues has been one of the ways to improve teaching competence in the SIPTT programmes. Teachers work with a colleague at school who is called shadow teacher. The teacher attends classes, gives feedback and discusses with the shadow teacher strategies used in the class. Moreover, each new teacher identifies two to three aspects that he/she would like to improve such as contacting parents, asking for help and support, or use different ways to manage their classes with the help of shadow teacher. The teachers' works will be kept in own portfolio. However, despite that, teachers seem to feel competent in enhancing the skills of competence of colleagues, they had lowest mean value in sum score *attitudes towards cooperation with colleagues and parents*. The reason for this might be that the sum score *Enhances the competence of students and colleagues* measures more the competence and the latter more reality of being able to do this in practice. It has been reported that teachers in Oman experience high work load at schools and this keeps teachers busy with their classes.<sup>51</sup> Because of this, teachers might not have enough time for communicating regularly with parents and colleagues.

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51. Al-Ghattami, Sulaiman and Suleiman Al-Husseini, "Teacher Research: Practice, Challenges and Prospect for Improvement: An Empirical Study from Oman," *European Journal of Educational Sciences* 1, no. 3 (2014): 144-164.



## Gender Differences

In the current study, females reported higher scores than their male counterparts consistently in almost all of the sum scores. The difference was statistically significant for *Attitudes towards cooperation with colleagues and parents* and *Supporting students' individual needs*. In families, women are often expected to be more responsible for taking care of children and their needs due to their natural trait as mothers and caretakers.<sup>52</sup> In addition, women usually gather together with their families, relatives and tell each other about achievements of their children. Due to this and social conventions on communication between female and men in Omani culture, it might be that female teachers are more comfortable with communicating especially with mothers of the students, this could be due to the fact that they possess higher verbal skills than male.<sup>53</sup> Moreover, this might have an effect on teacher's work also in a way that women are also more used to taking each child's individual needs into account. One possible consequence is that the co-operation in the case of male students might be more limited.

It has been noticed in international studies that female teachers are more focused on the learning process of the student, engaging them in more collaborative learning approaches. On the other hand, male teachers are more oriented in delivering the information and working more independently.<sup>54</sup> It has also been suggested that male teachers are more focused on tasks, once they finish the tasks they are done, while female teachers showed more empathy and communicated more with the students in collaborative activities.<sup>55</sup>

The results are aligned with the previous findings in Omani context of Alkharusi,<sup>56</sup> Alkharusi, Aldhafri, Alnabhani and AlKalbani,<sup>57</sup> who found out that

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52. Queller, David C., "Why do Females Care More than Males?" *Proceedings of the Royal Society of London. Series B: Biological Sciences* 264, no. 1388 (1997): 1555-1557; Kelleher, Fatimah, Francis O. Severin, Meera Samson, Anuradha De, Tepora Afamasaga-Wright and Upali M. Sedere. *Women and the Teaching Profession: Exploring the Feminisation Debate* (UNESCO, 2011).

53. Forsthuber, Bernadette, Anna Horvath and Akvile Motiejunaite, *Gender Differences in Educational Outcomes: Study on the Measures Taken and the Current Situation in Europe* (Brussels: Education, Audiovisual and Culture Executive Agency, European Commission, 2010).

54. Islahi, Fatima and Nakhat Nasreen, "Who Make Effective Teachers, Men or Women? An Indian Perspective," *Universal Journal of Educational Research* 1, no. 4 (2013): 285-293.

55. Ibid, 286.

56. Alkharusi, "Teachers' Classroom Assessment Skills: Influence of Gender, Subject Area, Grade Level, Teaching Experience and In-Service Assessment Training," 2011.

females outperform males in several areas of professional competencies. This contradicts with previous studies on self-assessment according to which males tend to overestimate their skills and females underestimate regardless of their performance level. However, this phenomenon was noticed to appear among students. One might ask that would the difference be even bigger if both had evaluated their skills more realistically?

### Teaching Experience

With respect to teaching experience, results revealed significant differences in the sum scores in *Teacher's feedback and assessment skills* and *Attitude towards own work* according to experience in favour of teachers with more teaching experience. There seems to be a small decline in feedback and assessment skills after early years, but also in this sum score, those with the most experience (over 12 years) assess themselves most competent in this area. To sum up, a sense of competence in these areas seems to increase by the years of experience.

One explanation to the above results in both groups is because: new teachers in the first years start understanding their jobs and duties, practise new roles and responsibilities so they show more competence towards the above areas. After 7-8 years, work becomes more stable and promotions are raised every 5 years experience, while 10-15 Omani Rials are added to teacher's salary annually. After 12 years, those teachers receive more than 100 salary bonuses; this may raise teachers' motivation to work and feel more confident to state their competence in many areas and might work even better for gaining further promotions.

In addition, Alkharusi,<sup>58</sup> Alkharusi, Kazem and Musawai,<sup>59</sup> Alkharusi<sup>60</sup> found out that teachers skills in assessment improves by the years of experience. Teachers practise giving feedback, and get used to more efficient ways to improve students' performance, and become more autonomous in their work. Increased positive attitude towards their own work and professional development of more experienced teachers is a consequence of natural career development and

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57. Alkharusi, Aldhafri, Alnabhani and Alkalbani, "Educational Assessment Attitudes, Competence, Knowledge, and Practices: An Exploratory Study of Muscat Teachers in the Sultanate of Oman," 2012.

58. Alkharusi, "Teachers' Classroom Assessment Skills: Influence of Gender, Subject Area, Grade Level, Teaching Experience and In-Service Assessment Training," 2011.

59. Alkharusi, Mahdi Kazem and Al-Musawai, "Knowledge, Skills, and Attitudes of Preservice and Inservice Teachers in Educational Measurement," 2011.

60. Alkharusi, Aldhafri, Alnabhani and Alkalbani, "Educational Assessment Attitudes, Competence, Knowledge, and Practices: An Exploratory Study of Muscat Teachers in the Sultanate of Oman," 2012.

growing routine and autonomy by the years.<sup>61</sup> In Oman, the experienced teachers have also gained more training. After 7 years of experience teachers receive more trainings in different competence areas, they visit different schools and participate in marking higher-grade exams. More experienced teachers have greater possibilities to be promoted as principals, senior teachers and some even apply in universities to carry out Master's degrees or PhD studies or apply for higher positions in the Ministry of Education.

Possibilities for professional development both increases satisfaction with the work and increases sense of competence. It has been found that professional development is a chance to increase teachers' job satisfaction especially with more experienced teachers because the type of professional development trainings they receive moves from learning general skills to more specific skills.<sup>62</sup> Zhang and Burry-Stock<sup>63</sup> noticed that those teachers who have gained more training on assessment had better skills in assessment regardless of the years of experience. They drew a conclusion that training may compensate for novices' lack of experience in the classroom.

Furthermore, more experienced teachers often give responsibilities that should actually be theirs to the early year teachers. This gives extra workload for the novice teachers for whom the new work as itself is challenging enough which sometimes leads student teachers to sink or learn to swim and survive.<sup>64</sup> Instead, these novice teachers would benefit from good induction and support from more experienced teachers.<sup>65</sup> found that those teachers who had gained more support from more experienced teachers had a higher self-esteem at the end of the first year of teaching. In Oman, previously, there was no specific induction programme for teachers. The Ministry of Education prepared training packages that targeted new teachers and also more experienced teachers only.<sup>66</sup> Recently, the Specialised Institute is targeting new teachers in the one-year programme to prepare them for school context and teaching. The difference from the previously introduced packages lies in the involvement of more embedded practices of teaching strategies in schools.

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61. Klassen, Robert M. and Ming Ming Chiu, "Effects on Teachers' Self-Efficacy and Job Satisfaction: Teacher Gender, Years of Experience, and Job Stress," *Journal of Educational Psychology* 102, no. 3 (2010): 741.

62. Ibid, 749.

63. Zhang, Zhicheng and Judith A. Burry-Stock, "Classroom Assessment Practices and Teachers' Self-Perceived Assessment Skills," *Applied Measurement in Education* 16, no. 4 (2003): 323-342.

64. Allen, Tina L., *An Examination of the Perceptions of Cooperating Teachers and Teacher Candidates regarding the Initial Implementation of a Co-Teaching Model with Student Teaching at a Northern Louisiana University* (University of Louisiana at Monroe, 2013).

65. Hoy and Burke Spero, "Changes in Teacher Efficacy during the Early Years of Teaching: A Comparison of Four Measures," 2005.

66. Ministry of Education, *National Education for All*, 2014.

## Conclusions and Recommendations

Investigating teachers' self-assessment in areas such as professional qualities and values (PQV), professional knowledge and understanding (PKU) and professional skills (PS) through self-assessment questionnaire with respect to gender differences and teachers' years of experience raises the attention to encourage further trainings. One important recommendation is to train male teachers to effectively communicate with parents. This could probably result in a positive effect on boys' success at schools. It is recommended that female teachers analyse and report the most effective strategies of communicating between female teachers and parents, this could positively attribute to identifying the steps clearly to male teachers and utilize most effective practices that enhances the communication between male teachers and parents thus meeting individual students' needs in the schools.

Since teaching experience has a tremendous effect on teachers' performance and that some early years' teachers who stay in profession are observed as more positive than those who leave the teaching profession at a later stage, further research is recommended to study the reasons behind their positive attitude at work so as to lessen the obstacles facing teachers who leave their professions.

Specialised Institute for professional training of teachers trains teachers on assessment skills and offers training for novice teachers, therefore the effect of training on assessment skills is recommended to be studied in future research projects.

## Limitations and Further Studies

There are some limitations in this study that should be considered in future studies:

- Not all the statistical assumptions were met with the research tool used in this research. Also, the Cohen  $d$  and eta squared values were quite low. Because these flaws in the research tools, the results must be interpreted with some caution.
- Researchers are not unanimous on the reliability of self-assessment as a method for studying professional competence. The difference between men and women in assessing their professional competence is a research topic of its own and should be studied in future research.
- The differences in assessed competence by regions were left out from this article, because the topic deserves to be dealt more analytically and thoroughly than would have been possible in this article. Existing data

makes it possible to analyse this topic from the point of view of teachers and students.

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