



Rethinking Teacher Education: Synchronizing Eastern and Western Views of Teaching and Learning to Promote 21st Century Skills and Global Perspectives

Judith Smith[†] and Ran Hu
East Carolina University

The purpose of the study was to share findings with educators across disciplines of how to incorporate an eastern and western blended philosophy of teaching and learning to promote 21st century skills and global perspectives. Drawing from a previous self-study of their views of teaching and learning between Chinese and American cultures, the two assistant professors investigated how their blended philosophies affected teaching and learning to promote 21st century skills. They found that studying their own philosophies of teaching and learning heightened awareness of the necessity to incorporate new knowledge of best practices from other cultures.

Introduction

According to Heath (1983), culture is our way of thinking, believing, and valuing. “We come to understand our own culture by trying to understand others” (Clifford, 1988, p. 76). Throughout the first year of their life at the same university, the authors, one American and one Chinese, used the self-study approach to present their views of teaching and learning, examine how their different cultural backgrounds influenced the formation of their perspectives, and explore how their exchange of views of teaching and learning supported their teaching practice (Authors, 2011). Through the exchanges of views of teaching and learning, the two assistant professors have gained a more profound understanding toward their own culture, blended their philosophies of teaching and learning as they incorporated 21st century skills and global

[†] Address for correspondence: Judith Smith, 122 Speight Building, East 5th Street, East Carolina University, Greenville, NC 27858. Email: smithjud@ecu.edu

perspectives into their teaching. After four years of incorporating a blended philosophy of eastern and western perspectives into their teaching, the two assistant professors are focusing their instruction for students in higher education on 21st century skills and global perspectives. This paper is a continuation of their first self-study. In this paper they investigated how their blended philosophies affected teaching and learning to promote 21st century skills.

Two Cultural Beliefs about Teaching and Learning

The authors of this study realize that many different philosophies have influenced education theory, policy, and practice in China and the United States. However, the two philosophies that influenced their beliefs are Chinese Confucianism and Deweyan pragmatism.

As one of the oldest philosophies in the world, Confucianism has influenced not only the social and moral aspects of the Chinese, but also, the educational belief of many Chinese (Smith & Smith, 1989; Ames & Rosemont, 1998). Confucius emphasized the importance of educating students to be virtuous rather than only teaching subjects (Smith & Smith, 1989). Confucian values of *Dao* (teachers leading the way), *Ren* (benevolence, love, and humaneness toward others), and *Li* (students follow tradition, and not to challenge authority of elders and teachers) influenced the role of teachers in the Chinese culture (Ames, 2003; Ames & Rosemont, 1998; Hall, 1998).

Confucius believed in education for everyone; all students should have the right to an education with no class distinctions (Analects, 15.39). He stressed using individual instruction using personal, informal methods (Analects, 6.21; 11.22); while recognizing the importance of application and requiring students to apply what they learn by putting their knowledge into practice (Analects, 1.1). Commitment is highly valued in the Chinese culture due to Confucius' teachings wherein he expected students to be diligent and modest in their studies. He encouraged students in saying, "the mechanic that would perfect his work must first sharpen his tools" (Analects, 15.10). Reflecting on modesty, Confucius, stated

“in strolling in the company of just two other persons, I am bound to find a teacher. Identifying their strengths, I follow them and identifying their weakness, I reform myself accordingly” (Analects, 7.21). Overall Confucius instructed students to be diligent, committed to learning, modest, and with an attitude of learning “study as though you cannot catch up to it, and as though you fear you are going to lose it” (Analects, 8.17).

The Confucian philosophy had great influence in making Chinese classrooms collectivist and in stressing discipline and conformity that reflect teacher domination and authority. Students follow teachers’ instructions without question, value actions and attitudes that affect their future, and are persistent and hard-working (Bond, 1996; Hofstede, 2001; Hofstede & Bond, 1988; Hofstede & Hofstede, 2005; Ng & Smith, 2004a; Ng & Smith, 2004b). The Eastern culture instills in teachers the responsibility of not only teaching knowledge toward a particular subject, but also to educate students to become people of virtue (Smith & Smith, 1989; Ames & Rosemont, 1998).

In the United States various philosophies such as idealism, realism, pragmatism, and existentialism have prevailed (Kidd, Kaufman, Baker, O’Shea, & Allen, 2008). These philosophies influenced and guided educators in all aspects of life as they identified their philosophical orientation. The authors of this study realize that many philosophies have influenced education theory, policy, and practice in the United States. For example, the standards based movement and emphasis on testing has placed pressure to bring an accountability model to higher education (Authors, 2011). For this study the first author focused on Dewey’s educational philosophy since he was a leading American educator and considered one of the most influential American thinkers. John Dewey’s philosophy of pragmatism confirmed the human and moral importance of thought and emphasized experiences as the way forward for the education of future generations (Galbraith, 1998).

According to Dewey, the western perspective fostered the growth of individuals, promoted social justice, and strengthened the democratic way of life (Danforth, 2008; Galbraith, 1998; Kellner,

n.d.). Dewey advocated a naturalistic approach to learning, often referred to as progressive, practical education. Students learned by interacting within the environment while setting goals, completing projects, engaging in problem-solving, and using inquiry (Dewey, 1916, 1938; Boyles, 2006).

Dewey advocated the use of inquiry in the classroom. He believed that students should be actively engaged. Dewey (1938) stated, “inquiry is a continuing process in every field with which it is engaged. It is the convergent and cumulative effect of continued inquiry that defines knowledge in its general meaning” (p. 8).

Considering these two cultural perspectives, the eastern views of Confucius and the western views of Dewey, the two authors studied themselves to discover how the two different philosophies could be blended to provide effective instruction (Hu & Smith, 2011). As well, the authors agreed with the current educational movement that calls for the mastery of 21st century skills in order for students to be successful in our rapidly changing world. Educators must embed 21st century skills into the curriculum because nationwide employers, voters, high schools, colleges, and universities nationwide realize that students must possess these skills in order to be successful in life and work (Partnership for 21st Century Skills, 2007; Association of American Colleges & Universities, 2007; Conley, 2005 & 2007). Based on this status quo, the authors re-examined themselves to see how their blended philosophies affected teaching to promote 21st century skills on learning. The next section reviews literature to describe the framework of our study: a holistic view of 21st century teaching and learning.

21st Century Skills/Global Perspectives

Prior to the year 2000, the emphasis for educating students was to promote the three r’s “reading” “writing” and “arithmetic”; today, in the 21st century, educators have a new charge: teach the new three r’s “rigor” “relevance” and “real world skills” (McCoog, 2008). Educators agree with business leaders and other interested groups that specific skills are needed for students to succeed in life in the 21st century of global communication, social networking,

and a world of new technologies (Beers, 2011; Moylan, 2008; McCoog, 2008).

Teaching 21st century skills equips students to think critically, communicate effectively, to become self-directed learners and problem solvers. Educators, employers, and the general public believe that mastering 21st century skills prepares students to succeed in our constantly changing world (McCoog, 2008; Ryan, 2011; Vockley, 2007). In a study of “Middle Schools Preparing Young People for 21st Century Life and Work”, Kay (2009) validated why we should teach 21st century skills:

Twenty-first century skills include the intelligent reasoning, positive attitudes, and practical skills that enable students to learn and achieve in core subjects at higher levels. They provide a powerful organizing framework for leadership and professional development, and for teaching and learning that motivates and engages students and builds their confidence as learners...These skills will also prepare students to innovate, lead 21st century enterprises, and participate effectively in civic life. (p. 45)

In addition, creativity and communication have been highlighted as capstone elements of 21st century learning. Sir Ken Robinson, renowned for his work in creative thinking, concluded that teaching imagination, ingenuity, inventiveness, and inspiration are crucial skills in the 21st century (Azzam, 2009; Moylan, 2008). Students need a robust curriculum that embraces problem solving and innovation (Vockley, 2007). To prepare students for the 21st century, educators agree that a broad and intensive use of technology is necessary (Beers, 2011; Kay, 2009; McCoog, 2008; Vockley, 2007). Teachers must adjust their traditional modes of instruction to include Instructional Communications Technology (ICT). Today’s students may be very familiar with social networking sites, digital music, and video sharing, but they are not as familiar with many of the opportunities technology offers to enhance and provide quality instruction (Albion, 2008; Orey, McClendon & Branch, 2006). In addition, other researchers stated that technology needs to be part of the daily curriculum in elementary and secondary school (McCoog, 2008; Moersch, 2011; Walker, Redmond, & Giles, 2010).

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Researchers have identified key skill sets as essential 21st century skills, and they are: critical thinking and problem-solving, creativity and innovation, collaboration, teamwork and leadership, cross-cultural understanding, communications and information fluency, computing and ICT fluency, and career and learning self-reliance (Moylan, 2008; Paul, 2012). The Partnership for 21st century skills (P21) also offers a framework to present a holistic picture about the necessary skills in 21st century teaching and learning. Figure 1 presents the key elements in the framework. The predominant skills, knowledge, and expertise represented in the rainbow, including (1) life and career skills, (2) learning and innovation skills, and (3) information, media, and technology skills, should be promoted in the teaching of core subjects and 21st century themes. The support systems below the rainbow, including standards and assessments, curriculum and instruction, professional development, and learning environments, must also be aligned to promote students' mastery of 21st century skills (Partnership for 21st Century Skills, n.d.). In this study we examined ourselves to see how our blended philosophy promote these 21st century skills.

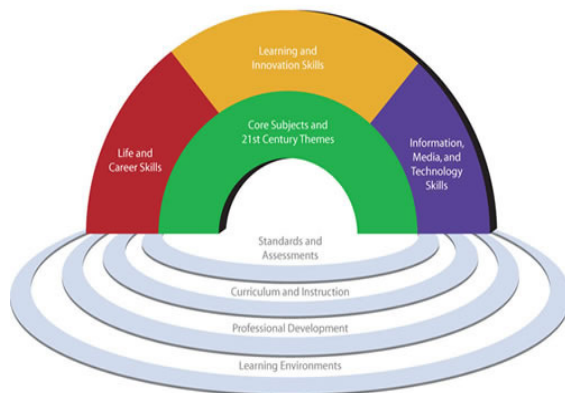


Figure 1. The Partnership for 21st Century Skills is the leading advocacy organization focused on infusing 21st century skills into education. The organization brings together the business community, education leaders and policy makers to define a powerful vision for 21st century education to ensure every child's success as citizens and workers in the 21st century by providing tools and resources to help facilitate and drive change.

Method

We adopted the self-study approach in this research. Self-study is defined as “intentional and systematic inquiry into one’s own practice” (Dinkelman, 2003, p. 8). This method has been recognized by many teacher educators as a powerful tool to identify useful knowledge for improving reflective practice and bringing knowledge and understandings to consider changes in the pedagogy of teaching (Hu & Smith, 2011; Rossaen & Gere, 1996; Ward & Darling, 1996). As Zeichner (1999) noted, self-study is “probably the single most significant development in the field of teacher education research (p. 8)”.

Both authors have been teaching at the university for four years. During this time, they have shared an office for a year, worked collaboratively on teaching and research by giving each other access to their face-to-face and online classes on Blackboard or Moodle (the course delivery platform), holding monthly reflective meetings on teaching, having bimonthly writing sessions, and making research presentations together. The data sources in this study included the following sources from the past four years: (1) researchers’ self-reflective journals, (2) monthly self-study meeting notes, (3) departmental peer evaluations of teaching from each author, (4) Student Opinion of Instruction Survey (SOIS), and (5) students and faculty feedback on the researchers’ invited presentations.

We analyzed the data inductively within a predetermined framework (Patton, 2001, p. 454). The three predominant categories of skills and knowledge represented in the P21 framework (life and career skills, learning and innovation skills, and information, media, and technology skills) were the predetermined themes. Based on these themes, we open coded the data and decided on four categories that reflected these themes. These categories were Course Delivery (CD), Standards/Expectations (SE), Dispositions (D), and Others (O). Figure 2 provides a detailed explanation of the definition and inclusion criteria of these categories.

Course Delivery (CD)

Description:

Statements about ways the courses have been taught, instructors' teaching methods and styles, and knowledge delivery.

Inclusion Criteria:

Engaging activities, strength and weakness of the course, instructional strategies, differentiated instruction, classroom environment, content relevancy, peer collaborations, effective communication, media and technology.

Disposition (D)

Description:

Statements about the professional qualities of the instructors to promote life and career skills.

Inclusion Criteria:

Attitude, punctuality, professional commitment, leadership, collaboration, interaction with colleagues and students, respect of diversity, responsive teaching, resourcefulness, initiatives.

Others (O)

Description:

Statements about issues that were not mentioned in the above categories.

Inclusion Criteria:

General compliments (i.e. great professor, wonderful class...), suggestions that are beyond the control of the professors (i.e. class should be shorter, class should be offered in a different format, practicum issues).

Figure 2. Category Cards

Findings

Authors 1 and 2 learned different things during the past four years as they implemented their blended philosophies of teaching and learning. Author 1 continued to include the western view of using inquiry as a way to teach, motivating students to be lifelong learners, adopting a student-centered curriculum, and providing democratic education for all. In addition, Author 1 discovered she had incorporated the eastern view of teaching in both online and face-to-face course delivery through implementation of high standards and expectations for her students, as well as modeling dispositions that exemplified respect, virtue, and diligence. Author 2 has taught courses both face-to-face and online in the past four years. She still valued the good qualities of teaching and learning from the eastern culture, such as commitment, perseverance, diligence, and strictness. She also recognized the importance of critical thinking, creativity, motivation and flexibility and tried to incorporate the best from the eastern and western perspectives on teaching and learning.

Life and Career Skills

Twenty-first century skills demand incorporation of teaching standards and expectations to instill life and career skills for students. Embracing the eastern view of diligence and hard work, Author 1 aimed to hold her students to high expectations and instill in them a conscientious desire for learning. She valued the eastern perspective of commitment to a rigorous work ethic. Author 1 reflected in her journal notes “a caring teacher can also hold students accountable to high standards” (Author 1 Journal, October 9, 2010). In the past four years she increased student assignments, upheld strict grading policies and deadlines, and modeled a strong work ethic. She enforced rules, assigned rigorous content and required students to submit a self-assessment participation form at the end of each class. Students graded themselves on punctuality, participation, completing assignments, and staying focused. Author 1 felt that she was instilling life and career skills for her students when Author 2 shared in her journal:

I am very happy to see that Author 1 has become a more “strict” teacher. I do believe that these qualities are part of the strictness that

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a good teacher should have - we want to prepare students to succeed in whatever jobs they have and these are important qualities!

Student dispositions refer to one's personality, behavior, and actions. Author 1 embraced the eastern views of learning: diligence, respect, and virtue. She believed that if her students adopted these values, they would become more successful in school and in life (Hu & Smith, 2011). Author 1 held that students aspiring to become teachers must adhere to rigorous disposition standards. For example, the student should dress professionally, exhibit a positive attitude toward teaching and families, and accept responsibility to seek solutions to problems. Author 1 modeled and explicitly required her students to embrace these teacher dispositions, which not only instilled the eastern view of diligence, respect, and virtue, but also resulted in better life and career skills.

In addition, Author 1 reinforced dispositions by requiring her students to demonstrate respect, virtue, and diligence during their practicum experience. On several occasions Author 1 conferenced with students regarding appropriate dress in the school setting, showing respect for diverse student populations, and advocacy for the teaching profession. At times Author 1 worried that she was too rigid in working with students. She strictly enforced the grading policy when students were unprepared for teaching, constantly late, and inappropriately dressed. Author 1 gained reassurance that she was teaching professional dispositions appropriately when her colleague agreed with her grading policy and Author 2 encouraged her during their monthly meetings, "Congratulations, you are teaching students to be respectful, a virtue in the eastern philosophy." As well, Author 1 modeled professional dispositions in her teaching; thereby, providing the example of a virtuous teacher for her students. Students commented in their SOIS, "her professionalism and gentleness is an inspiration", "professor sets a wonderful example for all of her students", "I appreciated the respect the professor showed to us as students".

The eastern Confucian-heritage culture believes that teachers should not only teach the subject but also lead the way, helping students grow to be the person with virtue. Influenced by this

philosophy, Author 2 has always required herself to set an example for her students - be committed and dedicated (Hu & Smith, 2011). However, after working with author 1, Author 2 has learned that caring and understanding are also virtues that teachers should have. She reflected in her journal:

I am amazed at the variety of my students. I have many who are non-traditional college students. A retired business man who wants to be a teacher, a single father of three children, single mothers who work on three jobs, parents of a new baby...I am deeply touched by the fact that they come back to school regardless of all their busy lives to make their teacher dreams come true, and I will do all I can to make learning available to them (Author 2 journal, May 9, 2011).

Author 2 knew that these students well understood the importance of education; therefore, she respected them and treated them like equals. Author 2 recognized the value of students' diverse life experience; hence, she supported different students with their different personal needs. Author 2 has always made herself available to students (during office hours, telephone, Skype, email, by appointment), and did everything possible to facilitate students' learning (sending constant reminders, locating extra learning resources, meeting students to answer their needs). A few students commented on Author 2 as, "...so respectful towards me. I am treated like an equal... responded to my emails in such a friendly manner". "She was very helpful and easy to contact...always quick to respond to questions or concerns". "I am so thankful to have her as the instructor. Thank you for suggestions about how to raise my son bilingually."

What is more, Author 2 learned from Author 1 that comparing with others is not part of the culture in the US. Instead, promoting individuality and building self-confidence are what is valued most in the society. In her teaching, Author 2 tried to help students build confidence to find the best in themselves. For example, she evaluated each student based on her/his personal growth and praised their improvement. She has assigned a reflective synthesis journal for each module. When grading these assignments, Author 2 has given feedback pointing out to students what they needed to improve for the next journal, and what they have done better compared with the last journal. When Author 1 explored Author

2's course, she commented on the journal feedback Author 2 has given:

It is a learning experience for me to see the feedback you gave to your students. For this module 3 journal assignment, you congratulated the student for moving from summarizing to synthesizing and explicitly including more text-to-self connections. You are also very explicit in telling the students that you will be looking for more text-to-text connections, asking students to relate chapter 6 to the previous article they read.

Both Author 1 and 2 recognized the importance of the above mentioned qualities teachers and students should have, and they tried to pass their understanding to others by giving presentations at the college, university, local, and national levels. Author 1 invited Author 2 to be a guest speaker in her face to face class to share her cultural heritage and the emphasis of the eastern perspective of hard work, ethical character, and diligence and how these qualities are important in life and career skills, especially in the teaching profession. At a university seminar the two professors shared their views of teaching and learning and global perspectives in teaching. Over 96% of the attendees responded in the evaluation that the seminar was interesting and relevant, with 100% of the responses recommending this topic in the future. Some of the participants noted, "I learned how to interact with students from other cultures better", "I learned how to adjust my classroom for children from other countries", "I must be mindful of different cultures coming into my classroom." The two authors also delivered local and national presentations together on the views of teaching and learning from two cultural perspectives. A participant from one of the reading conference presentations noted, "Very informational! Loved contrasting of cultures...I enjoyed the global flavor in regard to 'change' and 'implementation' (challenge/barriers) that really do have significance in daily instruction found in the classroom."

In addition, Author 2 made a presentation for one of her colleagues in another discipline on the diversity of the Chinese culture of teaching. When the students were asked how what they had learned would influence their future teaching, students wrote: "I will continue my awareness of cultures and find ways to

incorporate them through literature.” Another stated, “I now understand the Chinese student’s values and expectations from their family. I will discuss and identify family dynamics and how they differ among families regardless of the nationality.” Another student expanded her viewpoint to the Hispanic culture by noting:

I will create a Venn Diagram with my students comparing and contrasting Asian American Cultural perspective provided by the presenter and will tie this into the Hispanic Culture by having them add an additional bubble to the diagram for them to compare all three.

The above mentioned professional development activities gave pre-service and in-service teachers the added support systems needed to incorporate global awareness in their teaching for 21st century learning. Authors 1 and 2 continued their collaborative efforts in publicizing their blended views of teaching and learning by offering additional professional development to the university community.

Learning and Innovation Skills

Author 1 infused 21st century skills in teaching by continuing to include Dewey’s inquiry mode of teaching to make learning more meaningful and beneficial to students. Her blended philosophy preserved the western viewpoint that teachers should plan engaging, enriching hands-on activities in all content areas. In order to provide students with active learning experiences, she modeled activities and assessments she expected of her students in their future classrooms and provided opportunities for them to apply what they had learned in class. Students practiced methods of instruction through role-play, ‘think-pair-share’, jigsaw activities, group projects, mini e-units, and other hands-on strategies. In addition, Author 1 placed students in triad groups during their practicum experience in public schools to help them learn to communicate and collaborate with each other in teams. In online instruction Author 1 required students to implement the above-mentioned strategies in teaching students in their local elementary schools’ practicum settings. Students commented in their SOIS that classroom activities had “engaging activities relevant to the content and the instructor modeled the lessons that

we are to teach,” and peer evaluators shared the following comments, “professor exhibits effective use of instructional applications and implications,” “an excellent job of creating an instructional environment conducive to students’ participation.”

Author 1 taught basically face-to-face classes until her second year at the university. She learned from observing Author 2’s online class the importance of clearly defining assignments, returning emails promptly, and giving positive feedback by offering opportunities for additional learning. Author 1 reflected in her journal notebook: “Author 2 has shown me that communication is key. I must be explicit with every assignment.” Author 1 was pleased with her revised online class when over half of students made positive comments in their SOIS. For example students commented: “The teacher was available for consultation with emails answered in a timely manner. She excels in her communication skills online”, “very efficient in returning emails and answering questions”.

Author 2 learned from Author 1 that critical thinking and creativity are highly valued skills in US classrooms, and she has designed course projects to promote these skills. For instance, in one content area reading vocabulary project, students were asked to find content area specific words with interesting etymologies. Then they were required to design a lesson teaching the etymologies of these particular words and create a Wordle. Many students loved this project and commented: “I love the vocabulary project – I taught my class the lesson and they love wordle!” “The good thing about this class is that I have used many class assignments (vocabulary project, read aloud project, etc.) in my teaching and my students love all the new ideas.” In another guided reading assignment, students were asked to write a guided reading lesson plan and administer the lesson with a group of students. In constructing the questions, Author 2 asked students to prepare not only knowledge-level questions, but also open-ended higher order thinking questions requiring students to expand and elaborate on the topic, make inferences, draw conclusions, and summarize and synthesize the reading.

In addition, believing in the power of peer support and collaboration, Author 2 provided her students opportunities to review each other's work to learn from one other. In a graduate-level introductory reading course, students were required to write a literature review based on their selected topics as their final paper. A partner was assigned for each student at the beginning of the course, and they were required to help each other decide on a research topic, find resources, and write the literature review throughout the course. Toward the end of the course, students wrote first drafts by themselves and invited their partners to offer feedback. Students then revised their papers based on the feedback from their partners and submitted them to the professor for assessment. Many students found the support from peers beneficial, as students wrote in the SOIS, "Feedback from a peer, then a professor was helpful to me while writing my research paper", "I love the support from my peer - we learned so much from each other".

Information, Media, and Technology Skills

Preservice teachers typically come to the profession with relatively low technology skills that are relative to current technology trends and use (Brush, Glazewski & Hew, 2008).

Author 1 firmly believed that classroom teachers must be masters of, not only content knowledge, but also technology. Therefore, she incorporated technology projects, such as Voice Thread, Audacity, moviemaker, digital storytelling, and blogs into her teaching. She realized that 21st century education requires students to have a broad and intensive use of technology to succeed in a global economy. Part of the communication skills of learning and innovation in the 21st century demand a new type of learning, E-learning, that is accomplished through collaboration and communication experienced in an online learning environment.

Following the guidelines of NETS (National Educational Technology Standards) for Teachers (2008) and Students (2007), Author 1 inspired students' learning and creativity by assigning ICT (Instructional Communications Technology) projects to promote and model digital citizenship and responsibility. Graduate students' in Author 1's class commented on their VoiceThread

projects "I enjoyed being able to include Web 2.0 tools in my teaching. I felt that I was able to incorporate things into the lesson that otherwise I would not have been able to share", "Web 2.0 tools get the kids engaged and involved in their learning which allows them to gain more knowledge of the content."

Author 2 well understood the importance of technology skills for students to succeed in the 21st century, and has incorporated technology into both face-to-face and online classes. In courses delivered face-to-face, Author 2 used online delivery platforms (Blackboard and Moodle) to support her classroom instruction. In addition to having all the necessary course documents available online, Author 2 also required students to conduct online conversations in discussion forums when they were not able to meet and talk about the literature circle project. In terms of the required assignments/projects, students are given the freedom to explore different Web 2.0 tools, such as Voicethread, Glogster, Prezi, and worked in small groups to present their projects.

In online classes, Author 2 has used different learning tools and designed various projects to promote active learning among students. For instance, a professor's platform was used to post and emphasize important learning points for each module and to share the professor's responses to some important questions asked by students. Whole class discussion forums as well as small group discussion forums were used for students to communicate on individual projects (sharing response journals, feedback to a read-aloud project...) and group projects (literature circle, novel reading groups...). Different technological tools such as glogster, prezi, voicethread, and wiki were required as ways to present different projects. Many students had the following comments to Author 2's class: "The course is great. It makes you find different ways of teaching social studies instead of lecturing." "The strength of this course was the manner in which information was presented." Author 2's peer also had the following comment when they observed her teaching:

Throughout the course, students have many opportunities to learn and to complete tasks through independent work, group work and through field or clinical experiences... Various assignments include: response log, discussion forum, literature circle project, text set

project, interactive read aloud project, guided reading project, and other assigned tasks such as reflections and a final exam.

In addition, Author 2 believed the importance of providing personalized and individual instruction to her students. When preparing instructional materials, such as the module commentaries and assignment directions, not only had she made the instructional points clear and organized, but she also tried to be personal and use conversational language in her writing. As one student said: “When I would read the online materials it was almost as if I was having a conversation with her.” The personalized teaching was reflected also in the emails Author 2 wrote to her students, the feedback she provided for students’ assignments and the class announcements she posted. Another student stated, “She always responded to her emails quickly and in such a friendly manner. She also gave amazing feedback to help me learn and returned materials for grading in a timely manner”. Author 1 also wrote this comment when she was observing one of Author 2’s online courses:

Your online Moodle class was well planned with assignments, due dates, rubrics, a work calendar and extensive resources for students. Your personalized emails, addressing students as ‘dear ones’ as ‘friends’, developed a positive rapport with students.

Authors 1 and 2 gained evidence from students’ and colleagues’ comments that they were successful in promoting global perspectives in their blended philosophies while also incorporating 21st century skills. This validation was important for both authors as they strove to strengthen their teaching.

Discussion and Conclusions

In rethinking our views of teaching and learning, we found that our eastern and western blended philosophy was closely associated with the 21st century skills. In terms of life and career skills, the eastern perspectives help cultivate the virtues of responsibility, commitment, industry and persistence in students. The western view values individuality, self-confidence, and democratic education for students. A blended philosophy incorporates the best of both worlds: diligence, strictness, responsibility, commitment, and creativity. Both authors worked

to instill in their instruction rigorous teaching standards, high expectations, diligence, and a conscientious desire for learning.

In terms of learning and innovation skills, Author 1's western perspectives promote critical thinking, communication, collaboration and creativity: critical elements in teaching 21st century skills. Incorporating an eastern/western blended philosophy means that educators plan engaging lessons, embrace inquiry teaching, and provide clear instructions for students. Active learning becomes a routine in the classroom and teaching creativity is considered a necessary skill for all students. While the eastern perspective values both personalized and individualized instruction, a blended philosophy values collaboration in the form of peer support as a vital part of teaching and learning. Inspiring imagination, ingenuity, and inventiveness are crucial skills in the 21st century.

In terms of information, media, and technology, both our eastern and western perspectives embrace a broad and intensive use of technology to succeed in a global economy. Our blended philosophies encouraged project-based learning through the use of instructional technology and E-learning. We found in our online course delivery a strong connection to 21st century skills of problem solving and innovation. A distinct overlap occurred in teaching creativity by assigning technology-based projects in both online and face-to-face courses. Our blended philosophies always took into account authentic connections to the NETS standards.

Also important for Authors 1 and 2 was their personal relationship with each other. A high level of trust was vital to blend their two philosophies. The two authors shared very personal information with each other when they read and discussed writings in their personal journals, peer evaluations of their teaching, student opinions of their teaching, and student/faculty feedback on their presentations. Both authors shared their thoughts and feelings at their monthly meetings regarding cultural beliefs of teaching and learning without fear of being ostracized by the other.

The authors learned that university students studying to be teachers are interested in developing global teaching perspectives. In their classes, presentations, and national conferences Authors 1 and 2 worked with educators from a diverse range of cultures including: American, Chinese, Japanese, Pakistani, Finish, Spanish, and Korean. Twenty first century skills - career and life skills, innovation and learning, and information technology - are important student outcomes in each of these cultures.

After studying themselves the authors recommend to educators across all disciplines, whether business, the arts, medicine, science, psychology, and others that they develop a global perspective of teaching and learning. First educators must examine themselves (just as the authors did through self study) to uncover their own cultural philosophy of teaching and learning. Professional development among colleagues can be used as a great way to develop cultural awareness and understanding. Next educators should consider reaching out to others by identifying a critical friend and blending cultural perspectives in tandem with 21st century skills.

In addition, teaching and learning must always include a love and respect of all students and families from diverse cultures. Taking into account the culture of students in their classrooms is critical as professional educators match teaching and learning with the needs of their students. Educators must truly love their profession including all kinds of teaching from preschool to high school, from one-on-one to whole group, from classrooms to home visits.

We must model for our students the right way to interact and how to respect people in a way that they will trust you. Educators should ask themselves:

- Do I teach 21st century skills by communicating high expectations for my students?
- Do I model learning and innovation by teaching critical thinking, creativity, collaboration, and communication?
- Do I teach life and career skills with an emphasis on professional dispositions?

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- Do I model the use of information, media, and technology skills in my teaching?
- Do I care about my students and show them respect?

Finally, we would like to share what one student wrote in her response journal after Author 2's diversity presentation, "...I will reinforce to my students that deep down, we are all the same, no matter what continent we come from!" We agree. Chung-Ying Cheng (2005) reminds us that the virtuous person should demonstrate the values of Confucius *xin* (trust), *ren* (openness, caring), *cheng* (sincerity), and *li* (mutual human regard). We believe that with the myriad curriculum, pedagogical, and strategical reforms at the university, as well as, proposed legislation such as "No Child Left Behind" or "Race To the Top" a well-prepared teacher will always do whatever is necessary to prepare the citizens we need in a global society.

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