

RESEARCH ARTICLE

A Study of Directions for Elementary History Education Based on Preservice Teachers' Lesson Analysis Responses

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예비교사의 수업분석 반응으로 본 초등역사교육의 방향

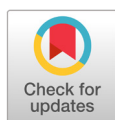
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ABSTRACT

This study analyzed elementary school history lessons by considering the characteristics of elementary school education and exploring alternative options for teaching history. This researcher established categories based on common topics identified by observing best-practice lesson videos with preservice teachers and repeatedly reading lesson critique forms in which the preservice teachers analyzed the lessons. Analysis of the preservice teachers' responses showed that they considered student-led activities to be positive, but questioned the purpose of the activities. The preservice teachers also identified confusion caused by lesson models that did not accurately reflect the nature of history. Considering the level of elementary school students, expertise of elementary school teachers, and different views on subject matter, this research article suggests teaching the nature of history by focusing on historical concepts. Inquiry activities, in which students use basic historical concepts to produce knowledge, will contribute to the implementation of this teaching method.

Key words: Characteristics of elementary school education, Elementary school social studies education, Historical concepts, Preservice teachers, History lessons, Inquiry activities



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Introduction

There have been discussions on approaches to subject matter in elementary school education. This is because the approach of elementary school education and the expertise of elementary school teachers can be recognized when there is a generally agreed framework of knowledge for elementary school education, and teachers provide lessons based on systematic theory (Chung,

2001). There are two views on elementary school education based on the subject matter. One view highlights education that teaches students basic knowledge that is not considerably different from common sense. Basic knowledge refers to the foundation of living rather than skills, and focuses on teaching the values that should be pursued in one's life.

According to this view, elementary school education aims to teach holistic and integrated characteristics rather than subject matter knowledge. In middle school, each of the subject matters is learned in detail, whereas meta-learning is taught in elementary school and subject matters serve as tools or materials for meta-learning (Um, 2002). Under this view, elementary school teachers should be skilled in making connections to develop new relationships between different subject matters rather than teaching subject matter knowledge. Teachers' expertise lies in their ability to identify and get down to the level of students and deploy teaching activities that gradually enable them to grow (Yoo, 2000).

The other view is that education is based on teaching the subject matter and focuses on cultivating the mind, albeit imperfectly (Yoo, 2006). This view is premised on the belief that good teaching of the subject matter can help nurture students with a good mind. While learning the subject matter, students experience changes in the breadth, understanding, and depth of their thinking, as well as their perspectives. Under this view, the nature or purpose of education should not differ for different school levels, but the method of education should differ for different student levels. For example, the purpose of social studies in elementary and middle schools is civility, and there should be continuity in education. The purpose of education should be within the overall context, and the nature of the subject matter cannot be separated from the nature of education as whole (Yoo et al., 1997). This view identifies teachers' expertise in teaching each subject matter independently or in an integrated manner and its content depending on the subject matter's purpose at the appropriate level.

Both approaches consider the level of young students, that is, those who receive an education. However, their views on the subject matter differ. This study refers to the view that proposes using subject matter for holistic education as the view of using subject matter and the other view that aims to reach holistic education through subject matter education as the view through subject matter.

For elementary school social studies, the content and organization of the curriculum differ depending on the view on subject matter. For example, A point of view like this is related to the development of the 2022 Revised Curriculum in Korea. The main issue in the curriculum development process was what should be appropriate historical knowledge for elementary school students' level of understanding of history (Lee, 2022).

Considering history, it is argued that students should not only learn abstract concepts such as democracy and class, but also explore the past with which they are not familiar. Previous studies have been influenced by Piaget's theory about stages of cognitive development, which suggests that it is difficult to teach history before reaching the formal operational stage where students can manipulate abstract concepts (Kim, 1995). Elementary school students often encounter the past through media outlets, and history is taught in early childhood education; thus, the argument that history can be taught in elementary school has become more dominant (Cho & Jeong, 2015; De Groot-Reuvekamp et al., 2014). In this regard, there are discussions about organizing the content of the subject matter of history, which elementary school students can easily encounter in their daily lives, by considering their attention, interests, and developmental stages (Moon, 2019). Researchers adopting the view through subject matter have attempted to organize

the curriculum by selecting content focused on daily life history, which students may find relatable in their daily lives (Lim, 2016; Kang, 2005). They proposed a daily life history by considering the students' level of understanding of history and academic system of history. Researchers adopting the view of using subject matter have focused on helping students develop interest and attention about phenomena in their lives, learn basic knowledge, and acquire basic civility qualities, regarded as the purpose of elementary school social studies (Lee & Na, 2022). This approach focuses on the psychological dimension of students, rather than the academic system, by covering social phenomena and issues in daily life that students may find interesting. While both approaches attempt to connect students' lives and history, the way they do so differs.

The current social studies curriculum in elementary schools has developed a framework of content and academic achievement standards by stressing the importance of establishing self-identity based on holistic development, while maintaining the logical framework of subject matter. Teachers in elementary schools teach multiple topics and provide lessons to young students. Considering the two mixed views on subject matter in elementary school settings, a detailed analysis is required to understand elementary school education more specifically. In this context, this study aimed to explore the current status of elementary school history lessons that have been critiqued by this researcher and preservice teachers. Preservice teachers have dual positionality, as they are both students and future teachers (Kim & Jung, 2019). Hence, they are instructed to consider how to view the subject matter. This study identified problems with elementary school history lessons from the perspective of preservice teachers in elementary school settings considering mixed views on subject matter education. In doing so, this study explored the direction that elementary school history lessons should take in the future.

Materials and Methods

Subjects

The lessons the preservice teachers analyzed were best-practice lesson videos obtained from EDUNET T-CLEAR (EDUNET, 2023). Best practice lesson videos are elementary school lessons selected by provincial education offices based on certain criteria and are shared across Korea (Pang et al., 2012). To analyze the videos, three lessons that covered the same topic were identified. Table 1 summarizes the lessons learned from this study.

Table 1. Selected topics in best practice lesson videos

No.	Hi storical period	Learning topic
1	Goryeo	Following Moon Ikjeom and Choe Museon
2	Goryeo	Goryeo, blossoming a diverse culture (Explaining the excellence of Goryeo's culture and advances in science and technology)
3	Goryeo	Goryeo, blossoming a diverse culture

The teachers provided their lesson intentions as follows: Lesson 1 was designed to allow students to become invisible, imagine historical scenes, and immerse themselves in reenactment activities. It provided many opportunities for students to share their thoughts through watermill discussions, thought-gathering discussions, and paired interviews. Furthermore,

the lesson was designed to allow students to express what they had learned through visual thinking and LW presentation activities, which served as meaningful lessons for each student. Lesson 2 used an expert collaborative learning model to explain the excellence of Goryeo's culture and advances in science and technology. The lesson divided Goryeo's culture and science/technology into four topics and examined them through expert activities. This allowed students to naturally understand and explain the excellence of Goryeo's culture and advances in science and technology, writing a diary as a person living in Goryeo, and conducting the golden bell challenge activities. Lesson 3 used a problem-solving learning model that instructed students to imagine themselves as people living in Goryeo and to identify problems in the then suggest alternative solutions. It was organized to help students clearly understand the context of the Goryeo period, learn about who made scientific and technological breakthroughs, and appreciate these historical figures (EDUNET, 2023).

Data Collection and Analysis

In total, 50 sophomore preservice teachers, who took a course about the teaching method for elementary school social studies, participated in this study. Before observing the lessons, the preservice teachers learned about the views on subject matter in elementary school education and the principles of the organization of the elementary school social studies curriculum. After observing the three lessons, the preservice teachers filled out lesson critique forms. The lesson critique form assessed teacher knowledge, interaction with students, teaching methods, evaluation, and conclusions. In the first session, the preservice teachers completed the lesson critique forms while watching the lesson videos. In the second session, they were divided into groups of five to share their comments on the lessons they had observed and to write group discussion minutes.

This study analyzed data by examining the lesson critique forms and group discussion minutes individually and by identifying common categories. Categories commonly observed among 50 preservice teachers were identified. To do so, the researcher repeatedly read the lesson critique forms and group discussion minutes written by the preservice teachers and categorized them based on similar responses. Subsequently, the researcher re-read the categorized responses and identified common keywords. By categorizing and re-categorizing keywords, such as interest, activities, model, re-enactment, repetition, similar reactions, and knowledge, this study extracted the following two categories: many activities, repeated historical knowledge, and inconsistency between teaching method and content: historical re-enactment without history.

To ensure the reliability and validity of the above analysis, the categories and statements grouped by the researcher were shown to the preservice teachers who participated in social studies club activities among others who signed up for the course.

On the other hand, since this study is the result of analyzing three lessons cases, there is a limit to generalization. Rather than a study for generalization, it is meaningful to examine the current phenomenon of elementary history lessons and seek alternatives.

Results and Discussion

Many Activities, Repeated Historical Knowledge

The view on subject matter in elementary school education may lead to a different understanding of activities. To begin with, from the view of using subject matter, the content of multiple subject matters is summarized to organize the content of activities designed to improve students' lives. Meanwhile, under the view through subject matter, activities provide the specific context required to understand the content (Yoo, 2006).

The video lessons presented many diverse activities. More specifically, this study analyzed preservice teachers' responses to the activities and found that they considered student-led activities positive.

- I think it was good, as most of the activities were led by students. (Ethics, Park XXX Jun)¹

They found that the students had the opportunity to speak during the activities and subsequently gained confidence. In particular, there were many activities that considered the interest and level of elementary school students, and teachers often showed animations or videos or provided initial hints to guide them toward the correct answers. In some cases, a photo was covered, and the shape of an object in the photo was revealed when the student pressed a number. Other examples included visual thinking activities and visual and tactile activities in which students were asked to touch cotton seeds.

The teacher specified lesson steps involving various activities. The teacher asked all students to read the learning goals and told them what activities they were going to perform. The teacher also controlled the lesson environment by designating group chants, songs, and praise claps to prevent distractions. The teacher used a consistent presentation format, such as "What I learned, What I want to know" (L-W activity) or relay presentation. Despite these various activities, the preservice teachers found that learning concepts were not deepened, but simply repeated. They attempted to identify the factors contributing to this problem.

- I think there was a lack of balance between knowledge transfer and activities. It felt like activities became an end, not a means (Social studies, group discussion minutes).

- Although water mill discussions have the advantage as students can take turns speaking and listening to other opinions, it seems that they repeat the same things others say and do not have enough time to think about their friends' opinions (Social studies, Moon XXXwoo).

While there were many reasons for failing to deepen the concepts to be learned, the preservice teachers mostly noted the repetition of the same content and too many activities. Historical facts, such as "Choe Museon invented gunpowder and defeated Japanese pirates" or "Moon Ikjeom brought cotton seeds from China, which allowed the Goryeo people to make clothes to stay warm in winter," were considered as key content and taught accordingly. Often, the activities simply summarize historical facts taught by the teacher. The tasks were neither diversified nor expanded over the course of the activities. Meanwhile, the preservice teachers criticized that the learning goals of more than three activities were

1 Specific major and assumed name of the preservice teacher in parentheses

not achieved in one lesson. In many cases, the purpose of the activities was inconsistent with the actual performance. For instance, in the expert collaborative learning model, the teacher selected the students' opinions and asked them to revise and improve what they discovered through mutual discussion. The preservice teachers who watched the lessons provided the following critiques:

- In the expert collaborative learning model, a lot of information was delivered among students in a short period, which led to difficulties in summarizing the information from the teacher's PowerPoint slides (Social Studies, Song XXXyeon).
- Students often seemed busy filling out lesson sheets while talking repeatedly about similar things. (Social studies, Jeong XXXwon).

While the teacher provided the students with many opportunities to present their opinions, their responses were highly similar.

- The lesson used the relay presentation method, and it was disappointing as it felt like students were forced to use this presentation format only. It felt like the lesson limited children's freedom of expression (Korean language, Kim XXXmi).
- The invisible person activity felt like the answer was already determined, and students were forced to close their eyes and think about the answer (Ethics, Park XXXjun).
- The lesson was just about connecting keywords where cannon, cotton, and movable metal type printing reminded students of Choe Museon, Mun Ikjeom, and Jikjisimcheyojeol (Korean language, Shim XXXyoung).

The results of the analysis by the preservice teachers showed two reasons for the students' similar reactions. One reason is the control of the lesson environment. Although the activities were seemingly led by students, they were conducted strictly in accordance with lesson procedures and formats predefined by the teacher. Because both chants and praise claps and the presentation format were already set, students were unable to provide open-ended responses. Another reason relates to teaching minimal historical knowledge. The teachers in the lesson videos simply repeated and taught historical facts, such as "Jikjisimcheyojeol is the world's oldest book printed with moveable metal type from the Goryeo period." The preservice teachers reported that the answers seemed already determined or that a set of facts was simply listed. One of the preservice teachers suggested that the teacher should teach students why Goryeo's movable metal-type technology was outstanding, what advantages cotton had over hemp fiber, wool, and silk, and what difference the use of a cannon made in people's lives, instead of repeating historical facts.

Inconsistency Between Teaching Method and Content: Historical Re-enactment without History

All three teachers used historical re-enactment activities in the lessons. Historical re-enactment represents a unique method of understanding history, which students cannot directly experience. Because the past is in the past, it is not possible to learn it through observation or sensory perception. In the field of history, re-enactment occurs by internalizing the thought process involved in the actions of historical figures, or by rethinking the thought process from the perspective of historical figures. Historical rethinking is based on the assumption that "a historical figure would have done it under

certain circumstances”(Kim, 2000; Min, 2005). The teachers in the lesson videos asked students to become invisible and follow Mun Ikjeom or Choe Museon during the Goryeo period to see what they were doing, travel back in time to the winter season during Goryeo, and keep a diary as a person living in Goryeo. The preservice teachers provided the following responses about the activities:

- I think it would have been easier for students to become people living in Goryeo if the teacher had explained more details about the context during the Goryeo period (Social studies, Han XXXwon).
- In the activity of writing a diary as a person living in Goryeo, which was conducted as a re- enactment activity, students only wrote about what the teacher mentioned. Overall, it felt like there was a lack of explanation for inviting different responses from students (Korean language, Shim XXXmin).

To perform a reenactment activity, students must know the context of a certain historical period. Nonetheless, the three teachers in the lesson videos did not explain this, nor did they instruct students to look into it. The topic of a re-enactment activity should also be presented as "Why did Choe Museon invent gunpowder?" to allow students to understand the purpose or intention of the historical figure's actions in the past. Soon after watching the teacher in the video explaining historical facts related to Mun Ikjeom and cotton, the preservice teachers realized that it was necessary to explain the social structure of Goryeo society at that time, including its class system. In the lesson videos observed in this study, re-enactment activities were not conducted as intended; the content was simply summarized.

- An activity is intended to allow students to immerse themselves in the context of a particular historical period. In this lesson, however, it was somewhat disappointing that the activity ended up simply summarizing and reviewing what they had learned instead of encouraging them to immerse themselves (Social studies, group discussion minutes).

This failure to conduct the activity as intended was also observed in other lessons using different teaching models.

- There were limitations to the lesson as answers were predetermined because history was something that had already happened and problems had already been solved (Ethics, Park XXXju).
- As far as I know, problem-solving learning involves solving problems in daily life. To understand problems during the Goryeo period, students inevitably need to acquire knowledge of the context of that period (Korean language, Yoo XXXa).
- Students have to face and solve problems. In this lesson, however, Mun Ikjeom and Choe Museon, not students, were the ones who did problem-solving. Should students not have been the ones who did problem-solving? (Social studies, Song XXXyeon)

The problem-solving learning model focuses on identifying the causes of current social problems and how they can be solved. Hence, when applying the problem-solving learning model to a history lesson that covers the remote past, temporality should be addressed carefully. First, it is necessary to determine whether the problem to be solved in a lesson is a problem in the past or present problem related to the past. If it is determined to be a problem in the past, the lesson should focus on exploring how a historical figure in the past tackled the problem. If it is determined as a problem in

the present related to the past, the lesson should focus on how students who have learned about the past can solve the problem in today's context. The preservice teachers identified problems caused by failing to apply the problem-solving learning model properly. Without considering the temporality and context of history, the problem-solving learning model made it ambiguous whether students or historical figures were the ones who should conduct problem-solving and questionable whether it is necessary to solve a problem that already took place and whose outcome is known. In addition, if it is determined to be a problem in the past, it is necessary to know details about the context of the historical period to understand what caused the problem. Hence, much deeper knowledge of the content is required. The preservice teachers said that a lesson should be organized to allow students to express various opinions around one activity instead of presenting multiple lesson models or activities.

- It would have been better if the teacher had set up a specific situation to allow students to immerse themselves in a re-enactment activity instead of conducting multiple activities (Social studies, Jeong XXXwon).

If the teacher intended to expand students' thinking through subject matter knowledge, the teacher should have presented the overall context of the Goryeo period. However, the teachers in the lesson videos only used minimal historical knowledge and wanted students to become interested in the lessons through many activities. They did not intend to teach students what it was like to live during the Goryeo period or expand or deepen it.

The analysis of the lesson videos showed that the teachers wanted students to learn by interacting with their peers and relying on historical knowledge, which was reduced to the level of routine basic knowledge. It is important to select and integrate the content of different subject matters to attract students' interest and attention. These lessons should ensure holistic development, teach students about civility qualities, and provide basic education about life. In elementary school education, which consists of many different subdisciplines, teachers are required to actively reorganize the curriculum.

In a previous study, teachers reported that integrated lessons felt natural to them as they learned about various subject matters because they were preservice teachers, but they had some difficulties with integrated lessons because of the clear boundaries between subject matters (Lee & Na, 2022). Currently, elementary school teachers hold two different views on the subject matter for providing lessons.

Various lesson models used to teach basic knowledge were organized to encourage students to learn together with their peers and to teach them to collaborate, take responsibility, and develop attitudes and behaviors as part of the community. Lesson models, such as problem solving and inquiry learning, are applicable not only to social studies but also to many other subject matters. Preservice teachers learn about learning models across many majors. They familiarize themselves with teaching methods, including learning models, more than with the content. However, many of the preservice teachers in this study found problems with lessons that applied learning models that were highly inconsistent with the content. The re-enactment activities used by teachers in the videos were developed specifically for history. The re-enactment is an activity that constructs and recognizes historical acts imaginatively by rethinking the thoughts of historical actors based on relevant evidence. This includes activities such as empathic understanding of historical acts (Kim, 2000). It is used without distinguishing between historical empathy and re-enactment. Several scholars have suggested that these concepts are important for teaching history (Barton & Levistik, 2004; Brophy et al., 2016; Seixas, 2015). Historical

empathy and re-enactment were based on the nature of history, considering temporality and context. The activities aimed to help students understand the characteristics of a certain historical period and to identify the intention or purpose of a historical figure. Some of the basic questions include "Why did this historical figure do such a thing?" and "Given that we know the intention of the historical figure, what should we do today if we are in the same situation?" (Barton & Levistik, 2004; Foster, 1999). These questions alone can help students avoid providing the same answers and encourage them to expand their thinking. Furthermore, the teachers in the videos considered problem-solving learning completely different from re-enactment. If the problem to be solved is a problem in the past, it naturally transitions into re-enactment, as students learn about the situation faced by a historical figure and understand why the historical figure did what they had to do.

Therefore, applying a learning method to a lesson separately from its content is difficult. To apply a certain model to the lesson, the teacher should consider the meaning of the model for the lesson. The teachers in the lesson videos, however, applied the activities to their lessons without understanding their meaning. Preservice teachers should learn by applying the same learning model to different subjects and reviewing how they work differently. Inquiry in science differs from that in history (Byun et al., 2023). Whether it is the view of using subject matter or the view through subject matter, minimal knowledge about the subject matter is required to teach young students.

Historical knowledge includes historical facts, thinking skills, attitudes, and values. The process of organizing historical knowledge can be taught based on concepts. Although scholars have presented the concepts of history in various ways (Lee, 1983; Rodríguez-Moneo & Cesar, 2017; Seixas & Morton, 2013; VanSledright & Limon, 2006; Van Boxtel & van Drie, 2018), they are categorized as first- and second-order concepts based on their attributes. First-order concepts group historical facts with common attributes, such as ancient kingdoms, class systems, and tributary trade. Second-order concepts show the essence of historical facts or historical research methods, and include ideas that historians use to interpret the past or understand historical facts (Rodríguez-Moneo et al., 2017). Lee (1983) said that teaching history is to teach the first-order concepts and to understand the Second-order concept. In particular, he thought it would be meaningful for students to historically explore concepts such as evidence, causality, empathy, which are included in the analytic questions asked by historians. The secondary concept plays a role in helping students understand the meaning contained in it while conducting historical research activities and helping transfer to other history learning (Lee, 1983). Historical concepts help students understand the nature of historical knowledge and think historically. Second-order concepts work when students determine what the past is and what it means through inquiry activities. Thus, students can learn about the nature of history by learning historical concepts through inquiry activities (Na, 2023). In other words, they can create knowledge based on basic historical concepts. These concepts are appropriate for activity lessons, considering the level and interest of students, and remove the burden of teaching many historical facts. They can also be taught to overcome the inconsistencies between content and teaching methods, as their inquiry activities reflect the nature of history.

Scholars present the elements of the secondary concept differently, but the temporality, evidence, and empathy presented above are elements that are commonly presented (Brophy et al., 2016; Carretero et al., 2014; Lee, 2005; Limón, 2002; Shemilt, 1980). As noted in the previous section, the criticism that the re-enactment/empathy and other

lesson models presented by the teachers in the videos were not properly implemented was due to a lack of temporality in history. The concept of time in history can be implemented through inquiry activities at an appropriate level. Historical time is not physical time, but the time people conceptualize, and it is organized by historians. To help students understand that historians' time is subjective, activities can be organized to allow them to explore subjective time from the perspective of historians. And the concept of evidence refers to evidence that supports historical facts discovered by historians. Historical evidence is based on historical materials, such as texts, artifacts, and ruins left behind by people in the past. As the past cannot be restored once it has passed, we understand people in the past based on what they have left behind (Na, 2023). Based on this evidence, it is to understand the context of the past. Empathy is understanding that people in the past were acting rationally from their point of view at the time they lived (Barton & Levistik, 2004; Foster, 1999). Empathy are premised on temporality and context. To understand how people behaved in past situations, it is important to understand that they did not think the way they do today, but rather acted differently according to the values, attitudes, and beliefs of the time. Students should imagine the situations of people who lived in the past and infer how they lived and thought.

In this way, when the teacher freely selects the event or person he wants to teach and explores history, focusing on secondary concepts such as temporality, evidence, and empathy, students can learn how to construct historical knowledge.

Conclusions

This study examined history lessons in elementary school and explored alternative options for teaching elementary school history, considering different approaches to subject matter in elementary school education.

Based on the lesson critique forms of the best-practice lesson videos, this study analyzed how 50 preservice teachers viewed the lessons. Considering that elementary school education is characterized by young students, teachers' expertise in teaching multiple subject matters simultaneously, and mixed views on breaking down barriers between subject matters and integrating subject matters, these sophomore preservice teachers had the historical knowledge they learned as a subject matter in middle and high school and from a history course in general education during their freshman year. They were learning pedagogical theories and methods across many subject matters and were positioned between students and teachers. The researcher determined that they could view elementary school lessons, which are organized based on mixed identities of subject matter as dual positionality. Preservice teachers positively evaluated student-led activities organized by the teachers in the videos with considerable procedural knowledge. However, they also questioned what they were trying to teach through these activities. They raised substantial criticism about whether the activities were simply intended to repeat historical knowledge and encourage students to remember it. While the teachers said that they intended to teach students the attitudes necessary to live as part of the community with their peers through minimal historical knowledge and various activities, there was a problem with repeating the minimal historical knowledge and making students memorize it during the activities. The preservice teachers also found that lesson models combined with history caused confusion regarding activities when the temporality and context of history were not considered. Based on

the study findings, it is necessary to consider how to teach history in elementary school, considering the developmental level of elementary school students, the expertise of elementary school teachers, and the identity of the subject matter. This research article suggests organizing activities around the concept of understanding the nature of history instead of teaching detailed historical knowledge. Historical concepts such as temporality, causality, evidence, historical context, perspective, and interpretation should be implemented and taught at the appropriate student level. The use of historical concepts makes it easier to integrate history into other subjects. For instance, these concepts can be used to connect with tool subject matter, such as intelligent life and the Korean language. It is also possible to find common concepts in geography and general social studies and organize them as key concepts. Such a proposed organization would help avoid simply listing achievement standards in parallel with these three subject matters. However, even if the core concept is interdisciplinary, the meaning and usage of concepts are different for each subject matter (Bank et al., 1999). So, this proposal is at a basic level and needs to be refined with further research.

Conflicts of Interest

The author declared no conflicts of interest.

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