

The Instrumental and the Holistic Modes of the Teacher-Student Relationship

Mohd Mokhtar Muhamad^a, ^aFaculty of Educational Studies, Universiti Putra Malaysia, Email: mk_mokhtar@upm.edu.my

This paper analyses the ideas of four authors who conscientiously discussed their theories on human relationship. These authors are: Martin Buber (I-It versus I-You relationship), Paulo Freire (the banking concept of education), Alexander Sidorkin (athenaic versus erotic relationships), and Nel Noddings (the one-caring and the cared-for). From the analysis of these four authors, it was found that the problem of teacher-student relationship can be narrowed to two modes of relationship: 1) the instrumental mode which constantly creating one or more “barriers” between the teacher and the students, and 2) the holistic mode which acknowledges the students as subjective and holistic human beings. These four authors suggest similar solutions, which use a process of back and forth between the two modes of relationship. By using the interconnected framework of these two modes and relationships and the process of back and forth between them, the problem of teacher-students relationship and quality improvement can be better understood.

Key words: *Teacher-student relationship, human subjectivity, wholeness of human being; holistic education, objectification of human being, Islamic worldview.*

Introduction

The use of the term “ecosystem” in depicting our educational system signifies its complexity and the interrelationship between individual human stakeholders (students, teachers, lecturers, administrators, policy-makers, etc.) and non-human concepts (educational aims, policy, contents, materials, teacher’s salary, awards, etc.). These individual human beings and non-human concepts vary at different levels of education and in different countries. We can have relationships between various individuals in an educational ecosystem, but this paper will focus



on the relationship between teachers and students in the context of primary and secondary educational institutions.

One of the main educational objectives in schools is the academic achievement of the students. International educational assessments such as the Trends in International Mathematics and Science Study (TIMSS) and the Program for International Student Assessment (PISA) had become significant methods in determining the educational achievement of a country. Within the countries themselves, academic achievement in schools is important in determining college and university entrance. When a teacher excessively dwelled into the world of academic achievement, his/her consciousness is narrowed towards the duality of “high academic achievement” versus “low academic achievement.” Then, this duality sometimes extended into an association between “students with high academic achievements” and the notion of “good students”; as well as an association between “students with low academic achievements” and the notion of “bad students.” As a result, there is a high possibility that teachers will unconsciously treat students with high academic achievements in a different way compared to students with low academic achievement. There are significant amount of previous empirical research on the different treatment of teachers towards students with high and low academic achievements analysed by Rubie-Davies (2015) in terms of teachers’ expectation.

Addressing the problem of research on teacher-students relationship in educational settings, Sidorkin (2002) criticized the unintentional use of behaviourism and claimed that due to the lack of better theories we keep falling back into the framework of behaviourism. As a result, studies on teacher-student’s relationships in education are mostly from the perspectives of interpersonal communication, and not really about human relationship itself. For example, previous studies indicated that a good teacher-students relationship can – directly or indirectly – increase students’ academic performance (J. Hughes & Kwok, 2007; J. N. Hughes, Luo, Kwok, & Loyd, 2008; Klem & Connell, 2004; Liew, Chen, & Hughes, 2011). A study found that students with good perceptions towards their relationship with teachers are more likely to perceive themselves as having an academic potential and a sense of belonging to their schools (J. N. Hughes, 2011; Edeme, 2018).

A meta-analysis study confirmed these studies where positive teacher-students relationships can increase students’ engagement and significantly improve their academic performance (Roorda, Koomen, Spilt, & Oort, 2011). In addition, another meta-analysis review on longitudinal studies also indicated a positive correlation between teacher-students relationship and students’ engagement in schools (Quin, 2016). While these studies were conducted in the United States, similar topics had also been addressed by some educational researchers in Malaysia. For example, Rohani Arbaa, Hazri Jamil, and Nordin Abd Razak (2010) claimed that the best predictor for an increase of learning commitment among secondary school students in Malaysia is a good teacher-students relationship; and Md. Yunus, Osman, and Ishak (2011)

found that learning motivation is the mediator between teacher-students relationships and academic achievement in Malaysia.

However, these studies on relationships in education do not focus on the understanding of human relationships *in itself*. Rather, they explained teacher-students relationships in terms of other variables, or in terms of academic functions. For example, the use of a variable such as “perception” to describe teacher-students relationships and the use of academic functions such as “motivation,” “positive learning environment,” “engagement,” “commitment,” and “academic performance” to describe the *outcome* of a positive teacher-students relationship. Therefore, the focus of these studies were about what teachers or students *perceived* to be a good teacher-students relationship and the *outcome* of a good teacher-students relationship, but not about the human relationships *in itself*. Sidorkin (2002) claimed that there is a “very practical need for educational theory centred on the notion of relation.” (p.85).

Empirical studies that use variables such as the ones above require the researchers to first specify what they meant by a good teacher-students relationship before focusing their studies on the outcome. These specifications were often done without unpacking the complex and implicit elements of human relationships. Their specifications of a good teacher-students relationships are assumed to be correct without any critical and deep analysis on the understanding of human relationship. The focus in this paper is to provide a phenomenological¹ explanation on human relationship and how it can be practiced in current educational settings.

The Philosophy of Human Relationships

One of the most important theories in the philosophy of human relationship is the work of Martin Buber. In his book *I and Thou*, Buber (1970) argued that even though we call people by their names, or use the word “he” or “she,” or even address them as “subject” as most psychologists and social scientists have done in their studies, the way we perceive them most of the time are as if they are objects. Regarding an individual as an object means trying to analyse the person only on the basis of the observer’s point of view. This is a one-way relationship where one side is dominating the other by assuming that he/she has some knowledge about the other. When we objectify an individual human being, we inevitably reduced that person according to the content of our own experience and sometimes unintentionally utilise and visualise that person based on our own perspectives. Buber (1970) referred to this type of human relationship as “I-It” where the “It” signifies an objectification of the other.

¹ What I meant by “phenomenological” here is the type of phenomenology categorized by Padilla-Díaz (2015) as transcendental phenomenology where we analyze the essences perceived by consciousness with regard to individual experiences.



According to Buber (1970), when a person addresses another person as a subjective human being, there is no object, no means, and no mediation between the two persons. He referred to this type of relationship as “I-You.” This type of relationship starts with a process he defined as “encounter.” With this definition of encounter, when we encounter another human being as a person, there is only an authentic human relationship. Buber (1970) differentiates his notion of encountering from experiencing (*erfahrung*). When we are experiencing others, we are only experiencing them from our first-person position. It is only within us with no participation of the world. In experiencing, we constantly make assumptions about others based on our objectified past without any consideration that others might have a different worldview. On the other hand, when we are encountering others (not merely experiencing) what we have is a human relationship. Buber’s work has directly or indirectly inspired many of those who are interested in the philosophy of human relationships that can be applied in educational settings, including Paulo Freire, Nel Noddings, and Alexander Sidorkin.

In his *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, Paulo Freire analysed human relationship between the oppressor and the oppressed, and used that analysis to study the relationship between teacher and students. He claimed that most teacher-student’s relationships are based on the teacher as the narrator of the subject while the students are the listening objects. Freire (2005) called this as the “banking” concept of education, where the role of students is merely receiving, filing and storing information received from the teacher. This is a form of oppression because it negates education and knowledge as a process of inquiry and regards students as objects with no critical consciousness. Freire (2005) insists that it is not the students but the educational system that needs to be changed. The educational system needed is the one that can raise students’ consciousness, encouraging them to discover their existential experience, relate themselves with the world, and become fully human. This can be achieved through what Freire (2005) called “the problem-posing method” of education. Learning should involve acts of cognition and not merely information transfer. From his theories, Freire (2005) had become among the pioneers of student-centred learning movement in education.

In her theory of care, Noddings (2003) disagreed with most theories in moral and ethics because they are derived from a rational-cognitive approach. The reason is that in such an approach we only share justifications of actions, and not what motivates and touches us. She introduced the term “the one-caring” and “the cared-for” in referring to the two individuals in a relationship. Noddings’ (2003) theory of care can be compared with Buber’s I-You relationship, but with further development because for Buber (1970) it is impossible that a teacher-students relationship to be mutual as its nature is to be unequal. Noddings (2003), however, argued that that even though the relationship between the one-caring and the cared-for is unequal, it can still be mutual. For Noddings (2003), the fundamental aspect of caring for someone is to “consider their natures, ways of life, needs, and desires” (p.14). In order to accomplish this, the one-caring must try to apprehend the reality of the cared-for. However, it is impossible to



entirely apprehend another person's reality. The only effort that we can make is to see the other's reality as a possibility for us. When we do this, it means we care.

Another author, Alexander Sidorkin (2002) uses the term "erotic" and "authentic" to denote the concept of personal and teleological relationship respectively. In an erotic² relationship, the basis of the relationship is immediate pleasure where we are enjoying each other's company and presence. This happens without any need for reason. On the other hand, an athenaic relationship is based on the need for having a relationship with others where something else is the purpose. Most teacher-students relationship in schools are in this category because the purpose of their relationship is the content of learning and not the individuals in the relationship.

Sidorkin (2002) applied Buber's theory in the context of educational practice as he suggested that teachers should have creative transformation between erotic and athenaic relationships with students. There are two types of transformations. The first one starts with erotic before changing into athenaic (E-A), and the second type starts with athenaic, then changes into erotic before changing again into a new athenaic relationship (A₁-E-A₂). The E-A transformation usually occurs to teachers who naturally have charismatic personalities. Most of them do not know that their success in teaching is because of their natural engagement in the erotic relationship, and not in their teaching methods or strategies. This erotic relationship often leads to success in the athenaic relationship as well, where the purpose of education is achieved. That is why most of the time, instructional models and theories are effective for some teachers but not for others. The A₁-E-A₂ transformation is what Sidorkin (2002) meant by creative transformation, which for him is a more powerful type of transformation. It starts with developing athenaic relationship based on students' interests and then develops into an erotic relationship. Due to this erotic relationship, a new athenaic relationship can then be constructed. In this new athenaic relationship, students are willing to engage in contents that are previously uninteresting and mundane for them. This willingness is due to their erotic relationships previously developed with their teacher.

The types of relationships addressed by these four authors can be grouped into two categories: objectification of human beings and acknowledging the subjectivity of human beings. The substance of Buber's I-It relationship, Sidorkin's authentic relationship, and Freire's (2005) relationship between the oppressors and the oppressed is the objectification of another human being. On the other hand, the substance of Buber's I-You relationship, Sidorkin's erotic relationship, and Noddings' (2003) relationship between the one-caring and the cared-for is the acknowledgment of the subjectivity and wholeness of another human being.

²The term eros is used in a broad meaning and is not narrowed into sexual meaning. Both terms erotic and athenaic originated from the names of Greek gods, Eros which symbolizes love and desire, and Athena which symbolizes arts, crafts, war and wisdom.



Instrumental Reason and the Problem of Objectifying Human Beings

Buber's I-It relationship, Sidorkin's authentic relationship, and Freire's (2005) relationship between the oppressors and the oppressed are similar to each other in terms of perceiving other human beings as objects. In such a relationship, there is a certain type of reasoning involved which is very instrumental in nature. The main purpose of instrumental reason is to achieve certain aim. The existence of other human beings during the process serves only as "tools" to be utilized in achieving the aim.

In a first-person position, a seller's instrumental reason thinks, "The buyer's relationship to me is only as someone who buys goods from me," and a buyer's instrumental reason thinks, "The seller's relationship to me is only as someone who sells goods to me." A medical doctor's instrumental reason thinks, "The patient's relationship to me is only as someone who needs a medical treatment from me," and the patient's instrumental reason thinks, "The medical doctor's relationship to me is only as someone who provides a medical treatment for me." An employer's instrumental reason thinks, "The employee's relationship to me is only as someone whom I paid for a job," and the employee's instrumental reason thinks, "The employer's relationship to me is only as someone who paid to me for a job I did." These are examples of instrumental reason embedded within the relationships that we experience through our daily life. Even though Buber acknowledged the need for instrumental reason in our daily life, he also stressed upon its limitation. Buber (1970) said "And in all the seriousness of truth, listen: without It³ a human being cannot live. But whoever lives only with that is not human." (p.85).

In a school setting where students attend to learn certain educational content, the use of instrumental reason is inevitable. The teacher's instrumental reason thinks, "The student's relationship to me is only as someone who needs to learn a certain educational content from me." Such a relationship was described by Sidorkin (2002) as authentic because the purpose of the relationship is the content of learning and not the students in relationship with the teacher. He argued that in establishing such a relationship with the students, teachers should be cunning and knowledgeable on the economy of relationship with their students. This effort involves knowing what the students want and use it in exchange for what the teachers want for the students. This is the basis of Sidorkin's creative transformation of A₁-E-A₂ relationships mentioned earlier. In this type of transformative relationship, what the students want is an erotic relationship with the teachers while the teachers use that erotic relationship for the purpose of establishing authentic relationship and achieve certain educational aims, such as academic achievements.

³ The word "It" here refers to the way of experiencing other human beings in an I-It relationship. In such a relationship, others are considered as objects to be utilized for a certain aim. Therefore, the word "It" here is refers to the use of instrumental reason being discussed in this paper.



Even though this theory is an attempt to escape from the framework of behaviourism, it still remains in the realm of instrumental reason. This is because we are only establishing a certain form of relationship for the purpose of establishing another form of relationship. In the end, student academic performances remain as the final purpose. In a long term, the erotic relationships will wear off especially if the students still have no will to engage in the authentic relationship, or still do not academically perform. The worst situation that could happen is the possibility of student consciousness transcending these relationships and realization that the teacher's erotic relationships had a certain purpose. If such realization occurred, then the teacher-students' relationship can possibly be damaged. In order to avoid this damage, the transformation of A₁-E-A₂ relationships needs to be continuous where the teacher maintains the erotic relationship⁴.

Similar possible situation was addressed by Noddings (2003) as she criticized caring relationship were drawn from the fact that our moral reasoning is problematic because our attention is focused on our own self and not towards the cared-for. If the cared-for realized this, they will feel that we do not really care for them as our reason of caring was only to fulfil our ethical ideal. Noddings' (2003) cautions against moral reasoning of ethics in relationship is mainly because of the patriarchal dominance in its development. Moral reasoning, most of the time, has been guided by the masculine spirit where language is focused on logical principles in determining ethical behaviour. If this is the only consideration of our reasoning process in caring, then such moral reasoning is instrumental in nature as the other person in relationship are not part of our consideration.

The worst case of instrumental reasoning in education was described by Freire's (2005) banking concept of education where the teacher-students relationship leads students into memorizing the learning content narrated by the teacher in a mechanical way. In such a relationship, the roles of the students are merely receiving, filing and storing information received from the teacher. This is a form of oppression because it negates education and knowledge as a process of inquiry and regards students as objects with no critical consciousness. The aim and goal of instrumental reason in this relationship is to impose the content of education upon the students and to make sure the students received it. There is no reciprocity between the teachers and the students because the role of the students is only as receiving objects. The banking concept of education completely rejected any form of relationship that acknowledges the subjectivity of a human being.

⁴ It was not clear whether Sidorkin proposed a continuous transformation of erotic and athenaic relationship, but he *did* use the term "the economy of relationship" which signified continuous fluctuation in achieving equilibrium.



Layers of Objects That Mediate Relationships

As stated previously, the main problem of instrumental reason is its focus in trying to achieve a certain aim and the existence of other human beings during the process serves only as “tools” to be utilized in achieving the aim. But a worse case can happen when there are more than one “object” that hinder a good, positive, and authentic relationship from being established. Academic achievement and salary are examples of objects that can become two barriers between teachers and students. If a teacher thinks that academic achievement of his/her students is the most important aim and students should be taught ultimately for that purpose, then the teacher’s reason is instrumental and academic achievement is a barrier that can hinder a positive relationship with the students. In another situation, if a teacher thinks that academic achievement of his/her students is an important aim because their achievement can significantly affect his/her salary as a teacher and students should be taught ultimately for that purpose, then the teacher’s reason is instrumental and *both* academic achievement and salary are the two barriers that hinder a good, positive, and authentic relationship with the students, even further than the former example.

The number of layers can substantially increase depending upon what is imbedded within a certain layer. For instance, if a school is practicing a policy where students with low academic achievement will be expelled, then academic achievement is a serious issue in the school’s ecosystem among the students because of the consequences of being expelled. Each consequence of being expelled from the school is another layer of object between the students and the teachers, making academic achievement a thick layer of object mediating their relationship. This theory explains why there are some policies introduced with the intention to improve the effectiveness of education but end up destroying the teacher-student relationship and finally destroying education itself. As stated by Biesta (2013), the policy makers want education to be strong, secure, predictable, and risk-free, but “if we take the risk out of education, there is a real chance that we take out education altogether.” (p.1).

On the other hand, if a teacher thinks that the student themselves are the most important aim and their academic achievement is only a part of the students’ wholeness as human beings (as explained by Buber’s (1970) I-You relationship, Sidorkin’s (2002) erotic relationship, and Noddings’ (2003) notion of care), then academic achievement is not a barrier but serves as something that facilitates the relationship. Therefore, teachers need to recognize what are the barriers that can affect their relationships with the students and prevent these barriers from becoming a hindrance of a positive teacher-students relationship.



Acknowledging the Subjectivity of Human Beings

The I-It relationship occurs due to our tendency to objectify our experiences (*erfahrung*), including our experience of another individual human being. Without realizing it, we usually almost immediately analyse and objectify the other person by extracting his/her external and/or internal aspects⁵. The relationship is between our self and these objectified aspects, not with the self of the other person. However, in an I-You relationship, we are having an immediate relationship *with* the self of the other person, without any internal or external aspect as a mediation. One might argue that this is a form of cultural blindness where we are stripping the other person from his/her identity such as race, culture, and religion, and attempt to put everyone into one narrow definition of human being. In contrary, the I-You relationship does not strip the other person from his/her identity. Instead, these identities as well as other attributes, characteristics, qualities, and all other aspects of a single individual person are embedded within the other person as a single whole. In Buber's own words:

“The relation to the You is unmediated (*unmittelbar*). Nothing conceptual intervenes between I and You, no prior knowledge and no imagination; and memory itself is changed as it plunges from particularity into wholeness. No purpose intervenes between I and You, no greed and no anticipation; and longing itself is changed as it plunges from the dream into appearance.” (Buber, 1970, p.62-63).

In the I-You relationship, the focus of a relationship is the other person who is in relationship with us while other objects can be utilized for that purpose. There is a similarity between Buber's (1970) I-You relationship, Sidorkin's (2002) erotic relationship, and Noddings' (2003) relationship between the one-caring and the cared-for, where the main characteristic of these relationship is their acknowledgement towards the subjectivity of human beings. When our relationship is directed towards the self of the other person without any layer of object as a barrier, we will holistically include all subjective aspects of the other person.

Buber (1970) used the term *begegnung* in German, or “encounter” in English (translated by Walter Kaufmann) to describe his I-You relationship. What we encounter in such a relationship is the self of the other person. Not any kind of characteristic, external or internal, becomes a mediator in between our self and the self of the other person. This requires our self to be in a state of relaxed vigilance as described by Buber (2006), a state where being relaxed and being vigilant are both unified within our self. This state is similar to the teaching of *wu-wei* (action-

⁵ In Buber's (1970) philosophy, experiencing (*erfahrung*) is the main feature of an I-It relationship and he claimed that as long as a relationship is based on experiencing, it is always an I-It relationship, regardless of whether we are experiencing external aspects of other person such as skin color, spoken language, and observed behavior; or internal aspects such as emotional and mental state. Buber (1970) said, “All this is not changed by adding “inner” experiences to the “external” ones...Inner things like external things, things among things!” (p.56).



less action or letting go) in Taoism, where “dialogue is a personal action that I undertake and, at the same time, undertakes me.” (Kramer, 2003, p.104). In addressing the other person with relaxed vigilance, we are both active and passive in a sense that we are actively keeping ourselves passive and at peace with the different characteristics and particularities of the other individual in order to maintain addressing that individual as a whole being and as a You. There is no internal tension within the person who had achieved the state of relaxed-vigilance because the state of being relaxed and being vigilant is effortlessly unified within the self.

With the subjectivity of the other person embedded within him/her and our state of relaxed vigilance unified within our self, we will effortlessly suspend any judgment towards the other person. Every time we encounter someone, it is as if we encounter that person for the first time. There is no certain assumption, prediction, expectation, or anticipation in between our self and the self of the other person. In such a relationship, we really acknowledge the other person for their existence as a person, and not because of certain characteristic, attribute, or quality that the person possesses. Any objective aspect emerging from that person will lead us back to his/her subjectivity and wholeness of a human being. An action conducted, or words stated by a person will lead us back to possible subjective aspects that can justify that particular action or words and suspend our judgment and assumptions towards that action or words.

In her theory of care, Noddings (2003) proposed the receptive mode as a state which is different from empathy or the emotion of “feeling with” the other. Empathy involves *projecting* our self into the self of the other person as an object of contemplation. In contrary, Noddings’s (2003) receptive mode involves *receiving* the self of the other person into ourselves; and through this, we see and feel with the other person. When we are in the receptive mode, we have stepped out from the world of instrumental and enters the world of relation where we “receive what-is-there as nearly as possible without evaluation or assessment.” (Noddings, 2003, p.34). In this receptive mode, we make lateral moves in modes of consciousness. Noddings (2003) claimed that it was the lateral movement of consciousness that made Mozart spoke of hearing melodies in his head, Gauss being seized by mathematics, and Joan Miró having a guided hand as he paints. While these examples of lateral movements of the consciousness are between humans and non-human concepts, we can also have such movement in our relationship with other individual human beings.

Similar type of relationship was described by Sidorkin (2002) in his concept of erotic relationship where the basis of the relationship is immediate pleasure in enjoying each other’s company and presence. The attractiveness of a teacher, in this type of relationship, is not due to the method, techniques, and knowledge of the teacher but is due to the individual personality of the teacher him/herself. In Sidorkin’s (2002) economy of relationship, he claimed that we can win the students’ respect and cooperation by giving them “personal attention...tokens of respect, and affection.” (p.107). Therefore, Sidorkin’s erotic relationship is also similar to



Buber's (1970) I-You and Noddings' (2003) care in a way that this relationship acknowledges the subjectivity of others whose wholeness includes personal attention, respect, affection, and other subjective individual needs. This can only be done by having certain individual personality as mentioned by Buber (relaxed-vigilance) and Noddings (receptive mode).

The Oscillation, the Movement, and the Transformation

Two different modes of relationships from Martin Buber, Paulo Freire, Nel Noddings, and Alexander Sidorkin were extracted for examination in this research. The first mode of relationship, which is called the instrumental mode, is based on instrumental reason where the other is considered as objects and the relationship is mediated by one or more barriers. The second mode of relationship, the holistic mode, is based on receiving and acknowledging the other as a subjective and whole human being without any judgment, anticipation, purpose, or any concept mediating the relationship. Another similarity between Buber, Noddings, and Sidorkin is their solution in establishing positive human relationship is not in choosing one mode of relationship over the other. If we choose only the instrumental mode, then we are losing our humanity; if we choose only the holistic mode, then we cannot function in the society. Therefore, their solution involves a method of alternating between the two modes of relationship.

The Oscillation. For Buber (1970), it is impossible for us as human beings to maintain the I-You relationship all the time in our everyday life. As human beings, we cannot escape from fulfilling our objective needs such as food, sexual desire, shelter, and other material needs. Relationships with other human beings are always required in fulfilling these needs. Buber (1970) himself acknowledge these needs as he said, "And in all the seriousness of truth, listen: without [I-It relationship] a human being cannot live." However, he also immediately added, "But whoever lives only with that is not human." (p.85). In other part, Buber (1970) claimed that men should not be "...confined to the It-world but free to step in and out between the It-world and the world of relation again and again." (Buber, 1970, p.100). Further, Buber (1970) claimed that the freedom of a man is when he "...knows that his mortal life is by its very nature an oscillation between You and It, and he senses the meaning of this." (p.101). His solution, therefore, is not to attend to either the I-You or the I-It relationship, but the oscillation between the two types of relationships.

The Movement. Noddings (2003) claimed that continuous or untimely mode of instrumental thinking is a form of degradation, but not the instrumental thinking itself. "What seems to be crucial is that we retain the ability to move back and forth and to invest the appropriate mode with dominance." (Noddings, 2003, p.35). Therefore, the lateral movement of consciousness in the receptive mode should not continuously dismiss our instrumental reason. She further explained that "[the] receptive mode may be both reflexive and reflective; that is, instead of



receiving the world or the other, I may receive myself, and I may direct my attention to that which I have already received.” (p.35). Instrumental reason becomes a tool for us to analyse the complexity the other’s reality that we received prior to moving back to the cared-for as a person. Her solution, therefore, involves the back and forth movement of our consciousness between the subjective reality of the cared-for and our instrumental reason in objectively understanding it.

The Transformation. Sidorkin (2002) proposed a creative transformation that starts with developing athenaic relationship based on students’ interests before developing an erotic relationship. Due to this erotic relationship, a new athenaic relationship can then be constructed where students will have the willingness to engage in contents that are previously uninteresting and mundane for them due to the erotic relationship developed. His solution, therefore, involves the back and forth transformation between the erotic and the authentic relationships where the authentic relationship will eventually be affected by the erotic relationship.

In our daily meetings with other individuals, we should attempt to initiate the oscillation, the transformation, and the movement of our consciousness between objectifying other individuals in fulfilling our needs and acknowledging their subjectivity as holistic human beings. In order to initiate this, the first step is to recognize the barriers hindering the holistic mode of relationship from being established. We can imagine this situation similar to a person walking at night in the woods. Because of the darkness, he/she kept on tripping and fell. Once he/she acquired some lights from a lantern or a torchlight, the objects can now be seen, and this person can easily evade the objects without any need to remove them. Similarly, a person who cannot recognize what are the objects that serve as barriers and hinder the holistic mode of relationship from being established, will keep on “tripping” and remain in the instrumental mode of relationship. However, once that person recognizes and acknowledges these objects as objects that hinder the holistic mode of relationship, then the immediate establishment of the holistic mode of relationship occurs naturally.

The Instrumental and the Holistic Modes of Relationship in Educational Ecosystem

In the introduction of this article, academic achievement and the notion of how “good versus bad students” can affect teacher-students relationship was addressed. From the perspective of the two different modes of relationships we have discussed, there are at least two layers of barriers in the situation addressed. The layer of academic achievement and the layer of “good versus bad” students. These are the layers that prevent the teachers from establishing the holistic mode of relationship and from reaching out the real self of the students that exist within with their subjectivity and wholeness as human beings. If the teacher realized that academic achievement is merely an object and a part that does not completely represent the wholeness of the students as human beings, then the teacher might consider other aspects such as: the



possibility of a different skills and talents for the students, the possibility of limited educational resources for the students, the possibility of emotional hardships the students are facing, the possibility of family problems, the possibility of socioeconomic status of the students, the possibility of different interest of the students, and many other possibilities that most of the time unknown to the teachers.

As the teacher realizes these possibilities, he/she will suspend his/her judgment and enter the holistic mode of relationship where: 1) the state of relaxed-vigilance which will make the teacher at peace in not completely knowing what are the reasons for these students to have low academic achievement, and 2) the state of receptive-mode which will receive the self of the students regardless of their reason for having low academic achievement, 3) the erotic relationship begins with these two states as the teacher started to enjoy being with the students, instead of judging them from their academic achievement.

As discussed previously, the teacher needs to change back and forth between the holistic mode and the instrumental mode of relationships. Therefore, the teacher-students relationship educational context is centred upon the oscillation, the movement, and the transformation between “acknowledging the subjectivity of the students as holistic human beings, receiving the self of the students, and enjoying their presence as such” and “reflecting on their academic achievements.” Continuous oscillation, movement, and transformation will result in an educational ecosystem that acknowledge the subjectivity of human beings within the students. At the same time, the educational ecosystem also recognizes the problem of objectifying the students and the inevitability to completely remove the objective aspects of the students. Students can feel that the ecosystem of the school are: 1) not judging, labelling, or mistreating them due to their lack of academic performance; 2) teachers can truly accept and acknowledge them no matter what their backgrounds are; and 3) such an ecosystem will create sense of belonging and pleasure being at school which in turn will make school years as meaningful learning experiences in their life.

Conclusion and Suggestions for Further Analysis

Based on Buber (1970), Freire (2005), Noddings (2003), and Sidorkin (2002), I have concluded that the foundations of human relationships can exist in two modes: the instrumental mode and the holistic mode. They also shared similar solution, which is to avoid ourselves from continuously dismissing one mode of relationship in establishing the other mode. Based on Buber (1970), Noddings (2003), and Sidorkin (2002), we need to have an oscillation, movement, and transformation between these two different modes of relationship. When applied in the context of teacher-student relationship, these two modes serve as a phenomenological explanation and guidelines on how teachers can establish a better relationship with their students.



Further analysis can be explored using the two modes of relationship as these modes are based on the relationship between human beings regardless of their context of relationship. For example, we can analyze the relationship between graduate students and their academic supervisors in completing postgraduate studies, the relationship between colleagues in their career development, and the relationship between employers and their employee in a productive organization. By studying these relationships from the perspective of the modes of relationship discussed in this paper, we can better understand the fundamental aspect of a good relationship, why certain conflicts occurred, and this will be achieved through the design of a method to train related individuals with the skill to have continuous oscillation, movement, and transformation between the instrumental mode and the holistic mode of relationship.



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