

Authenticity in teaching: a constant process of becoming

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Abstract This study probed the conceptualization of (in)authenticity in teaching and the way it could be enacted in pedagogical practices. The participants were a purposive sample of 20 Iranian university teachers. Data were collected using in-depth interviews, field notes, and observation. The collected data were analyzed through the lens of hermeneutic phenomenology. The results revealed that authenticity in teaching consisted of themes of being one's own self, pedagogical relationships, contestation, and ultimate meaning which were enacted in the participants' practices through their sense of responsibility, awareness of their possibilities, understanding of pedagogical relationships, self-reflection, critical reflection, and critical hope. Inauthenticity was also conceptualized as teacher-centered classroom manifested in the monologic discourse and traditional assessment which could confirm the dialogical nature of authenticity in teaching. For the participants of the present study, authenticity involved the constant process of becoming that deepened their understanding of themselves and others. Further findings are discussed in the paper.

Keywords Authenticity in teaching · Inauthenticity in teaching · Hermeneutic phenomenology · The process of becoming

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Introduction

Believing in the significance of the teachers' experience of their teaching which will form them, shape them, and write upon them (Waller 1932), the present study probed Iranian university teachers' experience of teaching to uncover what shape their teaching would give them through which they could create their own subjective educational theories. Focusing on the participants' pedagogical practices and relationships, the researchers concentrated on (in)authenticity or being (un)true to one's self because as Brook (2009) argued, it is the key to the possibility of the experience of being a teacher as teaching is "an expression of the being of humans which shows itself through our everyday existence" (p. 47). Reviewing the existing literature on the conceptions of authenticity in teaching, Kreber et al. (2007) also referred to the significance of authenticity in teaching "to make individuals more whole, more integrated, more fully human, more aware, more content with their professional lives, their actions more clearly linked to purpose, "empowered", better able to engage in community with others, and so forth" (p. 24). To address how the participants experienced (in)authenticity in teaching, the researchers empirically explored how they conceptualized (in)authenticity in teaching which was studied by few researchers (Cranton and Carusetta 2004; Kreber and Klampfleitner 2013; Kreber et al. 2010; Vannini 2007) and how they enacted it in their classroom practices that was missing in the existing literature on authenticity in teaching. Aiming at interpreting the participants' experiences to explore the meanings they assigned to (in)authenticity in teaching, a hermeneutic phenomenological study was conducted.

The review of literature

Providing phenomenological interpretation of teaching, Brook (2009) argued that teaching is primarily concerned with authenticity and is a phenomenon of being human with authentic and inauthentic possibilities. Although there has been a growing interest in authenticity in teaching and education due to its important role in teaching during the past years (Barnett 2004, 2007, 2011; Bonnett and Cuypers 2003; Brook 2009; Chickering 2006; Chickering et al. 2006; Cooper 1983; Kreber 2013; Kreber et al. 2007; Malm 2008; Sarid 2015; Splitter 2009; Thompson 2015; Tisdell 2003), few studies empirically investigated authenticity in teaching from university teachers' perspectives (Cranton and Carusetta 2004; Kreber and Klampfleitner 2013; Kreber et al. 2010; Vannini 2007) which are further explained.

Cranton and Carusetta (2004) conducted a 3-year research project to investigate how faculty members from a variety of disciplines understood authenticity in teaching. Using grounded theory approach in their study, they proposed a model of authenticity in teaching which included five dimensions: self-awareness, awareness of others, relationships with learners, awareness of context, and a critically reflective approach to practice.

In 2010, Kreber et al. (2010) explored nine university teachers' conceptions of authenticity in teaching conducting semi-structured interviews and reported that authenticity in teaching consists of important themes: being sincere, candid, and honest, care for subjects and students, and identity formation based the on horizon of significance.

Furthermore, Kreber and Klampfleitner (2013) probed the meaning of authenticity in teaching in university lecturers combining conceptual with empirical investigation and reported differences between philosophers' and lecturers' conceptions of authenticity.

Whereas philosophers defined authenticity as reflections on one's purposes and possibilities, consistency between values and actions, self-knowledge, critical reflections on the existing norms and practices, and being defined by one's own expectations, lecturers conceptualized authenticity in teaching as being sincere, engaging students with subjects around ideas that matter, and care for students and subjects.

Through the lens of ethnographic research conducted at a university, Vannini (2007) explored how university professors experienced both authenticity and inauthenticity across their careers and how professors' experiences of authenticity and inauthenticity differed across rank and hiring cohorts. Findings of the study revealed that feeling authenticity was accompanied by teaching with care and the sense of responsibility, whereas feeling inauthenticity meant ignoring students and considering the academic world as meaningless. In addition, Vannini reported changes between professor's concepts of authenticity from the time they were hired to the time they were retired.

In this study, we also seek to add to the existing literature by exploring university teachers' conceptualization of (in)authenticity in teaching. As Kreber et al. (2007) explained the main philosophical studies on authenticity were conducted by researchers from Europe and the recent studies on authenticity in teaching are from North America and the present study can be different and novel in this respect as the researchers and the participants of the study were from Iran, a country in the Middle East. Focusing on pedagogical practices and relationships, the researchers also probed the classroom praxis of the meaning of (in)authenticity in teaching which was missing to some extent in the existing literature, while it is more helpful in understanding the meaning of authenticity in teaching (Kreber et al. 2010). Therefore, the following meta-questions guided the researchers:

1. How do Iranian university teachers conceptualize (in)authenticity in teaching?
2. How are Iranian university teachers' conceptions of (in)authenticity enacted in their pedagogical practices and relationships?

Methodology

In order to interpret and understand how the participants made meaning of their experiences of (in)authenticity in teaching, the researchers used hermeneutic phenomenology whereby the participants' experiences could be interpreted according to the researchers' theoretical and personal knowledge (Ajjawi and Higgs 2007). We applied Gadamer's interpretive hermeneutic phenomenology as an approach in hermeneutic phenomenology by which the experience is described and interpreted by three metaphors: the fusion of horizons as the encounter between the researchers and the phenomenon under the study, the act of dialogue that means being open to the topic of inquiry and engaging in conversation with participants "not to understand individual people, but to understand that about which they speak" (Wilcke 2002, p. 5), and the hermeneutic circle which involves "a self-correcting process of learning that spirals into the meaning of the whole by using each new part to fill out and qualify and correct the understanding reached in reading the earlier parts" (Lonergan 1990, p. 159), which are further explained in our procedure.

Context of the study

The present study was conducted in Iran as an Asian context with its mainly collectivistic culture where authenticity may be defined and recognized in a different way from societies with individualistic culture. Highlighting the relationship between individual preferences and cultural values, Kim and Markus (1999) from Stanford University explained that the individualistic culture used the positive connotation of independence for being unique, whereas the collectivistic culture applied the positive connotation of connectedness for conformity. As the studies conducted on authenticity and authenticity in teaching were from Europe and North America with the individualistic culture, the findings of the present study which was conducted in Iran with the collectivistic culture can broaden the existing horizons on the concept of authenticity in teaching. In addition, the authenticity in teaching is completely unexplored topic in Iran in spite of its important role in cultivating teachers and learners in higher education. According to Bazargan (2000), the higher education in Iran consists of two subsystems which are government funded and non-government funded and enjoy the similar and highly centralized curriculum planning and decision making by Ministry of Science, Research and Technology (MSRT). Although there has been a tendency toward decentralization in the recent years by empowering local universities (Hamdhaidari et al. 2008), the transition is slow. We also chose authenticity in teaching as the topic of our study because of the significant growth in enrollment in higher education as the result of “a very high social demand for higher education” in Iran (Bazargan 2000, p. 175), which may affect the being and becoming of teachers in Iranian higher education.

Participants

The participants of the study were chosen using criterion sampling which involved selecting “cases that meet some predetermined criterion of importance” (Patton 2002, p. 238). In the present study, the predetermined criterion consisted of experience of university teachers. The definition of experienced teachers seems to hinge mainly on the number of years taught. Most commonly, studies consider experienced teachers as those with approximately 5 years or more of classroom experience (Tsui 2003, 2005). During a 1-year period, 20 Iranian university teachers from different academic fields (five from psychology, five from English translation, four from graphic design, and six from computer engineering) aged from 34 to 55 whose years of experience ranged from 7 to 22 participated in the study. As Ajjawi and Higgs (2007) argued “the advantages of this range of experience are the richness in the depth of data obtained and the multiple perspectives illuminating the phenomena” (p. 617). Eleven teachers were women; nine were men. The recruitment method includes direct emails to personal contacts and consisted of three email messages. The first mail was sent to 40 teachers who were nominated by our colleagues and friends teaching at different universities as experienced teachers who were known for their expertise, knowledge, and good behaviors. We were allowed to have their email address and explain about our research study. As was explained by Thomas et al. (2007), we sought to recognize cues in contexts that we felt would “predict those most likely to agree to participate in the study” (p. 434). In the first email, we clarified the following points:

1. Who the writers are.
2. What the research is about and why it can be important.
3. Why and how the potential participants were selected.

4. How the results and findings of the study can be important and valuable.

Whereas 40 teachers were selected through nominations from colleagues and friends, only 22 teachers agreed to take part in the study, 10 teachers ignored our emails, and eight teachers didn't agree to participate in our study as they were busy and our study was time-consuming. Two of these teachers could not participate in our study due to their personal problems despite their agreement. The second email was sent to those teachers who emailed us with queries about the study and asked us to answer more questions. The third email was the Thank You email sent to all those who agreed to be with use during this project and those who answered us in spite of their disagreement to participate in the study.

Instruments

Data were collected through observation, in-depth interviews, and field notes which are congruent with hermeneutic phenomenology (Ajjawi and Higgs 2007). Observation was used to probe the lived experience of teaching. In-depth interviews were used as opportunities for verbalization and articulation of the meanings of the experiences. In-depth interviews were based on a recursive model proposed by Minichiello et al. (1995). Hall (2008) explained that the proposed model “follows a conversational process where the interview follows the natural flow of conversation” (p. 157). The researchers also utilized three field notes on all aspects of the present research: the transcript file, personal file, and analytical file. According to Ajjawi and Higgs (2007),

The transcript file contained raw data from the interviews. The personal file contained a detailed chronological account of the participants and their settings, other people present (e.g., staff, clients, and their family), and reflective notes on the research experience and methodological issuesThe analytical file contained a detailed (critical) examination of the ideas that emerged in relation to the research questions as the research progressed. It also contained reflections and insights related to the research that influenced its direction (p. 619).

Procedure

Participants selected through criterion sampling were interviewed. Individual in-depth interviews were conducted with all participants whereby they had the opportunity to speak freely and honestly about their own experiences, emotions, and perceptions. They were asked and invited to talk about their stories and experience of being true to their own self in their teaching, their practices of authenticity and inauthenticity based on their own conceptions, their actual experiences in the classroom, their relationship with their students and colleagues, and their challenges and processes of being and becoming. Whereas the in-depth interviews were guided by some guiding questions selected based on the aim of the study and the main research questions, more detailed questions emerged through the constant dialogue with the participants. The participants were 10 Ph.D. candidates who were required to pass Test of English as a Foreign Language (TOEFL) to be accepted as Ph.D. student at Iranian universities, five faculty members who were experienced in publishing papers in international journals and were knowledgeable in using English, and five English teachers. Thus, the researchers preferred to conduct all interviews in English as three researchers from four researchers of the present study were English teachers at university. The main guiding questions asked in in-depth interviews are presented in Table 1.

Table 1 Interview Questions

Some of the key questions asked in in-depth interviews

1. What does it mean to you to be (in)authentic or (un)true to yourself in your teaching? (describe ideas that come to your mind when you hear the word of (in)authentic teacher or the teacher who brings herself into her teaching)
2. Would you describe how you bring yourselves in your teaching?
3. Would you describe how being (un)true to yourself in your teaching influence your relationship with your learners?
4. Would you describe how being (un)true to yourself in your teaching influences your relationship with colleagues and administrators?
5. Would you give us examples of (in)authentic moments from your work experience?

It should be added that our orientation in interviews was romantic as we sought to understand and interpret our participants' life as (in)authentic teachers. According to Wolgemuth et al. (2014), the aim of romantic orientation in conducting interviews is creating trust and providing *entrée*. Explaining the relationship between the interviewer (IR) and the interviewee (IE) in romantic orientation to interviewing, Roulston (2010) argued that:

A romantic conceptualization of interviewing will lead the interviewer to work to establish rapport and emphatic connection with the interviewee in order to produce intimate conversation between the IR and IE in which the IR plays an active role. This generates IE's self-revelations and 'true' confessions which will generate data to produce in-depth interpretations of participants' life worlds (pp. 217–218).

Moreover, all participants were observed in different sessions of their teaching during an academic semester. The aim was observing the participants when they were interacting with their learners. Such observations are used to "prompt reflections by the participants on their current and past journeys and experiences, and to provide points of reference for interpretation of findings" (Ajajawi and Higgs 2007, p. 618). The collected data were analyzed through the lens of Gadamer's hermeneutic phenomenology. To use Gadamer's ideas for research process, we used a Gadamerian-based research method proposed by Fleming et al. (2003) which included five key stages: deciding upon research question, identification of preunderstandings, gaining understanding through dialogue with participants, gaining understanding through dialogue with text, and establishing trustworthiness. Two initial research questions proposed at the end of the review section were in search of understanding how teachers made meaning of being (in)authentic in teaching and how their conceptions of (in)authenticity in teaching were enacted in their practices and relationships which fitted with Gadamer's interpretative hermeneutic phenomenology and were in consistent with interpretative research paradigm of the present study. Holroyd (2015) also argued that the main aim of Gadamer's hermeneutics was "elucidating the conditions whereby understanding takes place" (p. 2). Our research questions were the starting points to understand our participants' authenticity while delving into conditions in which they experienced being a teacher and being an (in)authentic teacher.

The second stage was identification of preunderstandings. According to Fleming et al. (2003), "one appropriate approach to provoking one's pre-understandings is a conversation with a colleague" (p. 117). As authenticity in teaching was and is a novel topic among our

colleagues in Iran, we tried to delve into books and international papers on this topic reading lines, between, above, and beyond the lines. We also thought it might be helpful to converse with colleagues studying and teaching philosophy at universities concerning authenticity.

The third stage was gaining understanding through dialogue with participants. Fleming et al. (2003) explained that this stage involved understanding the meanings of texts gathered from participants through fusion of horizons. Fusion of horizon “refers to the encounter between the researcher and the topic of inquiry in which two standpoints come together” (Wilcke 2002, p. 4). Gadamer explained that “to acquire a horizon means that one learns to look beyond what is close at hand-not in order to look away from it but to see it better” (as cited in Fairfield 2010, p. 14). We were four researchers interested in understanding the lived experience of teachers: an adjunct teacher who was experienced in conducting a hermeneutic phenomenological study and was and is eagerly interested in examining the uniqueness and everydayness of teaching due to her personal experiences and challenges in teaching, an experienced faculty member teaching materials development and curriculum design to the postgraduate students, an experienced faculty member teaching qualitative research and sociolinguistics to the postgraduate students, and an independent researcher familiar with philosophical and educational literature on authenticity who dropped out of civil engineering in spite of being a good student because of his strong disagreement with academic literacy. We had similar and dissimilar experiences in being different, rejected, resistant to norms and standards, and progressive. But we had the same question in our mind: How can we be both a victim and a perpetrator in our teaching and learning? According to Wilcke (2002), “the fusion of horizons occurs through the act of dialogue” (p. 5). We sought to have different dialogues with each other. As our participants were teachers of different courses, we also sought to get familiar with their world through establishing dialogues with our colleagues or friends studying the same courses. Also, individual in-depth interviews were conducted with all participants whereby they had the opportunity to speak freely and honestly about their own experiences, emotions, and perceptions. The constant dialogues with the participants made us look at the meanings from a novel perspective. We understood that being a university teacher itself was a part of being a human and this new understanding changed and broadened our horizons.

The fourth stage was gaining understanding through dialogue with text. This stage included the hermeneutic circle through which we moved from part to the whole and then return to the part in one respect or another to achieve an understanding of words with one meaning. The meaning of a single word could be discovered in light of the sentence whose meaning could be uncovered in the light of the whole text. In order to interpret the collected data or to understand meanings, the researchers used the thematic network. As was explained by Attride-Stirling (2001),

Thematic networks systematize the extraction of: (1) lowest-order premises evident in the text (Basic Themes); (2) categories of basic themes grouped together to summarize more abstract principles (Organizing Themes); and (3) super-ordinate themes encapsulating the principle metaphors in the text as a whole (Global Themes) (p. 388).

In fact, the analysis of the collected data led to the extraction of codes. A code might either involve one line of text or several lines. Then, the initial codes were renamed, redundant ones were deleted, and those which seemed to be indicators of a similar concept were integrated. Considering authenticity in teaching, the codes were organized into larger categories where some codes were considered as subsets of those larger categories which

were then classified into Basic Themes and Organizing Themes. It should be added that the transcribed data were coded and collated using a coding framework based on the researchers' theoretical interests concerning authenticity and authenticity in teaching as were explained by the explicit and implicit theories, the main concepts covered in the relevant literature reviewed, and the salient features in the transcriptions which were relevant to the research questions because the researchers applied the theoretical thematic analysis which is used to provide a more detailed account of one particular aspect of the entire data set rather than the rich description of the entire data based on the researchers' theoretical and analytic interest in the topic of inquiry that is represented in the overall research questions (Braun and Clarke 2006).

The researchers also considered the conceptions of authenticity proposed by scholars who empirically investigated authenticity in teaching (Cranton and Carusetta 2004; Kreber and Klampfleitner 2013; Kreber et al. 2010; Vannini 2007). Then, themes were extracted from the coded transcriptions through latent thematic analysis which "starts to identify or examine the underlying ideas, assumptions, and conceptualizations-and ideologies-that are theorized as shaping or informing the semantic content of data" (Braun and Clarke 2006, p. 84). The extracted themes were also reviewed to check the coherence of the pattern observed in the identified themes. The researchers then refined the entire data set into themes which were "(1) specific enough to be discrete (non-repetitive), and (2) broad enough to encapsulate a set of ideas contained in numerous text segments" (Attride-Stirling 2001, p. 392). The refined themes were categorized into Basic Themes, Organizing Themes, and the Global Themes.

The last stage was establishing trustworthiness. Trustworthiness as an important concept in qualitative research is an indicator of validity which involves four criteria of credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability (Lincoln and Guba 1985). Merriam (1998) considered credibility as congruence of findings with reality. Triangulation or the use of different methods to gather data, i.e., in-depth interviews, observation, and field notes, was for the purpose of establishing credibility of the study. Transferability or external validity of research refers to "the extent to which the findings of one study can be applied to other situations" (Merriam 1998, p. 207). The transferability of the study was guaranteed by detailed information about the following aspects as was proposed by Shenton (2004):

1. Factors based on which participants of the study were chosen.
2. The number of the participants of the study.

Table 2 Organizing Themes and the corresponding Basic Themes of authenticity in teaching

Organizing Themes	Basic Themes
Being one's own self	Awareness of one's own possibilities Taking responsibility of one's actions
Pedagogical relationships	Teachers Students Subject matters Teachers' intentional relationship Students' intentional relationships
Contestation	Challenging oneself Challenging the educational systems
Search for ultimate meaning	Quest for freedom Search for quality

3. The data collection methods used.
4. The number and length of data collection methods.

To address the dependability of the study, all the processes within the study were reported in detail in method and discussion. Another goal of triangulation or gathering data using different methods was establishing confirmability or objectivity of the study.

Empirical findings

Authenticity in teaching

The analysis of the collected data regarding authenticity in teaching led to the extraction of 11 Basic Themes and four Organizing Themes as shown in Table 2, which are further explained:

Being one's own self

The first Organizing Theme was being one's own self which consisted of two Basic Themes of awareness of one's own possibilities and taking responsibility of one's actions. The following quote is an example from the collected data:

As a teacher, I should know what is in front of me. In fact, when I collect data about my own conditions and facilities, what I have or what I don't have, I got ready for more appropriate actions and re-action by which I shape my teaching and my learning in the classroom.

In their interviews, experiences, and reflections, teachers talked about the importance of recognizing the possibilities which they had in their work including their freedom or limitations in choosing materials, learning activities, and the criteria for assessment as can be understood from the following example extracted from data:

We are limited to some extent by the course we are to teach or the place where we work. But there are cases when I can choose freely and among all those limitations. I decide what kind of materials to use in my class to teach the course that is determined by the system.

The participants also referred to the value and importance of being responsible for their actions which was enacted in their teaching by their personal willingness to take on responsibilities, fulfil duties and obligations, and own up to their mistakes and weaknesses. Following is another quote from the interviews conducted with the participants

I have a lot of duties and I should be ready and responsible for them and for my teaching. You know, I accept this fact that I am not complete. So, I listen to my students and if they show me that I made a mistake or did something wrong, I try to protect myself by reviewing myself and my actions. There is no way to escape. It is time to reset your teaching.

Pedagogical relationships

The second Organizing Theme was pedagogical relationships which consisted of the Basic Themes of teachers, students, subject matters, teacher's intentional relationships as

“paying attention to how students are making sense of how the teacher is relating to the subject matter” (Higgins 2010, p. 438), and students’ intentional relationships “namely the student’s attending to the teacher’s relationship to the subject matter” (p. 438), which indicated the important pedagogical relationships constructing the reality of the classroom and included categories of the teacher’s relationship with students, the teacher’s relationship with the subject matters, the students’ relationship with their teacher, the students’ relationship with the subject matters, the students’ relationship with the teacher’s relationship with the subject matter, the teacher’s relationship with the students’ relationship with the subject matter, the teacher’s relationship with the students’ relationship with the teacher’s relationship with the subject matter. Following is a quote from the interviews conducted with the participants:

Yes, it is true that our job is a hard job as it is rooted in relations. It is very important to know what we choose to teach, how and why we teach it, how our students receive or reject it, and how we are interacting with each other focusing on that topic or material to be taught in the classroom.

In fact, in the present study, the pedagogical relationships between and beyond teacher, student, and subject matter constructed the horizons by which choices and practices in the classroom became meaningful and significant. For the participants of our study, authenticity in teaching was conceptualized in their pedagogical relationships and was enacted in their caring for their students, the subject matter to be taught in the class, the nature of their relationships with their students, and the students’ reactions that could influence what to teach, how to teach, and why to teach. The following is another example from the collected data:

I constantly check what is happening in my class, how my students react to me, my materials and subjects, and how I myself react to their actions, experiences, and reactions. We are closely integrated. We are living in a web. It is complex and challenging.

Contestation

The third Organizing Theme was contestation which included challenging oneself and challenging the educational systems. The Basic Theme of challenging oneself involved our participants’ efforts to remain fair and to be consistent with their own priorities. Challenging the expectations of the educational system also meant questioning and reflecting on the existing policies and practices. The following examples extracted from our data indicate the participants’ engagement in contestation:

I am in constant argument with myself and others who are with me in the educational system. I require such argument to refresh myself, to be honest in my beliefs and actions, to be just, to be human. This makes me have arguments and dialogues with others including the system which asks us to do what we don’t believe in. I want to show I am myself.

I try to protect my own self by being honest to myself. There is no need to be fake. To follow my own values in teaching, I had and have to fight with axioms and instructions imposed by external forces that don’t know my class and my students. I started by using social network sites in my classes when I was harshly criticized due to the existing problems.

The participants of the study constantly challenged themselves to remain fair and consistent with their own priorities and values which made them implicitly or explicitly challenge the educational system where they worked. To follow their own authenticity in teaching, they had to question and reflect on policies such as low payment and practices like publishing papers in any type of journals one after another, using summative assessment instead of formative and performance assessment, or focusing on theories rather than practices which were imposed by the educational system to evaluate their teaching. As Hunt (2006) explained the constraints and structures imposed by the educational system may “create a situation in which teachers are impelled to adopt strategies inconsistent with their own deepest values” (p. 56). Thus, teachers tried to have arguments and dialogue with their own selves, colleagues, and those who had important roles in their educational systems. According to Taylor, “by engaging in contestation and debate, one becomes part of a larger process that is aimed at preserving and allowing for a life that makes possible authenticity as a moral ideal, one that a society can choose to guide itself by” (as cited in Kreber 2010, p. 165).

Ultimate meaning

The fourth Organizing Theme was search for ultimate meaning. Reading and rereading transcriptions of the collected data drew the attention of the researchers to the participants’ search for a meaning beyond and above the frontiers of their class, their relationship with their students, colleagues, and administrators as is shown in the following example:

Being a good or true teacher for me has values and meanings by which I become stronger. Being a true teacher who is sincere with herself and with others means going beyond all prescribed conceptions and meanings. Something is happening inside of you that makes you closer to Him. It is the reason for which I was born.

The ultimate meaning consisted of two Basic Themes of the quest for freedom and search for equality. The quest for freedom included two important categories: following one’s own expectations and purposes and independence from those expectations imposed by others and society as can be understood from the following comment from our participants:

I want to create my own teaching that is something unique. That means I do not limit myself to what has been prescribed. I want to fly over all those clichés by which I had to be someone different from who I think I am. It should be finished. I want to become myself through my teaching even if I have to stand against all people and rules that are around me.

The majority of the participants referred to their attempt to free themselves from the external expectations as one of the most important goals of their teaching in order to discover their own true selves, accomplish their internal purposes and expectations, and escape from the existing clichés. Additionally, search for equality went beyond the micro-level of the learner and teacher interaction or meso-level of the processes and procedures of educational institutions and referred to the attempt for equality at the macro-level of wider societal contexts and the effort to take actions in order to deal with inequalities in practice. Most of the participants of the study talked about their strong wish to create a society where all people are equal and it could be started from their classes. Furthermore, they explained that creating a just society requires fighting with and standing against all

inequalities as was eloquently reported by the following comment from one of our participants:

Teaching is not limited to our class. I follow a goal and a great dream rooted in my experiences and my childhood. My teaching is a journey toward that destination. I want to have a role in creating a healthy society where all people and all children are equal. I do my best to stand against those who are responsible for differences and I start from my classes and my students.

Our participants' search for ultimate meaning was manifested in their understanding of and critical reflections on the differences and inequalities which were guided by a hope for a better world where all people were considered as equal and had the chance to enjoy prosperity and happiness. We called this hope non-naïve and critical because it not only recognized inequality but sought to transform it.

I look at the future and want my learners to look at the future. We are together to create changes and revolutions. Our heart should not be empty of those shining rays of desires for something good and new. We don't wait. We act to pave the way for those other ones who are searching for a better atmosphere.

Further, the search for ultimate meaning not only focused on transforming conditions at macro-level but also provided the opportunity for teachers to transform their teaching because as was pointed out by Silverman and Casazza (2000):

Critical reflection goes beyond mere reflection, which could be simply a review of actions in the light of accepted precepts, in that it requires the reflector to deconstruct long-held habits of behavior by looking beyond the behavior itself to their own self-image and examining why they do what they do (p. 239).

Inauthenticity in teaching

The analysis of the collected data concerning inauthenticity in teaching led to the extraction of the Organizing Theme of teacher-centered classroom that consisted of two Basic Themes of monologic discourse and traditional assessment. Monologic discourse was characterized by features such as transmission of unchanging ideas, unequal relationship between teachers and students, and lecture-based activities instead of discussion-based activities. The Basic Theme of traditional assessment also meant the use of paper-pencil tests and the passive role of students in assessment. The following quotes are other examples from our data:

Due to the limited time, I sometimes prefer to ask my students to give the lecture from the book or papers we want to cover in our class. They give their lectures and others listen. At the end, some students ask their questions from me or from the presenter. We save time but there is no opportunity to exchange our understanding from the text. We are parroting the texts and being copied from others.

When they ask me to teach a class of general English with more than 30 students, I have to test my students using multiple-choice questions. They are supposed to choose the right answer based on what they have learned not based on their own ideas. I think, there is no place for research for my students and for me.

In their description of inauthenticity in teaching, most of the participants considered it as teacher-centered classroom where there is no opportunity for discussion and dialogue.

Thus, the learners are not allowed to express their own selves, involve in exchanging their ideas with their teachers who retain the control of the class, or have a role in making important decisions of the classroom such as assessment. In such a learning and teaching context, the learners just receive knowledge from their teachers without being asked or being allowed to challenge and question what they receive. The participants also referred to the use of paper–pencil tests to assess the learners by which the learners are required to choose the right answer from among the given options rather than provide their own answer and understanding.

The interpretation of the empirical findings

The empirical findings of the present study revealed that authenticity in teaching as perceived by the participants of the study consisted of four Organizing Themes: being one's own self, pedagogical relationships, contestation, and ultimate meaning. The first theme included the awareness of one's own possibilities and taking responsibility of one's action. Kreber and Klampfleitner (2013) considered the recognition of one's own possibilities as the feature of authenticity identified by philosophers rather than university teachers, whereas it was considered as an important point for our participants. Conducting an ethnographic study, Vannini (2007) also argued that authenticity for university teachers involved teaching with the sense of responsibility. It seems that the inner-directed authenticity looking at one's own possibilities was conjoined with other-directed sense of responsibility focusing on the world beyond to create authentic teaching. In his study on authenticity and responsibility, Barnett (2011) talked about responsible authenticity whereby inner and outer callings are heard and realized simultaneously.

The second theme involved the Basic Themes of teachers, students, subject matters, teacher's intentional relationship, and students' intentional relationships manifested in the care for the students, the subject matter to be taught in the class, the nature of the teachers' relationships with the students, and the students' reactions. Although the importance of care for students and subjects was emphasized by Kreber and Klampfleitner (2013) and Kreber et al. (2010) and theme of other as students and colleagues and theme of relationship indicating the relationship between teachers and students were identified in the empirical study conducted by Cranton and Carusetta (2004), the present study went beyond teacher, student, and subject matter and their relationships to consider teacher's intentional relationship and student's intentional relationship which create the pedagogical relationship constructing the reality of the classroom as was explained by Higgins (2010). Higgins also added that "of course, there is no formal limit to the number of relationships that could be added via iteration, but this begins to capture the range of considerations that enter into typical pedagogical relationship" (p. 438).

The third Organizing Theme was contestation which included teachers' attempt to challenge themselves and challenge their educational system, structures, and constraints through debates and arguments with themselves and with their learners and colleagues. In fact, teachers' contestation reflected their effort for "challenging what is taken for granted or encouraging critical reflection on assumption" (Kreber 2013, p. 57) through which they searched for alternative ways of being a teacher in the classroom and being a teacher in an educational system. Critical reflection on governing norms and practices was also addressed by Cranton and Carusetta (2004) believing in authenticity inside the institutional context, whereas it was among features of authenticity in teaching as conceptualized by

philosophers rather than by university teachers in the study conducted by Kreber and Klampfleitner (2013).

Moreover, the analysis of data directed the researchers to ultimate meaning as the fourth theme of authenticity which was constructed by two Basic Themes of the quest for freedom and search for equality and included categories of following one's own expectations and purposes, independence from those expectations imposed by others and society, and search for equality at macro-level which were manifested in critical hope for change and transformation through understanding of and critical reflections on the differences and inequalities and went beyond the wall of the classroom and the institutional contexts. Confirming Kreber's vision on authenticity in teaching in higher education as a transformative process (2013), authenticity in teaching for the participants of the present study had the transformative potential resulted from critical reflections and self-reflections by which they could be reconstructed and could engage in the constant process of becoming or incompleteness whereby they sought for their own freedom.

Inauthenticity in teaching was also conceptualized as the teacher-centered classroom which is governed by monologue discourse of the teacher who controls the class and focuses on the traditional method of assessment whereby the students have no opportunity to create their own answers. Although the researchers interested in the study of authenticity in teaching from the teachers' perspectives rarely considered the conceptualization of inauthenticity in teaching, the researchers of the present study focused on inauthenticity as well because it is opposite to authenticity as argued by Heidegger (1927/1962). In line with the result of the study conducted by Vannini (2007), findings revealed that inauthenticity in teaching means neglecting the learners' voices. It was also indicated that inauthenticity in teaching could affect the relationship between the teacher and students, learning activities, and the method of assessment.

Although two themes of being one's own self and pedagogical relationships were in line with the themes of self, other, relationships identified in Cranton and Carusetta (2004), sense of responsibility reported in the study conducted by Vannini (2007), and care for subjects and students as extracted in studies conducted by Kreber et al. (2010) and Kreber and Klampfleitner (2013), the present study also showed the importance of contestation and ultimate meaning as two new themes of authenticity in teaching whereby teachers constantly challenged themselves and their educational contexts in their search for equality in order to find their freedom from otherness while respecting and reflecting on others. In addition, the conceptualization of inauthenticity in teaching as teacher-centered classroom with the monologic discourse revealed that authenticity in teaching required the dialogic discourse and more participatory roles of students in the classroom where the students could find their own voice in the midst of other voices. This finding also indicated that teachers' authenticity in teaching could provide the opportunity for their students to become more authentic. As was argued by Kreber (2013), authenticity in teaching "involves working towards providing present, future and potential students with the opportunity to function in ways that support their authenticity" (p. 47).

Conclusion

The present study sought to investigate Iranian university teachers' conceptualization of (in)authenticity in teaching and its manifestation in their pedagogical practices and relationships. Data were collected using in-depth interviews, observation, and field notes. The

analysis of data revealed that authenticity in teaching conceptualized by teachers consisted of themes of being one's own self, pedagogical relationships, contestation, and ultimate meaning moving our participants toward responsible authenticity, deep understanding of pedagogical relationships, critical reflection, and self-reflection through the constant process of becoming and incompleteness and as Malm (2008) explained:

If we understand authenticity as constituting a state of "being" in a constant process of "becoming", that is, as a moral goal in itself (e.g., self-fulfilment as a teacher) as well as constituting a moral means towards attaining other goals (e.g., through positive relations with students), we must recognise the value that the concept of authenticity has on an individual level as well as acknowledge its relevance in a wider (societal) context. Psychologically, philosophically and pedagogically the concept of authenticity can be used to deepen our understanding of ourselves and others (p. 385).

Also, findings of the study showed that inauthenticity in teaching refers to the lecture-like discourse in the classroom or the authority of the single voice of the teacher where there is no chance for discussion or dialogue. Therefore, the teachers in higher education can take into account the importance of dialogue and learner-centered teaching and assessment in addition to the act of self-reflection, critical reflections, discussion, sense of responsibility, and critical hope as experienced by the participants of the present study if they seek to bring their own selves into their teaching, change themselves as a teacher and a human, and transform the existing situations.

In the present study, (in)authenticity in teaching was explored from the teachers' perspective, but social and institutional nature of teaching and pedagogical relationships indicates that there is a strong need to research studies investigating the reality of classroom and teachers' and students' being and becoming from different perspectives including teacher educators' and administrators' horizons. The main sample of the study consisted of 20 Iranian university teachers, and this could curtail inferences from the study. Longitudinal and multimethod studies with a larger number of participants can be used to more clearly uncover the meaning of (in)authenticity and its manifestation in the classroom reality.

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