

Paving Educational Pathways towards Sanitation Awareness and Resilience in Afghanistan

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Abstract

In edition 9 of the International Conference of the Future of Education in Florence, Italy, ICUMEDA Intercultural Mediation & Art was introduced as tool for academic mediation facing special educational needs in the potentially traumatic context of war and flight. Raising awareness of relevant intercultural issues within the academic mediation framework (published under the term "Ur-Mediation" in the expert journal PERSPEKTIVE MEDIATION) has been this platform's priority: From 2015 to 2019, intercultural issues due to isolation and trauma were addressed and respective comprehensive programs were successfully accomplished in various academic settings in Afghanistan. As was already published in last year's Conference Proceedings, starting with 2020 ICUMEDA has started to lay its emphasis on mediating in intercultural and intergenerational topics related to tradition as is the case in the broad variety of sanitation issues. The new paper for this conference's 10th edition will give insight on compiled ideas and thinkable concepts that pave future pathways towards education in the field of sanitation awareness and resilience in Afghanistan — and the potential of new mediative art to enhance and beautify this participatory engagement.

Keywords: *Academic Mediation, Trauma Pedagogy, new mediative art, upskilling pathways*

1. Paving educational pathways by addressing sanitation issues

ICUMEDA Intercultural Mediation & Art was introduced as tool in setting the stage for upskilling pathways in Afghanistan hosting various contents [4]. Raising awareness of relevant intercultural issues within the academic mediation framework (published under the term "Ur-Mediation" [1]) has been this platform's priority: From 2015 to 2019, intercultural issues due to isolation and trauma were addressed and respective comprehensive programs were successfully accomplished in various academic settings in Afghanistan. Starting with 2020 ICUMEDA has started to lay its emphasis on mediating in intercultural and intergenerational topics related to tradition as is the case in the broad variety of sanitation issues [5]. The global outbreak of a pandemic which unexpectedly coincided with the advancement of this mediation concept gave even more impetus to realizing the importance of this matter.

As the ICUMEDA platform stems from the idea of mediation two significant aspects could be mentioned on how addressing sanitation issues is linked to interventions in the field of academic mediation. Some sanitation issues are historically linked to unsound tendencies of categorising individuals. Information boards inside the Toilet Museum in Delhi, India for example not only report on how the lack of sanitation in history was linked to war but also how the question of who is supposed to take care of the matter led to ideas that bore the potentiality of degrading individuals or whole groups of individuals. Another aspect involves the sudden outbreak of a pandemic this year which happened on a global scale, the whole world got almost simultaneously involved in one crucial matter that called for action. The self-conception of an intercultural mediator has to include ideas of paving educational pathways leading to the implementation of hygienic standards even where tradition and cultural taboo might be a roadblock on the way to it. Topics linked to cultural identity or water allocation in communities are about to gain new importance, and it is mentionable that the assignment of topics of these kind to the think tank of mediators has been an early piece of consideration also long before [8].

2. Paving educational pathways by fostering resilience

The process of fostering resilience has to be done in accordance with or with prior consideration of cultural conceptions in order to be of lasting value. As is the case in Afghanistan, poems often display cultural thinking patterns that can be used to build and strengthen the power of resilience. Here are two examples of Afghan poetry and how this can be a departure point for creating a resilient mental state:

A place where you have no acquaintance or friend; That city, the sea and the desert are all one and the same. [13]

The underlying thinking pattern in this beautiful poem here might be seen as loneliness being *always* a deplorable condition. The idea of fostering resilience for a traumatised individual that might misapply this poem comes into play when changing the deplorable condition of loneliness to a positive condition of solitude in which the increased amount of time is used to focus on creative thoughts. More ideas might include:

Learning to appreciate solitude and remoteness by not comparing the own situation to someone else's [6]. In some cases moments of solitude spent in nature may serve as individual framework for calming down which is a first and important step in applied trauma(-informed) pedagogy [12]. Tranquil moments in nature may also be seen as opportunity to ponder over the inner sense of coherence, in the best case, or at least trying to deeply think about the personal room of activity which the current life situation provides, something that can be considered another initial step towards gaining resilience [10]. Appreciating moments of solitude and remoteness bears the potential for creative thinking, yet certainly the roadblock of uncreative and overbearing self-observation, hyper-reflection, should be reworked in trauma pedagogical interventions – assisting in “liberating the creative process from the inhibiting effects of any unnecessary reflection” [9].

If you fall from a mountain you can get up again. But the broken hearted will never rise again. [13]

The underlying thinking pattern in this beautiful poem might be seen as the experience of failure to be *always* indissoluble. The idea of fostering resilience for a traumatised individual that might misapply this poem comes into play when starting to view failure as life opportunity for improvement by simply taking a lesson from it. Finding beauty in learning from failure and the perception of something broken not to be consequently lost.

This process might be able to serve as participatory engagement, maybe even within the very creative realm of art. Introducing *new mediative art* did essentially mean introducing a way to turn experiences of emotional pain into creative art [3] aligned with the process of setting the stage for educational pathways [4]. Introducing *new mediative art* also included the fact that getting involved in it is the result of a solely voluntary incentive [2] as is generally the basic requirement for any action within mediation [7]. An artistic portray of images of both failure and unscathed glory, both imperfection and superbness discovered as globetrotter on a world travel and exhibited in BEAUTIFUL YOU ARE aims at perceiving ways to turn experiences of failure into potential beauty. BEAUTIFUL YOU ARE is to be shown digitally for the second part of an Academic Symposium in Afghanistan this summer which is held as virtual event [5].

new mediative art is one way to make the participant see the *present* situation not as destination but as departure point, to learn to be generous towards the future by giving all to the *present*, and to assist in making the *present* a true gift and present [11]. It strives to further enhance and beautify this participatory engagement of paving future pathways towards education in the field of sanitation awareness and resilience in Afghanistan.

As complement and conclusion of this paper, another viewpoint concerning sanitation might be seen in the peculiarity of the situation which does bear the potential to be relieved in humour: Every human experience, no matter how significant or insignificant, can serve as basis for humour, if the truth and the pain that are found within become apparent for the audience [14]. Sanitation interestingly is commonly seen as either insignificant or significant issue, depending on the very individual viewpoint, and the fact that an intercultural mediator of academic performance is the one addressing and pursuing it may be the pretext to mutual humorous moments. Yet, this does by no means dampen the crucial importance of the sanitation issue especially in times of a global pandemic, in contrary, it enhances the actual beauty of accomplishing this potentially life-sustaining task.

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