

BRINGING SLOYD INTO THE AMERICAN ENGLISH LANGUAGE ARTS CLASSROOM:
EXPLANATIONS AND POSSIBILITIES

An Honors Thesis by

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The following faculty members have examined the final copy of this thesis for form and content, and recommend that it be accepted in partial fulfillment of the requirement for the degree of Honors Baccalaureate with concentrations in English and Curriculum & Instruction.

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ABSTRACT

This research focuses on the history, principles, and methods of sloyd, a handicraft education system used predominantly in the Nordic countries. Through my study abroad in Finland in 2018, I had first-hand experience with the system and saw the benefits for teachers, students, and myself. This learning inspired me to bring this knowledge into an American English Language Arts context, specifically through the teaching and composition of zines.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

The beginning of every adventure begins with a question. In my case, the question was a constant “why?”

After deciding to pursue secondary English education at Wichita State, I entered the teacher education program. The first semester of the program I was enrolled in a variety of courses, both in education and in my content area. One of these classes was a practicum class where I was placed in a middle school classroom. In this class I was supposed to observe, ask questions, and practice teaching a lesson or two. It was in this practicum that I first began to ask “why?”

In the first few weeks of the class, I already had a feeling that the teacher I was paired with did not want to be teaching. First, the assignments, readings, and all other classroom materials given to the students were straight from a workbook, and I did not see evidence of curriculum design beyond this text. Additionally, the teacher would talk to certain students, particularly the ones with lower grades, as if they were a direct burden to her and there was constant tension between the teacher and paraprofessional in the classroom. Later in the semester, this teacher confided in me that she wished she would have done something else with her life. She said that she was just riding out this job until she could retire and move on. I kept thinking to myself, “this teacher has been here for over 15 years. Why is she still teaching if she has really hated it all this time?”

The real “why” came toward the end of the semester. One day, the students were given an book report assignment where they could choose a book and present a summary in a variety

of formats (writing, drawing, etc). One student expressed that he wanted to read *Hatchet* by Gary Paulsen, a book he had seen a lot of his friends reading. After approaching the teacher about reading this book for the report, he was laughed at by the teacher and told that this book was WAY beyond his reading level and to pick another book. The student then came to me, saying that the teacher made him feel stupid and that he REALLY wanted to read this book. Upon hearing this, I told the student that he is not stupid and that I would talk to the teacher, but I could not promise anything. When I spoke to the teacher, she seemed annoyed that I was pushing this, but said that if I “wouldn’t mind” reading a lower level book with the student and quiz them on content, then maybe they could read *Hatchet*. I agreed and spent the rest of the night reading the lower level book, eager to help this student in whatever way I could. The next week when I came back, I discussed the book with the student and then found out it was too late for this student to count this book. Why? Why was this student discouraged and restricted from reading something above his reading level?

Still, I felt optimistic. The following semester I was placed in a twelfth grade English classroom and I was hopeful that it would be a more positive experience. The first day I was in the class, I walked into a room with two small pictures on the walls and no other decoration. After being told to sit in the very back of the classroom, I spent the rest of the class being ignored by the teacher and when I tried to thank her for her time at the end of class, she told me she did not have “time for this” in a rude tone.

During the semester, I watched as students were given packets of papers that were due within a few weeks with no further instruction. Students lost interest after day one and procrastinated until the final few days, in which the teacher would bribe them with statements such as “if you don’t do this, you won’t be able to graduate.” When I told the teacher at the end of the semester that I wanted to go to abroad to find out what educational tools are out there,

she told me this was a stupid idea and I should just get my degree done as soon as possible, get my license, and teach. There was no encouragement to pursue new ideas or try new things, which had clearly influenced students and their investment in learning in the class. Again, why did it have to be this way?

My “why” is not focused on students, but those who work with them and the system that surrounds them. Why is this system set up so people can act this way and not be caught? Why are students being taught with methods that do not help them, but instead, make them feel belittled? I wanted to know the answer to these why’s and so many more, so I decided to go to the country with one of the best education systems in the world: Finland. I want to acknowledge here that I recognize that my experience and knowledge is limited. I have done two semesters of observation, spent a semester observing and doing minimal lessons abroad, and been a middle school paraprofessional for a semester. Still, I am passionate about learning more about education and the ways that the system can be improved for the betterment of society.

Finland is stated to have one of the best education systems in the world, and those who state this often reference PISA, the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD)'s Programme for International Student Assessment. In their most recent results from 2015, Finland boys and girls' performance in science, reading, and problem-solving are "one of the highest among PISA-participating countries and economies." (OECD, 2016). Finnish girls are also have one of the highest PISA scores for mathematics out of the participating countries and economies (OECD, 2016).

This is further rated by the OECD by classroom environment, citing that Finnish school children spend an average of 24.2 hours a week "learning regular lessons," which is one of the shortest average times for PISA rated countries (2016).

Furthermore, the level of "student's life satisfaction is one of the highest among countries and economies participating in PISA" at 7.89 on a 0-10 scale (OECD, 2016).



I spent a lot of time exploring Finnish nature. Here I am along the western coast of Finland.

I did not know much about Finland when I got there. What I did know is it is cold, they speak a unique language, and they have one of the best education systems in the world (OECD, 2016). After spending five months living there, I found out more about this amazing country. One of the my most important lessons when I was there was about Sloyd Education. Sloyd or s löld in Swedish, uses “craft as a tool in general education to build the character of the child, encouraging moral behaviour, greater intelligence, and industriousness” (Olafsson &

Thorsteinsson, 2012, p. 1). When I came back to the United States, my major question was how this kind of education can be brought into an American context, due to the many benefits I saw the system have on students, teachers, and the school system as a whole.

CHAPTER 2

WHAT IS SLOYD?

2.1 General History

Here I am saying that sloyd is amazing, but what is it? The history of sloyd is often dated before the term was first used in an educational context. Craft education in itself was first introduced into school systems in Finland by Uno Cygnaeus, known as the father of the Finnish folk school (Kantola & Rasinen, n.d.). Cygnaeus served as the superintendent of a Finnish school in Russia and from his experiences in St. Petersburg and his study of education philosopher Friedrich Froebel, he decided to implement “paper folding, weaving, needlework, and work with sand, clay, and colour in the kindergarten” of the Finnish schools. These ideas originally came from Froebel, but Cygnaeus took this a step further “to include farm work, gardening, metal- and wood-work, and basket weaving—collectively known as *veisto*” (The Editors of the Encyclopedia Britannica, 2019). In Finland, due to the work of Cygnaeus, “a compulsory craft education for girls and boys started in Finland in all 406 folk schools” (Kantola & Rasinen, n.d.). This occurred in 1886 when the Finnish government made the system compulsory for boys in rural schools and this extended to urban areas in 1872 (The Editors of the Encyclopedia Britannica, 2019).

Around the same time in Sweden, Otto Salomon began using the term “pedagogisk slöjd” meaning “educational sloyd or craft” (Thorbjörnsson, 2000, p. 1). This is said to have been around 1885 (Thorbjörnsson, 2000, p. 1). Scholars still debate who really founded the methods of sloyd due to this overlap. Still, these two educators contributed different roles to the creation of sloyd itself. While Cygnaeus developed and implemented craft education itself, Salomon worked more on the “pedagogical development and international distribution,”

particularly with his book *The Teacher's Hand-book of Sloyd*, published in 1891, and his work at Nääs, a Swedish Craft School where the ideas of Sloyd were first implemented (Thorbjörnsson, 2000, p. 2). This research focuses mainly on what Otto Salomon did with the Sloyd method due to his focus on pedagogy and bringing the system to students around the world.

At the time, Salomon had radical ideas for the classroom. He thought that students were spending too much time sitting and not enough time doing “physical activity” (Thorbjörnsson, 2000, p. 3). In Salomon’s time in Sweden, schools were teaching through “rote learning of pure facts” and were seated for “long periods without any physical activity.” He said that teachers who spend too much time covering “factual knowledge” will “fill up memories with facts like stuffing meat into sausages” (Thorbjörnsson, 2000, p. 3).

For Salomon, sloyd was the answer to these problems he was seeing in the classroom. “If practical manual work is introduced, the matter is changed, for many who are dull when the head works without the hand, excel when the use of the hand is required as well as that of the head, as in handicrafts” (Thorbjörnsson, 2000, p. 3). Salomon drew on the knowledge that he had from philosophers and educators such as John Amos Comenius, John Locke, Jean-Jacques Rousseau, and the aforementioned Cygnaeus (Thorbjörnsson, 2000, p. 2). Comenius, considered the father of modern education, also saw problems with the school system. He said that schools can often drive out a natural “craving for knowledge” that he believed people have. He said that public schools should teach crafting “to enable individuals to identify their interests and to understand what life required from them” (Olafsson & Thorsteinsson, 2012, p. 2).

Locke also promoted craft education, but focused more on the physical exercise benefits of this type of education. In reference to woodworking he stated “the mind endures not to be constantly employed in the same thing or way, and sedentary or studious men should have some

exercise, that at the same time might divert their minds and employ their bodies” (Olafsson & Thorsteinsson, 2012, p. 2).

Salomon also studied the philosopher Rousseau had ideas from various educators and philosophers. Rousseau "realizes the value of learning through problem-solving within an apprenticeship rather than rote learning in a classroom" and thought that those "practicing craft were the happiest human beings" (McArdle, 2002).

These people influenced Saloman’s approach to craft education and in turn, brought him the theoretical background to the methods of slojd. Salomon coined the term in his book *The Teacher’s Hand-Book of Slöjd*, which was published in 1892. In the “methods” section of the book, he begins to describe how slojd works.

The teacher is to give students models, drawings, and projections of the task to be completed "The models should always be executed after drawings and models, and in the first instance invariably after models which are placed before the pupils for accurate imitation" (Salomon, 1892, p. 13). Students work on the task without help from the teacher: "...the teacher must guard himself against giving more help than is absolutely necessary." Salomon even says that teachers should not even touch the student's work in order to not inhibit the student's process (p. 14). The teacher’s role in slojd is similar to a facilitative role where “the teacher's art ... consists essentially in being as passive and unobtrusive as possible, while the pupil is actively exercising both head and hand" (p. 14).

The American educational philosopher John Dewey also saw the teacher’s role in a similar way. Dewey stated that the teacher should reduce “the occasions in which he or she has to exercise authority in a personal way” (Dewey, 1938, p. 54). He wanted teachers to cater to the needs of the students by “arranging conditions” that satisfy student needs, “develop ‘the

students' capacities," and that are "conducive to community activity and to organization" (Dewey, 1938, pp. 57-8).

Another aspect of sloyd is that the tasks become progressively more difficult and "shall proceed gradually from the more easy to the more difficult, from the simple to the complex, and from the known to the unknown" (Salomon, 1892, p. 10). The first tasks should not be so difficult that students cannot complete them in a shorter amount of time. As the lessons become more difficult, the time to complete them can also increase (p. 12). When these do become more difficult and complex, guiding models can be taken away from the beginning of instruction and students can refer to drawings, either from the instructor or themselves. In fact, "[t]his may be regarded as the final aim in elementary instruction in sloyd" (pp. 13-4).

Another educational philosophy that shares similarities with Sloyd is the Association Montessori Internationale, created by educational philosopher Dr. Maria Montessori. This method focuses on a progression of activities based on student needs. She "focused on the development of the whole person over the course of gaining maturity" (Association Montessori International of the United States, Inc., 2018b). This development is determined based on "psychological characteristics and developmental needs of his age group" through a "prepared learning environment" (Association Montessori International of the United States, Inc., 2018a). The Montessori method also emphasizes that it provides an environment of "rigor, experimentation, and challenge" (Association Montessori International of the United States, Inc., 2018a).

Not only are these tasks built up in difficulty, but the teacher must also keep in mind that the students need to be constructing practical items "which can be used in everyday life, acquires

dexterity in performing the exercises as they occur" (p. 11). The tasks should not only be practical, but creative, original, and innovative. "...

each model acquires to some extent the charm of novelty, and this still further increases in the pupils that interest for their work which is of the very greatest importance as regards the educational benefits to be derived from slojd" (p. 13). When I was in slojd class, we often were given a theme and told to choose a

project within that theme utilizing the skills that we had been working on. For example, we were given an assignment to create something using the wood, textile, or metal methods we had learned based on a fairytale.



These are some of the finished fairytale projects with my classmates.

Educators and authors of the book *Understanding by Design*, Wiggins and McTighe also see these methods as effective. In their words, these methods are called “authentic assessment,” “authentic task,” and “performance task” (2005, p. 337). An authentic assessment has performance tasks that “simulate or replicate important real-world challenges” (2005, p. 337). This assessment includes “realistic performance-based testing - asking the student to use knowledge in real-world ways, with genuine purposes, audiences, and situational variables” (2005, p. 337). This is similar to slojd, which seeks to develop practical skills and assess students’ ability to tackle more challenging tasks.

2.2 Sloyd in Finland

For country-based practices of sloyd, I will focus on Finland since I can draw on personal experiences and interviews for the system itself. Sloyd/craft education is taught throughout the Nordic countries, but here just Finland will be addressed.

Finnish Sloyd began as separate subjects for girls and boys in 1866. The main purpose for this was to produce items that could be used at home and “development of skills needed to maintain agricultural and household equipment and tools” (Porko-Hudd et al., 2018, p. 28). That being said, the teaching of craft has always been separate from the teaching of art (Pöllänen, 2009, p. 2). Sloyd was taught with this focus until 1970 when Finnish schools moved from a “parallel” school system where students are split into single-sex classes to a “comprehensive” school system (Porko-Hudd et al., 2018, p. 28). In this new system, craft education was labeled as “crafts, textile crafts, and technical crafts.” Students from grade one to three took both textile and technical crafts and could choose one from grade four to seven. In sixth grade, however, they had to take the option that they did not pick, so if a child chose to take textile crafts from grades four to seven, they would take technical crafts in grade six (p. 28).

This system stayed in place in Finland until a new curriculum reform in 2004, which made craft education a “single combined compulsory subject” for everyone (p. 28). From fifth to ninth grade, students choose between textile or technical craft, but they must “be provided with contents from the non-chosen craft subject” (Pöllänen, 2009, p. 2). Since 2004, craft includes technical work and textile work. Technical work is “wood, metal, plastic, and electronic work” and textile work is “sewing, knitting, crocheting, weaving, embroidery, textile printing, and felting” (Porko-Hudd, 2018, p. 28).

The focus of this craft education has been on a “holistic craft process,” meaning that the student participates in all phases of the process. Some examples of phases are ideation, design, manufacturing, production, and evaluation. The two main aims of this holistic process are that the phases “stimulate cognitive, sensorimotor, emotional, and social factors within the learner” and that the student is “bodily, emotionally, and cognitively active” (p. 29). This is different from “ordinary craft” where students copy models or follow instructions in order to create something (Pöllänen, 2009, p. 4). This holistic model is the direction that the Finnish system wants to continue promoting and has been “since the curriculum reform in 2004” (Porko-Hudd, 2018, p. 28). The holistic model will be described in detail further in the paper in the section titled “What does a Sloyd Class Look Like?”

Over time, sloyd methods have stayed similar, but the focus has shifted to become more modern. Sloyd in a modern context is not as focused on the physical benefits of the method, although they still exist. Modern sloyd is centered around increasing quality of life, sustainable thinking, and independence. According to the program description at Abo Akademi, "Being able to create things with one's own hands contributes to individual well-being and quality of life, and it also promotes environmental thinking and sustainable development in society" (Abo Akademi).

In Finland, sloyd is part of the National Curriculum and is labeled as “craft” in the curriculum designed in 2017, which was implemented in August of 2018. This is categorized within “Basic Education for the Arts” along with eight other art forms such as “visual arts, literacy art, and dance” (Finnish National Agency for Education, 2018).

Sloyd is taught within four universities in Finland and is labeled as “craft science” where students study "Finnish textile-based craft teacher education, sloyd from Swedish craft teacher education in textile and technical crafts, and craft, design, and technology from former technical work-based craft teacher education" (Porko-Hudd, 2018, p. 27).

These universities are moving sloyd in a new direction for the future with a focus on "multi-material-based and technology-unbound multidisciplinary research areas" (p. 32). Scholars see this direction of sloyd as having “challenges to overcome” as well as “opportunities for development” (p. 34). In general, one issue is that “the strong tradition of handicraft education in general education is being reassessed” due to today’s “technologically advanced urban society” (Pöllänen, 2009, p. 2). Porko-Hudd also states that there are “challenges in craft education regarding the lesson-hour distribution” and implementing holistic processes with multi-material-based work because students need time “to develop ideas and design and manufacture user-oriented and useful products with good quality” (2018, p. 34). Still, there are opportunities for sloyd and craft education to develop with our changing society. The challenges encourage “new visions of pedagogical models and practices better suited to the increasing complexity, connectivity, and speed of the knowledge society” (2018, p. 34).

2.3 Sloyd Principles

Sloyd is based on 10 principles created by the aforementioned Otto Salomon. These principles are found below. The principles, according to Salomon, should be divided by the first eight being “of a formative character” and nine and ten “classified as utilitarian” (Thorbjörnsson, 2000, p. 4).

1. To instill a taste for and an appreciation of work in general.
2. To create a respect for hard, honest, physical labour
3. To develop independence and self-reliance.
4. To provide training in the habits of order, accuracy, cleanliness and neatness
5. To train the eye to see accurately and to appreciate the sense of beauty in form
6. To develop the sense of touch and to give general dexterity to the hands
7. To inculcate the habits of attention, industry, perseverance and patience
8. To promote the development of the body's physical powers
9. To acquire dexterity in the use of tools.
10. To execute precise work and to produce useful products.

Sloyd in a modern context still includes all of these principles, but focuses more on certain ones. To paint this picture more clearly, it is best to determine how modern educators view and categorize the system of sloyd. Dr. Sinikka Pöllänen works at the School of Applied Educational Science and Teacher Education at the University of Eastern Finland. In her 2009 article, she provides four “Pedagogical models for learning craft at school: Craft as product-making, Craft as skill and knowledge building, Craft as design and problem-solving, and Craft as self-expression” (pp. 7-16).

These models focus on different aspects of sloyd. For example, in Salomon's principles there is a heavy emphasis on the physical benefits of sloyd as mentioned in principles two, six, eight, nine, and ten. In Pöllänen's methods, the physical aspect of sloyd is built in and tied to learning in different subjects, particularly in “craft as product-making” (2009, pp. 7-9). She states that “being skillful and knowledgeable about basic techniques, materials and tools provides one with the capability to transfer that knowledge into learning more challenging skills and later on into working life or leisure” (p. 8). In a more practical sense, this could also mean “improving

psycho-motor skills" and understanding technique and materials (pp. 8-9).

Salomon's principles three, four, and seven are comparable to the pedagogical model of "craft as skill and knowledge building" (pp. 9-10). The three principles mentioned focus on skills or habits that one is to obtain through the practice of sloyd, such as independence, self-reliance, accuracy, perseverance, and patience. In the pedagogical model, skills are acquired "by linking the skill acquisition to technique, materials and tradition" (p. 10).

Another pedagogical method is "craft as self-expression," which is comparable to Salomon's fifth principle: "to train the eye to see accurately and to appreciate the sense of beauty in form" (Thorbjörnsson, 2000, p. 4). Here, Pöllänen writes about sloyd classes working within a theme so students have the opportunity to understand the holistic process they are engaging in to create something (2009, p. 14). Furthermore, sloyd used in this way is meant to activate "children into being socially and culturally oriented" (p. 15).

Another principle that encourages appreciation is the first one: "to instill a taste for and an appreciation of work in general" (Thorbjörnsson, 2000, p. 4). This was something that I realized after I came back to the United States and was reflecting on my experiences in sloyd. The methods of sloyd "teaches him to respect the working man or woman and not fall under the dualistic belief that some kinds of work are more important than others, because the importance of educational sloyd is not attached to the work, but to the worker (Salomon, 1892, p. 1). In the United States, I feel that there is often a line drawn between "white collar" and "blue collar" work. Thomas, R. J. states that "blue-collar occupations typically are not tied to an ascending staircase or ladder of career development, which is the 'normative, achievement-oriented model of careers,'" but those in these positions "still have meaningful work experiences and accumulate skills over time" (1989, p. 354). These categories often have stigmas placed along with them, but this does not seem to be the case in Finland.

There is a term in the Finnish language called “sisu” which means “inner determination” (Lucas & Buzzanell, 2004, p. 273). This term was used in the context of a study done with blue collar workers in a mining community in Finland. Through learning how the community described their work through discourse and occupational narratives, researchers found that the participants, retired mine workers, used this term to “construct a strong occupational culture that enables them to find dignity and meaning in their work despite outsiders’ perceptions of dangerous and dirty work conditions and of lack of success as defined by normative models of financial gain and hierarchical advancement” (p. 285). They also used the term to unify “the miners into a strong occupational community” (p. 281). This study is just one example of how people in Finland step away from the traditional negative discourse separating blue and white collar workers.

Pöllänen’s fourth pedagogical model is “craft as design and problem-solving” (2009, pp. 11-14). In my opinion, this model brings together the other models and all of the original principles of sloyd. Having an appreciation for work and beauty, adapting skills to craft, learning productive habits, and actual physical dexterity and labor all come together in order for students of sloyd to be able to problem-solve and design a product. In the article, Pöllänen lists many aspects that must come together to make this model a reality including developing, building, knowing and using resources, investigating, testing, assessing functionality and aesthetic, reflection, and more (pp. 12-14). In the following section, I will address what a sloyd class looks like in terms of the holistic approach to sloyd and craft education. In this example, there are key elements of problem-solving and design along with aspects of the other principles and methods mentioned above.

CHAPTER 3

WHAT DOES A SLOYD CLASS LOOK LIKE?

My experience in a sloyd classroom is two-fold. First, I took a class abroad called “Sloyd Knowledge.” This class focused on three aspects of craft: textile, woodworking, and metal work.



This was a course that was designed to introduce both exchange students and those entering the Sloyd Program (either textile or technical) to sloyd and its methods. In this class, the learning was very holistic and we were assigned to construct products from the idea to evaluation stage.

I was also an observer in multiple elementary and middle level textile sloyd classes at a Finnish school. These classes were taught in Swedish, but I was able to ask the instructor and the students whatever questions I wanted to, so I learned a lot in this way.

To illustrate what a sloyd class looks like, I will go through the process of a project that I created using the methods of sloyd that are taught to teachers of the subject in the “Sloyd Knowledge” class. This project in particular was the final project of the course and was a group project. As mentioned before, the holistic approach can be an individual or group effort. This project was a teamwork and multi-material project. As a class, we were assigned to groups of four or five by the instructors. As a group, we were given a large piece of wood. Our task was to “cooperate and do a ‘puzzle’ with all pieces together.” We were to “shape the pieces with wood carving and they have to fit together with each other” and also incorporate an element of textile work (Myrskog & Brännkärr, 2018).

To begin we were given the following requirements seen in the image above. The first step of this holistic process for the student is brainstorming (Pöllänen, 2009, p. 4).

The instructor’s role in this part is to direct the learner with a “meaningful task” (p. 4). In this case, the task would be to find something that would interest all participants, maybe even something that is important to everyone in the group. For my group, we first attempted to find similarities between our cultures. As a side note, one was from Spain, two members were from Japan, one was from Finland, and I am from the United States. To brainstorm, we sat away from the others in the class and began determining what we all liked.

Theme 4: Teamwork, wood carving combined with textile techniques

You are going to be divided into smaller groups (4–5persons/group)

Everyone in the group is going to get an own piece of wood. Your task is to cooperate and do a “puzzle ” with all pieces together. You’re going to shape the pieces with wood carving and they have to fit together with each other. You decide together what motive you want to do. You have also to add some details made out of techniques and materials from textile sloyd. In the end of the project, each of you writes individual reflections about your feelings during the project. How did you solve problems? What is your thoughts about the teamwork? What have you learnt by working and solving problems together? Other thoughts? Include a picture of your own work in the project. **Evaluation 26.10**

The task includes shortly:

- Brainstorming ideas, sketching
- A detailed sketch in scale 1:1 (1 cm on the sketch = 1 cm on your project). The sketch has to include measurements, colors and all the details, also the ones in other materials
- Wood carving
- Making details using textile techniques (e.g. felting, sewing, embroidery...)
- Writing reflections about the work (individually)



Focus points in this project are teamwork, managing to divide the work in the group and helping each other in the group.



We began asking each other if we should do something that is Christmas-themed because it was only about a month away. The two group members from Japan began to talk about how they do not really celebrate Christmas in Japan, but they personally like the holiday and wanted to do something focused on Christmas because it is such a large part of Finnish culture. From here, we decided to create a Christmas tree by combining all of our pieces. Another part of the project was that each of our pieces had to be individual before they came together as one coherent image. For this, we brainstormed that it would be best to incorporate two ornaments from our home countries on our portion of the tree. These ornaments would hang off the tree and symbolize our heritage, culture, and relationship to the holiday. This stage is completed and enhanced by drawing initial sketches of what students want and this is what we did after we decided what we wanted to do (p. 4).

The next stage is the design phase. In this phase, "inner ideas are given a symbolic form" and we did this as we began to decide what ornaments we would make for our section of the project (p. 5). I decided to make a poinsettia flower, which my church sells each year during the Christmas season. This reminds me of the holiday from my cultural perspective, but also from my religious perspective as a Catholic. The second ornament I did was a small wood slice with nails in it to make the shape of the star. I then wrapped red thin yarn around the nails to fill in the star. For an additional piece, I also reflected back to my Christmas memories as a child when my siblings and friends would string popcorn to put on a separate



indoor tree since we were not permitted to decorate our family Christmas tree. I talked to the others and told them about this, and they were excited to participate in this “American” tradition. We also decided in this stage that the student from Finland would take the top of the tree because we all wanted the Finnish Christmas Star to be the top of the tree, since we were all experiencing Finnish Christmas season together.

The goal of this stage is to make sure the product is "aesthetically pleasing, functions well and is feasible with respect to the pupil's skills, available time, materials, tools and costs" (p. 5). We all discussed the sketch further in this stage to find out if we all had or could learn the skills to carve out the side of the wood. Doing this would make the tree look raised from the base of the wood. We asked our group members and the instructors a lot of questions in this stage, particularly due to feasibility. For example, we wanted to make sure we could get the tree to be raised at the same height between all of us.

The third stage is where students realize and evaluate. In this stage, we really began to put the work together. While we spent this part of the process working individually on our pieces, we made sure to check in on each other and ask questions when needed. Making sure the pieces were even and could fit together appropriately was the most difficult part and like the last stage, we continued to ask more questions to evaluate the aesthetic of the product.



This stage also focuses on "realising the design and revising previous knowledge and skills so that the new things learned during the process become

attached to the existing body of knowledge" (p. 6). To do this, we practiced carving in particular and found different methods to make this more effective. The group member from Finland already had experience in both carving and using the machines and was able to share this with us to increase our knowledge. With practice, we were able to get to the assembly portion shown to the right.



The fourth and last stage of the holistic process is assessment. This stage focuses on "visualisation, articulation, and reflection" through assessment (p. 7).

After seeing the finished product, we brought out our draft and tried to see if what we had visualized at the beginning fit what we produced. For example, we had to have small spaces in between pieces to keep them even with each other, which we were not planning on.

The teacher in the classroom can facilitate this portion and it is their task "to guide the assessment and reflection towards the different phases of the holistic craft process" (p. 7).

In my course for this part of the assignment, the two instructors assigned us to answer the following reflection questions at the end of the project:



"How did you solve problems?

What is [sic] your thoughts about teamwork?

What have you learnt by working and solving problems together?

Other thoughts?" (Myrskog & Brännkärr, 2018).

This reflection was both written and spoken when we presented our work to the class. When we presented, we explained the different parts of the process and how this all came together to create this product we were all proud of.

Reflection is not just part of this stage, but is an important part of the entire process (Pöllänen, 2009, p. 7). In fact, the entire process is very recursive. Pöllänen states "the design process is non-linear and time consuming, and is, therefore, felt as a challenge for the teachers to plan" (p. 6). Another way to identify this type of learning is as an "experiment" (N. Morawiec, email communication, March 19, 2019). Nathan was a fellow exchange student who took multiple sloyd classes at the university, including the Sloyd Knowledge course that I took. He states that "sloyd (or slöjd) is definitely a course which has to be not taught, but experimented by any student."

In general, the entire process was group-driven, other than the original hand-out and examples shown to us. Throughout the process, we were able to ask the instructor's questions, but it was our job to move from one step in the process to the next. For me, this level of independence was eye opening and allowed myself and others to engage in problem solving, enhance our creativity, and work at a pace that made sense for us while still upholding a deadline. This is what a sloyd class looks like in engaging the holistic process to enhance students learning and understanding.

3.1 How is Sloyd Different from Technical Education?

Another aspect of sloyd that is important to understand, particularly as an American, is that sloyd is not technical education, which is a common form of education in the United States. There are two main differences between sloyd and technical/vocational education.

The first difference is that while sloyd can promote careers in technical fields, training for these jobs is not a component of the method at all. McGann argues “We also do not teach sloyd with a view towards the monetary value of the training. In other words, we don’t teach sloyd to prepare a child for his future job, like vocational training would do, and we don’t teach any handicraft so that the child can profit from the things he can make now” (2017).

The second difference is that sloyd is meant to “connect brain and hands”, and they cannot be separated (N. Morawiec, email communication, March 19, 2019). In short, sloyd combines two aspects of learning that are often separated. Pennethorne states, “The child is only truly educated who can use his hands as truly as his head, for to neglect one part of our being injures the whole, and the learned book-worm who is ignorant of the uses of a screw-driver, also lacks that readiness and resourcefulness, mental neatness and capability, and reverence for labour and its results, which a knowledge of practical matters gives. (1899, p. 561).

CHAPTER 4

BRINGING SLOYD TO THE US THROUGH ENGLISH LANGUAGE ARTS

Sloyd is a mindset and a way of life, a method to independence and an encouragement for students to problem solve. That being said, I will further explain how sloyd, within its principles and methods, can be implemented and integrated into English Language Arts Classes through the use of Zines, "also known as fanzines or little magazines" that "are self-published alternatives to popular culture magazines" (Guzzetti & Gamboa, 2004 408). Zines take various forms and can be personal, themed, or political. This form of expression has changed constantly since the 1930s and they are now used predominantly by young women as a form of creative expression to "explore issues such as body image, sexuality, politics, and violence" (p. 408). Furthermore, zines can also be seen as "an act of civil disobedience; a tool for inspiring other forms of activism; and a medium through which girls effect changes within themselves..." (p. 411).

Sloyd can be brought into the classroom in many ways, but I believe that incorporating zines in the classroom has the ability to encompass many principles and methods of sloyd. To begin, students can be taught about the history of zines to understand their background and how they came to be. This can be illustrated through Thomas Paine's "Common Sense" because it was "instrumental in promoting the ideas that contributed to the U.S. War for Independence, perfectly demonstrates the revolutionary and rebellious nature of zines" (DePasquale, 2016). When it comes to the art that is incorporated in zines, it would be best to show some examples, as the art that is included in them varies from author to author. Below are some examples that students can see.



(Phung, 2013).



(Adelina, 2018).

These examples can be shown to students in an introductory lesson to show that zines can take many different forms in the style of writing and art. After students learn about zines, they need to begin the holistic process by brainstorming ideas for zines. This can be done as an individual or group project, but may work better as a group project for the sake of time and resources.

After dividing students into teams, they need to begin brainstorming what the theme of their zine will be. Zines, like sloyd, are flexible in structure; "there are a lot of ways to create a zine and there are no written rules. You can go wild with your content and images as zines have more of a DIY inspired look" (Adelina, 2018). As mentioned above, zines are meant for students to send a message and/or express themselves. Students will work in their groups to find the theme they determine is a best fit for them all. This may take problem-solving, which aligns with sloyd principles, as students negotiate different and conflicting social issues, topics, etc. that they want to make the theme of their zine.

The next step in the holistic process is designing. As mentioned earlier, the goal of this portion of the holistic process in sloyd is to create a product, in this case a zine, that is "aesthetically pleasing, functions well and is feasible with respect to the pupil's skills, available time, materials, tools and costs" (Pöllänen, 2009, p. 5). The group needs to come together to decide what all of this looks like depending on their skills. For example, if some group members are more skilled in computer design, then the zine could be done on a digital platform. On the other hand, there could be a student that is talented in visual art and it may make more sense to have handmade zines. Keep in mind that within this phase, students "need stimuli and advice as well as support and feedback to guide the design process" (p. 5). This can come from the instructor as he/she guides students in the direction that they want to go. This is also an important part of the connection to sloyd. Teachers should act as facilitators and allow students to take the direction that they wish to pursue.

After designing the zine, students will realize and evaluate it. Here students will take the knowledge that they learn within the process and apply it to their previous knowledge (p. 6). This will be different for every student depending on the knowledge they had before and what they learn through creating the zine. This could mean that they are exposed to a whole new social issue, they may have heard new perspectives on something they were passionate about, or they could learn about other students' experiences.

The last step in the holistic process is assessment. In this step students will compare all of their sketches/versions of their zine to see how they have progressed, reflect on new information and skills learned, and determine if they met their goals (p. 7). Teachers facilitate this step by determining how this process will work and how far to take it. For example, students can write personal and/or group reflections, but they can also have students compare the different zines created in class to assess for effectiveness, creativity, etc. To illustrate how sloyd can be used in an English Language Arts class, I utilized the holistic process used in present-day sloyd classrooms and applied it to zines. Other parts of sloyd that can be applied to English Language Arts lessons are the principles and pedagogical models of sloyd mentioned earlier. In the example of zines, the following principles of sloyd align with the production of zines:

“To instill a taste for and an appreciation of work in general.

To develop independence and self-reliance.

To provide training in the habits of order, accuracy, cleanliness and neatness

To train the eye to see accurately and to appreciate the sense of beauty in form

To inculcate the habits of attention, industry, perseverance and patience

To execute precise work and to produce useful products” (Thorbjörnsson, 2000, p. 4).

In addition, all of the pedagogical models can be showcased and practiced through the design and created of zines: “Craft as product-making, Craft as skill and knowledge building, Craft as design and problem-solving, and Craft as self-expression” (Pöllänen, 2009, pp. 7-16). Along with the principles, these models can be applied to various units, lessons, etc. to exhibit elements of sloyd.

CHAPTER 5

CONCLUSION

Sloyd is an education system that I have loved from the first day that I stepped into the classroom. The amount of independence, problem-solving, design-thinking, and real-world application has inspired me to look at education differently since I returned to the United States. While we are far off from having kindergarteners learn how to work with wood, textile, and other materials, we can still incorporate aspects of sloyd into certain areas of education. After my experiences in Finland, I will not ask all of the “why’s” that I asked before, but instead I will choose to ask the question “how?”. How can classrooms be set up to allow students for more independence in the classroom? How can curriculum be designed to promote problem solving? How can teachers be encouraged to try new methods of education like sloyd? With these how’s, I feel that I can move on the next leg of my journey.

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