

WHAT MAKES CONTEXTUALIZATION OF TEACHING MODELS POSSIBLE? *INSIGHT* AND *ERFAHRUNG*

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This paper proposes Creative Isomorphic Alignment (CIA) as an epistemic and ethical criterion for deriving pedagogical universals from local cultural practices. Drawing on Bernard Lonergan's account of insight and Hans-Georg Gadamer's notion of Erfahrung, we argue that (1) insight performs the conceptual abstraction of a pedagogical 'must' from concrete practice, and (2) Erfahrung functions as the hermeneutic test that preserves fidelity to living traditions. The proposal is illustrated with culture-based cases (kumbira, gitara, lantugi) and informed by semi-structured interviews with six lantugi culture-bearers (Bohol, 2024–2025). We conclude with normative criteria for acceptable isomorphism and recommend further evaluation of existing attempts and explicit power/knowledge mapping.

Keywords: artificial intelligence in education, Bernard Lonergan, Hans-Georg Gadamer, Erfahrung, insight

INTRODUCTION

Contemporary debates in the philosophy of education about decolonizing, indigenizing, and contextualizing curricula often oscillate between two unsatisfactory poles: sweeping universalism that reduces local meaning to a metaphor (Tuck and Yang 2012), and inward-looking particularism that risks provincialism. This paper locates a middle path by asking a focused epistemic and hermeneutic question: by what intellectual movements can teachers legitimately abstract pedagogical universals from situated cultural practices without reducing or appropriating those practices? Drawing on Bernard Lonergan's account of *insight* and Hans-Georg Gadamer's notion of *Erfahrung*, we propose Creative Isomorphic Alignment (CIA) as a justificatory criterion: a disciplined procedure by which the structural logic of a living tradition is identified, abstracted into a pedagogical “must,” and tested so that contextual fidelity and pedagogical transferability cohere.

Still proliferating in the Philippines today are colonial “approaches to teaching that would have direct benefits on the existing order,” placing heavy emphasis on “memory work” (Martin 2002, 93, 98). Progressive teaching has also been called for in the Philippines, such as scholars asking “how can Freirean liberating pedagogy be brought inside a Biology class or a Mathematics class or an Accounting class (Cortez 2013, 63)?” Or the late Juan Rafael Macaranas of De La Salle-College of Saint Benilde, who explored learner-centered pedagogy (Macaranas 2018). Yet even these adapted progressive pedagogies are not “autonomous” to the Philippine experience (Alatas 2022).

Bernard Lonergan (1904–1984), Jesuit philosopher and theologian, explored the very structure of human understanding, what makes discovery possible. Lonergan, in *Insight: A Study of Human Understanding* (2005), traced how knowledge arises from raw data to an intelligible form through questioning and reflection. Hans-Georg Gadamer (1900–2002), a student of Heidegger, turned to the historical and dialogical nature of understanding. In *Truth and Method* (2004), he described *Erfahrung* not as accumulated experience but as a transformative encounter that reshapes the knower’s horizon through openness to what is other. Both demonstrate that contextualization is a movement of understanding: *insight* enables teachers to grasp universals in particulars, while *Erfahrung* ensures that the encounter remains genuinely transformative, not stale or appropriative. This paper asks: By what epistemic and hermeneutic mechanisms do insight and *Erfahrung* make possible, or otherwise ground, the abstraction of pedagogical universals from local practices without producing appropriation? First, we introduce contextualized teaching models, then we work out the proposal that insight and *Erfahrung*, respectively, are preconditions for the former.

This paper reflects on semi-structured interviews with six *lantugi* culture-bearers in Bohol (conducted in 2024–2025), along with participant observation and archival materials. We argue that the CIA, enabled by Lonerganian insight and Gadamerian *Erfahrung*, both justifies and constrains the translation of local cultural practices into pedagogical models so that fidelity and transferability are mutually sustained. Put differently, insight supplies the conceptual leap by which teachers grasp a universal “must” in a local practice, while *Erfahrung* supplies the hermeneutic safeguard that tests whether that leap remains receptive to and transformed by the living tradition.

CONTEXTUALIZED TEACHING MODELS

Our experience teaching social studies indicates that many students lack familiarity with local cultural practices and their epistemic significance (Ebojo et al. 2025). Student achievers tend, however, to be aware of Western ideas, or perhaps, the popular Asian ones. Here we find that students are in a state of “cultural schizophrenia,” where the student “is basically a Malay, yet he is in a state of restlessness and lack of direction brought about by the conflicting pressures of his Malay, Hispanic, and American orientations” (Araneta 1964, 234). This paper argues for a space similar to what Mijares calls “cultural verification” of a foreign idea within

our own local culture, where he inquired whether there is a match between the Buddhist doctrine of *anatta* and the Filipino concept of “loob” (Mijares 2021, 88). The need to locate and articulate not foreign but universal pedagogical principles that can be teased out from local culture is all the more urgent. However, existing calls for “decolonizing pedagogy” that are not anchored in universal pedagogical principles (Flores et al. 2025) run the risk of provincialism, operating under the assumption of an incommensurability between the local and the universal.

The second author, Reynaldo Inocian, has developed several culture-based teaching models over the years. While a full list of his innovations would be too long to recount here, among his notable works with his colleagues and students are the “*Ugmad Teaching Model*” (Tejada et al. 2018), the “*Puso Teaching Model*” (Cabasag et al. 2021)¹, the “*Gitara Teaching Model*” (Inocian and Luzano 2023)², and, in collaboration with the first author, Mark Steven Pandan, the “*Lantugi Model of Agonist Teaching*” (Pandan 2025).³ Yet as Lonergan writes, the greater challenge lies not in performing the task itself, but in uncovering the inner movements behind it, i.e., “what you are trying to do, what the method is that you are employing in doing it, and how that method will give you the results” (Lonergan 1990, 4). This section presents an attempt, with full acknowledgment of the anti-Cartesian argument against the self-transparency of such mental processes, to articulate such task of developing contextualized teaching models.

One characteristic of the method by which a contextualized teaching model is developed is that it is anti-method. To many education researchers in the Philippines, that would be heresy. It is only in the recent decade that interpretivist research approaches are gaining traction at various colleges and universities, at least in Bohol. Before that turn, there was a hegemony of positivism. By stating that the contextualized teaching model development is anti-method, we are not arguing for the total elimination of method. We are only cognizant of the problem of what Gadamer calls “methodological sterility” (Gadamer 2001, 41–42, quoted in Nixon 2017). Gadamer writes:

As tools, methods are always good to have. But one must understand where these can be fruitfully used. Methodical sterility is a generally known phenomenon. [...] Applying the method is what the person does who never finds out anything new, who never brings to light an interpretation that has revelatory power. [It is]... not their mastery of methods but their hermeneutical imagination that distinguishes truly productive researchers. And what is hermeneutical imagination? It is a sense of the questionableness of something and what this requires of us.

Developing contextualized teaching models shows that teaching is both a human art and an accountable science; it requires insight and an openness to transformative *Erfahrung*. The central claim is that teaching presupposes forms of self-understanding and embodied historicity that current artificial intelligence (AI) systems can approximate or simulate but cannot participate in in the human, phenomenological sense. Yıldız (2025, 6) argues:

the act of thinking in humans is deeply social and cultural. It is not an isolated event but one that draws on the tools of language and symbolic interaction available within a given society. Human thought is a product of history, experience, and socialization—elements that are wholly absent in the ‘thinking’ that occurs in AI systems. These systems, while sophisticated in their ability to process and analyze data, do not ‘think’ in the reflective, context-dependent way humans do. Rather, they ‘think’ through pre-programmed algorithms that operate mechanically, without the interpretative faculties associated with human cognition.

AI may assist in structuring materials or simulating scenarios, yet the originary intellectual act of *insight* and the hermeneutic transformation of *Erfahrung* remain rooted in embodied, historically situated agents. Thus, the design and ethical enactment of contextualized teaching models requires human discernment, sustained cultural participation, and mutually accountable partnerships with culture-bearers. Dwight (2012, 31) writes:

Our vision of being and becoming human undergirds all our educational design (whether explicitly or implicitly), conscious or unconscious. Our developed curriculum, our syllabi, and our pedagogical imagining all are reflections of who we are, what we value, and importantly, who or what we want our students to become.

The authors prose the concept of “Creative Isomorphic Alignment” as an epistemic-ethical criterion composed of (a) a justificatory move (creative isomorphism) in which the practitioner abstracts a universal pedagogical “must” from invariant structures in local practice, and (b) a hermeneutic validation (alignment) in which the abstraction is tested, revised, and ratified through reciprocal engagement with culture-bearers and through evidence of transformative learning in situated classrooms. “Creative” signals that abstraction is an inventive but disciplined intellectual act, a conceptual translation that preserves function while allowing formal difference (cf. Lonergan’s insight as the discovery of a principle in a concrete case). “Isomorphic” captures the required structural correspondence: the pedagogical move must map onto invariant relations or functions of the cultural practice (not merely its surface forms). “Alignment” denotes the hermeneutic calibration: the mapping must be tested against the tradition and the learners’ responses so that the abstraction neither instrumentalizes nor effaces the source practice.

To illustrate the process, consider the emergence of social studies teaching models inspired by *lantugi*, a form of passionate public reasoning in Central Philippines. Pandan first encountered *lantugi* through years of participation in a local apologetics community in Bohol, where dialectical exchange served as a mode of learning and persuasion. Later, during graduate studies under the Inocian, Pandan developed a provisional version of the *lantugi* teaching model. That version was revised because it followed a mistake commonly made by those with only vague exposure to the process. The mistake consisted in the fallacy of accident, which refers to “which takes an accident [...] and treats it as essential” (Kreeft 2014, 110). Instead

of matching the essence of *lantugi* with a *lantugi* model of teaching, Pandan was held captive by the procedure, by the list of steps, the phases involved, before, during, and after a *lantugi* event.⁴ These steps turned out not to be the essence of *lantugi*, even though they are pervasively present.

That fallacy is overcome through phenomenology, which brackets the researcher's prejudices and strips away nonessential features of the phenomenon (Alsaigh and Coyne 2021).⁵ The phenomenologist "objectively" abstracts the meaning, the essence, the core of the phenomenon (Estafia 2018, 21). That objectivity is the safeguard from cultural appropriation, by which we mean the contentious taking or repurposing of cultural content (symbols, practices, or forms) in ways that use something of value to its source community, where the use is publicly contested by members of that community and is undertaken with knowledge (or culpable ignorance) of that value and contestation. Developing a contextualized teaching model requires what Churchill calls imaginative variation, a disciplined act of, "sifting through the [individual structural descriptions], eliminating the details of the experience so that only its most general schema remains" (Churchill 2022, Ch. 5). It is a process of imaginative variation, where the researcher "tries to 'see' a unity of sense, or *eidos*," asking what elements of a phenomenon can be altered or removed "without changing the essential nature of the phenomenon." Bracketing "takes the inessential (accidental details) out of play; the reduction, in turn, focuses our attention on the essential (the invariant meanings that appear across all situations, real or imagined)" (Churchill 2022, Ch. 5). In this way, the developer of a teaching model moves beyond the procedural or accidental features of a cultural practice and grasps its essence, which is the intelligible core that can bear pedagogical abstraction. In the case of *lantugi*, Pandan (2025) identified seven themes that collectively comprise the core, or general structural description, of the practice.

Once the essence has been derived, the inventive step follows (and must be ethically mediated). It is worth noting that it is hypothetically possible that the culture-bearers do not welcome such an inventive step, in which case developing a teaching model based on their culture runs the risk of cultural appropriation, as described above. Some elements of a cultural practice are proprietary, sacred, or contextually bound and thus must not be translated into pedagogy without permission. In the case of *lantugi*, part of its essence, as identified by Pandan through phenomenology, is its openness to "transposition." Although Inocian had reservations about using the term "transposition," Pandan decided to stick with it because of how instructive it is in simultaneously connoting both change and difference. Even amateur guitarists are aware that one can play the same song across different keys. Transposition simply refers to playing a song at a key different from the original, with the song remaining substantially the same. The change is simply in the order; the original is the lifeworld of those who composed the song, and the second order is that of the person playing a cover of the song. Note how playing the cover at a different key is often indistinguishable to an untrained ear. Only somebody with perfect pitch can immediately notice it. Note how apt "transposition" is as a conceptual metaphor for "contextualization."

The authors insist on the aspiration and the assertion that the process of contextualization retains the substance of the cultural practice because the alternative

implies that the cultural practice, instead of becoming the agent of decolonizing, itself gets “hijacked” by the “unscrupulous” teacher innovator (Curaming 2017, 68). To the extent that the cultural practice loses its original essence in the transposition process, the process of contextualization will ultimately benefit not the local culture, but the teacher whose supposed interpretation of the culture has confused and alienated the original.

A walk-through of the datum-concept pairing will illustrate this further, although, as it will be made clear in the subsequent section, the identification of the concept to be paired with the datum requires “insight.” *Tagay* is the contextualization/local transposition of *catharsis* in cooperative learning (Inocian et al. 2019). *Lantugi* is the contextualization/local transposition of agonist teaching (Pandan 2025). *Kumbira* is the contextualization/local transposition of joyful teaching (Capin et al. 2024).⁶ Contextualized *raffia* instructional model is the local transposition of pragmatism (Centillas et al. 2024). Arguably, this inventive step falls within the discipline of philosophy due to its theoretical nature, demonstrating the need for teachers to be competent in this field (Altez-Albela 2024). Its engagement with empirical data does not diminish its philosophical character.

Philosophy researchers begin to complain because they are told by reviewers to clarify or, at the very least, identify an empirical or quantitative method. Indeed, that is understandable. Data is important. Philosophers are used to idiosyncrasies. The way we see things must be based on a whole or some structure, which should be integral. Yet, to understand poverty, for instance, one needs to examine numbers rather than just speculate on the reasons why people are poor. It is in this sense that philosophy can learn or work with the social sciences (Maboloc 2025, 71).

Pandan borrowed the term “isomorphism” from Lonergan to illustrate further the proposed match between the datum and the concept. It clarifies what kind of structural alignment the pairing requires. Hence, in previous oral presentations of the idea, Pandan used the term “creative isomorphic alignment” with the identified cultural element as the goal of any teaching model. You can only match agonism and *lantugi* if there is indeed a structural match between the two. Because the two entities being paired are abstract, there is no tangible indicator of isomorphism. It must be argued discursively.⁷ A dilemma Pandan faced was whether the religious content was part of the essence of *lantugi* and, therefore, should any teaching model derived from it be ostensibly religious, yet this was resolved when *lantugi* practitioners themselves expressed the idea of *lantugi* covering even socio-political issues. Furthermore, from a theological standpoint, religious moral claims can stay true to their tradition even when recast in procedures accessible to secular interlocutors (Paña 2025).

Normative criteria for acceptable isomorphism include (a) structural congruence between practice and pedagogy, (b) minimal instrumentalization of sacred or proprietary elements, (c) reciprocal consultation with culture-bearers, and (d) demonstrable pedagogical outcomes tied to the claimed universal. Operationally, CIA proceeds by (1) identifying invariant structural features of the practice, (2) abstracting the pedagogical ‘must’, (3) mapping the must to classroom moves, and (4) validating that mapping through culture-bearer feedback and learner outcomes.

Designing a teaching model does not, by itself, break student alienation from their own culture; reflexive implementation is required to make possible the kind of

horizon-shifting *Erfahrung* that Gadamer describes. Successful implementation of the teaching model would trigger in students what would later be described through Gadamer's concept of *Erfahrung*. A study conducted at Holy Name University aimed to explore the phenomenology of students' experiences with *lantugi*, although it employed a version of *lantugi* that had not yet been conceptualized as agonist or rational discourse (Esaga et al. 2025). Whether it has demonstrated *Erfahrung* of *lantugi* requires further verification.

INSIGHT

Loneragan deals with “issues which are now interesting to non-scholastic philosophers and deals with these issues in a way which should be illuminating to them” (Grisez 1958, 554). In this section, we will draw from the first chapter of Lonergan's *Understanding and Being* (the Halifax lectures on *Insight*) (Lonergan 1990). At the most basic level, Lonergan distinguishes what is given from what is grasped. Sense and imagination present facts or images; insight grasps the must, the necessity that makes an image intelligible as an instance of a universal truth. So, imagine looking into local culture, a practice, an artifact, any element of everyday life, and finding in it a kernel of something that points beyond itself, toward a universal or non-local principle. That local cultural element becomes the concrete groundwork where, as Lonergan puts it, “you see, then, in the concrete instance what is universally true” (Lonergan 1990, 24). For Lonergan, the “occurrence of an insight means that through and in a particular case one has recognized a general principle or universal” (MacKinnon 1964, 500). But while that concrete cultural practice is visible, the underlying general principle, what Lonergan calls “the must,” requires abstraction. It is the grasp of necessity, the apprehension of modal status, that sense of *must*, which images or senses alone cannot show. “You understand that it must, and this understanding with respect to diagrams, with respect to images, is insight.” (Lonergan 1990, 24).

An “insight” is not just recognition of similarity but the intelligible leap that makes a particular practice visible as an instance of a universal pedagogical form. The universal principles in education are what the “must” refers to in this paper. The earlier teaching model I co-developed, the *Fiesta Teaching Model*, remained focused on the cultural practice itself without yet articulating the universal principle that serves as the conceptual bridge between the practice and pedagogy (Moral and Pandan, 2024). In the same year, a comparable model was published that explicitly identified “joy” as the universal principle abstracted from the Cebuano *kumbira*, or festive communal dining. When repositioned into a teaching model, this concept gave rise to the “Kumbira Model of Joyful Teaching” (Capin et al. 2024). Note how “joy” is not tangibly present in various instantiations of *kumbira*. Joy is abstract. Grasping it requires more than immersing oneself in multiple fiesta celebrations. It requires insight, where the intellect does not merely register resemblance among particulars; it experiences, in a distinct act, the intelligibility that licenses universal judgment. He describes *insight* as “that event that is our primary object of attention” when attending to a problem (Lonergan 1990, 27). In other words, *insight* is an event within intellectual

consciousness, the moment when the mind “catches on,” a sudden illumination in which “it must” become so. For instance, you do not see the “soul” of a human person. You see the matter (body). Yet all human beings are humans in virtue of their souls, not in virtue of their bodies. *Insight* discloses precisely that “soul,” as Lonergan (1990, 30) illustrates when returning to Aristotle:

When you ask, 'What is a man?' you mean, 'Why is this a man?' You have this, what you point to, the materials. You ask, 'Why is this a man?' The answer is the soul. It is the soul in this matter that makes it a man. If you had a different kind of soul, you wouldn't have a man. Soul is what you know by insight into the sensible data. Just as you have insight into sensible data, so there is form in matter. Aristotle's 'matter and form' distinction is tied right in with insight.

The central role of *insight* that we are arguing for in the development of teaching models is present in any discipline. For instance, Lonergan describes how mathematical practice depends on *insights* that are apprehended in diagrams and imagination and only later (sometimes) made explicit in axiomatic language. *Insight* underpins scientific and metaphysical explanation: to know what something is is (in many contexts) to have grasped *why* it is, and that grasp is *insight*.

But when mathematicians found that intuitions (insights) about the parallel postulate could be mistaken, they sought a method that would avoid such fallibility: rigorous, axiom-driven symbolic logic (Lonergan 1990, 27-28). On the one hand, formalization can reproduce mathematics when all insights are already embodied in the axioms, and then a machine can carry out the derivation. However, *insight*, the discovery of axioms, and the original grasp still require the intelligent act of the human mind. Thus, while symbolic logic can systematize and protect against certain epistemic errors, it cannot fully replace the initial moment of *insight* whereby the relevant universals are grasped. We begin with the concrete particulars. This immersion, almost ethnographic, into the lifeworld of culture, requisite for *insight*, is an act that computational systems can only at most mimic, but essentially cannot do.

There are too many things happening during any cultural experience that taking note of everything would involve a “combinatorial explosion” of data among computers (Vervaeke, Lillicrap, and Richards 2012, 3). Humans, however, do not experience this explosion in the same way computers do, because they intuitively limit the search space, focus only on *relevant* options, and ignore the rest. But this creates a paradox: to decide what’s relevant, one must in principle already have surveyed the entire problem space to know what to ignore. That brings me to the tacit value of historicity and thus convergence with Gadamer in Lonergan. It is the *human* experience that frames what counts as relevant to humans, and to human activities such as teaching and learning. Lonergan insists that “seeking knowledge is seeking an unknown” (Lonergan 1990, 4). That seeking is not blind appetite but reflective activity, “it is not merely a tendency towards an object, it is a conscious tendency,” and precisely because knowledge is sought while still lacking, “this combination indicates the existence of an ideal, the pursuit of an ideal” (Lonergan 1990, 4). Spitzer interprets the argument of Lonergan as: the coherence of the question implies that an answer

exists (Spitzer 2015). Lonergan historicizes that ideal: he recounts the early mathematical turn: the Pythagoreans' discovery of "the harmonic ratios" and Archimedes' law of the lever, and shows how these discoveries gave rise to what he names "the mathematization of nature." (Lonergan 1990, 6). From those beginnings, he traces further mathematizing achievements (Galileo's law of falling bodies, Kepler's laws) and the move "from particular laws ... to system" culminating in "Newtonian system." (Lonergan 1990, 7). Yet the story does not stop there: "Einstein moved it to another basis, a more general geometry, and quantum mechanics has taken us right out of the field of law and system," so that "the fundamental ideal has become states and probabilities." (Lonergan 1990, 7-8). Thus, insight is historically mediated: the implicit ideal of inquiry is made explicit through a succession of scientific insights that reshape what counts as the goal of knowledge. Each epoch, then, redefines what is relevant to know and how knowing itself is pursued, showing that the very act of limiting the search space, the avoidance of combinatorial explosion, is historically and culturally conditioned, and thus inherently human.

This historicity of *insight*, its dependence on lived contexts that shape what counts as relevant, also appears in educational practice. Just as scientific understanding evolves through culturally situated breakthroughs, so too does pedagogy. Western cooperative learning methods, structured group strategies like "jigsaw" or "think-pair-share," were observed by educators at Cebu Normal University as mismatched for Cebuano classrooms (Inocian et al. 2019). Teachers saw that these imported methods felt mechanical and clashed with local ways of working together. Researchers then turned to everyday communal practices: *tagay* (sharing a drink in turns that fosters inclusion), *alayon* (neighbors joining forces to finish a big task), *yayong* (two people lifting or helping each other directly), *tambayayong* (many helping one, often in times of need), and *unong* (empathic care for someone in distress). The insight struck the researchers that these practices are actually living systems of cooperation. By translating these practices into classroom routines, the team formed the *Tagay*, *Alayon*, *Yayong*, *Tambayayong*, and *Unong* (TAYTU) models (Inocian et al. 2019). Notice how the cultural practice is transformed when drawn on as a resource to solve a specific problem. In hindsight, that problem appears to be the colonial nature of Philippine education. This is the problem culture-based teaching models aim to address (Martin 2002; Pandan 2025; Flores et al. 2025).

Interestingly, there can be a plurality of *musts* that can be abstracted from a single cultural practice. In the case, for example, of *lantugi*, a passionate communicative practice (parallel to apologetics debates in the West) is developed through the incompatible lenses first of Habermas' rational discourse (Pandan and Inocian 2025), then of Mouffe's agonism (Pandan 2025). In a single paper, these multiple abstractions can be carried out, for instance, in Lapu-Lapu City, Cebu, where the making of the *gitara* is a living local phenomenon: handcrafted, family-taught, broken into more than a hundred discrete steps, and bound up with livelihood, identity, and communal craft knowledge (Inocian and Luzano 2023). The universal teaching repertoire that Gitara Teaching Model adopts draws on several familiar models: classical conditioning (careful preparation of stimuli and context), Piagetian constructivism (learners build schemas by assimilating and accommodating new material), Vygotskian scaffolding (teacher or more capable peers temporarily support

learning), apprenticeship/situated learning (learning in a community of practice), cognitive information-processing for deliberate testing and feedback, and project-based/outcome-based pedagogy (hands-on production as evidence of learning). The wedding of the two is simple and tight: GTM maps craft stages onto pedagogical moves: *Pagpangandam* (preparation) sets the context and cues (conditioning); *Binagsang Pagporma* (forming parts) lets students generate ideas and tentative skills (constructivism); *Pagsalan* (polishing) is guided practice and scaffolding; *Katapusang Pagporma* (assembly) is collaborative synthesis inside a community of practice; and *Pagsuway* (testing) externalizes assessment through real, functional products (cognitive testing + outcome focus). The result is a culturally rooted pedagogy that preserves local craft logic, sustains economic purposes, and achieves universal learning aims (skill, reflection, transfer) in one integrated model. Multiple plausible abstractions (“multiple musts”) can legitimately arise from a single practice; the chosen abstraction must be justified and coherent for the model’s aims. Pandan, however, currently prefers a single primary lens for each innovative teaching model research paper, in the interest of cohesion.

Before we proceed with Gadamer, let us discuss briefly Lonergan’s engagement with the developmental psychologist Jean Piaget in *Topics in Education: The Cincinnati Lectures of 1959 on the Philosophy of Education*, which gathers a series of lectures that Bernard Lonergan delivered to educators and scholars at Xavier University in Cincinnati. Lonergan presents Piaget as a genetic epistemologist whose central insight is that development is an adaptive process made of two poles, assimilation and adjustment, and that these poles operate across biological, psychic, and intellectual levels (Lonergan 1993, 196–198). By “assimilation,” Piaget means applying an existing pattern of action or thought to new situations; by “adjustment,” he means changing that pattern when new objects or ends demand it.

Reading the development of culture-based teaching models through this lens, assimilation names the innovative teacher’s deep immersion into a culture, the phase in which the teacher internalizes local practices, meanings, and the “gist” or universal principle beneath them, while adjustment names the pedagogical re-contextualization that converts that grasp into classroom form. The teacher first enlarges their own assimilative horizon (through reading, participation, and long observation), then designs a provisional scheme that captures the cultural gist, and finally enacts and refines that scheme in situ when learners’ responses reveal the need for modifications (Lonergan 1993, 196–206).

We can sketch the developmental stages of the teacher-innovator. this is a speculative, structural analogy: Piaget’s operations, assimilation, and equilibration will be used as interpretive tools to read phases of professional maturation. Where Piaget wrote about children’s spontaneous reorganization of thought, we read the same processes as patterns in how teachers construct, test, revise, and generalize teaching models. Regarding the child, Piaget writes that “The first is a sensory-motor, pre-verbal stage” (Piaget 1964, 177). At the sensorimotor phase, the teacher-innovator’s work is primarily performative: in novices, the main competence is practical dexterity: pacing, classroom positioning, voice modulation, handling materials, which are skills executed without explicit theorizing. These are embodied operations: reliable action sequences that produce predictable classroom outcomes.

In Piaget's sequence, the second stage is "pre-operational representation — the beginnings of language, of the symbolic function" (Piaget 1964, 177). Analogously, in this stage the teacher begins to embed cultural meaning, such as stories, analogies, and classroom rituals, that make principles feel more intelligible in practice. These are representational moves: symbolic forms that make tacit practice communicable but are not yet systematized as reversible procedures.

Piaget's third phase is the concrete operational stage. Concrete operations are "operations... on objects," i.e., classification, ordering, number, spatial, and temporal operations. (Piaget 1964, 178). In this phase, the teacher builds structured models, e.g., lesson sequences, formative checks, and decision rules, that can be enacted, revised, and varied. Design intelligence appears: the teacher can move from example to generalization and back, and can test procedures in different classroom settings.

Fourth comes the formal operational stage, which enables reasoning on hypotheses and "operations of propositional logic." (Piaget 1964, 178). The mature teacher abstracts general principles from local designs; formulates transferable frameworks; mentors others. This phase is less about another set of classroom moves and more about *meta-operations*: designing principles, diagnosing structural breakdowns, and building training that targets the operational level of other teachers. In this stage, "He can now reason on hypotheses, and not only on objects" (Piaget 1964, 178). The mature teacher reasons hypothetically about what would happen under novel constraints, constructs models that generalize, and anticipates how to scaffold novices toward those operations.

This trajectory traces how professional intelligence in teaching model development matures. Innovative teaching extends beyond just "educational competency, social competency, and technological competency," regardless of how relevant these competencies are (Zhu et al. 2013, 9). The mature, innovative teacher does not just improve their techniques. Their entire approach to being with students changes. The kind of understanding they build deepens, and the values that guide their work become more deliberate. They move from simply doing things well to understanding why they work, and then to teaching in ways that reflect who they are and what they believe about learning and life. This transformation shows that culture-based teaching is not a formula to follow but a human process of insight shaped by history and meaning. Perhaps it would be productive to call this highest level "insightful teaching." From here, Gadamer's idea of dialogue helps us see how a teacher's personal discovery can grow into a shared and living practice in the classroom.

ERFAHRUNG

In *Truth and Method* (2004, 347), Gadamer insists that experience is "always negative." Gadamer does not mean that experience is morally undesirable; he means that its central operation is negation, an encounter that reveals a prior assumption, rule, or prejudice to be inadequate and thus in need of revision. This involves, for Jack Mezirow, a disorienting dilemma, that is, a moment when one "becomes critically conscious of how and why our habits of perception, thought, and action have distorted

the way we have defined the problem and ourselves in relationship to it” (Mezirow 1981, 65). Gadamer qualifies this negation as ‘determinate’: it does not indiscriminately reject everything, but targets a specific claim. By exposing what the earlier view omits, such negation opens the way to a richer, more integrated understanding of both the object and the prior error (Gadamer 2004, 347).

This dynamic of determinate negation unfolds concretely in educational settings. Every act of teaching is an encounter with students whose lived horizons may unsettle the teacher’s own assumptions. In culturally diverse classrooms, what Gadamer calls the “negativity” of experience becomes unavoidable: a teacher’s inherited frameworks are shown to be insufficient for understanding learners whose identities are formed by layered historical and cultural influences. As Semião et al. (2023, 12) observe, “the majority of teachers see cultural diversity as a challenge that many do not feel prepared to face.” Teachers are not trained to be anthropologists, yet their students are too complex even for anthropologists. The Filipino student emerges as the product of many cultural influences; among them, the original Malay, which had become differentiated into many cultural and sub-cultural groups by the time the Spaniards arrived, the Spanish, and finally, the American influence. The impact of these varying influences, assimilated to different degrees, has made it difficult for Filipinos to achieve a sense of national identity. Consequently, the Filipino today suffers from a form of cultural schizophrenia. (Araneta 1964, 234)

As a result of the multiethnic diversity among Filipino students, teachers are compelled to reconsider the teaching practices they have inherited. Not doing so compromises student outcomes because “cultural dissonance can affect learning” (Dean 1989, 24). “Teacher self-reflection” has become indispensable to design and implement “culturally relevant teaching practices” (Semião et al. 2023, 13). This highlights the relevance of educational foundations, which asks:

Towards what shall we be educating? What kind of men and women should we try to form? Can we envision a single ideal-type Filipino that all schools in the Philippines should strive to produce? Are we to set one cultural objective that must be considered as valid by all schools from Manila to Dankagan? Shall we try to teach the same subjects, in the same manner, and try to attain the same goals at each of the grades of the academic ladder? Or should we recognize from the outset the diversity of cultural types and levels in the Philippines and set our aims accordingly? Train Manila boys to be cosmopolitan, and provincial boys to be rural (Araneta 1964, 234)?

Gadamer invokes Hegel’s dialectic and speaks of a “reversal” of consciousness to explain how productive negation works (Gadamer 2004, 349). The “reversal” is the moment when consciousness turns back on itself; it learns about itself by encountering something other than itself, and that turn changes both what we thought the object was and what we think we are. We argue that the innovative culture-based teaching models are potent at facilitating this reversal. If teachers present terms like *tagay*, *puso*, *gitara*, etc. through direct instruction, the content (i.e., culture) will appear mundane because it belongs to the everyday experience of the learners. Making students memorize

details about cultural practices, values, and objects cannot facilitate *Erfahrung*. What is needed is something to “make the familiar strange” (Comaroff and Comaroff 1992, 6). How much stranger could a *tagay* teaching model get? How amusing would it be to hear that at the next meeting, the teacher will let the class experience the *Kumbira* Model of Joyful Teaching? In what sense might *lantugi* be agonist? What is agonism in the first place? This triggers the realization among students that perhaps there is something in local culture that they have not considered before. They then do mini-theorizing, and it is that theorizing which makes “social science interesting” (Swedberg 2016, 5).

This reversal has two linked effects. First, the object is reinterpreted: the encounter shows the old conception to “not pass the test,” meaning the former idea fails when faced with the new situation. In that sense, the new object carries truth about the old one. Students have the opportunity to reflect on everyday encounters with *tagay* and re-interpret the entire field of human experience with *catharsis* (Inocian et al. 2019). Second, the subject changes: once an experience has occurred, we “possess” it, we hold it in our memory and horizon, and it no longer surprises us; only the unexpected can produce a fresh *Erfahrung*. When teaching both the universal principles with local instantiations, or when teaching local culture as the kernel of universal tropes, the element of surprise is opened once again, after they have been drowned by boredom wrought by repetition. Because prior experiences become part of our horizon (the background of expectations and assumptions that shape how we see things), someone who is experienced develops an “orientation toward new experience,” a disposition to be open to further surprise, not because they have mastered everything but because earlier revisions have shown them the limits of prediction (Gadamer 2004, 350). That is how you cultivate the wonderful life of enduring curiosity.

Gadamer concedes that Hegel’s dialectical description “has some truth,” yet he resists Hegel’s endgame (Gadamer 2004, 349). Hegel treats dialectic as teleological, aimed at a final consummation in science or absolute knowledge, where subject and object become identical. Gadamer rejects that teleology: *Erfahrung* cannot be fully absorbed into theoretical certainty. Instead of closure, genuine experience culminates in continued openness, preserving the possibility of further revision. This is why conceptualizing *lantugi* as rational discourse did not close that possibility of it being conceptualized through an opposite lens, i.e., agonism. This refusal to let method or theory swallow experience is central to Gadamer’s hermeneutics and gives it an ethical edge: experience reveals limits and so tempers grand plans and overconfidence, cultivating prudence and humility rather than dogmatic certainty.

Gadamer centers the existential force of genuine experience with Aeschylus’s phrase “learning through suffering (*pathei mathos*)” (Gadamer 2004, 351). That is to say, the idea that we learn from what we endure signals that many of the deepest lessons come through disappointment, failure, or pain. Those negative instances do more than add facts; they disclose human finitude: the limits of foresight, control, and planning. In this way, *Erfahrung* carries moral and almost religious weight; it teaches us what cannot be mastered. It is here that the preservation function of culture-based teaching models becomes relevant. For instance, part of what one comes to understand with why in *lantugi*, the participants tend to be passionate, emotional, is that they are

defending their patrimony from ceasing to be, in the case of apologists, through the arrival and diffusion of a competing sect. There is grief there. That passion is the cultural survival of that primordial Bisaya virtue of “*kaisog*”, which provides it with a baseline by which students could begin to empathize with a group that might have previously seemed quarrelsome (Borrinaga 2023). And when it gets linked to the democratic theory of agonism, the universality of human passions, intertwining with what human beings fight for, humanizes the practice.

Such cultivated empathy can remediate an individual’s alienation from their own cultural tradition. To Gadamer, the embrace of one’s own tradition, or, in Lonergan’s terms, self-appropriation, is a step toward an accurate and holistic grasp of human knowledge. Going back to the section of *Truth and Method* where we left off, Gadamer’s ideal is openness to tradition conceived as a Thou: tradition does not simply sit there as neutral data but actively addresses interpreters, it “says something” to us (Gadamer 2004, 483). Texts, rituals, and inherited practices can make a claim on you. Hermeneutical experience is therefore conversational rather than purely analytical; it requires that we allow tradition to disturb our prejudices and to change our horizon. This is not naïve historicism, not a blind acceptance of the past, but a situated readiness to be transformed by what we read and encounter, acknowledging that interpreters are themselves historically conditioned and can therefore be affected by the tradition they study. Because teachers and learners are embodied and historically situated, they can be transformed by Tradition and *Erfahrung*. By contrast, AI systems lack embodied historicity and thus cannot undergo *Erfahrung* in Gadamer’s sense; they manipulate representations algorithmically but do not participate in the dialogical, transformative event that constitutes hermeneutical experience.

We cannot, therefore, have a new experience of any object at random, but it must be of such a nature that we gain better knowledge through it, not only of itself, but of what we thought we knew before, i.e., of a universal. The negation by means of which it achieves this is a determinate negation. We refer to this kind of experience as *dialectical* (Gadamer 2004, 347-348).

Gadamer distinguishes two everyday meanings of “experience.” One he calls *Erlebnis*, to mean a first-hand, psychological, immediate, unified, intentional event of meaning in the sense of “being alive when it happens” (Gadamer 2004, 53). *Erlebnis* is the experiential backdrop that explains how we feel or empathize. Gadamer treats aesthetic experience as the paradigmatic instance of that unity. It is a momentary event with a long afterlife, “What we call an *Erlebnis* in this emphatic sense thus means something unforgettable and irreplaceable, something whose meaning cannot be exhausted by conceptual determination” (Gadamer 2004, 58). Davey (2015), however, explains that *Erlebnis* is circular in that it tends to return the subject to its own horizon; the reader/listener essentially encounters their own feeling. *Erlebnis* involves a process that returns you to prior assumptions but does not reconfigure them, and is thus not what is suited for Gadamerian hermeneutics. These experiences trap the subject within their emotional/aesthetic intensity instead of bringing them to what Churchill (2022) calls a “general structural description” of the experience, and thus “deprives them of objective status and condemns them to being incommunicable objects within an inarticulable solipsism” (Davey 2019, 302).

The other meaning of experience is *Erfahrung*, which Gadamer treats as an encounter that upends taken-for-granted expectations and revises understanding (Gadamer 2004, 347–48). From “*fahren*,” which means “to travel or to wander,” *Erfahrung* connotes the “idea of travel as an experience that deeply transforms the traveler, and it is precisely in such an experience that truth exists” (Lawn and Keane 2011, 49). Most importantly, while *Erlebnis* reflects back the subject’s existing horizon and feelings, and thus remains subject-centered, Davey (2015) argues that *Erfahrung* is a process of re-entry that modifies the structure each time. Davey (2019, 302) writes:

As Gadamer appreciated, it is not the properties of an intense individual experiential moment that are hermeneutically important but how that moment reflects and is related to the historical and cultural processes which underpin it, processes which the individual agent is not necessarily conscious of. Gadamer proceeds to ontologize experience, seeing it as an expression of ontological processes we partake in, rather than as an object solely contained within consciousness.

We can draw on Piaget (1970) to further illustrate this point. *Erfahrung* corresponds with Piaget’s “accommodation,” while *Erlebnis* corresponds with “assimilation.”⁸ Where assimilation simply reinforces existing schemas and thus does not yet get the existing schema revised, *Erlebnis* is the existential revisiting of an experience, yet without that experience getting ontologically reconfigured. And just as accommodation involves “modification of an assimilatory scheme or structure by the elements it assimilates” (Piaget 1970, 708), *Erfahrung* involves the revisiting of the experience in a way that transcends it, thereby transforming the interpreter in the process. *Erfahrung* involves a shock that breaks the flow state, which occurs when we expect something similar to what we have experienced before (Gadamer 2004, 360). It is in that element of surprise that we know we are being receptive, that we are not just talking to ourselves, that a fusion of horizons is possible.

The upshot is that “when assimilation outweighs accommodation (i.e., when the characteristics of the object are not taken into account . . .), thought evolves in an egocentric or even autistic direction” (Piaget 1970, 708). Creative isomorphic alignment requires more than immersing in the experience. The experience must move the teacher, so that the power of tradition is not neutered, but rather harnessed; otherwise, the teacher will be forcing culture to speak what the teacher has predetermined it to say, that is, cultural appropriation. What must be avoided is being trapped in the *Erlebnis*, notwithstanding the intrinsic value of that project, but for the purposes of being productive for pedagogy, might just be a case where, “[r]eality is subordinated to assimilation which is distorting, since there is no accommodation” (Piaget 1951, 86). The potency of culture and tradition must be harnessed, rather than being stifled, by the development of these teaching models. A proposed teaching model is not validated until culture-bearers have ratified the mapping between practice and pedagogy through reciprocal engagement. Yes, one must not be too scrupulous in this, for culture is already actively waiting to be transposed; it does not need to be

forced, for it is inherently awaiting new life. Yet as in all things, it must be done with care, as “Pedagogy is never innocent” (Bruner 1999, 17).

CONCLUSION

Contextualization, we have argued, is a disciplined epistemic and ethical process whose legitimacy turns on two interlocking movements of understanding: Lonerganian *insight* and Gadamerian *Erfahrung*. Knowledge of pedagogical universals can be legitimately abstracted from local cultural practices only when that abstraction is produced by a recognitional act of insight. *Erfahrung* is a determinate, horizon-altering encounter that must produce recognisable change in the interpreter’s understanding. “Creative” abstraction is permitted so long as the abstraction preserves the function and relations of the source practice rather than its surface form. Yet Curaming’s stern reminder that relocating the locus of enunciation without attending to the grammar of power/knowledge simply relocates opportunities for capture must be taken seriously. Curaming (2017) demonstrates that well-meaning scholarship can be repackaged and redeployed by powerful actors, resulting in outcomes that contradict the authors’ intentions. If CIA is to do more than theorize a tidy middle path between universalism and provincialism, it must expressly make resistance to co-optation a structural feature of its procedure.⁹

Practically, then, Creative Isomorphic Alignment requires a preliminary and ongoing layer of power-sensitive work. A legitimate contextualization must avoid teleological closure: it must preserve openness to future revision rather than claiming a final, exhaustive account of the practice. Ethical contextualization requires named beneficiaries and accountable authorship so that benefits and responsibilities are traceable and contestable. Where culture-bearers decline or withhold consent for translation, the project must either abandon that translation or reconfigure it in ways explicitly authorized by those bearers. The pedagogy derived from a cultural practice must be accompanied by documentation of the validation process (culture-bearer consultation, learner outcomes, and power/knowledge audit) whenever it is disseminated publicly. These safeguards reconfigure CIA from an abstract justificatory criterion into a guarded, praxis-oriented method: insight still produces the “must,” *Erfahrung* still tests transformation, but both operate within a scaffold that anticipates and limits instrumental capture.

The authors acknowledge the difficulty of these additional considerations, yet if contextualization is to be “truly progressive” or “pro-people,” it must take seriously the entwining of power and knowledge (Curaming 2017, 65). Theoretically, this amendment reframes CIA as triple: insight + *Erfahrung* + power-mapping. But articulating that third element requires an entirely new paper to flesh out. Only by pairing conceptual rigor with concrete safeguards against appropriation can teachers, scholars, and culture-bearers jointly claim that contextualization has been done both rightly and justly. It is our aspiration that *lantugi* be treated no longer with the apathy or scorn by which some locals see it (Pandan 2025), that the *lantugi* community will finally be recognized as part of the intangible heritage of Central Philippines. Viray (2025, 129) observes:

One of the most powerful contributions of the book is, perhaps, its revalorization of *lantugi*, not as a casual, everyday exchange, but as a serious and structured form of discourse that demands intellectual engagement. *Lantugi* is a familiar mode of interaction, often occurring in public spaces, family gatherings, or informal settings. However, the author urges us to look beyond its surface informality and recognize its pedagogical depth. In the analysis of the author, *lantugi* emerges as a discursive practice that cultivates critical thinking, rhetorical skill, and ethical reasoning. It is not merely about winning an argument or showcasing verbal dexterity; it is about engaging with ideas, testing assumptions, and learning through dialogue. This reframing is crucial because it allows educators to see *lantugi* as a legitimate and powerful tool for classroom learning.

Teaching is at once interpretive, ethical, and political: it requires the eye to discern universals in concrete practice and the humility to be altered by what one discerns. That double, even triple, capacity, insight coupled with *Erfahrung*, embedded in structures of power, marks teaching as a distinctively human art in an age of increasingly capable yet ahistorical machines (Lonergan 1990; Gadamer 2004; Dwight 2012; Yildiz, 2025).¹⁰

NOTES

1. Woven rice pouch cooked in coconut leaves.
2. The guitar.
3. Dialectical or agonistic dialogue characterized by spirited exchange and reasoned argument.
4. For this observation, the author thanks Professor James Louies Un. Furthermore, we thank the reviewer for pointing out the need for a fuller exposition of Creative Isomorphic Alignment (CIA).
5. Another mistake made in the initial version (the coursework version) was using autoethnography as a design. No matter how valuable autoethnography is, the authors are of the opinion that multiple long-term culture-bearers would be significant to facilitate imaginative variation. Imaginative variation is practically impossible with the dataset of one.
6. A Visayan communal feast symbolizing collective joy and shared abundance.
7. In “Aquinas, Lonergan, and the Isomorphism between Intellect and Reality,” Gaven Kerr worries that Lonergan’s way of starting with how humans know things and then reading metaphysics back from that might accidentally mix up two different kinds of reality. Kerr fears it could sound like Lonergan is saying our acts of thinking somehow make things real, that cognition brings things into being. In Kerr’s reading, when Lonergan lines up the cognitive sequence (experience → insight → judgment) with the metaphysical sequence (potency → form → act), it could be taken literally: if judgment is equated with metaphysical “act,” then thinking would look like it causes

existence. That looks like a kind of idealism, the idea that the mind has first claim on reality (Kerr 2014). Jeremy Wilkins replies that this is a misunderstanding. He is not saying the mind creates being. Judgment is the analogue to act, not in the order of being, but in a separate order, i.e., knowledge. Judgement is a condition for knowledge, in a distinct but similar way, act is a condition for being.

8. We acknowledge Fleurdeliz Altez-Albela for noting the novelty of this insight, which thereby prompted us to elaborate on this claim further.

9. Teachers seeking to develop contextualized models must undergo sustained immersion, reflexive self-appropriation, and iterative enactment; a one-off exposure is epistemically insufficient.

10. AI was occasionally used to enhance the language of the paper.

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