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Flipped, refracted, and socratic learning: a triune approach in teaching introduction to philosophy to Indonesian higher students

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ABSTRACT

Teaching Introduction to Philosophy to Indonesian students faces at least these three challenges: first, the challenge of patchiness: students know philosophy patchy and erratic because they are never introduced properly to philosophical thinking; second, the challenge of digital nativity: students are part of Gen Z that are constrained with digital world; third, the challenge of inequal starting points: students come from different background as they are coming from different part of the Indonesian archipelago. To address these challenges, this study demonstrates the effectiveness of integrating three distinct pedagogical approaches simultaneously: Flipped Classroom, Refracted and Socratic Learning. We will show that from the theoretical framework, these approaches are surprisingly connected to each other, and from the experimental study, students perceive these approaches positively. Utilizing a qualitative case study framework backed by diverse data points, this paper explores the experimental application of these approaches and highlights how favorably students perceived the intervention.

INTRODUCTION

Western philosophy is not unfamiliar to Indonesian society. In fact, there are some Western-based philosophical thoughts in the constitution: social justice, democracy, and respect for human rights. Non-Western-based philosophical thoughts are also acknowledged, such as the value of harmony. Other philosophical thoughts, such as communism, Marxism, liberalism, and neo-liberalism, are also widely known in society. However, a formal and systematic study of Western philosophy and its philosophical thinking is still seen as unusual. As far as we can observe, in the Indonesian universities, there are only two universities that have a Faculty of Philosophy, the University of Indonesia in Jakarta and Gadjah Mada University in Yogyakarta. Outside these faculties, systematic study of philosophy is usually conducted only in the Catholic philosophical and theological high schools or Catholic theological faculties. However, these high schools and faculties are not meant to treat philosophy as their main concern.

Philosophical teaching is considered a preparation for theological studies, since most of their students are seminarians who later become Catholic priests. The same is true for Islamic universities. In these universities, there is a specific philosophical program, but it is considered a part of Islamic theological studies and not meant to study philosophy specifically.

This situation is unfortunately worsened when we consider that the introduction to philosophy or to philosophical thinking is not supported by the curriculum for pre-university students. Although there is civic education that is meant to introduce ethics of public life, this subject is not aimed at providing preparatory courses on philosophical thinking.

The situations described above imply that although students might have some information about philosophy, either through civic education or the media, they lack systematic philosophical thinking. This is the first challenge of teaching philosophy systematically. We call this challenge

the challenge of patchiness: students have erratic and patchy information on philosophy, as a systematic philosophical course is lacking.

The second challenge to introducing philosophy comes from the fact that current students are part of the Z generation. According to Michael Dimock from Pew Research Center, this generation is described as youth born in the mid-1990s through the late 2010s (Dimock, 2019). Marc Prensky dubs this generation as “digital natives” (Prensky, 2001). In the educational context, he elaborates that considering this characteristic, there is a disparity between educators (teachers and lecturers) and students. The disparity is exposed by educators in some forms of complaints, for example: they usually say, “Students now don’t want to do this or that, not like they used to.” “I can’t get them interested in ...” “They don’t appreciate this or that kind of assignment.” In Prensky’s view, the cause of this gap is the rapid development of technology. He writes “Our students today are all ‘native speakers’ of the digital language of computers, video games and the Internet ...” (Prensky, 2001). Meanwhile, the previous generation, who are now in the position of educators, are “digital immigrants”, people with innate concepts from the past who are trying to adapt to a new environment. However, as Prensky notes, these immigrants “always retain, to some degree, their ‘accent’, that is their foot in the past” (Prensky, 2001).

From the author’s observation, a comparable situation also occurs in Indonesia. Students in Indonesia are also digital natives who are accustomed to digital media, online games, the internet, and social media. The communication style and values that they strive for or that they consider valuable are different from the style and values held by educators, who are digital immigrants. Undeniably, this disparity is one of the obstacles in the learning process. The incomprehension between lecturers and students, misconnections, and irrelevance are very often frustrating not only for educators, but also for students. Therefore, a way must be sought so that the right learning process can occur, and students are able to develop their abilities more optimally.

This second challenge in introducing philosophy to students of the first generation is their characteristics as the Z Generation. Call this the

challenge of digital nativity: students are part of Gen Z who are constrained by the digital world. A solution to this problem must consider their deep engagement with the digital world.

The third challenge is specific to the Indonesian context: students in universities usually come from various places where educational facilities are unequal. Some places in Java and Sumatra are equipped with advanced facilities, whereas some remote areas like in Borneo, Sulawesi, Papua, or Flores have inadequate, even poor facilities. This gives rise to unequal ability between students in the classroom. Some students are provided with adequate facilities such as access to literature, and they can use gadgets freely, whereas others have very restricted access and are not used to the internet. This challenge can be called the challenge of unequal starting points: students come from different educational backgrounds, so they do not start to study philosophy at the same level of knowledge.

In response to these three challenges, the subject of Introduction to Philosophy taught in the Faculty of Theology, Sanata Dharma University, Yogyakarta, Indonesia, was carried out within three frameworks that were simultaneously implemented: Flipped Classroom, Refracted, and Socratic Learning.

First, flipped classroom. The term flipped classroom is called differently by different authors. It might be called flipped learning, inverted learning, inverted classroom, flipped teaching, or flipped course. Nonetheless, according to Abeysekara and Dawson (2015), there are some common characteristics of the flipped classroom. A flipped classroom is a learning model that moves the delivery of information about learning materials from inside to outside the classroom (Space), uses time in the classroom for active and social learning activities (Time), and requires students to complete pre- and/or post-class activities to benefit from in-class activities (Activities).

In addition to these three basic aspects, the Flipped Learning Network also provides four pillars of the flipped classroom that refer to the acronym FLIP (Talbert, 2017). The first pillar is a flexible environment, which provides opportunities for students to have a wide and diverse learning environment according to their own choice and context, while allowing teachers to be responsive to

the situation rather than merely following a rigid lesson plan. The second pillar is learning culture, which focuses on the learning process itself by inviting participants to foster an internal willingness to creatively find their own learning paths, with the teacher acting as a traveling companion who provides useful clues. The third pillar, intentional content, ensures that learning materials prepared in the form of texts, videos, images, or online content are explicitly directed toward learning objectives and focus heavily on educational quality rather than mere appearance. Finally, the fourth pillar requires a professional educator who must invest significant time and energy in advance to understand their students' context and "hot spots" to spark curiosity, while flexibly yet professionally utilizing classroom hours as a space to discuss and deepen the materials students learned beforehand.

Second, learning can be understood as refraction based on the Ignatian Pedagogy Paradigm. As seen in the flipped classroom model, this student-centered approach is central to the Ignatian Pedagogy Paradigm, which champions a holistic education involving all aspects of humanity, including the cognitive, affective, conative, and action dimensions (Mesa, 2017). In this holistic model, the learning process moves through five distinct, but interconnected stages: context recognition, experience, reflection, action, and evaluation. Context recognizes that learning never starts from a vacuum, meaning that students, educators, and the material itself are always shaped by a specific background, such as rapid technological advances. Experience, according to St. Ignatius, means to feel deeply and internally, describing the cognitive and affective activities used to grasp learning materials thoroughly so they influence decisions and actions through imagination, active questioning, and rational assessment (Loyola & Mullan, 2007). Following this, reflection engages the powers of the soul—cognition, affection, and imagination—to help a person fully understand what they experienced, allowing them to capture what is meaningful for their life and consider the implications for others and their environment. This internal reflection then manifests externally as action, where a conscious decision driven by the learning process is carried forward into real-world choices directed toward oneself, others, and society. The final stage is

evaluation, which serves as an integral part of Ignatian pedagogy to see how successful the process was and what can be adapted; however, it looks beyond mere academic skills to evaluate how well the person is developing into a well-rounded individual.

The development of this integral and whole person is implemented through refractive learning (Go, S.J. & Rita, 2019). While refractive learning shares similarities with the flipped classroom by putting students at the center of the experience, it expands its focus to develop all aspects of a person through the learning interactions between the world, the learners, and the educators. Go and Rita (2019) outline six aspects (the 6 Es) that characterize the relationships between these three parties, which are empathy and empowerment, expertise and enthusiasm, and engagement and excellence. The relationship between the educator and the learner is defined by empathy and empowerment, where the educator uses cognitive and affective abilities to understand the students' current conditions and complements this by trusting students with the autonomy to independently overcome problems. Meanwhile, the relationship between the educator and the world relies on expertise and enthusiasm, meaning the educator acts as an intellectual role model by connecting complex concepts and practical implications while demonstrating an adventurous, responsible curiosity for their field. Lastly, the relationship between the students and the world centers on engagement and excellence, which requires students to engage in direct contact with academic difficulties, challenging questions, and bold imaginations to navigate the complexities of their study, ultimately producing excellence that is both cognitively intelligent and affectively humanistic.

Third, the Socratic Method of Teaching and Learning. Learning philosophy systematically is a new thing for students in Indonesia in general, because, unlike in the West, in previous education levels, philosophy courses did not exist. This Introduction to Philosophy course has a very strategic task, which is not only to show philosophical thoughts that will be useful for them, but also to involve students in philosophizing independently. That is, in this course, students must be introduced not only to what philosophy is, but also to how to think, ask, and answer questions

philosophically. In learning philosophy, the Socratic method is known to lead people to the discovery of philosophical truths and to an understanding of how to philosophize itself (Biondi, 2008).

Martha Nussbaum gives the following characteristics of this Socratic method: “Philosophy breaks out wherever people are encouraged to think for themselves, questioning in a Socratic way. For all [...] students, philosophy supplies something that formerly was lacking - an active control or grasp of questions, the ability to make distinctions, a style of interaction that does not rest on mere assertion and counterassertion” (Nussbaum, 1997).

This Socratic method of philosophizing derives from Plato’s dialogues in his books. Plato’s books are not philosophical treatises or expositions, but dialogues between several characters. The main character who always appears in the dialogue is Sokrates. Some scholars argue that the Socratic figure in Plato’s books is different from the Socratic figure who lived at that time (Benson, 2011). What is unique in the Socratic method is that people are brought to philosophical conclusions not by being convinced by others, but through dialogue; people are invited to discover these conclusions for themselves. Socrates in the dialog plays the role of a midwife helping someone in labor. Socrates asks, argues, and confirms the thoughts and opinions of his interlocutor so that the person knows what conclusions he believes in, what arguments support them, how the arguments work (logic), and what the shortcomings are. The Socratic method is often called elenchos, because the purpose of the dialog and discussion between teachers and students is to seek essential truths whose arguments can be justified (elenchus) (Benson, 2011).

The study conducted aims to evaluate the triune approach in teaching Introduction to

Philosophy to Indonesian higher students, Flipped Classroom, Refracted and Socratic Learning. In this paper we show that this triune approach which was used simultaneously was effective, in the sense that these approaches could overcome the challenges of patchiness, digital nativity and unequal starting points.

METHODS

Approach

As mentioned above, the goal of the study is to evaluate whether the triune approach is effective in helping students to understand and engage in the subject of introduction to philosophy. To do so, we used a mixed method. We collected students’ perceptions of the pedagogical method used by asking them to give an evaluation. We then interpreted this data using Microsoft Excell that can produce an analysis of the trends. This data was then analyzed qualitatively by bringing together students’ reflections on the lessons at the end of the semester.

The case

The triune approach is applied in the class of Introduction to Philosophy for six months, beginning from July 2024 to December 2024. There are 14 lesson units in a semester, one midterm exam, and at the end of the course, there is a final exam. Each unit is conducted for 100 minutes. In some weeks, the lecturer provided pre-Class materials (texts, presentations, or videos) and post-Class materials (reflective questions, post-tests). Based on the refracted learning method, the subject has four aspects to achieve: competence, conscience, compassion, and commitment. The concrete goals of each aspect are described in the following table:

Table 1. Objectives of the Course “Introduction to Philosophy” (Faculty of Theology, 2024)

Competence	Careful in analyzing opinions and arguments
	Honest in analyzing one’s arguments
	Faithful to the logical and scientific way of thinking
	Scientifically responsible
Conscience	Have reflective - introspective abilities
	Generous in interpreting one’s arguments
	Have a positive point of view towards others’ arguments

Compassion	Compassionate towards friends in need and difficulty
Commitment	Faithful to read the text even when it is difficult
	Honest in reading and quoting texts

The classroom consists of 40 students. Most of the students, 34 (85%), are seminarians (candidates for the Catholic priesthood). They live in seminaries, catholic convents, or monasteries around the city of Yogyakarta and should follow their house rules. 35 students (88%) were male, and the remaining 5 (13%) were female. The situation reveals their condition and motivation in taking the Introduction to Philosophy course. From the questionnaire, it was found that 25 students (63%) attended the lecture because they were sent by their leaders and not because they wanted to take the course by themselves. Meanwhile, only 15 students (38%) attended this course of their own will. The implication of their backgrounds, that they are future Catholic priests and attend lectures because of orders from the leadership, is the high attendance rate and their activeness in participating in pre-class activities, in class, and after lectures.

Most of the students (95%) are 25 to 30 years old. It means that they were born between 1999 and 2004 and classified under Gen Z. Nonetheless, as we have indicated earlier, they do not have the same access to technology. This is not only because they come from different islands in Indonesia, but also because there are some restrictions for seminarians on whether they are allowed to bring and use their own gadgets. Outside of the classroom, all students have access to the pre-class materials, whether it is text, video, or PowerPoint presentations. However, as some seminaries and convents do not allow students to bring their own mobile phones or laptops, not all students had access to the interactive tests. There were only 29 students (73%) who had direct access to using their mobile phones or laptops in class. The remaining 28% did not have direct access. This is certainly a separate note so that the pre- and post-test forms can be adjust so that every student can participate.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Inequal access to tools (cell phones, laptops, and computers)

Qualitative insights from this study indicate that while a vast majority of participants maintain

independent digital access, the remaining 10% experience a profound form of exclusion since they do not have direct access to the necessary tools such as laptops or cell phones. In flipped or hybrid learning environments where independent pre-class preparation is a prerequisite for engagement, this gap transforms the digital divide from a simple logistical barrier into a systematic barrier to educational equity (van Dijk, 2020). Attewell (2001) in his foundational work on the first-level digital divide posits that the absence of physical hardware immediately collapses the infrastructure of the digital classroom for these individuals, effectively locking marginalized students out of the learning cycle, even before formal instruction even begins.

Beyond absolute access, the qualitative narratives highlight the nuanced realities of “fragmented access” among students who technically possess devices. Drawing on second-level digital divide theory, empirical research emphasizes that physical ownership does not guarantee functional equality in learning environments (van Deursen and van Dijk, 2019; Hargittai, 2002). Restriction to hardware or smartphones will limit students’ capacity for deep cognitive engagement, application multitasking, and the sustained attention required by complex pre-class modules (Warschauer and Xu, 2018). This structural friction ultimately induces acute academic alienation, underscoring the need for intentional institutional interventions to ensure learning frameworks remain equitable.

Most students have access to communication tools

The study reveals a stark disconnect between students’ digital access outside the classroom (90%) and their functional capacity to use these devices during formal lectures (73%). Within the Faculty of Theology, this drop is directly driven by institutional regulations imposed by seminaries and convents, which prohibit the possession and transit of independent hardware. This restriction creates a unique manifestation of the second-level digital divide, where access is not dictated by personal

finances but governed by the structural economies of the students' living environments (Karlsen and Ytre-Arne, 2022). Consequently, nearly a third of the cohort (28%) faces abrupt pedagogical exclusion during interactive modules. This dynamic reinforces the reality that technological integration is highly dependent on institutions; when a student's lived environment fragments their device portability, the classroom space inadvertently becomes a site of systemic marginalization.

To mitigate this disruption, the lecturer implemented an analog workaround by substituting digital interactive platforms with a paper-based test. While such adaptive strategies provide a temporary pedagogical failsafe to maintain basic inclusion, empirical research suggests that traditional paper alternatives fail to replicate the cognitive and social benefits of contemporary digital student response systems. Digital response platforms foster engagement by offering complete anonymity, which lowers students' evaluative anxiety and eliminates the fear of public mistakes (Yu et al., 2014). Conversely, transitioning device-insecure students to highly visible, paper-based assessments while their peers utilize personal technology can inadvertently compromise this anonymity, potentially highlighting the institutional restrictions of non-device users and disrupting the synchronized, data-driven feedback loops essential for active learning environments (Caldwell, 2007).

Texts in local language and video presentations with explanations are perceived as most helpful

The study further shows that students strongly preferred for native-language texts and guided audiovisual materials, both of which were described as highly effective for autonomous pre-class preparation. Participants consistently reported that Indonesian texts paired with explicit video explanations provided a clear, accessible pathway to understanding complex topics before entering the formal lecture space. This positive reception aligns closely with Mayer's (2005) Cognitive Theory of Multimedia Learning, which posits that working memory is significantly optimized when verbal and visual information are processed concurrently rather than in isolation. Similarly, the integration of educational films received strong praise, with students noting that the visual narrative structure helped ground abstract concepts. By pairing native-language prose with synchronized audiovisual cues,

the instructional design successfully reduced the students' extraneous cognitive load. This allows first-year undergraduates to build a stable conceptual foundation with minimal learning friction (Paivio, 1986).

Conversely, the data highlight a significant pedagogical barrier regarding the deployment of foreign language resources. Flipped modules delivered via English texts were widely perceived as unhelpful and functionally inaccessible by the cohort. In educational linguistics, this steep drop in comprehension is recognized as a consequence of high cognitive friction and language anxiety, which commonly afflicts early-stage university students who have not yet developed an academic schema in a second language (See MacIntyre, 1999). Forcing students to simultaneously decode unfamiliar academic vocabularies and complex theological theories creates an additive disadvantage that halts independent learning. These narratives emphasize that for flipped classrooms to remain equitable and effective, instructional materials must be culturally and linguistically responsive to the developmental stage of the learners.

Pre-class materials are seen as more beneficial

Narratives from participants highlight that the deployment of structural pre-class materials, specifically native-language texts, static slide decks, and narrated video presentations, cultivates a highly supportive ecosystem for autonomous study. Students consistently associated these digital formats with an enhanced sense of temporal flexibility, reporting that the ability to pause, rewind, and review complex concepts at their own pace fostered a strong sense of personal agency over their academic progress. This developmental shift from a passive recipient of instruction to an active agent is well-documented in the literature as a core component of self-regulated learning theory (Zimmerman, 2000). By transferring the initial baseline information delivery outside the physical classroom walls, these multi-format resources encourage students to take ownership of their learning trajectories. This structural autonomy actively encourages them to seek out supplementary academic literature independently to fill gaps in their understanding.

Furthermore, this multi-modal approach to pre-class preparation serves as a powerful catalyst for intrinsic student motivation. The positive reception

of these materials can be understood through the lens of Self-Determination Theory, which posits that academic engagement flourishes when an environment supports a student's need for autonomy and competence (Ryan & Deci, 2020). Rather than experiencing the pre-class phase as an isolated or rigid chore, participants noted that the varied formats sparked a deeper curiosity about the subject matter. Previous empirical research confirms that when multi-modal scaffolding successfully lowers cognitive friction during independent study, it naturally stimulates epistemic curiosity (Litman, 2005). Consequently, providing flexible, student-centered digital materials does not simply prepare students logistically for the upcoming lecture; it fundamentally reshapes their academic identity, transforming early-stage university students into self-directed, motivated learners who are equipped to navigate advanced academic inquiries.

Socratic learning model lectures are considered very helpful

Reflections from the participants indicate that integrating the Ignatian Pedagogical Paradigm (IPP) with a Socratic learning approach creates a highly engaging and holistic educational environment. Students noted that this framework drew them into active participation, bridging both cognitive development and affective engagement. The inclusion of real-time gamified tools like Kahoot and interactive dialogue fostered a sense of enthusiasm and emotional investment in the coursework, which effectively lowered their affective filters. This dual engagement supports the foundational tenets of holistic learning theory, which posits that deep cognitive processing is intrinsically linked to positive emotional states (Immordino-Yang & Damasio, 2007). Furthermore, the deliberate cultivation of academic freedom allowed students to express diverse opinions openly and fostered further intellectual autonomy. This aligns with the core stages of the IPP—Context, Experience, Reflection, Action and Evaluation, where learning is treated not as a passive transmission of information, but as an active, dialogical exploration of truth within a secure community of inquiry (International Commission on the Apostolate of Jesuit Education (ICAJE) 1993).

Despite these overwhelmingly positive dynamics, the data exposes a systemic challenge regarding structural time constraints. While the Socratic open-dialogue model stimulated deep epistemic curiosity, the rigid 100-minute lecture limit (2 x 50 minutes) frequently left complex intellectual inquiries truncated. In certain educational research, this tension represents a classic conflict between “covering” a curriculum and “uncovering” concepts through dialogical inquiry. When rigorous Socratic questioning meets strict institutional scheduling, it can induce cognitive dissonance or dissatisfaction if the dialogue is halted before reaching a satisfying conceptual resolution (Copeland, 2005). To prevent this temporal friction from stalling student momentum, previous research suggests extending the reflective cycle of the IPP beyond the physical classroom walls. Implementing post-class asynchronous discussion boards or digital journaling prompts allows students to continue processing unresolved questions, ensuring the contextual exploration remains thorough without being cut short by the clock.

The lecture on introductory philosophy brings about changes within

The analysis reveals that students' written reflection (the final stage of the Ignatian Pedagogical Paradigm (IPP)—Action—serves as a powerful vehicle for internal transformation. Rather than limiting the educational outcome to passive knowledge acquisition, the lecturer's use of targeted reflective prompts channelled student insights into measurable personal growth. The universal reporting of meaningful and inspiring experiences confirms that the course successfully bridged the gap between abstract academic contents and the students' lived realities. This profound shift aligns with the core philosophy of the IPP, which defines “action” not merely as external behavior, but as a deeper internal commitment to truth, character growth, and intellectual integrity born from sustained critical reflection (International Commission on the Apostolate of Jesuit Education (ICAJE) 1993).

The specific dimensions of change articulated by the students highlight a multi-faceted process of cognitive and psychological development. The cultivation of a critical attitude, systematic thinking, and intellectual accountability directly mirror the

intended outcomes of Mezirow's (2000) transformative learning theory. By confronting complex philosophical ideas, students underwent a structural shift in their frames of reference, moving from unexamined assumptions to reasoned, responsible arguments. Furthermore, the simultaneous shift from negative to positive academic self-appraisal illustrates an expansion of academic self-efficacy (Bandura, 1997). When introductory students demystify a historically intimidating subject like philosophy and realize their own capacity for rigorous critique, their locus of control shifts. This synthesis of theory and student testimony underscores that when structured reflection closes the learning loop, it does more than clarify subject matter; it fundamentally reshapes the learner's identity, producing self-aware thinkers who possess both the cognitive tools and the moral agency to act responsibly in the world.

CONCLUSION

The implementation of three pedagogical approaches in the Introduction to Philosophy course the Flipped Classroom, the Refracted Learning of the Ignatian Pedagogical Paradigm, and Socratic Learning has been demonstrably effective in supporting students. These methodologies were selected in consideration of the students' context as members of Z Generation, the objective of cultivating students' potential, not only intellectually but also as a whole human being, and the intention to foster an initial understanding of philosophy as a discursive discipline. The developmental initiatives thus far have yielded notable positive outcomes for students, encompassing not only cognitive competence but also the cultivation of conscience, the capacity for compassion, and a steadfast commitment to consistency between knowledge and action. This success has been clearly evidenced by the personal transformations described by students in their reflections.

Nonetheless, the integration of technology within the learning process – pre-Class, during the Class, and post-Class sessions – warrants careful consideration, given the unequal access to such resources among students. This disparity arises from the situation of many students residing in seminaries or convents, which precludes them from personally possessing gadgets. To ensure equitable

learning opportunities, an appropriate innovation is the manual distribution of texts to all students.

In a broader perspective, the combined application of these three approaches in the Introduction to Philosophy course appears to effectively address the prevailing challenge of introducing philosophy, a subject that is often regarded as an abstract and unfamiliar field, in a manner that is both engaging and capable of arousing greater curiosity. Offering students the opportunity to study course material in advance, facilitating open and unrestricted discussion, and encouraging post-class reflection have all proven effective and appealing for the internalization of course content. Nevertheless, it is important to emphasize that the findings from research on the development of these approaches do not negate the merits of alternative pedagogical and instructional models.

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