

Chapter 6

Post–Adult Education Alternatives in 45 Years of Learning/Teaching: An Integral–Informed Autoethnographic Reflection

R. Michael Fisher

University of Calgary, Canada

ABSTRACT

The author critically examines the directional trends that education has gone through in the last 45 years of his teaching and learning experiences, primarily in Alberta, Canada (1972-2017). He argues that, formerly, Alberta was at the leading edge of positive progressive change, before neoliberal ideology invaded Education. Through use of autoethnographic reflection and sociocultural and political contextualization of his educational experiences, the author elaborates the necessity of adopting a holistic-integral alternative path to research and teaching outside of institutionalized mainstream education systems. His emphasis on the affective domain, for example the importance of fear in education, is accompanied by his applications of developmental notions of “post-adult,” transdisciplinary, and integral theoretical work. The purpose of the chapter is to demonstrate, through his own life, a model of potential guidance for teachers, who are questioning how best to negotiate their own careers within the challenges of 21st century neoliberalism and cascading global crises.

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INTRODUCTION

A Narrative-Based Integral Methodology

If I am going to promote an *integral education* beyond merely a holistic or integrative education of multiple perspectives, I feel obligated to apply integral methodology. Likewise, I ought to performatively write integrally as well—as much as I am capable. Although this chapter is not action research nor a best example of action research in my teaching history for 45 years, it is an acting upon my own life as a teacher/learner for the purpose of my own growth, healing and potential transformation. I want to be a better teacher and person, in a better world.

For the past 60 years in North America (at least), the field of Education has universally been greatly impacted in a positive way by two influences: *reflective practice* and *action research*. Teachers have become classroom researchers, and like this chapter for me, they are encouraged to put themselves under the lens of investigation and critique (both positive and negative). There is more to good education and development of a quality teacher than merely delivering content effectively and/or be a nice caring person.

I have set out an integral methodology guideline for myself for this chapter. The guideline begins by foregrounding self-reflectivity to the point of creating a “study” using autoethnographic principles, whereby I attempt to research *myself* as intimately interrelated with the *culture* in which I teach and learn. Context is important, to make this not an autobiography—all about me. Yet, the structuration is a narrative-based personal “story” about a specific learning/teaching journey. Ultimately, the chapter’s purpose is to better understand Education historically, especially in Alberta and beyond, and offer my journey as a model of potential guidance for other teachers, who are negotiating their careers in the context of a 21st century of global cascading crises.

What is not usual about my interest in Education is the emphasis on the affective domain. Leitch and Day (2000) make a critical point, that reflective practice and action research methodologies for teachers and educational researchers have been overly dominated by rational cognitive models and theories. These two researchers argue that there needs to be a better ‘balance’ and integration of the “role of emotion in understanding and developing the capacities for reflection which facilitate personal, professional and ultimately system change” (p. 179). In other words, their critique is that we have not been attentive enough on the impact that emotion has on determining the quality by which teachers, in particular, research themselves using reflective practice and action research approaches.

Since 1989 my special focus has been on the so-called emotion named “fear.” I mean to emphasize that my study is transdisciplinary, and thus I have concluded that ‘*fear*’ today is not what it used to be—that is, as it was (and still is) typically framed in a more traditional disciplinary methodological container—primarily, that of Philosophy, Psychology and Medicine. Education as a field has largely been dependent on psychology to tell it what it is supposed to think about human affect. My work challenges that assumption.

The most important role of transdisciplinary research and thinking has been its emphasis on “integrating epistemics (i.e., [diverse] ways of knowing)” and the deeper analysis of “world views” that shape the researcher (Scholz, 2017, p. 1). I have wanted to know what shaping worldviews lie deep below the surface of people and cultures and how they determine not only the behavior of fear as an emotion (e.g., fears, phobias)—but how they determine the very way we perceive and understand *fear itself*—and, concomitantly the way we perceive ourselves. All of which determines how we practice *fear management*

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