

Engaging with Meditative Inquiry in Teaching, Learning, and Research Conference Proceedings Day 2: August 17th, 2022

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7) Book Contributors' Panel 1: Reflection, Contemplation, and Meditative Inquiry

Adrian Downey, Christopher T. McCaw & John Quay, and Christina Flemming

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Abstract

In *Book Contributors' Panel 1: Reflection, Contemplation, and Meditative Inquiry*, the scholars consider transformative mindsets; praxis and visual methodologies; and autobiography as a method for research. In "Mindset and Meditative Inquiry," Adrian Downey examines growth mindset in relation to meditative inquiry and the concept of *yet*. McCaw & Quay consider tools and practices that encourage and contribute to teacher liminality in "Picturing Meditative Inquiry in Dialogue with Heideggerian, Deweyan, and Buddhist Praxis." Christina Flemming presents "Autoethnography as Meditative Inquiry," highlighting the similarities of these methods of inquiry as self-directed creative processes. Christina shares an example of her own research, reading a story she wrote about her experiences embracing her queer identity.

Meditation: This session began with a guided meditation by Christina Flemming. She brought us to concentrate on external awareness of stimuli, asking us to tune in and actively listen to our environments. The practice brought us to a place of attention and awareness of self.

YouTube Link:

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=sdJuj5v4gN8&list=PLfVjDB_dQhEomgiYYmBJKj1nvD1oGBwaf&index=7&t=1s

Keywords: *growth mindset, self-beliefs, meditative inquiry / reflection, contemplation, non-duality, meditation, temporality / Autoethnography, meditative inquiry, arts-informed research, queer identity, writing as inquiry*

Mindset and Meditative Inquiry

Adrian M. Downey

Mount Saint Vincent University

My presentation emerged from an article titled “Mindset and Meditative Inquiry” published in *The Journal of Educational Thought*, which was then republished in the book *Engaging in Meditative Inquiry in Teaching, Learning, and Research* edited by Ashwani Kumar. The chapter focused on a conceptual conversation between Carol Dweck’s work on growth mindset and Ashwani Kumar’s writing on meditative inquiry. I first discussed the ideas of growth and fixed mindset, which are called incremental and entity self-belief elsewhere in the literature. The difference between the two centres around the word “yet”. In the fixed mindset, one’s mentality is that one’s abilities are unchangeable (e.g., I am not a good race car driver). In the growth mindset, one’s mentality is that one’s abilities can change (e.g., I am not a good race car driver, yet). Through time, attention, practice, and effort, one can become better at whatever one attempts to do. After I described these two mindsets from Dweck’s work, I emphasized how Kumar’s writing on meditative inquiry presents a vision of growth that is in-tune with the self. Rather than continually striving to become better at something, Kumar advises that we ought to follow our intuitive intelligence and do what our heart truly desires. Through that process, we will grow—but growth is not the goal, rather a by-product of living authentically. Putting Dweck’s work into conversation with Kumar’s yields two key insights. First, the fixed mindset and meditative inquiry share an acceptance of the self, but for different reasons. The difference hinges around whether acceptance is out of insecurity or true

understanding of self. Meditative inquiry asks us to accept ourselves, including our limitations, out of a true understanding of who we are rather than any fear of inadequacy, as we would in the fixed mindset. Second, growth mindset and meditative inquiry share an emphasis on human potential, but for different reasons. As above, the difference hinges around whether growth is a goal or a by-product of a wider, holistic engagement with life. Fundamentally, the key difference between growth mindset and meditative inquiry is that meditative inquiry asks us not to strive, while growth mindset encourages us to do so. In conclusion, I encouraged meditative inquiry not as a panacea for every educational ailment—indeed, some of my own work highlights the limitations of meditative inquiry—but rather as a practice with generative potentials for self-discovery. It is an openness to a wider engagement with life, in that it offers a new perspective to an education system often too caught up with its own perpetuation to see outside of itself. My own engagement with meditative inquiry has been fraught and difficult, and I think it is important to remember that this is an ongoing engagement, not a one-time phenomenon. What meditative inquiry offers is an expanded perspective on the purposes and directions of education, and in that it remains a valuable contribution of the lexicon of curriculum theory.

Picturing Meditative Inquiry in Dialogue with Heideggerian, Deweyan, and Buddhist Praxis

Chris McCaw & John Quay

University of Melbourne

Our presentation uses data generated through participatory visual methods to elaborate on

philosophical arguments put forward in our chapter published in the edited volume *Engaging with Meditative Inquiry in Teaching, Learning, and Research* (Kumar et al., 2022). In that chapter, we started with the notion that the project of curriculum as meditative inquiry (Kumar, 2013) brings with it a variety of philosophical challenges, in part because it requires venturing into territory not often encountered in conventional, method-centric considerations of education. Specifically, it provokes educational thinkers to look beyond images of teachers' work as a form of reflective practice, and to explore contemplation, meditation, and awareness as foundational dimensions of transformative teaching. Bringing the work of Kumar into dialogue with Heideggerian, Deweyan, and Buddhist praxis, we addressed two challenges. The first was to produce a clear conceptualization of the kind of *awareness* grounding meditative inquiry, which we conclude is "aesthetically whole, non-dualistic, and held in a delicate embrace of non-grasping wonder and equanimity" (McCaw & Quay, 2022, p. 150). The second related to the question of the *tools* and *practices* available to educators to embark on meditative inquiry. Here, we identified "invitations or entry-points to meditative inquiry, grounded in the cultivation of non-clinging and non-craving through meditative practices of non-action: relaxation, letting go, and letting-be" (p. 150). Our presentation explores and illustrates how these dimensions of meditative inquiry emerge and manifest in the lived experiences of educators, using visual data from an empirical study of beginning teachers who were also committed meditation practitioners. Participants produced drawings which engaged creatively with metaphor to express the complex relationships between teaching

practices and meditation practices. In creating direct, holistic mappings of meaning from one domain to another, visual metaphors are useful modes for meditative inquiry. Drawings, in particular,

"...offer a different kind of glimpse into human sense-making than written or spoken texts do, because they can express that which is not easily put into words: the ineffable, the elusive, the not-yet-thought-through, the subconscious."

(Weber and Mitchell, cited in Kearney & Hyle, 2004, p. 3623).

Three participant drawings are presented for consideration. The first places the teacher metaphorically between multiple mirrors, inviting an analysis of processes of looking-out and looking-in in meditation, and of the dualistic relation between self and world in conventional notions of reflection. The second depicts the teacher with their head metaphorically replaced by a set of gym weights. This image stimulates a discussion of how external structural conditions of policy and curriculum, as well as internal factors such as values, thoughts and personal history, shape educator subjectivity, and obstruct a present and transparent relationship with students. Thirdly, a minimalist drawing of a rock being thrown into a pond invites an exploration of what non-dualistic, responsive presence might look like in the everyday practice of the teacher. Together, the drawings presented provide compelling colour, movement and richness which illustrates how practices of meditative inquiry may intersect with and shape the professional lives and activity of educators.

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Autoethnography as Meditative Inquiry

Christina Flemming

Mount Saint Vincent University

Within her chapter in the book, *Engaging with Meditative Inquiry in Teaching, Learning, and Research*, Christina Flemming explores the notion that art creation processes and autoethnographic writing both share various commonalities with meditative inquiry. This discovery arises because of Flemming's own artful autoethnographic approach, which centers around writing as inquiry. Due to the nature of the creative process, an auto-ethnographer must leave space for the unanticipated. In other words, just as things flow in life, the writer never knows precisely where things will go until the writing itself feels

complete. An artful approach to research often means that one does not know exactly what form the final product will take. This process involves a certain amount of risk, or at least surrendering to uncertainty. Yet, just as the artist must eventually shape her work into its final form, the autoethnographic researcher must ultimately connect her own lived experiences to wider sociocultural issues. The purpose of Flemming's research is to center the importance of sharing stories within the context of education. Sharing stories within the classroom is particularly empowering for those belonging to groups that have been traditionally silenced. Furthermore, exploring the development of her own identity as a queer educator has been a therapeutic journey for Flemming. There is freedom in embracing the unknown. During this conference session, Flemming shares insights into the similarities between embracing meditative inquiry as an approach to both scholarship and life, and the process of crafting her own autoethnographic stories. In order to highlight both the process and product of this type of personal research, Flemming reads one of her own stories aloud. Within the story, she explores embracing her own queer identity and how personal transformation blossoms both on one's inside, as well as on one's outside—through clothing as a form of expression. Just like one literary hero, Oscar Wilde, Flemming embraces fanciful clothing as a mode of embodied autobiography.

Author Bios

Adrian M. Downey is an assistant professor at Mount Saint Vincent University (MSVU). He holds undergraduate degrees in music and education from Bishop's University, a Master of Arts in Education from MSVU, and a PhD in educational studies from the University of New Brunswick. His research generally focuses on curriculum studies and the foundations of education. He can be reached at Adrian.Downey@msvu.ca
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John Quay is an associate professor in the Graduate School of Education at the University of Melbourne. His main research and teaching interests include philosophy of education, outdoor education, environmental education, physical education and curriculum theory. John has published books and journal articles which convey his thinking in these areas. Books include *John Dewey and Education Outdoors* (Sense Publishers, with Dr Jayson Seaman) and *Understanding Life in School: From Academic Classroom to Outdoor Education* (Palgrave Macmillan).

Dr Christopher T. McCaw is a Lecturer in Education at the Melbourne Graduate School of Education, Australia. His research and thinking inquires into the nature of teaching and teacher professionalism, the purposes of education, post-secularism in education, and questions of self, identity and agency. He has a specific interest in the integration of contemplative practices, such as mindfulness and yoga, into educational discourses and practices. Christopher also has a background working as a classroom teacher in secondary schools, specialising in inquiry learning in the sciences, humanities and philosophy.

Christina Flemming is a lifelong writer and artist. She is the Managing Editor of *Art/Research International: A Transdisciplinary Journal*. She is also a PhD candidate (ABD) in the Inter-University Doctoral Program in Educational Studies through Mount Saint Vincent University (MSVU). Her doctoral research has enlivened her love of many things, including teaching. She is part-time faculty in Education at MSVU. Her research interests include autoethnography, poetry, and storytelling. As an arts-informed researcher, Flemming is always seeking to explore the multidimensional ways in which individuals come to learn about themselves and the world.
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8) Book Contributors' Panel 2: Dialogue and Meditative Inquiry

Vikas Baniwal, Paul Stemmler & Krista Ritchie, and Rajean Willis

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Abstract

This panel presentation explores teaching experience and meditative inquiry, linking theory to practice, as well as the importance of self-study and dialogue. Vikas Baniwal considers the value of dialogical connection in the educational experience in "Dialogical Relationships in Higher Education." Paul Stemmler and Krista Ritchie compare meditative inquiry and Maslow's concept of self-actualization in "Linking Learning Theory and Evidence to Meditative Inquiry." Rajean Willis discusses the importance of meditative for trauma-informed practice in her presentation "Explorations of Trauma through Meditative Inquiry."

Meditation: Kristie Ritchie offered a meditation at the beginning of this session that was introduced to her by her father. She shared a meditative visualisation, manifesting a colour and object, asking participants to concentrate and focus. She concluded with a body scan, connecting participants to body awareness. She brought us to a space of safety and positivity.

YouTube Link:

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ypzVwm8jCmo&list=PLfVjDB_dQhEomgiYYmBJKj1nvD1oGBwaf&index=8&t=2s

Keywords: *dialogue, contemplative practice, meditative inquiry, contemplative methods / psychological needs, vulnerability, dialogue / trauma, social justice, social work, healing*

Dialogical Relationships in Higher Education

Vikas Baniwal

University of Delhi

Extending the discussion presented in my chapter "Ruminations on Dialogue as a Form of Meditative Inquiry" published in Kumar's *Engaging with Meditative Inquiry in Teaching, Learning, and Research*, the theme of this presentation is the

nature of dialogical engagement between supervisor and master's and PhD scholars. The foundational assumption of the practices shared in my presentation are that dualities of personal-professional, reason-emotion, individual-collective, inner-outer, and so on are hindrances to the quality of a study. Therefore, the topic of the study must emerge from the master's and PhD scholar's experiences, as it provides the passion and perseverance for an intense

engagement of four to five years. In this process, the work takes a direction that resonates most with the scholar, bringing conviction to the study. Such an in-depth personal engagement between the supervisor and scholar often questions the established patterns of interactions, institutional hierarchy, and pre-defined roles. A dialogical relationship also counters the instrumental approach to educational research. Since the study emerges from the person, it involves mutual vulnerability, which widens the supervisor's role, making them a constant companion and support with a deeper engagement in the study while making the scholar more accountable. It makes academic study a systematic way to understand life.

Dialogue enables mutual trust, which is vital for a deeper engagement, and if other scholars reciprocate this trust, then a community of scholars emerges. A community of scholars—where sharing experiences, learning, and brainstorming with the co-scholars takes place—is vital as that space is relatively free of hierarchy.

A dialogical relationship involves an approach which requires care, compassion, and awareness as there are moments of emotional turmoil and feeling lost, which also bring humility, personal and professional growth, and a nuanced understanding of the study. The ethos of the space where such engagements take place also plays an important role; however, such an engagement is never smooth sailing. The dialogic may not emerge. Often, deeply personal questions create restlessness among scholars and supervisors. It is full of struggles and painful experiences. Nevertheless, if it emerges, a dialogical relationship makes teaching, supervision, mentoring, and relating with other people a rewarding experience.

Linking Learning Theory and Evidence to Meditative Inquiry

Paul Stemmler

Halifax Regional Centre for Education

Krista C. Ritchie

Mount Saint Vincent University

Moments of vulnerability are nearly always those moments when we are in dialogue with each other, and learning is inherently dialogic. To be at the precipice of trying to do things you do not yet know how to do requires trust and an openness to vulnerability. Students are not the only ones embracing positions of vulnerability. Teachers too, particularly early career teachers, are learning every day. Being open to grow and learn is also being open to struggle and fail in relationship with others.

“To share your weakness is to make yourself vulnerable, to make yourself vulnerable is to show strength” was shared through a blog by Criss Jami in 2011. This adage of vulnerability and the deeply personal and fundamentally human experience to learn as social beings is not a new topic of discussion. What has been lacking in education literature, however, is an interdisciplinary approach that acknowledges the insights that have been garnered about vulnerability (Tickle, 1991; Weidinger, Spinath & Steinmayr, 2016) and dialogue (Alfassi, 2009; de Mello, 2012) from diverse areas of philosophy, research, and practice. Kumar's (2022) book is a first attempt to bring often disparate fields together to discuss meditative inquiry and its central concepts. Coming from an educational psychology and learning sciences perspective, there is much research that has measured psychological concepts that indicate the deeply intra- and inter-personal nature of learning. To provide just one example of how this vast literature aligns with

the core tenets of meditative inquiry, we will review a classic here—Maslow’s hierarchy of needs (Maslow, 1958).

When trust is established within a learning community, everyone is able to open themselves to vulnerability and get to the real work of learning—to try, to fail, to explore, and to be. Maslow’s hierarchy of needs concisely summarizes the psychological needs that must be met to be ready to learn and inquire. The lower-level needs are foundational to achieving higher-level psychological needs. At the base, all people need to have their physiological needs met, such as consistent access to housing, food, safe drinking water, and healthcare. In the Canadian context, we cannot assume that all students are coming to class with these needs met. Imagine the trust required for a student to admit to a teacher that their inattention in class or poor performance on a task is because they are too hungry or tired. When a teacher knows, they can help meet these physiological needs and nurture readiness to learn. Beyond physiological needs, psychological needs grow in complexity, from safety (no threats of violence, sense of security), social belongingness (trusting relationships with others), esteem (self-confidence and agency) and then, ultimately, self-actualization (awareness and realization of personal potential, including seeking personal growth through peak experiences). Self-actualization is a term Maslow used that one might consider to be a complementary concept to awareness within meditative inquiry. There is sufficient evidence from psychology, and the learning sciences more broadly, to move what we know about the vulnerable and dialogic nature of learning (Kumar, 2013) into teacher professional training, curriculum planning and enactment, and teaching standards. How then, do

we move forward? One way might be for curricula documents to move away from a tight grasp on pre-defined structures of knowledge toward inquiry-oriented curricula (LaBanca & Ritchie, 2011; Shore et al., 2009). Though there is value in curricula providing some consistency regarding what we want students to know, this is a low bar to aim for. More important to development and learning is knowing how to learn. If curricula documents moved content (current outcomes in most Canadian contexts) from *outcome* to a supportive appendix of cognitive models of what we hope students will understand about the world, then the *outcomes* can evolve to include self-awareness, ability to ask questions, find awareness of one’s interests, and the knowledge, attitudes and skills needed to pursue those interests. Now is the time for a move toward psychologically informed education to support student learning. Meditative inquiry is a philosophy of education that can facilitate conversation regarding how to achieve this call to action.

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Explorations of Trauma through Meditative Inquiry

Rajeon Willis

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In this presentation, I engage in self-reflection and dialogue regarding my experiences with meditative inquiry, an educational approach introduced to us by Ashwani Kumar in the Doctoral Seminar in Contemporary Educational Theory. I share my reflections on what I believe are the transformative aspects of meditative inquiry as a budding scholar. More specifically, I contemplate meditative inquiry as a means for

enhancing my understanding of research interests in trauma. In our book chapter for the meditative inquiry collection (Willis and Leslie, 2022), my co-author, Laura Leslie, and I contemplate how meditative inquiry can help us: a) expand our understanding of trauma, including cultural and intergenerational trauma; b) as an option for pursuing work in social justice from the inside out; and c) challenge mainstream ideas and definitions of trauma. I speak about my heritage as an Indigenous African Nova Scotian. Dialogical conversations and contemplative reflections are often transformative instances that give space to discuss different ways of knowing and allow marginalized individuals to examine their experiences with oppression. In our chapter, Laura and I write about resilience, trauma, and meditative inquiry. We consider these through a conversation about the sacredness of hair braiding, specific professional and personal events that shape us, and traumatic experiences that change us. I discuss how trauma is at times bigger than an individual experience, and may expand to include institutional racism by systems, race-based trauma and post-traumatic slave syndrome as described by Dr. Joy DeGruy (2017). I speak about how we are unpacking the layers of trauma, what we know, or what we don't know and how we see it. I conclude that meditative inquiry, with its emphasis on self-exploration, critical reflection, and collegial dialogue, can play an important role in understanding and healing trauma.

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Paul Stemmler is a high school teacher in Halifax Regional Centre for Education, within the Nova Scotia Department of Education and Early Childhood Development. A graduate of Mount Saint Vincent University's Bachelor of Education program, Paul studied philosophy with Dr. Kumar and collaborated on educational psychology research with Dr. Ritchie.

Krista C. Ritchie is an Associate Professor in the Faculty of Education and Mount Saint Vincent University in Halifax, Nova Scotia. A graduate of McGill University's Educational Psychology Master's and PhD programs, Krista is committed to projects where scholars and practitioners in education come together to better understand and serve children and youth.

Rajeane Willis is a proud Indigenous African Nova Scotian woman. She is a doctoral candidate in Educational Studies at Mount Saint Vincent

University and has an educational and professional background in clinical social work. Rajeane's research interests examine the intersectionality of race, culture, well-being, and social justice, particularly exploring cultural trauma and anti-Black racism, and the impact on African Nova Scotians with a call for holistic healing.

9) Book Contributors' Panel 3: Diverse Cultural Perspectives and Meditative Inquiry

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Abstract

In this panel, three authors offer presentations based on their explorations of commonalities between specific cultural ways of knowing and meditative inquiry, and the ways in which these perspectives can contribute to the field of education. In her presentation, “Exploring the Connections between Africentric Principles and Meditative Inquiry: Understanding their Significance for Teaching and Learning in Adult Education Contexts,” Susan Brigham explores the ways in which Africentric principles align with meditative inquiry, informing education through spirituality and social justice. Diane Obed discusses her deepening relationship with the world through Indigenous ways of knowing. Through her presentation, “Synergies Between Indigenous Ways of Knowing and Meditative Inquiry,” Diane highlights the ways in which Indigenous approaches and meditative inquiry support holistic and intuitive knowledge and practices. In his presentation, “Meditative Inquiry and Mindfulness,” David Sable shares his understanding of how mindfulness and meditative inquiry are both ways of knowing and being that can help us to be fully in the moment, and how important this is for education and learning.

Meditation: At the outset of this panel, Diane Obed led participants through a calming meditation, guiding us through mindful breathing and connection to the body. Her calm nature brought us to a state of ease and made us aware of our body and its connectivity to life around us.

YouTube Link:

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ddwSAwqil-g&list=PLfVjDB_dQhEomgiYYmBJKj1nvD1oGBwaf&index=9&t=2459s

Keywords: *meditative inquiry, Africentricity, adult education, spirituality / Indigenous, decolonization, diversity, holism / mindfulness, inquiry, awareness, paradigms, openness*

Exploring the Connections between Africentric Principles and Meditative Inquiry: Understanding their Significance for Teaching and Learning in Adult Education Contexts

Susan M. Brigham

Mount Saint Vincent University

In my presentation, I draw on my book chapter in Kumar's (2022) volume *Engaging with Meditative Inquiry in Teaching, Learning, and Research: Realizing Transformative Potentials in Diverse Contexts* (pp. 31-44). I explore points of coherence between Africentricity and Kumar's meditative inquiry-based approach and conceptualize how these two perspectives together inform the field of adult education. I underscore how Africentric principles and ideals provide grounding to educational aims and pedagogical processes, which are closely connected to Kumar's meditative inquiry approach. The presentation provides examples of pedagogical efforts that aim to awaken in students and teachers a sense of compassion, empathy, connectivity, creativity, open-mindedness, and cooperation.

Africentricity is a philosophy that centres people of African descent in any analysis (Asante, 2003). It provides a critical lens to address the general deletion of Black experiences and histories from curriculum, disrupt the authority of the dominant Eurocentric narrative, legitimize Black knowledge producers, bring into focus racial disparities, and challenge anti-Black racism and other forms of oppression (Asante, 2003; Brigham, 2021; Merriweather-Hunn, 2004). The purpose of Africentric adult education is to provide an educational environment in which African Canadian learners are not culturally oppressed in their sense of being (Asante, 2003) and to provide a critical lens for all adult learners to examine ideology. It acknowledges a collective

responsibility to actively re/claim our cultural heritage and epistemic centre.

Africentric principles align well with Kumar's meditative inquiry approach. I feel a sense of kinship with the meditative response as described by Kumar (2019) below:

Meditative inquiry allows one to see clearly and deeply how colonial, ideological, and neoliberal influences—characterized by, but not limited to, racial prejudices, political control of education, and economic and superficial view of education—operate within oneself as one relates with others in day-to-day living. (p. 11)

Africentric education envisages a fairer, more democratic world. It reflects the Ubuntu axiom *I am because you are* which implies an appreciation of the interconnected relationships between all people, past and present. It emphasizes unity, collectivity, communality, inclusion, and collaboration. While to some it may appear that Kumar's meditative inquiry is about the individual consciousness, a closer look into his work helps us see that a study of individual consciousness is actually a study of the collective consciousness as we all share and are deeply connected by human consciousness. Kumar (2013) reminds us that "Human consciousness, which is the basis of thoughts, feelings, and actions, is common to all humanity" (p. 41). This focus on human consciousness and its unity is central to meditative inquiry and Africentricity as it emphasizes our interconnectedness.

I conclude my presentation by emphasizing how the experiential, cultural, reflective, aesthetic, spiritual, dialogical, and community-oriented focus of Africentricity and meditative inquiry offer educators a plethora of perspectives to

experiment with in their own teaching and learning unique contexts. Through examples of practical pedagogical practices, I reiterate that Africentricity and meditative inquiry can together support our individual and collective pedagogical efforts at bringing personal and social transformation.

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Synergies Between Indigenous Ways of Knowing and Meditative Inquiry

Diane Obed

Mount Saint Vincent University

In this conference panel presentation, I begin the panel session with a brief breathing practice to allow for audience members to anchor their whole selves and attention into the virtual conference learning space. I then discuss intersections and similarities between Ashwani Kumar's innovative theoretical and practical approaches of teaching and curriculum as meditative inquiry and my own scholarly work on decolonizing education, Inuit land-based knowledge, and contemplative ecology in a Canadian context. I offer reflections from my chapter in the edited volume, *Engaging with Meditative Inquiry in Teaching, Learning and Research* (2022). I share my own stories that reflect decolonial and holistic learning from fellow humans—Inuit and Indigenous peoples—and more-than-human beings, such as the elements, including fire, seasons, waters, and other sentient beings. Indigenous approaches to learning from ecological settings and culture synergize naturally with the contemplative focus of meditative inquiry as they each emphasize self-awareness, holism, creativity, reflection, story, inter-subjectivity, interconnectedness, and embodiment among many other commonalities. For example, I offer reflections on how land acknowledgements can become further opportunity to engage in dialogue to deepen one's understanding of the importance of land acknowledgements for generating authentic relationships between Indigenous and

non-Indigenous peoples and what it could mean in terms of practicing equity and walking one's talk. Through dialogue as meditative inquiry, this engagement can assist in filling a gap in education, a gap that is left when cognitive learning is valued over all other forms of learning. Dialogue and teaching as meditative inquiry can facilitate more integration, embodiment, and congruence between one's values and behaviours. At a time when mainstream education seeks to diversify and include global and local forms of knowledge, each of these approaches offer holistic and intuitive knowledges and practices for deeper, meaningful self-engagement. I trust that a deepened and meditative engagement offers conditions conducive to self-inquiry that promotes an enhanced human capacity for greater attunement to ourselves, one another, and the earth.

Meditative Inquiry and Mindfulness

David Sable

Saint Mary's University

The premise of my conference presentation, drawn from the chapter with the same title in Ashwani Kumar's *Meditative Inquiry* edited collection, is that the understanding of consciousness and its transformation should form the core of educational experience. Meditative inquiry becomes a new paradigm for education. Mindfulness can be presented as an ally conducive to meditative inquiry.

Meditative inquiry is not a set of teaching techniques or a strategy, and, in its essence, mindfulness is also not a technique or a strategy. Like meditative inquiry, mindfulness is a foundational way of being. Although the popular mindfulness movement in western cultures began

with stress reduction techniques, mindful awareness can provide more. It can set the conditions for transformation at the level of consciousness, where the felt sense of connectedness and authentic dialogue may create new meaning from present experience, past the buzzwords of ideologies and culturally embedded conditioning. When mindful awareness is applied to interaction, it can have far-reaching transformative implications. It can transform education beyond simplistic rote learning, analytic problem-solving methods, or fragmented, critical reflection.

Meditative inquiry and mindfulness are ways of knowing by fully being in the present moment and releasing fixation on conceptual certainty. Rather than being fearful or feeling criticized for not knowing the correct answer, students come to be inspired by open awareness. They become familiar with resting in an alert openness first, rather than reacting only with discursive patterns of their past. This openness can be in relation to whatever content is proposed.

If we want to transform consciousness in education, we need to cultivate the seeds for mindfulness that already exist in the same manure that we may criticize at the same time for stifling human potential and protecting the status quo. We need to cultivate those seeds even when we perceive the ostensible purpose of education appears to be in support of simple rote learning and information transfer, or the more sophisticated but still objectifying critique of social structures, or even self-reflexive, but still dualistic critical analysis. When mindfulness is applied to many of the student engagement practices familiar to educators in multiple disciplines, such as journal writing, active listening, peer-to-peer inquiry, and dialogue, it is

not only a matter of conceptually identifying one's conditioning and habitual patterns to counter bias and confusion. Like meditative inquiry, mindfulness embraces immediate experience as an existential process that implies being present, open, and suspending judgement. In that space, the seemingly intractable problems of science—as well as the bias and confusion that produce racism and social inequality—can be holistically engaged, allowing clarity, fresh insight, and connectedness to emerge. Compassion and justice can come from the engaged, creative presence of participants. The dualistic struggle for power no longer defines the shared reality. The “seed” in this case is their appreciation of resting habitual conceptual efforts and allowing transformative experiences to arise. This approach moves participants toward mindful self-awareness and meditative inquiry, relaxing mental fixations, even if that is not named.

Author Bios

Susan M. Brigham, PHD is Full Professor in the Faculty of Education at Mount Saint Vincent University (MSVU). Susan's research interests include adult education, migration, diversity, and gender. Susan has conducted research and presented her work in North America, the Caribbean, Africa, Asia, and Europe. Her co-edited books include *Adult Education and Learning in Canada: Critical Legacies* (2021); *Building on Critical Traditions: Adult Education and Learning in Canada* (2013) and *Africentricity in Action* (2012). She is associate editor with the *Canadian Journal for the Study of Adult Education* and the *Alberta Journal of Educational Research (AJER)*.

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Diane Obed is a mixed Inuk community member with white settler ancestry from Nunatsiavut, Labrador. She is a mother, writer, and scholar who currently lives, studies, and works in Mi'kma'ki, Nova Scotia. Diane is currently enrolled in the Educational Foundations PhD program at Mount Saint Vincent University. ORCID:

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David Sable Ph.D. is the former editor of the *Journal of Contemplative Inquiry* and an Adjunct Professor in the Department for the Study of Religion at Saint Mary's University (SMU) in Halifax, Canada. His thesis titled, “The Impact of Reflective Practices on the Dispositions for Critical Thinking in Undergraduate Courses,” was nominated for Best Thesis in the Social Sciences (2012), and his work noted in the U.S. National Teaching and Learning Forum 2012 (21(4)). David has been introducing mindfulness and contemplative interaction in courses on Buddhism and Spirituality in the Workplace since 2003. He has led numerous professional development workshops and residential retreats for teachers at all levels of education.

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10) Book Contributors' Panel 4: Structure, Consciousness, and Change

Nayha Acharya, Mohamed Kharbach, Michael Cosgrove

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Abstract

This panel entails the contributions of four authors who have experimented with applying aspects of meditative inquiry in their own fields of specialism. In her presentation, "My Journey with Meditative Inquiry: Teaching, Learning, and Researching in Law and Dispute Resolution," Dr. Nayha Acharya shares her own journey with using meditative inquiry to inform her research and teaching in the fields of law and dispute resolution. Mohamed Kharbach explores the research potential he discovered through combining meditative inquiry with critical discourse analysis in a presentation entitled "Meditative Inquiry and Critical Discourse Analysis: A Hybrid Approach for Doing Educational Research." In the final talk of this panel, entitled "On the Significance of Meditative Inquiry in Teaching, Learning, and Living," Michael Cosgrove shares his experimentation with meditative inquiry approach in his high-school classes.

Meditation: The session began with Nayha Acharya leading participants through a pranayama breathing technique that brought us to attentive awareness. She carefully explained *nadi shodhana pranayama*, known as cross nostril breathing. She shared a mantra used in combination with this pranayamic breathing: the syllable "HUM" on the inhale, "SAH" on the exhale, that translates to "I am That". This breath work brought us to an attentive state, allowing for clarity of mind and calmness of the self.

YouTube Link:

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=AinBernvW9M&list=PLfVjDB_dQhEomgiYYmBJKj1nvD1oGBwaf&index=10&t=2s

Keywords: *law, dispute resolution, meditative inquiry / critical discourse analysis, critical pedagogy, meditative inquiry, consciousness, research methodology / curriculum, Krishnamurti, meditative inquiry, teaching*

My Journey with Meditative Inquiry: Teaching, Learning, and Researching in Law and Dispute Resolution

Nayha Acharya

Dalhousie University

In this presentation, I began by discussing how and why learning about the concept of meditative inquiry expanded my understanding of learning, exploring, and even just being. Before I had heard of this idea, I approached learning as a

fundamentally intellectual endeavour. Learning was about taking information and making it part of your intellectual repertoire, and exploration meant using your brain and logical analysis to solve things, find and understand the reasons behind things, put two and two together, determining cause and effect, and so on. This resulted in an over-development of the head and a prioritization of intellect, to the detriment of other types of engagement including emotional, aesthetic, or spiritual learning, which I believe have a better capacity to bring one closer to the Self than pure intellectualism does. Meditative inquiry initiated a new approach in which learning could be understood as an exploration into any subject, into life, into spirituality, into one's own self, that is not limited to the head region (or the intellect alone). It invites a person to see learning and exploration as a holistic immersing of oneself into the moment and whatever is going on in the moment—intellectually, but simultaneously emotionally, physically, spiritually, etc. In my presentation, I offered an autobiographical rendition of how this theme permeated my teaching practices as well as reoriented my research interests in law. I shared how I had used the teaching as a meditative inquiry approach in my Alternative Dispute Resolution course, which I teach at the Schulich School of Law, Dalhousie University (Canada). I discussed the value of giving students freedom and space and how these ignites their own passions and creativity in relation to the subject matter. I then explained how my study of meditative inquiry through the text *Curriculum as Meditative Inquiry* (Kumar, 2013) led me to perceive that while legal scholarship often centres around conflicts, it rarely, if ever, pierces the heart of conflict itself, which, as Kumar suggests, is fundamentally rooted in conflicted human consciousness. It would be very unusual to come across legal

scholarship that squarely recognizes that no legal or societal structure will resolve the *actual* problem of conflict. I narrated how coming to this understanding resulted in my scholarly focus on conflict resolution mechanisms that may enable deeper transformation of the individual, their personal and social relations, and thereby society. I outlined my future goal of more deeply theorizing mediation (third-party facilitated conflict resolution) through the lens of meditative inquiry.

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Meditative Inquiry and Critical Discourse Analysis: A Hybrid Approach for Doing Educational Research

Mohamed Kharbach

Mount Saint Vincent University

This presentation is based on a chapter I contributed to Kumar's (2022) meditative inquiry edited volume. In it, I discussed a possible extension of the intellectual boundaries of the concept of meditative inquiry beyond the field of curriculum studies and into the field of research methodology. More specifically, I tried to conceptualize a potential cross pollination between critical discourse analysis, the analytic framework I used in my doctoral research, and meditative inquiry. The goal is to explain the theoretical and methodological benefits that can potentially result from such integration particularly in the field of critical studies in education. Results from this discussion indicate the existence of both methodological and

theoretical commensurability between CDA and meditative inquiry and that together they constitute a holistic analytic framework that can be used in the study of educational discourse. Informed by the ethos of meditative inquiry, my argument is that CDA can help researchers—especially in the area of critical pedagogy—explore new possibilities of research and knowledge production. At the core of this exploration is discourse, that is, language in use. As a product of human consciousness, discourse plays tacit roles in shaping individual consciousness in ways that align with the dominant cultural, social, and political mainstream narratives. In this sense, discourse is ideologically oriented. Along this line of argument, the study of discourse, and, more specifically, educational discourse can help us better understand the discursive construction of learners' consciousness and how this consciousness is conditioned by different ideologies. To this end, a hybrid analytic framework is required, one that combines the ethos of meditative inquiry (e.g., awareness, critical consciousness, and self-reflexivity) with analytic concepts from critical discourse analysis (e.g., discursive strategies, narrative analysis, linguistic analysis, etc.). It is my contention that such an analytic approach has the potential to tap into unexplored research areas in educational scholarship and beyond.

References

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A Dialogue Between Two Teachers: On the Significance of Meditative Inquiry in Teaching, Learning, and Living

Michael Cosgrove

Halifax Regional Centre of Education

This presentation is part of a panel exploring the specific impact of meditative inquiry in the classroom, as well as its broader impact on learning and living. The first key question this presentation addresses is: How has the meditative inquiry approach influenced my classroom teaching?

In general, students found meditative inquiry meaningful, and when they discovered more about themselves and the world, they were firstly uncomfortable, then angry, and then inquisitive. It allowed them to inquire about their own conditioning, their views of success, and their relationship with others, and created an important space for growth in the classroom. This type of inquiry gave students an opportunity to explore some foundations of their beliefs, and also allowed them to challenge certain long held beliefs and ways of thinking. As one student responded, "We are afraid of being wrong, so we agree with what we think is right, even if not necessarily true."

A curriculum that includes meditative inquiry emphasizes dialogue, reflection, meditation, and creativity. I and my co-author, Shannon Power, expressed in our dialogue-based book chapter for the Meditative Inquiry edited collection that "We often separate school from life as if the whole thing is not one thing." As a result, "School risks being the place where learning means you should never be wrong."

In the classroom, when given space, students expressed their thoughts about social media, comparison, and judgement, and were comfortable questioning their beliefs within the framework of meditative inquiry. In this presentation, anecdotal responses are shared with the panel in the form of anonymous journal entries. Responses from the students generate engaging discussion on the panel, and the conference participants share their observations during the session.

Author Bios

Nayha Acharya is an Assistant Professor at the Schulich School of Law, Dalhousie University. She completed her LLB at the University of Alberta, and her LLM and PhD (Law) at the Schulich School of Law. She teaches and researches in the areas of legal ethics, civil procedure, and alternative dispute resolution. She is the recipient of the 2020 Law Students Society and Alumni Teaching Excellence Award from the Schulich School of Law. She has published several journals of interest to legal practitioners and academics as well as those in higher education, including: *Advocates' Quarterly*, *Canadian Journal of Law and Jurisprudence*, *Queens' Law Journal*, *Canadian Legal Education Annual Review*, and *Critical Education*.

Mohamed Kharbach holds a PhD in educational studies from Mount Saint Vincent University (MSVU) in Halifax, Canada. My immediate areas of research include critical pedagogy, emerging literacies, critical discourse analysis, curriculum studies, and identity studies. I am a junior affiliate with the Canadian Network for Research on Terrorism, Security, and Society. I am also affiliated with the International Society for

Research on Identity (ISRI) and the Canadian Society for the Study of Education (CSSE).

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Michael Cosgrove teaches English and Philosophy in high school, where he continues to find ways to incorporate the educational philosophy of Krishnamurti. He received a Bachelor of Arts and Bachelor of Education from the University of British Columbia, and a Masters in Education in both Educational Foundations and Curriculum Studies from Mount Saint Vincent University. He has written a book titled *Salt of the Turf* (2017) and is a regular contributor to *Halifax Magazine*. Michael resides in Dartmouth, NS with his wife and two daughters.

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11) Holistic Teachers' Panel on Meditative Inquiry

Alexandra (Ali) Barclay, Dawn Erley, Carolyn Prest, Yelena Smith, Jack J. Ward

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Abstract

This panel is comprised of classroom teachers, each offering presentations on the ways in which they have worked creatively with meditative inquiry in the classroom and their own lives. In her presentation, "Holistic Teaching with a French Twist," Alexandra Barclay discusses her journey with meditative inquiry on two levels—personal and professional—offering advice for teachers based on her own experiences. Dawn Erley, in her talk "Dialogical Meditative Inquiry in the English Classroom," shares her perspective of how meditative inquiry can help to support and inform necessary challenges that the Indigenous approaches are making to the current, standardized English Language Arts curriculum. Carolyn Prest's presentation, "21 Pillars: Promoting Meditative Inquiry in the Public School Classroom," examines how rural students' skills and strengths can be leveraged to help promote self-awareness and growth through meditative inquiry. In her presentation, "Thinking Inside of the Box through the Epistemology of the Russian Nesting Dolls," Yelena Smith offers a nesting doll metaphor to illustrate the process of self-reflection and learning she has developed in her History Class. Lastly, in his presentation, "Practical Applications in a High School English Classroom," Jack Ward describes the ways in which he utilizes journaling and self-inquiry with his students to fulfill provincial outcomes for a high school English class.

Meditation: The session began with Ali leading the conference attendees through a meditation that combined a white light meditation and chakric system scan. This visual meditation guided us to feel connection within the body, allowing positive imagery and focus. This brought our sense and awareness to energy centres in the body.

YouTube Link:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QfDOjU47NX8>

Keywords: *teaching, self-inquiry, Voltaire / dialogue, English, teaching / Rural education, meditative inquiry, holistic teaching / multiperspectivity, epistemology of the Russian nesting dolls, thinking inside the box, meditative inquiry, placefulness / meditative inquiry, holistic education, English, high school, student-centred*

Holistic Teaching with a French Twist

Alexandra Barclay

Mount Saint Vincent University

This presentation explores my journey as a public-school teacher, and how I approach meditative inquiry in my classroom. I examine how I use self-inquiry as a pedagogical method for teaching and learning in the classroom. Using two specific meditations on my teaching practice, I draw from the secondary school setting, and, more specifically, my experience teaching French language arts and IB. My personal and professional path as an educator is related to my worldviews in education which are in part influenced by a foundation year of study in philosophy at King's College in Halifax, Nova Scotia. I pose questions about my own self-awareness and actualization in the classroom, as well as contemplate on how to raise my students' self-awareness and actualization within the realm of language arts instruction. Discussing IB course themes such as *Partage de la Planète*, and novels such as *Candide ou L'Optimisme* (Voltaire, 1759/1975), I explore the value of dialogue and inquiry in the classroom that relate to emerging global challenges. I relate the story of Voltaire's *Candide* as a template for self-exploration as well as an exploration of the world and environment that creates the conditions of humankind. Voltaire suggests that human beings investigate and acknowledge the struggles of interpersonal relationships, the role of oppression, and the importance of an open heart and curiosity. Voltaire argues "il faut cultiver notre jardin" (p.176) —that translates to "we have to cultivate our garden"—and cleverly illustrates the concept of emancipation. I suggest that emancipating ourselves as teachers in the classroom leads to valuable teaching and learning moments, especially when speaking around

important global issues or literary works. I examine how providing space for students to use their imaginations and creativity yields greater engagement among learners. The presentation contemplates meditative inquiry, as proposed, and discussed by Ashwani Kumar and contributing authors of *Engaging with Meditative Inquiry in Teaching, Learning, and Research* (2022). I argue that creating space for discussion about learners' observations, lived experiences, self-inquiry, and awareness are valuable and contribute to the development of reflexivity. Using curiosity and investigation as a guide, I consider the importance of critical self-reflection and dialogue, as well as the impact of meditative inquiry, self-actualization, and social change through teaching, learning, and research.

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Dialogical Meditative Inquiry in the English Classroom

Dawn Erley

Halifax Regional Centre of Education

In this presentation on Dr. Ashwani Kumar's new book *Engaging with Meditative Inquiry in Teaching, Learning, & Research: Realizing Transformative Potentials in Diverse Contexts*, Dawn first reflects upon the necessity of bringing meditative inquiry into the English Language Arts (ELA) classroom. Examining the current state of

education through the lens of Dr. Kumar's text, she highlights that meditative inquiry is essential for helping students develop a deep awareness of the dimensions of life, which would enable them to engage with the challenges they face in a genuine way. Considering Dr. Kumar's text alongside ideas previously learned from Elizabeth Cremona, the Director of Education for the Eskasoni school board, Dawn emphasizes that the standardization of education under an outcomes-based model makes it difficult for students to develop and pursue their curiosities, make meaning of their learning, or intrinsically enjoy learning.

She then examines how meditative inquiry can help teachers and students overcome these aforementioned obstacles to meaningful educational experiences, with a particular focus on ELA. Meditative inquiry can help encourage curiosity in the ELA classroom through open-ended, minimally guided dialogues, in which students consider, share, and reflect upon the topics and ideas they wonder about. Curiosity can also be fostered through experiential learning, in which students travel to locations outside of the ELA classroom to consider how artists, authors, and others they have studied become inspired.

In the latter half of this presentation, Dawn considers the historic role of English literary studies and departments in dialogue with the contemporary position of ELA in education, recognizing that English literature has been a vehicle for colonial violence. To reconcile with the colonial legacy of English literary studies, students can engage in a dialogue with the subject itself through strategies like code-meshing, in which they pull together all of their rhetorical resources when creating written pieces rather than translating their Englishes into the standard

academic language. Additionally, ELA educators can demote the status of the formal academic essay in the classroom, instead focusing more attention on creative and personal writing which allow students to play with structure, punctuation, and spelling, as well as incorporate slang, AAVE, words in other languages, and so on to find genuine outlets of expression that honour their identities.

21 Pillars: Promoting Meditative Inquiry in the Public-School Classroom

Carolyn Prest

Public School Teacher, Nova Scotia

Passionate about providing students in rural areas with rich and relevant opportunities, my presentation examines how rural students' skills and strengths can be leveraged to help promote self-awareness and growth through meditative inquiry. As a teacher with experience at all levels of public education within rural settings, I observed that, for many who reside in rural Nova Scotia, there exists a profound connection between the self and the natural environment. Through my presentation in response to the meditative inquiry collection, I describe how I am able to use this connection as a safe and holistic space to foster my students' self-awareness through meditative inquiry. Highlighting some of the universal truths that can be gleaned simply by one's presence in the natural environment, I detail how I help my students find a quiet, respectful, and reflective learning space in nature, and then help them begin the inward journey of reflection and meditative inquiry. I noted that when working within a data-centric and results-based system there can be significant challenges to building a classroom culture that values meditative inquiry as a necessary foundation to authentic learning.

Oftentimes, it can be one's own fear of pushing the limits and adjusting the norms that prove the greatest barriers. In other cases, it is the traditional conceptions of the "good teacher" that subvert one's intentions to move our students toward awareness. I go on to describe how the meditative inquiry collection is positioned as a series of supports to the teacher in the school system who desires to provide their students with a more holistic, engaging, and self-aware experience. Along with providing examples of how meditative inquiry can be incorporated into many contexts, the collection addresses the fears that those working toward change may experience. Grateful for the opportunity to interact with the collection and its contributors, I recognize the shift of focus from outward to inward that must occur within the system in order to educate in today's society. Bolstered by the insight and advice of the collection, I am eager to continue my journey of awareness and inquiry with my students and colleagues.

Thinking Inside of the Box through the Epistemology of the Russian Nesting Dolls

Yelena Smith

Halifax Regional Centre of Education

Marathon runners have a great term, "to hit the wall." In the wake of the pivotal events of 2020, after 25 years in the classroom, I discovered that I had depleted my own sources of energy and hit the wall in my teaching practice. My brain started to feel like concrete posts, every online day was a triumph of will, and I seriously doubted that the race had a finish line. My students needed a more inspiring and less fatigued teacher. Surveying the premise of meditative inquiry with its power of silence (critically needed in a history classroom),

purporting a deep and liberatory self-reflection became the means of transforming the problem into the solution.

The goal of my presentation orbits around the nexus of the classroom teacher's mental well-being and the ensuing success of their students while practicing the meditative inquiry as a vehicle for the authentic self-positioning and integrating multiperspectivity in the history classroom. To develop the necessary attitudes, dispositions, and ways of thinking outside the box in students to eventually allow them to meaningfully engage with diverse perspectives, I have applied the epistemology of the Russian nesting dolls (Matryoshkas) emulating a deconstructive thinking allowing an individual to "look inwards" and see "inside the box" with the purpose of positioning oneself, identifying one's own erroneous ways of thinking and viewing the world. The analogy of the Russian nesting dolls comes to mind since the nesting dolls consist of an endless series of wooden figures, all resembling each other and sharing a common theme inside. Dolls then become the countless thoughts ostensibly unified by a common theme explored in the classroom. In the Russian Nesting doll worldview analogy, the dolls within the levels are all synergetic and interdependent. Accepting the inside the box view and thinking, with its potential subjectivity, informs the view that other dolls within the larger structure shift trying to readjust the flow and trajectory of the worldviews and multiple perspectives. The trick is to be always mindful of the center where the levels of wholeness converge and coalesce together—the dolls within us. We always teach who we are; to better engage with our students we first and foremost must have the courage to look inside of all of our boxes before we embark on the journey of thinking outside the box. To form a perspective,

the students need to look inwards and examine themselves, imitating the disassembling of nesting dolls. Like teachers, they need time and space where they learn to understand themselves. The silence affords a *placefulness* which can unsettle fixed narratives and allow new meanings and identities to emerge. Fostering a silent and spiritual placefulness for my students allows them to indulge into that momentum in an attempt to embrace multiperspectivity and birth a new, authentic, more perspicuous, and insightful frame of mind.

Practical Applications in a High School English Classroom

Jack J. Ward

High School English Teacher, Halifax Nova Scotia

When I was a child, my father stopped our car by the side of a country road, and we walked on to a farmer's field to explore an aging rusted combine. He approached this relic with curiosity and engaged me in a series of questions to "discover" the origins and purpose of this machine. Decades later, through the courses "Meditative Inquiry" and "Holistic Education," and especially through the collective essays found in Dr. Ashwani Kumar's new book *Engaging with Meditative Inquiry in Teaching, Learning, & Research: Realizing Transformative Potentials in Diverse Contexts*, I had consciously discovered new tools to improve my teaching methods.

With student-centred education transforming the modern public school system, I developed the language and framework to reimagine the high school grade English classroom. Contained herein, are the practical considerations to apply both holistic and inquiry-based methodologies to course structures from grades 9 to 12 in the

English classroom. From identifying the practical problems of engaging all stakeholders in education—students, parents, co-workers and administration—to designing approaches for scaffolding learning in ways that demonstrate achievement of skills and outcomes, I provide considerations for assessments, teacher classroom management approaches, and a complete example of what an Elements of Fiction Unit might entail.

All of these practical aspects are grounded in the *Seven Core Principles of Meditative Inquiry* from Dr. Kumar's textbook which represents some of the deepest aspects of learning.

Author Bios

Alexandra (Ali) Barclay is a doctoral student at Mount Saint Vincent University as well as a public-school teacher. Originally from Montreal, she teaches French Immersion, IB French and Yoga for South Shore Regional Centre for Education. She lives on the beautiful south shore of Nova Scotia with her partner, two children and fur babies. A nature lover and philosophy admirer, she has always found inspiration in yogic and Buddhist philosophies and practices. In fact, her first volunteer teaching experience was in Kathmandu, Nepal in 1995 which allowed her to adventure into the wilderness of the Himalayas and fall in love with yoga. Intrigued by the interplay of meditation and curriculum design, she tries to incorporate inquiry and dialogue in her classes as well as eco-literacy to engage students in exploring the emerging challenges facing the planet.

Dawn Erley is a new educator in Kjiptuk (Halifax). As a settler, continuously learning on these lands, she is interested in and compelled to deploy a teaching methodology that seeks to subvert the imperialist white supremacist heteropatriarchy, aptly termed by bell hooks. Since taking a course with Ashwani Kumar, she has become deeply fascinated by dialogical meditative inquiry and its power to help individuals become more aware and engaged within themselves and with the world.

Carolyn Prest lives and teaches in rural Nova Scotia. The nature of rural education being what it is, she has gained experience teaching many subject areas at all grade levels, but her passions lie in the Visual Arts and epistemology-related studies. She was formally introduced to the concept of meditative inquiry as an educational practice during her Master of Education program at Mount Saint Vincent University, while taking a course with Dr. Ashwani Kumar. She is particularly interested in how individuals can find themselves through experiences with and in nature, and how these types of experiences can be integrated into mainstream public-school curricula.

Yelena Smith was born and raised in the USSR. She has been fortunate to be educated in Russia, France, and the USA. Yelena is currently pursuing her Master's in Foundations of Education from MSVU and teaching IB History at Charles P. Allen High. Her true passion for social justice has materialized in founding an advocacy group, Cheetahs for Change, deeply grounded into amplifying the voices of the historically marginalized racial communities in Canada. She strives to create a community of learners that nurtures empathy, compassion, and emotional and academic growth in a positive environment.

Jack J. Ward is a teacher, writer, and podcaster in Halifax, Nova Scotia. He has been using the concepts of inquiry-based learning all his life: first unconsciously through the teachings of his parents and then formally during his Master of Education program at Mount Saint Vincent University, while engaged in courses with Dr. Ashwani Kumar. Jack is particularly interested in how stories inspire and create the world through creativity, imagination, and connectivity. He can be reached at jackjamieward@gmail.com or through the Mutual Audio Network.