

CHAPTER 6: VIEWING FROM WITHIN AND WITHOUT EDUCATIONAL RESEARCH AND PRACTICES

Whilst articulating my research problem in Chapter 1, I came up with five key themes of my inquiry. Taking the first theme in Chapter 2, I realized that *a dictating leadership* cannot facilitate empowerment, so I proposed *a communicating view of leadership*, thereby giving rise to *a transformative holistic view of leadership*. In Chapter

But seldom, if ever, do we ask the "who" question—who is the self that teaches? How does the quality of my selfhood form-or deform-the way I relate to my students, my subject, my colleagues, my world? How can educational institutions sustain and deepen the selfhood from which good teaching comes? (Palmer, 1998, p. 4)

3, I came to know that an inclusive image of curriculum as montage would better serve the purpose of transformative teacher education for Pakistan rather than relying on a single colored image, and a centralized curriculum under reforms. Arriving at Chapter 4, I came to realize that traditional teacher centered teaching, and to somewhat student centered pedagogies with limited use of CTs as tools to improve TLPs cannot be helpful to liberate learners. Under these circumstances, critical-creative pedagogies are envisioned.

Landing at Chapter 5, I discussed traditional assessment practices, and some formative practices, which eventually gave rise to a holistic authentic-developmental view of assessment to accomplish a transformative teacher education and research practices in Pakistan. Given this background, in this chapter, I am discussing on fifth and last theme of my inquiry guided by three research questions (in Chapters 6A, 6B & 6C). Here, my inquiry aims to know (1) *epistemic singularity* inspired from the paradigms of positivism and postpositivism, (2) *epistemic plurality* inspired from multiple paradigms, and (3) *epistemic approaches* of MDS inspired from within *inclusive-holism*.

CHAPTER 6A: JOURNEYING INTO POSSIBLY EPISTEMIC SINGULARITY
EMBEDDED IN POSITIVISTIC RESEARCH AND PRACTICE

In this chapter, I am discussing the impact of positivist and postpositivist notions of *knowing as accumulation* and *dissemination* in teacher education and research practices. It, in a way or other, questions teachers in schools, and teacher educators at colleges and universities who are engaged as agents of achieving the technical interest of education (Habermas, 1972). I am also looking at how this limited notion of research as knowing, and the role of teachers (as *imparters, transmitters, disseminators, and discipliners etc.*) are influencing the lives of learners in schools and in other context of teacher education in Pakistan. Here, I am addressing the question, ‘*In what ways has epistemic singularism confined me to operate within an objectivist agenda of research and practice?*’

Setting the Scene: Research as Accumulation and Dissemination

The traditional methods of research and practices influenced by quantitative and qualitative approaches seem to govern the hearts and minds of teacher educators/teachers and/or researchers in teacher education and research practices in the context of Pakistan. These dominant conventional approaches to research and practices seemed to be highly inspired by scientific notions of WMW of *knowing as facts finding* and/or *facts collection* (for accumulation and dissemination) through one-size-fits-all ways of proven approaches (like quantitative and qualitative methods) of research.

The reasons behind an inclination towards the notions of research as scientifically proven methods having its hegemonic control over knowledge production and

dissemination seem to be embedded within the system of education and research practices, which we got from colonial system of education introduced in undivided India (sub-continent). Today such views do not seem to be more beneficial and supportive for social science researchers especially in teacher education and research practices. Graduates and under graduates enrolled in teacher education and research practices at institutions like TU are exposed to such kind of limited views of *knowing by default* through teaching courses on research methodologies of quantitative and qualitative research with the notion of binary duality.

Because, these methodologies only talk about data (either quantitative i.e., in the form of ‘numbers, figures and facts’ or qualitative i.e., in the form of ‘words’ through interviews, observations, documents analysis etc.) and its manipulation. These linear and reductionist methodologies do not seek spaces for multiple ways and means to understand nature of data, other ways to generate data, ways of meaning making through multiple logics and multiple genres, which paradigms can offer (Luitel & Taylor, 2013).

Because of this narrow view of methodologies (with dualistic nature) we would not look at data holistically and multiple ways to generate it using MDS. This kind of view does not help us to understand data with an inclusive lens. Perhaps, this limited view lead us to remain within dualistic, reductionist and objectivist agendas of research as the only way to know things (B.C. Luitel, personal communication, December 5, 2015). This institutional exposure to a kind of technical and hegemonic interest of education and research practices, holding a strong belief in such a controlled way of knowledge generation, seemed inspiring novice researchers to develop an understanding of *research as testing and proving* (Denzin & Lincoln 2011).

Arriving at this stage, I begin to reflect on my practices as a student, teacher educator and research supervisor. This, I am going to discuss in a letter to Waseem⁸¹, an ex-student teacher. Waseem was graduated from the School of Education at TU few years before, and is now teaching in a primary school where he seems facing similar challenges that I had faced as a teacher some years before. Perhaps, this may be because of the notions of controlled environmental setting for educating young minds, and those notions inspired from technical interest of education with lower order thinking skills (Habermas, 1972; Rehg, 2009). This view seems to contribute limited views of teacher educators who tend to focus on reproduction of knowledge using fixed methods of learning as memorizing, teaching as loading/filling on and/or disseminating information to learners and research as proving.

A Letter to Waseem: Critiquing Positivism in Practice

October 2015

Lalitpur, Nepal

Dear Waseem

I hope you are fine, and yet busy with your school, and social responsibilities in the village along with your farming activities. I can understand the life of a school teacher in a village who has to do so many things at the same time. I do remember that one of our teachers of my school time would hold meetings about village issues under his

⁸¹ Waseem is a composite character. He has been my school days class fellow and remained with teaching in a primary school and could not continue his studies. However, in recent past he got a chance (an official arrangement for professional development of school teachers) to do his graduation from School of Education TU, and now he is working in another school after completing his graduation. In this way, I became his teacher/ (old classmate). However, Waseem still seems to believe in control to impart education to children. He has many social and personal roles and responsibilities that engage him most of the time and used even school time to deal with such kind of activities, and that suffers his teaching responsibility.

headship⁸², and for us those moments could be unique to pass that time for playing in the ground without studying in his periods.

Waseem, most probably you will be surprised to have this letter from me after a long time, and probably you may think about my purpose of this letter to you. Here, I am thinking about my early school days that I and you had attended during early 80s. It was

Cultural myth offer a set of ideal images, definitions and justifications that are taken as measures of thought, affect and practice. These images instantiate the characteristics of modern myth: valued-laden, it is masked by a naturalized appearance that seems complete and speak for itself (Britzman, 1991, p.6).

really a tough time. And when I recall those moments of life, believe me, it looks very strange from many ways.

I guess that time was very rigid and nonconductive for learning, but some of our colleagues argue that it was not. They still hold strictness to be an important part of student's academic success. Here, I am wondering to what extent controlling an educative process can help learners to make a better sense of that education. So, one of the purposes of this letter to you is to know what is your view and how do you see those practices, which we experienced during our early school days.

'Positivism and other paradigms are not just only research paradigms, they are also a paradigms of practice...Perhaps positivism was a challenge to the then European theocracy, now it has seen making its way to Feudalistic structures to promote a control system' (Luitel, 2015/feedback).

Let me share the argument that our fellow teachers would make, 'we are teachers we need to maintain a strict

discipline in school, otherwise how can we motivate children to memorize lessons'

(Personal communication, July 10, 2015)? They believe that if a teacher cannot control his/her students teaching is not possible.

⁸² The teacher was a head of village Jirga committee to settle village social issues so the members of the Jirga committee used to come to school to discuss the issues from time to time. As a result the teacher used to engage with such activities and children used to play in the ground to pass the time.

So, developing a feeling of fear of teacher in school seems an integral part of reproduction of their teaching. Perhaps, for them keeping a very tight control in school is more important than teaching, and they seem to believe that to reproduce whatever teachers teach is only possible through strict environment.

Waseem, I have few questions to you and myself. Do we think having a silent voice (rather raising voice against and taking action) can help us to challenge such kind of cultural myths, which in a way or other, suffered you, me and many other innocent learners during school time? Do you think such positivist agenda of one-dimensional view, a reductionist and non-reflexive practices, and method of knowing by keeping nature of context and subjective realities as constants (without giving them due consideration) can make a sense?

Perhaps, considering cultural contexts, nature of available and accessible resources, values associated with religio-cultural, socio-economical, geo-political, and other facets, to name but a few, associated with people are, to me, seem to be the most important factors. As such factors play a significant role in shaping teaching/learning environments, without considering these facets of complex lifeworlds, how these colleagues can claim that only strict discipline would contribute to teaching/learning practices. More interestingly, they believe that knowledge can only be created, and disseminated through controlled and tested scientific ways teaching, learning and research. For them such strict disciplinary measures seem to be tested ways of their ways of knowing and believing. Do you think externally fixed quality standards of objectivity, validity, reliability and generalizability of the positivist agenda of research can enable us to understand such type of complex subjective nature of sociocultural issues? Perhaps,

today, we need to think about multiple logics through multiple ways of knowing that can better help us to come with a comprehensive meaning of subjective-contextual realities within such kind of complex social phenomena to explore rather than depending upon the paradigm of positivism and postpositivism (Taylor & Medina, 2011).

These narrow views of knowing within positivistic (i.e., narrowly quantitative and qualitative methodologies of research with either this or that logics) ways seem to dictate teachers to maintain a strict discipline in schools, and treat learners as receptors of the information through teacher centered approach to teaching (Alam, 2013). Thus, such perceptions about conventional paradigms seem guiding principles for teachers to shape their practices. I guess, you may still remember when teachers would come into our class for teaching they would hold sticks in one hand to disciplines us, and course textbooks in other hand to teach. It was like a warning for us to be very silent in front of elders (the teachers) and accept all the ‘truths’ that they have to offer us, forgetting our own ‘truths’ out of our own lived experiences. .

That is why today I call that time a very strange time of my school days. It was strange because talking in front of teachers was a kind of showing disrespect. Teachers would seek complete silence to read course textbooks with translation (the lowest level of comprehension (Krathwohl, 2002)) of the text into our mother tongue (Brushaski) to make us understand what the text was all about (Bachmann-Medick, 2009). It was strange because we were taught in our own language without culturally contextualizing in order to avoid the blend of facts⁸³. So, we would memorize the texts *as it were*. And we

⁸³ Facts are the written texts whatever given in the course books were considered as truths which cannot not be challenged by anyone and students were expected to reproduce exactly the same to pass their exam.

passed to next grades step by step without blending any facts, but reproducing the same stuff that was filled in our heads. *Waseem, do you remember how we used to rote memorize course contents like parrots just to remember things and pass the exam? I am surprised how fast we would forget every contents just few days after the exam. So, it was a kind of knowing as parroting. And I still remember how teachers at the end of year would ask questions orally⁸⁴ till grade V except mathematics. If we could not reproduce the text exactly the same in books (text 'as is it') they would label us poor learners (Nalaayiq), and would grant grades accordingly. I hardly remember, I ever got an 'A' in those oral assessments.*

Now here, I am reflecting on that time why teachers were not telling the lessons in the form of stories instead of translating word by word, and expecting us to reproduce word by word? Perhaps, it was the hallmark of conventional epistemic practices that focuses on positivist and postpositivist agendas of knowing as facts discoveries/transferring. So, they would tell us the facts and figures from the books as written there. Perhaps, the objectives of teaching were to transfer the bookish knowledge through control, and reproduction using rote memorization methods. Probably, it was a kind of transaction system of telling, and reproducing without contaminating or mixing and matching (linking with our own cultural context) the information passed on to us (Freire, 1993).

It was strange also because we had to face punishment for not memorizing, reproducing, and for not abiding by the strict rules of disciplines, and for talking in front

⁸⁴ Till grade 5th the type of assessment was oral exam except mathematics. Teachers used to ask questions from the books taught during the whole year and students were expected to reproduce exactly the same facts from the books to pass their grade.

of teachers. I do remember, when I got punishment for one of such rules to break. Probably, you may remember that incident. Don't you? Anyway let me share with you that critical incident, which I could not forget till today.

A Metaphor of 'Kicker'

Waseem, it can be any chilly winter day of second week of November 1981. I was sitting in my class, and unwillingly, I got indulged with one of my class fellows over a minor issue. And soon we started fighting with each other in the class, as usually children of the same age do in those cultures. In the meantime, our class teacher entered into the class with a long stick in his hand. You know, as I was notorious for being naughty, the teacher without asking the reason of our fight started beating me.

When I think about that incident, I begin to feel the pain of being knocked out from grade-III in a 'wrestling like, yet one sided match between "heavy weight wrestler-the teacher" and under ten/the delicate I'. You may guess who the wrestler was. Let me tell you the whole story now. Honestly speaking that was a teacher in his late 40s, but I did not want to indicate his name...not only for the ethics of the research but also for the respect to teacher/s. Anyhow, the dirty match began when the wrestler attacked on the delicate "I" for being 'Naughty' with one of my classmates.

Waseem, In that highly dominated one sided un/intentional wrestling match between 'Me and the Kicker' I began to feel that my classroom was presenting a scene of a "Police lockup" of a 3rd world country and/or "a Hell in the lock up- a type of wrestling in a cage" in the context of so called civilized, and developed world. Being a resident of developing world, I am very familiar with our police attitude with non/criminals to get their desired results. By the way, I would like to tell you that I have

never experienced that kind of treatment with police, but I have heard the stories of others as many of my friends and family members are serving in police. Thus, I began to feel about the delicate 'I' as a non/criminal in the hands of a 'Thanadar/SHO (station head officer in police)' in his dirty lockup- in my pity classroom. You can feel, what would be my situation at that time...!

Today, when I reflect on that situation, and think why he was so impatient, emotionally unsafe, and ignorant of rules of wrestling/punishment to discipline a child like me in my grade III. Honestly speaking, I do not find any answer to the question. However, to ease my pain and normalize the abused 'I', I presume that the kicker might not be aware of the rights of school children. And begin to think that if a teacher was ignorant of such delicate matters then who could tell that kicker/wrestler about rights of children where teachers were considered as great men- the knowers (Ulamah, the person who knows).

Dear Waseem, you may be well aware of the punishment in schools that has been banned, and considered as criminal act rather than a corrective measures to disciplining children. However, even today we can find many such stories of violations against rights of children in schools (Arif & Rafi, 2007). This is what happens in this part of the world where 'rights' are not even right to talk about. So, how could we expect teachers to behave within the realm of child rights at that time?

Coming back to my story, you know, the warning message or the so called ethic of the 'Hell in the lock up - don't apply at home, in school or public places' was not even applicable in my case. And I vividly remember, the heavy weight wrestler/the kicker without caring/knowing the ethic of the un/intentional match... had been playing in the

school with his student/s only. Perhaps he could not apply that at his home because he had no child till his end of life. I can only pray now that 'May Allah excuse him for being emotionally unsafe, in-humanistic and reactive to accomplish his objectivist agenda of disciplining children in school!

Disciplining Children in School as Punishing

Though punishment in schools for disciplining children is an abuse, it appears to be still exist in many forms in schools in the context for many reasons (Arif & Rafi, 2007). So, how could I forget an abuse with the delicate 'I' in my childhood?

I remember, the kicks of the kicker/wrestler with his heavy shoes- my teacher's black shoes (the shoes were repaired one- a local cobbler replaced the lower sole of his show with a thick rubber tier of a jeep) were so painful, but surprisingly I could survive... my goodness! As the kicker was hitting on my just growing soft back, and pulling my hair, slapping on my delicate checks, and hitting my just growing and thin body to ground where I could hardly protect myself. I just managed to bear the kicks, and remained silent rather than crying in front of all my fellow beings. I guess, it was my ego that did not let the abused self to react in the form of crying to the kicks, and withdrawing from school.

Yes... it may be one of the harsh unlucky days of winter in grade III when I was being beaten brutally just for breaking the rules of discipline in school. A harsh and chilly winter day adds more salt on my wounds as I was ruthlessly being defeated from the heavy weight wrestler. I do remember the day of punishment, when I hardly managed to reach home after school due to the pain in my whole body. You know, the signs of the 'kicks' ... and wounds I got in the match... I was trying to hide from my parents for their

emotional safety...but my condition was not like that to make parents feel that there was nothing happened wrong with me but normal....

Do you believe me Waseem...here, I can still feel my mother's cries by looking at my condition. She wept so painfully on me... and became so upset at the behavior of the teacher. She protested against my father for not taking action against the teacher. But she was not listened ... her cry went lost with tears only. Because, as you know, we were living in a highly male dominated society at that time. But, I do believe her cry in front of Allah was not lost... Waseem you will favor me, female in those times, in such societies, were so miserable that only Allah was listening to their painful voices.... And there were no rights of women to say something against the unjust treatments in that society.

Waseem, believe me, I am still thinking to what extent my father had a blind trust in teachers that they would not be wrong. And instead of my mother's cry at my punishment he did not take any action against the teacher. Rather he said to my mother, 'you should not cry at your sons' punishment. Your son is not an obedient boy to take his side, and to inquiry the teacher for the reason of the punishment... he might have done a mistake in his class, and that might be the reason he got punishment. I remember, he further added, 'even I am happy that this boy will become an obedient... one day!'

I do remember, a severe disagreement between my parents about the matter of punishment I was given in school, made the home environment unpleasant for my other three brothers. As I had no sister otherwise she could weep at my condition in the same way as my mother did. And on the other hand, becoming an obedient boy as my father would wish ..., as a reaction, I became an arrogant one for a while. An egocentric reaction filled with retaliation (to take revenge from the teacher) emerged in my lifeworld

at that time. I noticed a serious dialogue going on between me and my ego for a longer time just after that even.... Here, I present one small part of that dialogue below

- Me: When I will grow young and strong man like my father, I will take revenge of being beaten among my fellows*
- Ego: Oh no, come on boy! He is your teacher, and this is his style. He is the same with others as well... not only with you.*
- Me: I don't call him a teacher at all, he is my enemy, a Villon, and you know what happens with a Villon. I will never spare him...yes; I will hit him one day.*
- Ego: Just forget it dear. Try to improve yourself, and come out of this idea of revenge*
- Me: You know my mothers' prayers in front of Allah, one day will give him its return if I will not take any revenge even...*

Like this, I noticed a series of dialogues at that time. In the end, it brought the matter on the table to settle... unfortunately the reaction to retaliation ends with a turning point ... I did not hit anyone like that kicker.

However, my reflections inform me that some elements of harsh behavior (Arif & Rafi, 2007) – *a kind of retaliation* (emotionally unsafe and reactive rather proactive) can be noticed in very early life of my teaching in one of the community schools. Perhaps, I had been harsh, to some extent, un/willingly with few students with behavioral problems, and yet not at that level. I guess, that might be the negative inspiration I got from the kicker that framed subconsciously in forming my identity.

Waseem, this letter became very lengthy unexpectedly. So, I will write you further in my next letter about the cultural myths of the society, and their impact on teaching and learning. However, please keep sharing your ideas about my concerns about teaching and learning situations in schools with objectivist agenda to education. Until then...

Truly Yours

Sadruddin Qutoshi

I was reflecting on the days of my school and schooling in a very control environment where I came to know that few teachers were behaving like policemen to discipline children rather than academicians to nurture their intellectual growth and development. Perhaps, the notion of teaching/learning inspired from positivist views of knowing with few of a narrowly viewed notions of technical interest of education (Habermas, 1972) seem to lead teachers to accomplish their learning goals through maintaining strict discipline in schools. And in so doing, they seem to focus more on controlling the environment thinking that knowledge can only be received, and disseminated through tested and controlled ways of educating, education and research. The reflection enabled me to understand school life that we (I and other fellow students) could hardly manage to memorize our lessons to avoid punishment, and to get promotion to upper grade levels. Thus without enjoying our school life we reached at college with lower order thinking skills (Kratzwoh, 2002).

Teacher Education and Research Practices as Colonizing

Today, is Monday of March 2008. I am sitting in the office of director admissions to get some information about new admissions in School of Education. And we are discussing about the role of TU in teacher education. It seems attracting huge number of student in teacher education programs and preparing for the schools. There are many schools and colleges in different villages, towns and cities of the region which offer jobs to these fresh graduates with degrees in education, and TU is offering degrees both at Graduate and Masters Level. Naveed⁸⁵ asks, 'Don't you think it is a big contribution that this university enables so many student teachers to receive degrees in teacher

⁸⁵Naveed is a composite character to show director admission who is by profession an assistant professor at School of Education and recently given the responsibility of director admissions.

education?’ ‘I think you may be right in a sense that the university provides at least a chance to study’, I reply, ‘but getting a degree in teacher education seems not enough... I am wondering about our own practices in this culture. I mean the activities of research practices with which student teachers are engaged do not focus on their rigorous engagement in teaching practice as part of the degree requirement. I am wondering how such activities would help them to understand the problems and issues of teaching and learning in their classrooms when they join schools for teaching.’ Naveed interrupts me saying, ‘what do you mean by this? Are you not satisfied with your own teaching, learning and research activities of the School of Education?’

He goes on explaining universities practices, ‘you are well aware of the fact that we (you, me and other colleagues) have engaged student teachers rigorously to complete their curriculum (courses) and there are very strict rules of the University for teaching/learning and research to develop necessary skills and knowledge that they would implement in their schools in future.’ ‘Naveed, I’m talking about the practices of teaching, learning and research in terms of our emphasis with some limited view of education as/for pass/fail and research as proving and dissemination. I am wondering how such notions of education would develop their higher order thinking.’ I try to explain further, ‘I am worried about how their learning within such lower order thinking skills due to one-dimensional view of knowing would help them to understand the complex nature of schools and schooling to help their future learners?’

A lecturer sitting next to me shares his views, ‘sir, I think there are many faculty members who apply pure scientific ways of research practices, and they can better guide these student teachers how to help their students in future.’ What do you mean by pure

scientific ways of research, I ask? 'I mean implying quantitative methods of research using facts and figures (not the words and stories of the people), and reaching at solid conclusions of the research questions through scientifically proven method of doing research is the pure way of knowing', the lecturer explains further. 'However, there are some qualitative researchers who conduct research activities using case study research methods that can also help them to explore practices through probing. And I guess students are doing well with such kind of practices of teacher educators.'

'Why do you think this pure scientific method of research with collection of facts and figures within quantitative and qualitative methods of research can better help graduates? What about other ways to knowing? Why do you think your strict rules of teaching, learning and doing research using facts and figures would make teachers more productive in their schools?' I tried to explore their views more. 'I think quantitative methods are based on solid reasons that can give us a cause and effect relationship, and can better be justified with facts and figures only but it is not possible with personal stories as data' The lecturer continues, 'yes qualitative methods, as I said, in which we can use text data. And we can only judge knowledge claims with the same quality standard of objectivity, validity, reliability and generalizability to ensure quality of research because these rules are applicable worldwide.'

Arriving at this point of my inquiry, I start reflecting on question- why people in this university have a limited view of research as accumulation and dissemination of facts and figures using the only two dominant methodologies of quantitative and qualitative. This question further led me to think about what could be the reasons that restrict them to think beyond these two tested ways of knowing. And how would we develop better and

comprehensive understanding of the problems of teaching, learning and research practices with other than these two methods. Perhaps, these views of teacher educators reflect the culture of this university that seems to be influenced by such an informing nature of education inspired by technical interest of education with a limited view of research as proving and testing (Luitel, 2007).

Here, I begin to reflect that practitioners who seem to have strong beliefs in cultural myth such as providing tough time to student teachers in terms of keeping them under pressure would help graduates to improve their practices of teaching/learning with the skills and knowledge they gain within quantitative and qualitative methodologies of research. With such rigid views of education and training at the university it seems difficult to think about other ways to knowing in teacher education in this culture that highly demands to reform such practices.

Closure and my Way Forward

The practices of teaching/learning at school level with notions of controlling environment depict a positivist notion of knowledge and knowing. Whereas the teacher education programs in the context of university where these school teachers are prepared reflect somewhat similar notions of knowing and research practices with objectivist approaches. This view of knowing seems contributing objectivist approach to research by treating data as accumulation of facts. Consequently, this view appears to reject data as lived experiences in the form of personal stories, ways of knowing subjective realities. With such notions, there appears to be no room for thinking about an epistemic inclusivity through semi/fictive and nonfictive imagining for envisioning and meaning making. Perhaps, focusing more on a wider view of teacher education and providing

better opportunities for professional development of teacher educators/researchers and student teachers with multiple ways of knowing can be a vision to the existing problems associated with rigid notions of conformist view of objectivist research agendas (Taylor, 2015). Such a practical view of education would better help them to break these cultural myths of controlling for learning, and data as facts and figures notions of knowing what Taylor (1996) calls 'myth making and myth breaking'. With this view I am discussing on epistemic plurality in Chapter 6B.