CHAPTER 6B: ACCOUNTING FOR POSSIBLY CONSTRAINT

EPISTEMOLOGICAL PLURALISM

In the Chapter 6A, I have discussed on notions of epistemic singularity within the paradigms of positivism and postpositivism that encourage *knowing as: testing, proving, transferring* and *transmitting* to learners as receivers/reproducers to accomplish some technical interest of education. The role of teacher educators/teachers within such notions of research and practices (by creating a controlling environment for learning), was *knowledge disseminators, transferors, imparters, transactors, givers* and *discipliners* to mention, but a few.

Similarly, I came to realize that role of *learners remained as knowledge receivers, reproducers, memorizers, silent listeners* and *parroting texts* etc. In this chapter, I am discussing, '*How does reformist agenda of constraint pluralism help me to think about multiple ways of doing research?* With this research question, my purpose here, in this chapter, is to explore the emergence of epistemic plurality celebrated by multiple paradigms of *'knowledge/ing'* that can impact on my teaching/learning and research practices as a teacher educator with some *practical interest of education* (Bohman & Rehg, 2014; Habermas, 1972).

Setting the Scene: Acting as Reformative Researcher

After embracing reforms in teacher education, I began to notice some changes in my practices. I started focusing on student learning through multiple methods of teaching like applying activity based teaching (Begum & Khan, 2012), using CTs, and discussions and dialogues as tools to improve my classroom practices. I used different ways of

coordination with my co-workers in research activities (to ensure timely provision of feedback to students) and sharing resources (including research papers for developing students' understanding) on the research methods to enhance students learning.

Arriving at that stage, I came to realize that the changes in practices under reforms appeared to be superficial changes with less attention towards *professional development of faculty* (through focusing on behavioral changes and developing desired level of skills, knowledge and dispositions in areas of teaching/learning and research). With this reflection, I came to realize that engaging with traditional ways to teachers training through workshops and seminars seem limited and less effective. There I began to think that we need to focus on 'How to engage teacher educators/researchers with multiple ways of knowing?' Perhaps, this question led me to think about need of *innovative ways to knowing as professional development endeavours* to enable teacher educators who would further help their learners.

Arriving at this stage, I begin to think about student teachers who were graduating under such practices with limited level of knowledge, skills and dispositions (as future teachers), would have to face many challenges in their TLPs (see Chapter 6A). Perhaps, this view led me to think about the question of the kind, 'what kind of efforts do we need to put in terms of exposing these student teachers to multiple ways to knowing during their association with degree programs at the university, and how can we make their journey more meaningful in terms of their improved learning?'

Supervision as Constraint Communication

It may be any Fridays of June 2009, I was sitting in my office on my desktop computer preparing a list of master's degree students who recently qualified their

research proposal defence. I thought that assigning supervisors to student teachers based on the topics they had chosen, and the supervisors' interest in those areas was something challenging task. With this realization, I came to know that there were majority of faculty members with interests in quantitative, but few in qualitative methodologies of research. However, without having many choices at my disposal, as a research coordinator of the School of Education, I prepared a final list to discuss with the Dean of School of Education TU.

In the meantime Ms Butterfly came there in a very happy mood, and sat next to my table. 'Sir what is going on, you seem busy as usual', she inquired. 'Yep, I'm preparing a list' I replied. 'As you know majority of us have a quantitative method of research background, but few of us including you have expertise in qualitative methodologies.' I continued, 'Now you tell me how to manage. I mean we have no choice to provide supervisors to the student teachers as per their interest and needs.'

'I agree with you and that is the big mismatch, here in this university', she replied. 'I think the more we have expertise in different methods of research and ways of knowing the more we can explore ways to understand the problems and issues of teaching, learning, assessment and research practices.' I continued lecturing her to seek her views, 'Do you know majority of us even do not seem to accept qualitative research equal to that of quantitative.' I further explained, 'you know because of this narrow view of quantitative researchers, student teachers unwillingly adopt quantitative approaches to research.'

Ms Butterfly made a comment, 'I think both methodologies are equally important, but I think qualitative is more humanistic approach to research as it considers in-depth

interviews through probing to get insights into the problems under study. Whereas in

quantitative, I do not see this sort of rigor to reach to get insights through interviewing.'

Perhaps, you are right, and the agenda of qualitative research seemed to facilitate more

social science researchers to understand the nature of data, methods of collection, and

manipulation etc. However, the quality standards of validity, reliability, objectivity and

generalizability remain the same in both the cases', I shared my views.

'I think there should be some different quality standards for qualitative research

...epistemological pluralism as an approach for conducting innovative, collaborative research and study. Epistemological pluralism recognizes that, in any given research context, there may be several valuable ways of knowing, and that accommodating this plurality can lead to more successful integrated study (Miller et al., 2008, p.1).

as its focus seems exploration through discussions,

dialogues and in-depth exploration of views with

research participants in order to get insights with

different methods of knowing (Miller et al., 2008)

rather than collecting facts that quantitative

researchers do' Ms Butterfly explained. 'I guess, you are making an import point about

this matter, and I agree with you that for qualitative researchers at least the quality

standard of generalizability and objectivity[86] should be something different as an

alternative. As the nature of qualitative research, context, and researchers' interests

appeared to be different so quality standards should be different. So, how we can

generalize things,' I explained. Nodding her head she remained silent for sometimes.

Perhaps, she was thinking for a while before she asked the question*, 'Do you know other*

than these two methods of research, and how can we improve our way of knowing with

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[86] As qualitative research mostly focus on subjective nature of research so it cannot be generalize to different contexts because of its objectivity that holds within subjectivity rather generalizability. I mean for subjective realities we cannot generalize things for all and that is what quantitative researchers tend to deny this approach as a right way of research.

more insights based on individual researcher's and research participant's lifeworlds

regarding TLPs?'

> *'I guess, you are making an interesting point about thinking other than these two methods and ways of looking into researchers' and research participant' lives that makes a better sense to me. However, I think mixed method or 'multimethod research' could be one of those other methods of inquiry (Tashakkori & Teddlie, 2010).' I continued. 'And I think this method is likely more appealing to me, as it uses both quantitative, and qualitative methods together to make better meaning of my inquiry.'*

> *Mr Tanqeed sitting next me said, 'I think some teacher educators are taking interest in mixed method approach to research in our context as well.' 'Perhaps, mixed methods approach to research seems to follow the same quality standards as it uses both methods together, I explained. 'Don't you think by combining results of both methods we can get better result, and that can enable us with different ways of knowing?' Mr Tanqeed commented, 'Yes' I tried to explain, 'you are right, and yet this methodology does not use alternative ways to knowing but just complementing both methods together.'*

Arriving at this point of my inquiry, I begin to reflect the research and practices of teacher educators at TU context. Perhaps, the culture of university must have confined researchers/educators within fixed frame of doing research either in quantitative or in qualitative approaches. However, few researchers/educators seem to take an interest in mixed methods as it uses both methods to make better results of studies. Perhaps, this limited view of conducting research within teacher education did not seem to help me (and other educators/research supervisors) while supervising student teachers in terms of helping them to think beyond a narrowly conceived interest of education. And to move

towards practical interest of education, as reforms agenda seems to highlight, we need to know other than these methods of inquires that would help us in a better way.

In the meantime few students came to Mr Tanqeed for some discussion, and I again remained busy with my own task to complete by sorting supervisees into different groups like within quantitative, qualitative and mixed method research groups. Perhaps, it was not something surprising to know after analyzing data, I came to know that more than 50% fall within quantitative, 40% within qualitative using case study designs with semi/structured interviews, classroom observation, and document analysis, and yet hardly a few within phenomenological approaches, and 10% fall within mixed methods approaches. The profiles of the faculty show that 70% of the faculty fall within quantitative, 29% within qualitative and 1% within mixed method research. Arriving at this point of inquiry, I begin to think that as I have no alternative so I must assign students equally to supervisors.

After preparing a list and a format (schedule) regarding number of hours each supervisor were supposed to engage with supervisees in terms of face-to-face feedback, and through distance feedback[87], I shared with the Dean who after discussing the matter approved it. Later on, I came to know that majority of supervisors even could not meet the desired time allocation for their supervisees, and many students even reported facing severe problems in their research activities. I came to know that few supervisors even did not look at the work of their supervisees seriously. They seemed pushing their supervisees to complete within time without giving proper guidance to their supervisees to address their concerns. For example, one of the student teachers was discussing her problems

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[87] The feedback given to students through email, Skype, messenger and other tools of social media and communications

with unavailability of her supervisor. She was this to say, 'my supervisor does not even bother himself to understand my difficulties with developing data collection tools. So, how could I prepare tools for collect data… many time he promised to discuss, but could not give me time' (X.K. Rani, personal communication, October 15, 2010).

Similarly, I came to know that there were a few other issues of supervisor-supervisee interactions. Some supervisors were pushing their students to contact them through emails, but there were issues of late reply. One of the student teachers said, 'I hardly got one reply of my supervisor during the last five weeks… I am badly suffering due to no replies of my repeated requests' (K.K. Shah, personal communication, November 10, 2010).

This reflects that there were serious issues of support to supervisees in both the modes of communication resulting poor performance, and low level of quality work reported. I came to realize that even embracing reforms in teacher education and research, and with constraint pluralism (with having more than two ways to knowing/methods of research), student teachers were facing same problems relating to lack of support in research activities. Arriving at this stage, I began to reflect on to what extent the emergence of constraint pluralism in teacher education research could enable me (and other teacher educators/research supervisors) to come out of my old practices (by improving them) of narrowly conceived teacher education and research, and enabled me to move towards a practical interest of education (Habermas, 1972: Rehg, 2009). With my critical reflections, I came to realize that at that time, I (probably, including my other colleagues) was even not aware of other paradigms (i.e., criticalism, postmodernism

and integralism etc.), and we were considering the dominant methodologies (quantitative and qualitative) as paradigms.

Perhaps, at that time these methodologies (due to limited exposure to multiple ways of knowing, which I came to know latter on) served as multiple paradigms, and that is why it could be termed as *constraint pluralism*[88]. However, we as teacher educators and research supervisors would not provide that much support to our learners with a broader view of education in that cultural context. This reflects that perhaps un/knowingly positivism was making its way through a kind of feudalistic culture!

These reflections enabled me to think about two questions of the kind, '(1) how good 'intentions' and positive attitude of my teacher enabled me to enjoy learning (*as a student* at the time of my school) and (2) to what extent my role as a teacher educator (in the context of university) with an objectivist agenda of teaching and research to student teachers might suffered them?' Perhaps, this realization enabled me to write confessional way of letter writing, a way of showing humility and care on one hand, and a way of knowing on the other. Let me share a letter with you here.

A Letter to Nazem[89], an Ex-student Teacher/Teacher: Exposing the Constraint Multiplicity of Research and Practice

June 12, 2014

Dear Nazem,

I hope you would be fine and doing well with your school now a days. Perhaps, it might be around five years back when you left TU after completing your Masters in

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[88] The pluralism that could not empowered with multiple paradigms rather limited within dominant methodologies and method of inquiries within conventional research.

[89] Nazem a pseudonym used to show a student teacher of ICT in Education class who was scolded by the teacher educator for raising an issue related to teaching/learning and assessment in the subject…

Education, and joined the school where you are teaching now. Nazem, soon after I embraced a transformative journey towards my doctoral study, I was like in a movement of back and forth-recalling past events, reflecting on them and making meaning, and coming to present situation and thinking about questions of the kind, where I was, and where I am now, and where I want to go from here etc.

Nazem, honestly speaking I was thinking about you, and recalling few of 'critical incidents' and/or the 'cases or stories' (Orland-Barak, 2010, p.214) about teaching and learning situations in your class that happened some six years before, and you may remember that time I guess. I know you would be surprise to see this confessional letter to you regarding the way I could not realize your views about some issues in my teaching/learning practices at that time, and I became somehow impatient and harsh with you. I do not want to mention that incident word by word here, however, my reflections enabled me to call that… 'My Crazy Pedagogy Burst Me Out- a Quack on the Rocky Land of Monarch' that I can share with you if you would like that.

Here, I reflect on that event and come to realize that probably my positivistic views of one-size-fits-all notions of knowing at that time led me to be a reactive teacher rather a proactive one. Being a reactive teacher I might not understand your critical feedback as an opportunity to improve my teaching/learning, but reacted on your views. I guess, I was using one-dimensional view of knowing through objectivist agenda of one possible right answer, and I was not well aware of multiple ways of knowing what (probably) you had raised at that time regarding an alternative way to knowing. However, with the progress in my transformative journey, today I can realize that was a mistake. This realization enabled me to be confessional by saying that my strong resistance over

and rejection of your views was wrong… and I am very sorry for that behaviour! I hope you would feel easy after receiving this confessional letter from your teacher educator who is now becoming more conscious about self/others.

Nazem, though in this letter my purpose of writing to you is the confession that I just made it. Secondly, I would like to share a story of my life as a student of secondary school that I could not forget throughout of my life till this stage. As you are teaching in a secondary school, this time, and you have received a professional degree in education, your students might have many expectations from you. You can reflect on the questions- How am I improving the way I am doing? (Whitehead, 1989, 2014, 2015), How my behaviour affect the lives of my learners? Who am I, and what I value in my teaching?' Nazem, I can understand your good intentions with your care, love and affection are as important as your professional knowledge, and technical skills are to illuminate and inspire learners to make a difference in their lives.

Probably, it is equally important to reflect on the question- *to what extent our thinking, behaviour and interactions with others without excluding our views about ecological consciousness may affect them at large.* I do remember, my teacher's illuminating words, 'don't walk with proud, and anger on this earth. In the end, everyone has to go inside it, so love it and take care of it'. Let me share with you a story of this 'I', and that of my 'kind teacher' whom I can never forget in my whole life.

It may be one of the winter rainy days of my school some 26 years back in my grade X. 'It is not a good day today', I murmured with self, as I was having a cold with stuffy nose, and the sneezing that creates distress to my fellow bench seaters along with me. I was wanting to go home to take rest with a hot cup of tea, but my physics teacher

says 'your class is more important than your stuffy nose....' So, getting no permission adds more head ache and pain in my body.

In the meantime, the period overs and my/our favourite teacher who was teaching 'Urdu' (a compulsory subject, you know) enters into the class. He quickly notices my condition, and puts his warm cot on my shoulders, and calls the peon to take me to the nearby medical store where a compounder (a medical rep) was sitting, and I remember, we used to call him Dr Sahib. Today, when I think about his behaviour with students like me, it was a kind of fatherly love and care for a child. Nazem, I will never forget that in my life. Believe me teacher was an inspirational figure not only to me, but he was a favourite teacher of all students of the school. He was so caring, loving and passionate that no one can dare to forget him.

School Life and Teachers as Builders

Nazem, a teacher like him can be an ideal teacher who never hit any student in his school time. I call him an angel like teacher, and you can see him posing (5th from
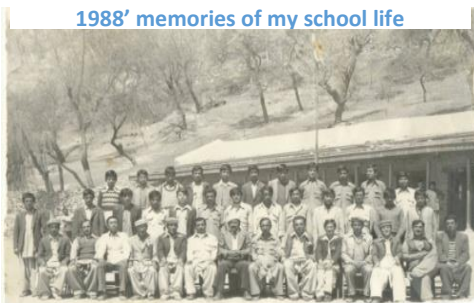
1988' memories of my school life

left) just left side of my real uncle/another kind teacher in the picture, where I posed in a long color white shirt over a black jacket in the second row (5th from left) just behind my bellowed teacher. In the picture I am in grade X, just after seven years of the severe punishment that I hardly survived in my grade III from another teacher/a kicker. And as a result of that survival I reached to grade X, but I lost many of my friends who could not survive such kind of punishments. They are working as formers, carpenters, and shopkeepers, to name but a few, as professions for their livelihood generation.

Today, when I meet my old fellows of school time they appreciate the way I survived, and my persistent struggle to get engaged with higher education. But I give this whole credit to the angel like teacher in my life who really inspired me, and enabled me to reach at this stage today.

A Metaphor of 'Picker'

I call such inspiring teachers as *picker-* who pick delicate learners to provide all possible support to their students to grow. By delicate, I mean in terms of motivations towards their learning and in terms of the age, as I was in my grade III when I was hit by a kicker. Luckily, I also got a *picker* who really encouraged me…who never hit me for even my silly manners till passing my grade V. It was because of his caring and loving attitude towards me that I received reinforcement, and could continue my education.

Why should I not remember those key moments of my life that made me a person like this today as compared to my other friends who lost their school days due to kickers? Though those fellows are not qualified today as they could not survive school punishment days, they struggle very hard to educate their children with better schooling, and care with pickers not with kickers.

Nazem, when I reflect on the life of the *picker*, perhaps, it was not the matter that he was my uncle's friend, and my fathers' as well, but that teacher was someone totally different in his nature. Yes, absolutely different…not like the other one (the hitter/ the kicker / the wrestler…oh my goodness the day when I recall it … that's' still painful one) …, but the picker was a compassionate teacher with embodied values of love, care and humility for humanity.

Perhaps, he was like an angle – a man sent from Allah with love, care and patience. By nature he was so cool, calm and caring. That great *picker* is still serving the community even after his retirement life, probably in his late 80s or so. He is a very nice human being with everyone in the society (a real example of *humanity with his humility*). May Allah bless him with a long and healthy life! Aameen! (Means may Allah fulfill my prayers). Dear Nazem, many students would expect you to be a very kind and caring teacher for them, and I hope this story will give you an inspiration that how students remember kind teachers unlike the teachers as kickers.

Inspirations as Personality Formation

These absolutely 180 angled opposite behaviors of teachers towards me in my school life have been great sources of reflections for me. For example, during student

life my, the experiences of getting punishment by a kicker who was highly inspired by the technical interests of education through control. And on the other hand, the love and care with good 'intentions' of a picker with a humanistic view of teaching/learning to facilitate learners. Perhaps, these two experiences enabled me to understand teachers' inspirational roles (both positive and negative) with their embodied values exhibiting through their behaviors towards the learning of their learners. This reflection on role of caring and loving *teachers as constructive inspirers,* can help teachers like you, me and others to think about our roles and it impact on learners lives.

Nazem, these events led me to ask- In what ways positive/negative behaviors of teachers affect the lives of learners in shaping their identities and personality formation.

How can particular interests of education make a difference in changing behavior of teachers/students etc.?

Perhaps, teachers with positive behaviors, like a teacher as picker in my case, either using black board technology or computer technology in their classes make a big difference in the lives of learners. However, practical interest of education can better serve the purpose of teaching/learning by focusing on how to take care of learners/others with difficulties in their learning lesson. Perhaps, such a wider view of education, can enable us to think about inspiring learners to improve both classroom/school discipline and their learning rather than using corporal punishment (Arif & Rafi, 2007) as means of controlling students. Because achieving learning outcomes through punishment seems inspired by a narrow view of education with an objectivist agenda of knowing and disseminating?

Perhaps, it was that inspiration that led me to become a teacher who loves, cares and feels of others (*humility for humanity* as one of the values*),* and does not hit students to discipline them rather provides chances to improve even at times of their mistakes. And more so, who loves every *signs of Allah* (i.e., the planet, plants, animals and other species etc.). Perhaps, the embodied values of teachers like in both the cases of my life with a *picker,* and a *kicker* made a big difference (positively and negatively) in my life by shaping multiple selves, creating love/hate for learning especially during school times.

Believe me Nazem, this realization through a retrospective reflections came as a result of my transformative journey, I am now feeling differently- a feeling of love and care for this planet and species non/living on it. With this in mind, I reflect on *how my embodied values can be 'life-enhancing values' for self/others* (Whitehead, 2014, p.4).

Perhaps, the more we engage with caring, loving and helping others the more we can feel charm in our life in return.

Nazem, if teachers like you, I and other fellow teachers embrace multiple ways of knowing within epistemic pluralism with humility for humanity and love (for learners and people and planet with good intentions) that can make a big difference in the life of learners. Such practices can help them in terms of having a school/university life as enjoyable, peaceful, respectable, and can also develop creativity, self-confidence and critical thinking skills in learners (Meece, 2003).

I think, this letter became very long, and I want to pause here hoping that this letter will find you at ease, and will provide you a chance to reflect as a teacher to be an ideal one. Nazem, saying sorry for our mistakes makes more humble, and creates love for all and 'hate' for none. Until then...

Truly Yours

Sadruddin Qutoshi

Closure and my Way Forward

Perhaps, the reformist agenda of constraint pluralism with multiple ways of knowing (using either quantitative or qualitative and/or mixed method approaches) while engaging with somewhat practical interest of education. However, this constraint pluralism could not enable me to develop wider view of powerful paradigms and their impact on my practices of teaching/learning and research in teacher education. In the next chapter, I am going to discuss MDS research as a transformative research endeavour.