CHAPTER 1

Narrative Frameworks for Living, Learning, Researching, and Teaching

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Prologue: Research, Like Water, Finds Its Own Level

The students who supported my research for this chapter were teacher candidates for whom I was course director in the Preservice Concurrent and Consecutive Programs of the Faculty of Education at York University, Toronto, Ontario, Canada, 2007–2008. “Puzzle Framed” is an inquiry-based exercise integral for an Action Research component to curriculum planning, design, and implementation prepared for preservice candidates in parts I, II, and III. The exercise encourages the practice of viewing our world with plural perspectives in a more multidimensional way.

My position as a course director and instructor is that Action Research begins with a form of self-study, “an opportunity for self-critical inquiry undertaken by the participants themselves” (Holly, Arhar, and Kasten 2005, p. 31). I promote an awareness of wonder, a self-questioning curiosity, keen observation skills, and a passion to fit together the pieces of a particular personal research puzzle in an Action Research approach to curriculum. This is most often a niggling question that the candidate has at the onset of the introduction to part I: Action Research.

This process gradually evolves into the relationship of the curriculum to its “Commonplaces” (Connelly and Clandinin 1988, pp. 83–86; Schwab 1978, 1983): teacher/learner/subject matter, and social milieu. How the teacher designs and plans curriculum for the learners in the context of
the social milieu and the subject matter becomes consciously founded on personal and professional experiences. Critical thinking and critical literacy skills are augmented through the initial autobiographical narrative inquiry. The enquiry of the candidates’ Puzzle Framed leads to new knowledge of self.

**Buoyancy with Data**

I discovered as a coparticipant/teacher that to move like water does to find its own level encourages a fluidity of thought and buoyancy with research data that is fundamental to a deeper understanding of coparticipant stories. As I have said elsewhere, “so, like water, I move, I wind and I seep through the levels of stories touching surfaces and making connections to my knowledge buildings” (Forsythe Moore 2006, p. 133).

Active engagement in reading, writing, listening, and sharing stories of experience in a literacy community supports a personal and professional awareness that sustains a curriculum design that is democratic, equitable, and socially just. This phenomenon is vital in pedagogical approaches and policies that maintain in their overall structure a respect for the cultural influences that impact individual learning styles.

**Candidates Choose a Teacher Metaphor**

Now re: your Teacher Metaphor: a flute. I feel it is my job to impassion with passion and no matter whether a trickle, a brook or a waterfall, the passion will re-present what it means to…savor, question, embrace, explore and to learn more… It is the great mystery of teaching. To light up for another how “it” works. Through love, really, and acceptance, understanding. Your music re-presents this and for this I would play my music as much as possible. My task as teacher is not to be concerned if the music is heard instantly, but rather that it lingers in the back of a mind until the right moment for the mind to go “aha.” Sometimes we wait for ever, sometimes [it happens] right away, sometimes next year—part of the role of teacher.2

As a result of an e-mail conversation with the teacher candidate to whom I sent the above response, the context for this chapter shifted. The curricular moment that is inclusive of the teacher’s three-dimensional exercises of inquiry into her personal puzzles, those that have informed her and influenced her as a person and a teacher, requires “a reach beyond” self-inquiry