

Awakening To Soma Heliakon: Encountering Teacher-Researcher-Learning in the Twenty-First Century

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As two teacher educators and researchers, we explored dimensions of instructional practice in teacher education through online forums. In the course of this research, we drew upon our online interactivity as the basis for reflexive inquiry. Analysis entailed coding key themes to create a four-part rendering involving a hyperlinked poem, a video, a parallaxic praxis research model, and a tagcloud. Interpreting experience through integrated multimedia examples potentially increases learning engagement and provides insights to our belief that teacher education must be deeply mindful, reflective, and interconnected to living.

Key words: teacher education, reflexive inquiry, poetic inquiry, parallaxic praxis

Les auteures, deux didacticiennes et chercheuses, l'une à la Washington State University et l'autre à l'University of British Columbia, ont exploré diverses facettes des méthodes utilisées dans la formation à l'enseignement à l'aide de forums de discussion. Au cours de cette recherche, elles se sont appuyées sur leur interactivité en ligne pour nourrir leurs réflexions. Leur analyse comportait le codage des principaux thèmes en vue de créer une représentation quadripartite : poème hyperlié, vidéo, modèle de recherche axé sur la parallaxe et nuage de mots clés. L'interprétation des expériences à travers des exemples de multimédia peut favoriser l'implication dans l'apprentissage et s'inscrit dans le droit fil d'une formation à l'enseignement qui, selon les auteures, doit faire place à la réflexion et être branchée sur la vie.

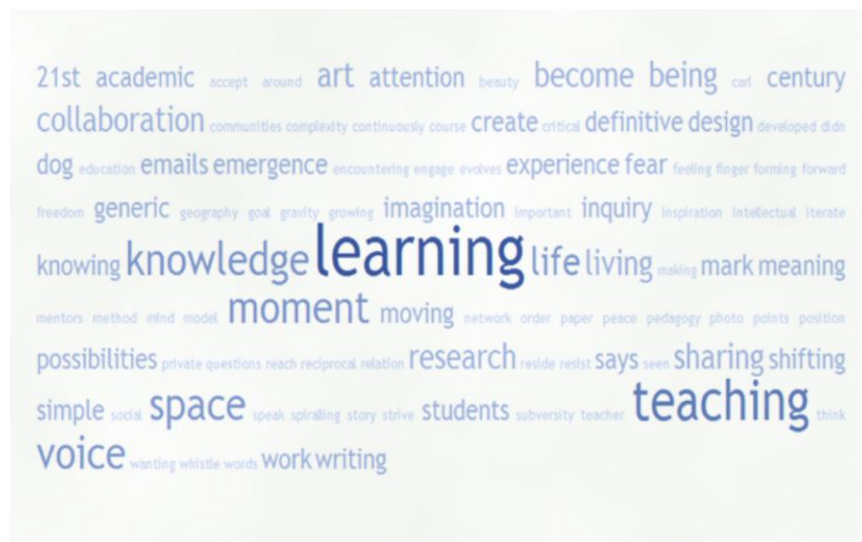
Mots clés : formation à l'enseignement, analyse réflexive, analyse poétique, parallaxe.

INTRODUCING THE APPROACH

We began a journey of dialogic inquiry a year ago, weaving together a responsive, intuitive, and spontaneous sharing of ideas as teacher-researchers, extending conversations that began in our doctoral program and continue today, transcending physical distance through the immediacy of online connectivity, in email, Skype, and social networking forums. Through virtual conversations concerning learning and living, we came to new understandings about the transformative process of becoming and being teacher-researchers, including how we experienced teaching teachers, and how we perceived incumbent teachers to experience our teaching. At the core of our exchanges reside the changing dynamics of teacher induction, the notions, values, and beliefs guiding teachers of tomorrow, and our rationale for making curricular decisions to challenge and cultivate the role of teachers as life-long learners and learning professionals. In the course of dialoguing, we mapped ourselves into teacher education through themes of struggles, complexities, and joys in the nexus of theory and praxis, coming to a greater appreciation for the future of teacher education as interconnectedness, where practice is a path to mindfulness.

Drawing on our extensive conversations as a source of knowing and as a method of inquiry, we deconstructed our e-letters, coding and collecting salient phrases and aspects that continued to resonate in relation to teacher education. The essence of our dialogic inquiry evolved into two interconnected artful expressions of a poem (Part 1), and video (Part 2). "To Soma Heliakon" is a poem written from these assembled phrases, copied verbatim from our writing, rendered in a weaving strand formation to symbolize how phrases link together across conversations about teacher education, and at the same time, serve to demonstrate how we make meaning through virtual nodes, drawing on intellectual relationships that influence our thinking, moving and writing as an active process of teacher-researcher reflection. The form also reiterates our content – our belief that deep learning is not on a straight direct path toward a test, but that transformative realization comes through tangential experience, where learning, metaphorically, is like the frays of a twisted rope that are hyperlinked to expected goals and intentions.

Embedded in the poem are hypertext links as coloured text that extend to broader networked conversations and multiple paths of inquiry, doubling the purpose of the poem as an arts-informed expression and an example of the kinds of structures underway that are redefining social and cultural learning assemblages. Also, the poem was entered into tagcrowd.com a tool to objectively analyze semantic frequency, creating a mathematical rendering of the poem based on word usage. The resulting *tagcloud* generated an image of words, scaled in font size to identify occurrence of dominant language features and most prominent thoughts, offering another view of the poem to provoke thought and meaning in the course of conversations. The title of this poem was inspired by the haunting electronic music of [Geoff Jensen](#), and through digital sampling, we generated our artful expressions while at the same time, inviting a collaborative, interdisciplinary community of inquiry to participate in these conversations by extending our inquiry to the social networking site, [Curriculum Theory](#).



THE POEM

one voice our voice

woven light double **helixing**

twining through 13 laden moons

singing, echoing, extrapolating, interlocuting emails

through crescents and phases reverberating beams

rays sprinkling newness fragmenting out and fractalling in

meeting in words, **a dialogic research inquiry**

anonymous authorship of generic familiarity

a true essence of artful collaborative inquiry

stirring pearls, **mingling strings**, mixing voices

in and out spiralling, spiralling, intersecting, overlapping

circuitous thought lines growing, **rhizoming** a tapestry

social networking, mapping a cartography, tagcrowding

resonating through phrase and passage shifting and sifting

though teaching and learning and living, moving in our change

through storying, encountering, every word becoming

a sentence, a discourse, a world, **now and forever**

a history and a future, to cradle our students

like **grains** slipping through the sky, atoms alighting

ever so briefly and through our fingers, each an entire civilization

and we, through a process of emergence

or moment of emergency reach out

unbounded by geography

to grasp the intangible isolation

of being and being teacher-researchers

find a venue here, **attend to attention span**

position ourselves to advocate for substantial

collaborative research rooted foremost

in shared experience

across time, reflection and deliberation simmered down

simply to fusing words, letters pulled from emails

lexicons drawn through space, pace with no significance

morsels freed from gravity, shifting **prosodies** to dance

writing **paratext** and threads into braids of poetic inquiry

a nameless formless emergence of knowing breathes
 exhales in relief, feeling the sound landing, generating more
 markings, always writing around, moving poignantly around
 the unnamed . . . how we are **escaping education**
 anti-teaching? breaking the fetters of our enculturation
 betraying our lives' work to step out, to speak
 confidentially of the unspoken, the fear
 and even now, here, this moment, to share deeply
 the complexity, the layering, the artful design
 of our own learning space, the reciprocity
 of sharing our learning and in doing, **our research**
becoming pedagogy, a **parallaxic praxis** of the possibilities
 "That is not because definitive knowledge is non-existent,
 but because, at least in the perspectives here, definitive knowledge
 (such as about what, for example, "works") as an ultimate goal
 distracts from the more crucial goal of continuously evolving
 knowledge models that are progressively useful in advancing
 learning" says **Eric Hamilton**. We acknowledge
Bakhtin's heteroglossia of voices
 through multi-media, multi-tier design

we softly **challenge** the ironies that reside
 like **ghosts** in our classrooms
 rupturing between teaching and learning
Mark Schofield says he can teach a dog to whistle
 I've seen him teach with my own eyes
 have you seen the dog whistle you ask?
 no. I didn't say the dog learned how
 teaching doesn't mean learning

we press the spaces together
 continuously shifting the cultural scene
 where the critical and painful moments of teaching
 are pointed at with one finger

where we fear critique and judgment, doubts of rightness
how honest can we be?
courageous and brave to iterate the emptiness
the wanting, the disappointment, the ephemeral
disconnect and distancing
the *intuitive knowing*
we speak, but are not fully heard
ask the simple questions:
what is good teaching?
what is bad teaching?
what is school for?
what is important for *living well*?
what is worth trading for this *golden age*
of life where grass and leaves and trees matter
and we put our children in rows
grooming them with paper and pencil
how does our teaching success correlate to student success?

our voices become lost together as our communication evolves
in conversations, within communities
situated in the spaces between, virtually?
amongst common research areas and course work,
and mentors and friends shaping our scholarship
our lives' work, through narrative inquiry
through *Carl Leggo* who created a space
of possibilities within the context of life writing
many years ago, entrusting us with story
inspiring our emergence in *Bessie* and *Red*
fluidly forming what we did not realize

only in a retrospective curriculum can we see
the background informing
our practices, our directions, our expressions
recognizing we are not alone
without teachers, mentors, researchers, others

we transcend to the intimacy of dialogue
as inspiration, encouragement, excitement
energizing us to write, to create, to engage
again, to encounter

a precious space of hopefulness
bringing forward genuine constructivist knowledge
through collaboration into true voice, a **third spirit**
of ownership, a hybridization that births anew
inuring deeper epistemological and ontological questioning
while also taking into account a new generation
of academic engagements that offer
the **potential** to **rethink** what it means
to author, to own, to learn, to teach
to integrate in ways
that shift definitions of discipline

I am taken aback. She says

“I look for courses across the university
where I don’t have to read or write
I didn’t expect to have to do this in art.”
I conjure my ode: re-chant the policy in my mind
What do I believe? I hear the inconsequentialness
of belief without meaning, the irrelevance
of accepting doctrine, knowledge
the necessity of comprehension

strive to blend order and structure and freedom, invested
unwavering commitment, multiple methods of communicating
oral, visual and tactile learning experiences
cloaked in a fluidity of responsiveness
resist teaching what to think, but HOW to think
regard reciprocal learning with
honour, humility, and humanity
instigating, provoking entry points
into the centre of a dual gravity

in tension between heart and mind, imagination and real
joyous but never knowing enough
aware of the **complexity undertaking itself**
design and delivery thought through
to **define wisdom** as investigation, analysis, experience
a learning through personal meaning making
dedicating energies to the students
respecting **intellectual freedom**
not dividing my attention publicly or privately
and yet, I become troubled
in the unfoldings residing
in the disjunctures and prevailing absences

how then do you model **critical thinking**? I ask
what am I giving with simple positive reinforcement
without a hint of possible alternatives
without disagreement?
how do I teach polite subversion outside fear?
why teach, what is the purpose?

while hanging laundry
I thought about identifying
the source of my art, my photos
my fictions, the moments of revelation
modeling 21st century teacher education
the attention to nuances, being in the moment
discovering and nurturing curiosity
within the **local that is global**
seeing beauty in the overlooked immediate realm
measuring the relation in the mundane
admitting inspiration comes from everyday
living and moving through geographies
works demonstrating simple **aesthetic relations**

and concurrently I cannot model my secret learning
the private spaces and emails on the flat screen

surface of my **online learning communities**
 and **social network utilities** teaming with life
 under the smooth liquid sea of photo sharing
 and **delicious** *notworking* schemas
 all forming webs of relation, unacknowledged learning
 skill sets developed in action, the new pedagogies
 of **in time funds of knowledge, in sidebars**, in tangents
 a new dawn learning

imagine
 a **potluck banquet**
 with plates and napkins ready

I surrender, let the teacher lecture go
 remove I, **relinquish the ancient paradigms**
 of teaching as feeding, release imagination
wake up subversity in order to create
do my part whatever that part is says **Richard Kahn**
 be in movement, **flow** together, in meaningfulness
 enlivening, developing intellectual atmosphere
 laugh at myself saying "remember this,
 it's one of the **happiest** moments of my life."

I redress time, the panic space
 drowning under the weight of too many details
 the growing academic temperamentality
 in the academic silence
 using relationships as my music
 always striving, yearning for space
 feeling a sadness, resistance to
 performing duties rather than following dreams
 having to do versus wanting to do
 never at peace, **manically high and low**
 agitated, for if we do achieve peacefulness
 do we cease to **be creative**?
 long and old and tired questions

the same we ask of students
always, what is important?

note the many connections which start to *coalesce* when I
accept the happening, search forward, reach
marking iterations through sharing, making sense my way
teaching-researching-learning
in the 21st century

THE VIDEO

encounters

THE ANALYSIS

Employing multimedia – text, audio, still images, video – we explored how technology, already reshaping the lives of becoming teachers, is certain to reshape teacher education. This poem and video model the shifting processes and beliefs that we have observed emerging across learning landscapes of classrooms, in schools and in the academy:

1. Learning is transformative when it is meaningful, making static curriculums unsustainable. By changing the role of teachers, and enabling more creative social constructivist approaches, a sort of ‘potluck’ pedagogy may emerge, where students and teachers come together informally and make discretionary decisions that facilitate aesthetic learning experiences. ‘Potluck’ pedagogy describes a deep acknowledgement for what students bring to the table and offers choice in the possibilities for learning.
2. The presentation and representation of learning reiterated in various pedagogic forms evokes and invokes imaginative thinking possibilities. The lesson shifts to become a forum for inventive possibilities for students to enter and engage.
3. Revisiting deeper ontological and epistemological questions, philosophies of wholeness and oneness, and introducing students to introspective and contemplative conversations help to advance past testing

practices students often regard as regurgitating momentarily remembered content.

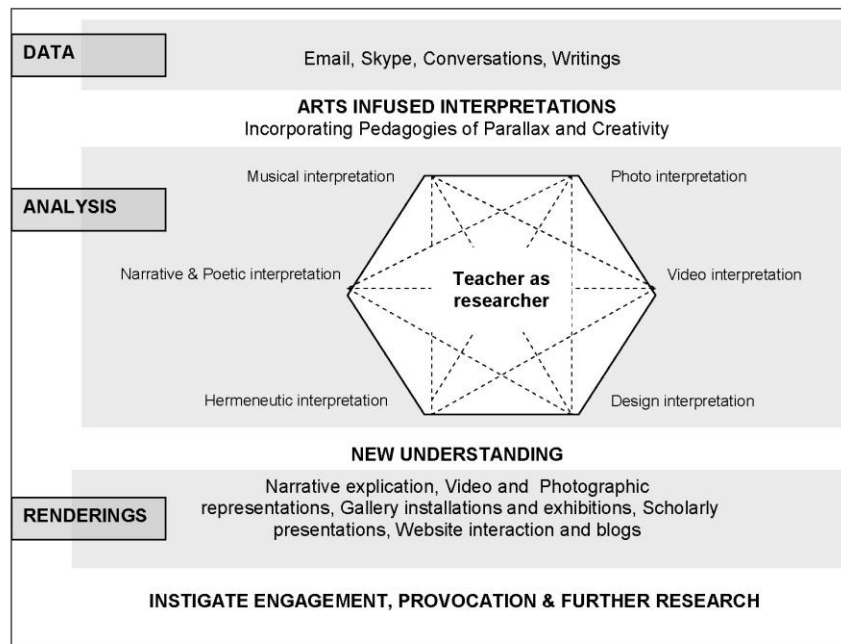
4. We continually ask: What is school for? What is human success? What is good mentorship and sustainable teaching? How do we learn wisdom through investigation, analysis, and experience?
5. We walk a fine line in the tension between the private and public in order to make personal meaning and above all, encourage creative and energetic newness.

THE RENDERING

Our video blends our individual photographic experiments of abstract light writing created in different spaces and at different times. Our digital images lend to the crux of our online written conversations, with commonalities in our image construction, such as colour schemes, juxtaposed with tensions in compositional shapes suggestive of movement between the blurring of fluidity and the articulation of lines. The series creates unity, and at the same time, generates an allegorical expression of futurism, with qualities of nebulas and star formations, doubling the conceptual framework of "To Soma Heliakon," Greek for "the golden body of the solar man," and notions of teacher education as both a yet-to-be discovered frontier that is deeply mindful and an awakening of joyful learning spaces. Fractalling fragments of conversation even further, we deconstructed the poem to "mash-up" our works, overlaying the video with traces of the poem. Echoing the methods of *tagclouds*, we applied varied font sizes in the video to change the emphasis of words in movement with images and music, effectively creating a video haiku in unison with Jensen's electronic music. The video is posted on [YouTube](#), and the hyperlinks are gathered from expansive sources demonstrating that conceptions of education, particularly knowledge creation and dissemination of research, is moving to include learning communities outside the classroom. We acknowledge multiple on and offline spaces as legitimate modes of communication. We model through this poem and video the possibilities of educational practice as social capital when conceptions of education authentically incorporate the immediacy of the local and the global.

Our work follows a research model of “parallaxic praxis,” which offers a framework for engaging in creative scholarship where the data and issues are viewed through artful lenses to provoke new understandings of teaching and learning. We invite commentary and consideration from audiences to broaden boundaries of formal and informal dialogue, seeking to bring together student and teacher with equitable intent, shifting the roles of the public academic to enfranchise and encourage social belonging. In this way, we seek to disrupt perceptions of knowledge making and knowledge as power-broking, and in so doing, embracing teacher education in the twenty-first century.

PARALLAXIC PRAXIS
Specific Project: To Soma Heliakon



CONTINUING THE CONVERSATION

We welcome your comments, questions, and critique of our inquiry in an [online forum](#) as part of our continuing conversations concerning art,

technology, education, and curriculum theory. Through exchanges on this site, we seek to constructively and collectively unfold integrated artful research.

INFLUENCES

We acknowledge that this work is grounded in a complex confluence of experiences, readings, relationships, and research over time. We are indebted to the individuals and work evidenced in the poem links which have become part of this dialogic learning process. Below are references which inspired this particular work.

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OUTLOOKS

[The Euphoria Project](#) – a science/art film which discusses happiness as engagement

[Just-in-time learning and Just-in-case learning](#)

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SOCIAL NETWORKS

[Curriculum Theory Network \[curriculumtheory.ning.com\]](http://curriculumtheory.ning.com)

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