

## BOOK REVIEWS

### **Memory Mosaics: Researching Professional Teacher Learning Through Artful Memory-work**

**by Kathleen Pithouse-Morgan, Daisy Pillay and Claudia Mitchell**

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Review by Megumi Nishida

Using the arts for teacher education may not be new, but using a method of artful memory-work for teacher professional learning is exceptional, especially for teacher researchers and teacher educators. *Memory-Mosaics: Researching Teacher Professional Learning Through Artful Memory-work* edited by Kathleen Pithouse-Morgan, Daisy Pillay and Claudia Mitchell (2019) consists of ten chapters, contributed by 21 teacher researchers and teacher educators from South Africa and Canada. Each chapter of the book shares experiences developing new ways of understanding professional learning through various forms of the arts. The authors of those chapters are creative, even bravely using unorthodox materials, e.g., photographs, collages, poems, films and even popular TV series, to elicit their memories of experiences as learners and educators. Since many authors in the book use memory-work methods as part of their self-study of teaching practices, this reflective process through narratives inspires their future vision as professional educators. The editors of the book are well distinguished educational researchers in the field of memory-work, art-based educational research and self-study research. They envision every story as a single mosaic piece, colourful in its own way and powerful with narrative, yet an artful mosaic tapestry appears when those mosaic pieces are gathered. The metaphor represents the editors' respectful attitude towards authors' unique yet authentic learning experiences. Throughout the book, the editors explore what is seen and learnt from those mosaic pieces. The name of artful memory-work made me wonder what it really means, but made sense after learning where those mosaic pieces came from.

Artful memory-work is art-based educational research. It has a root in the German feminist Frigga Haug's memory-work. Personally, I have participated in a summer seminar on Collective Memory-Work at the University of Iceland in 2019. During the seminar, we participants collectively investigated stories that each of us wrote, tried to explore common

themes to understand how we were negotiating our institutional positions as educators. It was an exciting process to dig deep into our thoughts together, but it required a mutual language, in this case, English. I wondered what if we could not speak the same language to express our thoughts? This experience made me curious about using the arts instead of texts. Expanding Frigga Haug's memory-work, Canadian teacher educator Claudia Mitchell and her research colleague Sandra Weber sought professional learning through memory-work by using visual and arts-based methods (Mitchell & Weber, 1999). They conceptualized professional learning through memory-work as "a pedagogy of reinvention"; "a process of going back over something in different ways and with new perspectives, of studying one's own experience with insight and awareness of the present for purposes of acting on the future" (as cited in Pithouse-Morgan et al., 2019, p. 5). The art-based memory-work implements the arts, such as drawing, photography, video making, script writing, metaphor, and poetry, as tools for reflection, and they are often used as a method of self-study of teaching and teacher education practices (Mitchell, Weber & Pithouse, 2009; Samaras, 2011; Tidwell & Manke, 2009; Weber & Mitchell, 2004). Artful memory-work allows teacher researchers to express their experiences and understand their education related memories visually for the purpose of teacher professional development.

My first encounter with the "Memory Mosaics" was serendipitous as I sat next to Kathleen Pithouse-Morgan, the first author of the book, at one of the roundtable sessions about self-study of teaching and teacher education practices at AERA, Toronto, 2019. I spoke with her about my interest in using Haiku poem in my teaching. I am a Japanese immigrant educator who works in the Icelandic education system. Since I began my teaching career in Iceland 2014, I have been struggling with various differences such as language, educational values and teaching culture. I was used to the Japanese way of structuring and controlling students, and I felt that the Icelandic way is almost the opposite. The Icelandic teaching values respect students based on an inclusive philosophy. I was completely confused by those differences but a habit of reflection in self-study keeps me moving forward. For the past few years, I have been working with Japanese preservice teachers. I try to bring my reflective strategy to Japan, but it needs to be arranged to meet the Japanese teacher education culture. In my past teaching experience as a Japanese cram-school (so-called *Juku*) teacher in the early 2000s, I discovered that teaching in Japan required technique rather than reflection. Teachers' responsibility was to teach students how to win their competition for higher education (Nishida, 2019). Unfortunately the competitive value of education seems to still remain among Japanese teachers after almost two decades. For example, when I encouraged Japanese preservice teachers to reflect on their educational experiences during the workshop I offered the first time at a Japanese teacher training collage 2016, I noticed that they were not used to expressing their thoughts with words for the purpose of reflection. They were afraid of being evaluated and making mistakes. As Haiku is originated in Japan and it is part of their national curriculum, I assumed that Japanese preservice teachers would feel comfortable to use the method to reflect on their practice. But I was still not sure how I could use them effectively to elicit their positive experiences in order to stimulate their future teaching images. At the end of

our chat, Kathleen took the newly published book from her bag and kindly gave it to me. It was hard to close the book once I opened it during my flight back to the lava fields of Iceland. What made me so enthusiastic about reading further and further? The reason is simple. I could hear genuine voices of authors.

Throughout the book, voices of professional learning of educators through various artful memory-work methods are presented. Narrative around the arts lets the readers imagine authors' experiences vividly. The second chapter in the book, "*To Seek Out Something More*": *Knowing the Teacher-Researcher Self Differently Through Self-Narrative Writing and Found Photographs* by Daisy Pillay, Sagie Naicker, and Wendy Rawlinson (p. 15-34) examines how photographs project teachers' quests for understanding professional identity and pedagogical exploration within South African diverse society and classrooms. For example, Sagie Naicker, who became disabled by accident when he was 25, struggles with a feeling of being "different" from an able-bodied person. Through self-narrative by reflecting on his photographs, he discovers his strength as becoming "an activist championing the personal, professional, social, and educational rights of people with disabilities" (p. 23). The third chapter *Working with Photographs: Seeing, Looking, and Visual Representation as Professional Learning* by Claudia Mitchell, Katie MacEntee, Mary Cullinan, and Patti Allison (p. 35-54) uses various forms of working with photographs such as creating collage, curating a photo album, to elicit preservice teachers' learning experiences, and "co-construct" the meanings of their learning. In one of the mosaic pieces from this chapter, Katie MacEntee explored South African preservice teachers' learning trajectory through photo-elicitation interviews. Preservice teachers took up training for art-based methodologies to approach HIV and AIDS education for the purpose of addressing the epidemics in the young generation, such as high school students, through participatory pedagogy. Katie used photographs that she took during trainings to prompt preservice teachers' memories of their teaching and learning. Photo-elicitation interviews revealed that preservice teachers gained new perspectives through learning from young students. The seventh chapter *Creative Nonfiction Narratives and Memory-Work: Pathways for Women Teacher-Researchers' Scholarship of Ambiguity and Openings* by Daisy Pillay, Mary Cullinan and Leighandri Moodley (p. 113-131) provides different mosaic pieces which remind us that we can learn from each other's stories. A Canadian experienced teacher, Mary began her doctoral studies in her 50s. She tries to understand her life and her place while listening to other late-entered doctoral students' stories by using the photovoice approach. On the other hand, Leighandri Moodley, a novice teacher of Indian origin in South Africa, listens to other novice teachers' stories to understand their experiences. Mary and Leighandri seem to be different in their professional careers and academic experiences, yet through listening to each other they experienced similar emotions in their lives giving them hope for their future.

Among those ten chapters, I found that some written by South African educators are especially empowering to me. In the fifth chapter *Collaging Memories: Reimagining Teacher-Researcher Identities and Perspectives* by Daisy Pillay, Reena Ramkelewan and Anita Hiralaal (p. 77-93), Reena Ramkelewan felt herself being a "teacher robot" (p.82) as she was

trapped by the institutional power that made her feel like being in a vegetative state. She could not raise her voice, as she describes that it was like a gun was put to her head if she was not following the status quo. While creating a collage, named “the cabbage-head”—as each collage creates the swirly layers like a cabbage—she found her love for her learners between cabbage leaves. This mosaic piece shows how collage generates a space for a teacher to explore a path towards a positive future. Because of my past professional experience as being a Japanese *Juku* teacher, I understand that it is not easy to go against political pressure. From Reena’s mosaic, I learned how South African teachers who had been oppressed under political pressure become empowered and find their agency for future teaching.

Some South African mosaic pieces are painful as the authors lived through the apartheid era as oppressed learners. The eighth chapter *The Promise of Poetry Belongs to Us All: Poetic Professional Learning in Teacher-Researchers’ Memory-Work* by Kathleen Pithouse-Morgan, S’phiwe Madondo and Edwina Grossi (p. 133-153) is a practical example. S’phiwe Madondo is a primary school teacher. His endeavor is to cultivate his students’ flair for English written communication to express themselves. While reflecting on his learning experience as a black African child during apartheid, S’phiwe composed a poem in which he expresses what he learned from his illiterate parents. He discovered that parents can offer pedagogical care regardless of their educational experiences. Composing a poem can be a powerful strategy to reflect on personal history, express subtleness of experiences, and generate new knowledge for professional development. The fourth chapter caught my attention because it highlights the value of collaboration between teacher educator and preservice teachers through artful memory-work: *Picturing a More Hopeful Future: Teacher-Researcher Drawing Early Memories of School* by Kathleen Pithouse-Morgan, Hlengiwe (Mawi) Makhanya, Graham Downing and Nontuthuko Phewa (p. 55-75). Three different teacher researchers, who lived in three different periods of the apartheid era as being either black or white, conducted self-study research by using memory drawing to explore their experience as learners. They drew their learning experiences and revealed the outrageous educational values that were the norm for them back in the apartheid era. However, by drawing and reflecting on their past as professionals, they become more committed to be humanitarian teachers. The highlight of this chapter for me is how Kathleen Pithouse-Morgan summarized her own learning through a poem she created to conclude chapter four. It shows how each mosaic piece is sewn into a colourful quilt.

We created drawings  
To remember in detail  
Rich and fertile memories  
To make visible the past

To remember in detail  
For teacher self-development  
To make visible the past  
From which to tell our stories

For teacher self-development  
To trigger emotions  
From which to tell our stories  
To reinvent the future

To trigger emotions  
Rich and fertile memories  
To reinvent the future  
We created drawing

(Pithouse-Morgan, Makhanya, Dowing & Phewa, 2019, p. 73)

The poem by Pithouse-Morgan reminds me that the acts of teaching and learning should be interactive and respectful. There is no hierarchy, we share our voices, and learn from each other. I learned that my challenge of using Haiku poem for teaching a concept of reflection also has to be conducted upon mutual respect. I should be able to hear Japanese preservice teachers' voices through Haiku poems.

This book may be inspiring to all educators who wish to acquire a new approach to teaching but also who wish to look into themselves and their surroundings through different lenses, through arts and collaboration.

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