

Narrative Generates a Learning Spiral in Education: Recognition, Reflection, and  
Reconstruction

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## NARRATIVE GENERATES A LEARNING SPIRAL IN EDUCATION

## Abstract

The narrative form is everywhere. It can be as common as our daily stories and as significant as a great novel. Narrating can be a process of self-assessment and introspection around a certain theme. In this sense it is important in education.

In this paper I argue that people learn not only by listening to narrative but also by teaching others through narrative and by reflection, which is a form of narrative where we tell stories to ourselves. I propose a model of narrative learning adapted from the work of Mary Catherine Bateson (1994) that involves recognition of experience, reflection, and reconstruction, which are interrelated as a spiral. I first describe my understanding of the importance of narrative. Next I focus on the importance of narrative for education in different cultures, including Canadian First Nations cultures and my own Chinese culture. When describing the importance of narrative for education in Chinese culture I interweave stories that reflect my own experience with narrative learning throughout my childhood. Finally I describe the narrative learning spiral model using examples from my experience in the Master's of education program.

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### **The Importance of Narrative**

In our daily lives, narrating is ubiquitous. It is possible to locate all the events and actions of one's life within narrative episodes or stories (Ramsey, 2005; Rossiter, 2002). As expressed by the literary theorist Barbara Hardy (1968), "We dream in narrative, daydream in narrative, remember, anticipate, hope, despair, believe, doubt, plan, revise, criticize, construct, gossip, learn, hate and love in narrative" (p.5). Polkinghore (1998) states that "examples of narrating include personal and social histories, myths, fairy tales, novels, and the everyday stories we use to explain our own and others' actions" (p. 1). In Polkinghore's view, narrative, in a broad sense, is any oral or written expression. In this sense, my action in writing this paper can itself be viewed as a form of narration.

The poet Muriel Rukeyser (1968) describes the ubiquity of stories in a famous line from her poem, *The Speed of Darkness*; "the universe is made of stories, not of atoms" (Rukeyser, 1968). Clark echoes this ubiquity when she describes the world as "narrative-saturated" (Clark, 2010, p. 4). Sarbin (1993) goes so far as to describe the world as being "story-shaped" (p.63). These authors share a view of the world as being fashioned by the stories we tell to explain it. Narrative is how we humans make sense or meaning of the world (Clarke & Rossiter, 2008).

There are those who see narrative as uniquely human and fundamental to our existence (Fisher (1984). According to (Clark, 2010) it is narration that separates us from "all other beings on this planet" (p. 3). Similarly, Kenyon & Randall (1997) note that, "to be a person is to have a story. More than that, it is to be a story" (p.1); from this point of view narrative is how we create our very identity.

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The point is often made that narrative is a shared creative activity. Czarniawska (1997) points out that presenting a narrative includes both the way we tell a story and how the receiver interprets it. Ramsey (2005) concludes that storytelling provides an opportunity for performance and reflection. He argues that narrative is more creative than descriptive. Dhunpath (2000) extends this view by explaining that rather than focusing on accuracy, a story focuses on conveying a particular meaning to the listener – “the story is a composition of construed meanings and self-representations” (p. 545). Narrative evolves through the interaction between the storyteller and the listener.

Clark (2010) describes the potential power of creative narrative for learning. In her view we “story our growing understanding” and make our learning visible to others through narrative. Clark’s perspective is evident in the following passage.

When we learn something new, we story our growing understanding of it. In so doing we are able to see for ourselves what we understand and what we do not, and we are also able to see what we do not yet know. This process of narrating our evolving understanding of something is how we make our learning visible to ourselves and to others; we can track it and thus be encouraged by its growth and be aware of what help we need to learn further. (p. 4)

One’s depth of insight and experience that emerges underscores the power of his or her life experience, and telling these stories is a means of teaching (Blakesley, 2010).

For teachers, narrative can provide a means to assess students’ growing knowledge. For peers learning from each other, it can strengthen the learning process. For self-directed learners, it is an internal way to practice and review what is being

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learned. When we listen to a story, we can apply it to our own lives, and then we learn.

In the words of Clark (2010) “narrative and sense making and learning are all connected” (p. 4).

Riessman (2008) outlines eight purposes of narration used by either individuals, groups, or both; to remember the past, to argue, to persuade a possibly skeptical audience, to bring the audience into the experience of the teller, to entertain, to mislead, and to mobilize others for social change. All of these purposes together, Reissman points out, combine to create one larger purpose of narration, to allow us survive as human beings.

### **The Importance of Narrative for Education in Different Cultures**

As I have been engaged in my studies in the Master of Education program in British Columbia, I have noticed that narrative is used to educate people in many cultures. I will take Canadian Indigenous First Nation cultures and the Chinese culture as examples.

I have several classmates who are First Nations. From them, I have learned that traditionally they learn from the stories that the Elders tell them. The term “Elders,” in an Indigenous cultural context, has nothing to do with age; it refers to “people who have acquired wisdom through life experience, education (a process of gaining skills, knowledge, and understanding), and reflection” (Archibald, 2008, p. 37). The oral tradition, particularly the telling of stories, is fundamental to Canadian Indigenous education. It is the way Indigenous people learn and share their knowledge, and it is also how people understand their world (Archibald, 2008). In Indigenous cultures, remembering the stories will help you be strong because telling stories to others is also a reciprocal practice (Archibald, 2008, p. 27).

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Armstrong (1987) also indicates that storytelling is one of the Indigenous teaching methods. In Indigenous cultures, remembering the stories will help you be strong because telling stories to others is also a reciprocal practice (Archibald, 2008, p. 27).

Archibald (2008) describes how the story tradition can be traced back thousands of years. Through telling stories, people are asked to think about why these stories happen and what they can learn from them. Below, I quote the words of one of the Elders from Archibald's book:

These words have been echoed by many Elders: I would like to tell my life, what I've done, so my grandchildren and their children will learn things that happened in this last hundred years. I believe that my story will be interesting for schools. I know when I go to schools today, kindergartens or even high school, the children like to hear about my life. They enjoy my songs that my elders taught me many years ago. I sing to them in my talking stick. (Archibald, 2008, p. 21)

This quote from the Elder suggests that the status of narration for Indigenous people is like the mentor in their life. "Elders' life stories can show how Indigenous people survived and how they can keep their cultural knowledge intact" (Archibald, 2008, p. 43). According to Benally (1997), speaking about Navajo culture, "knowledge, learning, and life itself are sacred, inseparable, and interwoven parts of a whole. The quality of each determines the quality of the other" (p.84). The integral role of stories is foundational.

I come from China. Thinking of my culture, stories also play a part in the Chinese educational tradition. We have numerous fables and Chinese traditional stories that are used to educate people, especially young children. As Wang (2012), describes in her

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study of emotional talk with children in China, usually parents and grandparents tell these stories. It is through these stories that cultural attitudes and beliefs are passed on from one generation to the next. “By telling stories around the child, about the child, and with the child, parents convey to their children cultural beliefs, knowledge, and ways of thinking and feeling” (Wang, 2012, p. 1). As an example of the use of stories in Chinese culture, here I share is a story that I was told as a child about borrowing the light.

Once upon a time, before electricity was invented in a place where people were very poor and had to work hard during the day just to survive, there were three people who wanted to study at night. Because they were so poor, they could not afford the wax and oil needed to light their houses at night. In order to study, they came up with wonderful ideas to borrow the light: One person climbed on his roof and read the book with the reflected light from the snow. Another one caught a lot of fireflies and put them into a gauze bag, so he read the book with the light from the fireflies. The third one bored a hole on the wall, so he could get some light from the neighbour’s house.

This story implies that these three people pursued knowledge under difficult circumstances, and studied hard in spite of poverty. This story also indicates that studying is our own responsibility. I was told this story by my parents when I was in primary school because they wanted me to study hard. Even now when I feel tired and stressed about my study, my father will say, “even ancient people knew the importance of studying, you do not need to borrow the light like them, and you have well-established and advanced teaching and learning facilities, how come you do not want to study?”

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There are thousands of similar examples in China. I did not care about those stories when I was young, but I do care about them now, as they are powerful and inspiring. There is a Chinese saying that “you will not know you need to read more until it is time for you to use your knowledge; you will not know how hard it is until you experience it”. Now that I have a need for these stories I appreciate them. They have helped me through difficult times.

The most welcome form of narration is perhaps either fairy tales or cartoons. In my current host family, there are two little children, one is six and the other is eight. Their parents read a story to them every night before they go to sleep. When they watch cartoons on television, their attention is fixed, they watch and listen without moving, speaking, or even blinking their eyes. As soon as the television is off, they begin to cry or shout. It seems as if they fall under the spell or magic of the story when it is being told, and then they are disappointed when the story ends.

Usually, a fairy tale starts with the phrase, “Once upon a time.” Thus, if I hear the phrase “Once upon a time,” I know a story will begin. One cartoon impressed me profoundly when I was a child. It is a Korean cartoon series called “A Long Time Ago” in English. Each episode tells an educational story. I watched this cartoon when I was in middle school. Here is an example of an episode I watched about a lazy and untidy boy.

Once upon a time, there was a boy who did not like to study, and did not like to do the housework either, which distressed his parents. One day, he threw his fingernails on the grass outside his house after he cut them. An elder wizard knew this and sent a mouse to eat his nails. Then the mouse transformed into the boy and went back to his house. The mouse was tidy



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and hardworking. This made his parents feel happy. They thought their son changed into a good person. When their real son came back, they thought the real one is a fraud and chased him away. The real son was sad and weeping on the grass. The wizard came to him, and asked him to think about what bad things he did in the past days. The boy suddenly realized his past behaviors were bad habits and promised to the wizard he would get rid of them. After that, the wizard sent a cat to eat the mouse and the boy went back to his home. Finally, the boy became clean and tidy, and studied hard.

Owing to this story, whenever I was about to throw something on the ground, I would think that if any mouse ate it, it might become me. Therefore, I learned to become a tidy person. As Polkinghore (1998) asserts “narrative meaning is one of the functions to organize elements of awareness into meaningful episodes” (p. 1). The story above combines various elements to form a meaningful episode. When I look back on this story, it interests me that narrating can be educational.

Another experience that impressed me is Mass. I once went to church with my host mother. The priest preached a story from the Bible, and I learned it. The story is about bridesmaids waiting to go to a wedding.

Ten bridesmaids were invited to a wedding. They were waiting for the groom. Five of them brought oil with their lamps, while the other five did not. After a long time waiting, the five who did not bring oil with their lamps had to see the light go out. When the groom came, only those five who kept their lamps lit could go to the wedding.

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From this story, I learned we should be prepared for a time when we are called upon, and we need to keep our lamp lit. The power of narrating is strong and infinite because it implies a process of cognition which involves “perceiving, remembering, reasoning”, (Polkinghoren, 1998, p. 9), and because it brings a fluent connection where people share beliefs and values (Polkinghoren, 1998, p. 14).

As Polkinghoren (1998) states “The stories we encounter carry the values of our culture by providing positive models to emulate” (p. 14). I remember a story that inspired me to write a special letter to my father when I was in university. Our Chinese teacher had given us a lesson about the article “A Letter Unable to Post.” The author narrates how she wrote a letter to her father to show she missed him, but her father had already passed away, so this is a letter that cannot be read. After that class, I decided to write a letter to my father, because I hoped my father could receive my letter while he was alive and I thought he would be happy. For me this is a powerful example of my learning something positive from another’s story. I was reminded to value my time with my father and communicate with him while I have the opportunity.

Additionally, “we create narrative descriptions for ourselves and for others about our own past actions, and we develop stories that give sense to the behavior of others” (Polkinghoren, 1998, p.14). I once sent an email to my niece who is 11 years old. She had sent me an email saying how much she admired my life abroad and how she wished she could speak English well like me. Personally, I did not think I was as good an English speaker as my niece described, and I wished that I could have a good job, earn money, and look after my parents. Therefore, in my reply, I told her how to become a good daughter at home, a good student at school, and a good person in society. I hoped she

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would be more outstanding than me when she is older. I gave her those suggestions by telling the story of my growth. That is an example of teaching others through my narration.

Experience and narrative are intertwined in complex ways. In the words of Ochs and Capps, “narrative and self are inseparable in that narrative is simultaneously born out of experience and gives shape to experience” (Ochs & Capps, 1996, p. 19). Sometimes when I felt stressed during my study and when I had no motivation to move on, I still had to overcome the stress and continue my studying and my life. Forming a narrative of my experience helped me overcome the hardship. Fighting hard to survive against pressure is one of the most common human experiences.

Once I told a story to my father about how I had used my initiative to succeed during military training in my high school. After that, whenever I expressed frustration and I felt that I could not do anything to make a good living, my father used this story, my own story, to encourage me and tell me I had the competence to live better. Under tough circumstances, our potential abilities can be inspired by such stories. Mezirow (1978) also believes that a serious situation in an individual’s life can change his or her perspective. Thus, it is important not to be afraid of difficulties. Hardships will make us strong. It is stressful experience that makes us grow up, and we overcome those difficulties, which makes our experience meaningful. In my example my father taught me this lesson using my own story.

Just as Rossiter explains and my examples illustrate, narration is a powerful medium of teaching and learning (Rossiter, 2002). As was the case for my learning through my own story that my father repeated back to me, narrative learning is interactive

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and reciprocal (Cortazzi, Jin, Wall, & Cavendish, 2001). Both the one telling and the one listening can more thoroughly comprehend their lives through the story (Polkinghorne & Cortazzi, as cited in Cortazzi et al, 2001, p. 253). When I think about my own learning through stories, I agree with Clark (2010), that learning through narration has three steps: hearing, telling, and recognizing. “When we hear, we are the receiver; when we tell, we are the actor, the one putting all the details together and making the experience coherent for ourselves and for others” (Clark, 2010, p. 5). By recognizing how the story applies to ourselves, we can understand how the story influences our development.

### **Narrative Learning Spiral**

Mott, Callaway, Zettlemyer, et al (1999) explain that narrative enables learners to engage in powerful learning activities that include exploration, reflection, and co-construction (p. 79). In the next section of this paper, by drawing on Bateson (1994), I argue that both learning through listening to a story and teaching through telling a story make us go through a learning spiral of recognition, reflection, and reconstruction. I begin each section with a personal comment.

### **Recognition**

*Through narration, I realize I am learning and I am improving. It helps me to recognize the value of my experience and seek the way to my heart.*

Fisher proposes that human beings are the creatures who tell stories and those stories serve a function of giving meaning to our experiences (1984). In other words, the process of narrating their experience is how learners give meaning to this experience (Clark & Rossiter, 2008). By narrating, people make their experience more vivid and interactive (Ramsey, 2005).

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Experience is also treated as an action, not so much something that happens to a person, but rather a creative, joint action in which community narratives such as, for example, ‘individual experience’ are one linguistic repertoire that shared intentionality and joint action can draw on in performing ongoing world and relations making. This performative treatment of person and world making is developed further as a narrative learning cycle is outlined. (Ramsey, 2005, p. 223)

Clark (2010) states that “experience itself is prelinguistic; it exists prior to and apart from language. We access it, reflect on it, make sense of it through languaging it, which is to say, through narrating it. In short, we learn narratively” (p. 5). Thinking about my experiences, I notice that difficulties have made up the majority of them since I left my home to go to another country. But at the same time, I find I have grown up through those difficulties. When facing adversity, people can alter their perspectives because of the pressure they are enduring (Mezirow, 1978). Taylor (2008) describes this connection between adversity and perspective transformation in the following quote:

A perspective transformation often occurs either through a series of cumulative transformed meaning schemes or as a result of an acute personal or social crisis, for example, a natural disaster, the death of a significant other, divorce, a debilitating accident, war, job loss, or retirement. These experiences are often stressful and painful, and they can cause individuals to question the very core of their existence.

(Taylor, 2008, p. 6)

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In thinking about this quote I understand that it is those difficulties that push me to face them, overcome them, and continue with my studying and my life, that teach me to be brave, to meet the challenge. There is a Chinese saying “the fragrance of plum blossoms comes from the hard coldness”. Therefore, when we feel stressed and have to endure pain and anguish, we could find that we gain experience and wisdom in the end.

Sometimes, I think if I had studied to complete my Master’s degree in my hometown, I would have been free from the hardships of life, and I would not miss my parents’ love for me. However if I had not come abroad, I would not have known the world outside of my country, and I would not have experienced a foreign country’s education; and if I had stayed with my family, I would not have known how much I miss them. Polkinghorne (1998) believes that “we use the narrative scheme to inform our decisions by constructing imaginative ‘what if’ scenarios” (p. 14). Through my “what if” scenarios, it seems that what I have obtained is more than what I have lost. According to Ochs and Capps (1996), “narrative is an essential resource in the struggle to bring experiences to conscious awareness” (p. 21), and “every telling provides both narrators and listeners/readers with an opportunity of evoking certain memories, concerns, and expectations” (p. 22). From Lindeman’s (1961) point of view, “Experience is the adult’s living textbook” (p.121); I also feel that the experiences I have described are my living textbooks, and my treasure. In this sense, narrating helps me come to recognize my past experiences and makes them meaningful. As Mezirow (1996) explains learning occurs when we give experience new meaning: “learning is understood as the process of using interpretation to construe a new or revised interpretation of the meaning of one’s experience in order to guide future action” (p. 162). In my case, through my journey, I

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have come to recognize the value of the difficulties I have faced. Although I still experience the difficulties, I value them, because it is through them that I have come to recognize the importance of my love for my parents, and their love for me.

### **Reflection**

*Through narrating my story, I reflect on my own life.*

Reflection evokes our past memories; through reflection we gain recognition, and deepen insights. According to Asselin (2011) reflection “involves openness, a willingness to look inward to think about feelings and new ideas” (p. 4). It also involves “personal and emotional risks, self-awareness, and insight” (p. 4). Reflection can help us understand who we are (Asselin, 2011). According to Taylor (2008) “Critical reflection is seen as conscious and explicit reassessment of the consequence and origin of our meaning structures” (p. 6). In the following quote Mezirow (1995) explains that we reflect in response to the feeling that something is wrong with the way we are interpreting our experience. It comes from a sense that we need to re-evaluate.

It is a process by which we attempt to justify our beliefs, either by rationally examining assumptions, often in response to intuitively becoming aware that something is wrong with the result of our thought, or challenging its validity through discourse with others of differing viewpoints and arriving at the best informed judgment. (p.46)

Narrating implies the process of self-reflection. “Narratives transform life’s journeys into sequences of events and evoke shifting and enduring perspectives on experience” (Ochs and Capps, 1996, p. 20). In short, it is through narrating that we actually create our perspectives on our lives. One way of narrating is to write a journal. Writing a journal,

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like a self-evaluation, presents how we have learned. As Taylor and Lamoreaux (2008) suggest “a journal entry as a specialized form of self-assessment reveals what can happen when adults reflect not just on course content but also on who they have been as learners” (p. 55). In order to arrive at our mental thoughts we must walk through the reflection path (Polkinghorne, 1998, p. 7). In addition, Polkinghorne (1998) points out that “each of us has direct access to our own realm of meaning, and this must be approached through self-reflection or introspection in our mental realm” (p. 7).

In my case, since starting university, I have kept a journal, recording what I feel about something, remembering something that is meaningful to me, or even just writing down my mood when I feel I have nothing to write about. As time passes, I can see my psychological change process and growth as a wavy line or rolling hills. Sometimes, I find my perspective towards one thing is not as mature as my view before. My thoughts are dynamic and fluid. The reflective writing in my journal helped me see my different perspectives more clearly. It helped me see how my perspective changes and matures.

As Ramsey (2005) states, narrative allows people to expand their views (p. 233) by considering different angles of the same story (p. 229). “Narrative reflection enables the reflector to attend to alternative perspectives, values and projects” (Ramsey, 2005, p. 233), and “different narrating dynamics offer a reflector a different lens to look at the story he or she is narrating” (Ramsey, 2005, p. 229). Consequently, people can narrate their own lives and gain recognition of their personality and life direction. (Barthes, as cited in Polkinghorne, 1998, p. 14).

My journal witnesses the development and changes of my mental path. As Polkinghorne (1998) proposes, it provides a framework for understanding the past events



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of my life and a reference for planning future actions (p. 11). Meanwhile, by sharing stories, we can get feedback from others and thus make sound future decisions, “narrative offers a greater potential for hearing alternative voices and so enabling a more communal reflection on events that could be considered relevant to future joint action” (Ramsey, 2005, p. 220). I feel that through narration in my journal I reflect on my mental realm, I experience the different perspectives that I hold and I see how they change over time. This reflection allows me to consider alternative futures, evaluate them and plan accordingly.

### **Reconstruction**

*My identity can be understood in terms of my stories, and my personality develops through these ongoing constructions and reconstructions of my life experience.*

We reconstruct our concepts by narrating. Clark (2010) claims that “if we make sense of our experience through storying it, it follows that we construct our understanding of ourselves narratively” (p. 4). Through telling, retelling, and reconstructing our stories, we discover meaning and create new meaning. We should not undervalue the power of stories in education because teaching with narratives builds up knowledge based on students’ experience (Rossiter, 2002).

Given the centrality of narrative in the human experience, we can begin to appreciate the power of stories in teaching and learning. We can also see that the application of a narrative perspective to education involves much more than storytelling in the classroom. Such an application necessarily leads to an experience-based, constructivist pedagogy. (Rossiter, 2002 p.1)

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In other words, narrating implies constructivist learning, during which “educators not only tell stories about the subject, they story the subject knowledge itself” (Rossiter, 2002 p.1). Donna Haraway (1989) conveys an example of this “story-ing of the subject knowledge,” in her book *Primate Visions*. She describes how a specific group of biologists, namely primatologists, have story-ed primatology into being, through an intricate weaving of fact and fiction.

Clark and Rossiter (2008) remind us that, we build our identity though telling our stories and those stories witness our growth (2008, p. 62). “Narrative is also how we craft our sense of self, our identity,” and “understanding identity as a narrative construction is another way of conceptualizing personal change” (Clark & Rossiter, 2008, p. 62). In the following quote Polkinghorne (1998) explains that through telling our stories we can combine distinct experiences to create a large meaningful picture of our lives.

Narrative is a scheme by means of which human beings give meaning to their experience of temporality and personal actions. It is the basis for understanding of life development and personal identity. Narrative meaning functions to give form to the understanding of a purpose to life and to join everyday actions and events into episodic units.

(Polkinghorne, 1998, p. 11)

From Polkinghorne’s perspective, it is through creating our personal narrative that we relate our actions to each other and to an aim or goal: ultimately it is how we achieve a sense of purpose.

Mott et al (1999) say that we can effectively analyze any form of narration and understand the process of making meaning from it; “It is becoming apparent that

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narrative can be used as an effective tool for exploring the structure and process of meaning making — whether the object of analysis be everyday life, the novel, or film” (p. 78). Through telling my story, I tried to help my niece. At the same time, as I guided my niece, I also captured my own experience. Through having my own story repeated to me by my father, I was encouraged, and I came to know myself again. My identity can be understood in terms of my stories, and my personality develops through these ongoing constructions and reconstructions of my life experience. This point is made evident by Brookfield when he writes that “Adults come to reflect on their self-images, change their self-concepts, question their previously internalized norms (behavioural and moral), and reinterpret their current and past behaviours from a new perspective.” (Brookfield, as cited in Blakesley, 2010, p. 25). Narrative learning promotes our self-learning ability, and puts emphasizes on learners’ experience.

As I have progressed through my studies in the Masters of Education program at Thompson Rivers University, I have felt that my learning story is somehow created through my exploration of new knowledge in relation to what I have already known. As Rossiter (2002) notes, the most effective approach to transmitting educational messages to learners is through narrative constructions, where learners connect new knowledge with lived experience and weave it into existing narratives of meaning. When I apply Rossiter’s comment to my own learning, I realize that during the Master’s of Education, when I have studied theoretical knowledge through reading scholarly work, as well as needing to find the points that are useful to me or relate to my research topic, I have needed to relate to my own relevant experience, or experiences of others I know, as examples.

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In the Master's of Education program I have reshaped or restory-ed my identity. This became evident to me through the experience of introducing myself. At the beginning of each course we were expected to introduce ourselves. When I began this paper we had completed six courses. Therefore we had already completed six self-introductions. Some teachers asked us to write a short paper, some teachers asked us to make a short video, and some teachers asked us to share a short casual oral presentation in the first class. As the forms varied, I experienced how to introduce myself in different ways. Ochs and Capps (1996) deem that, "whenever narrators launch a story, they open themselves to reconstruct" (p. 37). I felt I confirmed and relearned my identity each time during the introduction. Also, when I heard my classmates' introduction time after time, I was impressed and knew them a little bit more every time.

As well as re-story-ing myself during the Masters of Education program, I have learned to see from various perspectives. I have come to see that sometimes, one story can have varied meaning from different angles. For instance, thinking about the military training experience that I mentioned above, I see that it can be used to make the point that people will strive for survival under pressure. It can also be used as self-motivation when I felt gloomy. I have gradually come to realize that I constantly search for and reflect on my experiences and give them new meanings. The meaning goes deeper and deeper time by time. As I reconstruct those meanings, more meanings become evident.

### **Conclusion**

In summary, narrating is important in education. It can help people learn through a narrative learning process that involves recognition of experience, reflection, and reconstruction.

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Before telling a story, we should recognize our experience first. After we recognize our stories, we are better able to go through the processes of reflection and self-assessment. When we know what to tell and how to tell our story, we can reconstruct our identity and perception. The whole narrating process includes recognition of experience, reflection, and reconstruction, which can be seen as interrelating as a spiral. According to Mary Catherine Bateson in her book *Peripheral Visions*, "Spiral learning moves through complexity with partial understanding, allowing for later returns." (Bateson, 1994, p.243) We learn as we move ahead in this spiral, revisiting experiences, reflecting and reconstructing them in new ways through the course of our lives.

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