

Auto/ethnography: A Transformative Research Paradigm

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Abstract

This paper aims to address the key question, 'How far autoethnography contributes towards enriching the field of transformative learning?' Using my lived experiences as a teacher educator/autoethnographer/researcher and contextualizing self/others within a particular socio-pedagogical life courses I build the basis through addressing questions: Why auto/ethnography is one of the most suitable spaces for transformative researchers and to what extent it serves the agenda of envisioning a transformative teacher education. To achieve this objective I use autobiographies, stories, reflections and poems etc. as narratives with multiple logics and genres; pictography as art-based expression; and ethnography as methodological space within multiparadigmatic design space. In so doing autoethnographer has to delve into whole process of research along a continuum of self and beyond within a particular sociocultural context to understand the phenomena at deeper level of consciousness. This transformative paradigm holds a strong basis in the process of research as: re/reading, re/viewing, critically reflecting on self/others, re/writing for meaning making and developing a subjective understanding of phenomena under exploration. This process of research is found to be an innovative way of knowing through 'interpreting and constructing (Luitel, 2009) within Interpretivism, critically thinking and reflecting within Criticalism, and adding both 'pluralism and playfulness' (Taylor, 2013) within Postmodernism. In so doing it raises awareness, develops consciousness and improves capacities

constantly that ultimately alters our way of seeing and being in the world differently- a paradigm shift in self/others. It is found to be highly rigorous, dialectically eloquent, dialogically rigorous, critically reflective, consciously awakening, and innovative critical discourse that greatly contributes to transform researcher/s. Therefore, it seems illustrious for teacher educators/teachers to embrace this paradigm in order to foster their transformative learning so that to transform self/others.

Keywords: Auto/ethnography; transformative learning; paradigm shift; multiple logics and genres

1. Auto/ethnography and transformative learning

Auto/ethnography as a transformative research paradigm provides a wide range of flexibility to operate within *holism* using *Multiparadigmatic Design Space (MDS)* (Luitel, 2009, 2012). The richness of hosting multiple data referents and blurring of genres (Allen, 2011) within holism for generating wide array of data for meaning making is the most overwhelming features of this space. It works as: 1) *an 'un-locker' that opens* hidden windows to view unseen things; 2) *a revealer* that exposes sociocultural delicacies and/or intimate secrets of self/others; 3) *a healer* that creates empathy and sympathy for being victimized and/or marginalized; 4) *an energizer that empowers* the powerless to fight against inequalities; 5) *a challenger who fights* to disrupt canonical ways of seeing, believing and doing things as taken for granted; 6) *an enabler* that develops capacities in self/others; *and a change agent* who creates feelings of emancipation in society, to name but a few. Therefore, auto/ethnography has key potential to raise deeper level of consciousness and to develop wisdom (O'Sullivan, 2012) to reform inequitable situation, unproductive practices, inhuman beliefs, rigid notions and canonical ways of doing things, to mention a few, that is fundamental from the perspective of *Transformative Learning Theory* (Mezirow, 1992). It is considered to be a right tool to fight against all kinds of oppressive thinking and behaviors like “ageism, sexism, racism”, localism, regionalism, nationalism and globalism, to name just a few, practices which in one or the other way create conditions for marginalization and/or discriminations

(Taylor, 2013, p.9). Perhaps, developing new perspectives highly demands gaining awareness and to this end, we need un/conventional ways to challenge taken for granted views and un/wittingly held assumptions and expectations as our old habit of mind (Mezirow, 1978, 1990).

Our objective in this paper is to understand the key question, '*How far auto/ethnography as a methodological space and genera of writing contributes toward promoting TL of the researcher?*' Probably there are many ways to enrich the field of transformative learning, however, exploring through re/reading, re/viewing, critically self/reflecting (Brookfield, 1995) and re/writing for meaning making and developing a subjective understanding of phenomena under exploration may be few of the effective ways to foster TL at personal and societal levels.

Contextualizing self, the auto/ethnographer as a researcher.

As my agenda of research is experience a transformative journey that begins with exploration of researcher/teacher educator/the self (*me as researcher and researched*) and beyond (*other than me* in a sociocultural context of the university where I and my other colleagues are engaged in teaching, learning and research) at our conscious level. An exploration of '*Self*', as *Researcher* and *Researched* is concerned, is a complex phenomenon.

In such a situation to understand the phenomena by exploring at '*high deep*' (Saldana, 2015) conscious level demands an approach which can better facilitate the process of exploration of complex *undetached-fluid-self* and beyond within a sociocultural context of a newly established public sector university in Pakistan. To achieve the purpose of this journey (transformation of self/others) I use *research* as a *process of learning* and that is central from the perspective of transformative learning (Luitel, 2007, 2012; Taylor, 2014).

To this end, I argue that other than auto/ethnographic research seems more productive to achieve this objective, because it is one of the most *awakening and illuminating approaches* to research that engages the complex *undetached-fluid-self and beyond* in a *powerful multi layered learning process*. Before

discussing on my claim that auto/ethnography enriches TL, I would like to explain briefly what TL is all about.

Transformative Learning. TL for Grabov (1997, p.90) is an "intuitive, creative and emotional process"; for Mezirow (1978, 1990, 2000), the key proponent of the theory, ... is a rational process leading to experience a paradigm shift that alters my way of thinking, believing and knowing, and being in the world (Palmer, 1998); and for Boyd (1989, 1991) it is an extra rational process leading to raise consciousness and develop wisdom (O'Sullivan, 2012) to name but a few. However, to experience a turning point that seems to be an irreversible change encourages the transformed individual to work as a change agent for social transformation.

Thus the core of transformation, for all supporters, seems to be "fundamental change in personality to resolve personal dilemma", experience a permanent change in my old habit of mind and develop my capacities to bring reforms at different levels. Therefore, auto/ethnography is one of the best facilitating methods of inquiries to achieve this purpose - to experience "personality integration", a personal change leading to wider change in society (Boyd, 1991, p. 459; Taylor, E. W, 2007, 2012).

What is auto/ethnography? It is a method of research to explore personal lived experiences in 'stories of/about the self told through the lens of culture' to make meaning of the complex life within a sociocultural settings (Adams, Jones & Ellis, 2015, p.1; Reed-Danahay, 1997). It is a product of three spaces. *Auto* means 'personal experience - the self; *Ethno* means sociocultural, and/or 'cultural experience'; and *Grapy* means method of writing, as a genre (Ellis *et al.*, 2011, p.2; Ellis, 2004). According to Ellis and Bochner (2000) it is a "methodology that involves evocative, emotional, dialoguing and engaging writing...closer to literature and art than to science" (p.740).

This shows that it is a "genre of research and writing" about the *self*, a self that is not a separate entity detached from research but a central part of culturally others living in a sociocultural context of research work (Walls, 2006, p.9). To this end, Ellis

and Bochner (2000) have very rightly elaborated that it “is a genre of writing that displays multiple layers of consciousness connecting the personal to the cultural (p. 739)”.

This justifies that auto/ethnography is not only simple ways and means of writing ‘thick description’ (Geertz, 1973; Taylor, 2014, p.15) of lived experiences in the form of stories, poems, art based expressions, dialectical, dialogical and metaphorical expressions, to name a few, about self/others within a sociocultural setting along a continuum but also a process that creates multiple layers of learning. Perhaps auto/ethnographically “writing as a method of inquiry” (Richardson, 2000, p. 293) is not only an interesting, innovative and engaging process of knowing that leads towards TL but also something more convincing and engaging with complex self/beyond. Therefore, it appears to be very challenging to experience TL by using other than auto/ethnography and almost impossible through conventional methods of inquiries (Taylor, 2013).

Perhaps, writing in different non-conventional ways like auto/ethnography, for example, storytelling and poetic expressions can invite readers to get engage with more insights to a phenomenon under study (Allbon, 2013; Taylor, 2013). “Storytelling is a site for problem solving” that means that different stories of “every day, many problem solving narratives happen and delineate roles, relationships, values, and worldviews” (Ochs, Smith, & Taylor, 1996, p.95).

Thus writing stories of everyday lifeworld (Van Manan, 1997) is fundamental step towards TL because every story has its own significance and has a powerful contextual meaning within a subjective reality that may invite other readers to reflect on their own. However, the purpose of storytelling is not only to invite readers to feel about their lifeworld but also to use it to provide opportunities for re/thinking and reflections on such stories of every day lifeworld.

Probably, storytelling about lifeworld basically frames systems and the system that shapes lifeworld (Souto-Manning, 2014; see also Habermas, 1987). To understand the lifeworld and solve the problems at individual, institutional and social levels I use narrative, critical and ‘theoretical discourse’ to analyze

those problems (Charmaz, 2006, p.2).

To this end, this methodology as a process of research develops ‘*meta aware individuals*’ (Freire, 1970) who “question institutional discourses as opposed to uncritically embracing and being colonized by such discourses” (Souto-Manning, 2014, p.20). Therefore from this stand point, auto/ethnography as an emergent, contemporary and ‘transformative research method’ and a genera of writings (Custer, 2014, p.11). Therefore, I can say that auto/ethnography is a transformative paradigm that embraces a diverse range of data referents within MDS through narratives, art-based and imaginary forms of expressions, multiple logics and genres. It provides new ways of seeing, feeling, observing, knowing, expressing and re/presenting that appears to be highly powerful way of exploration of self and beyond to experience TL.

Multi-Paradigmatic Design Space: MDS holds paradigms of post/positivism on one end and post/modernism on the other without excluding other paradigms like *interpretivism*, *criticalism*, and *integralism etc* giving rise to holism in new social sciences qualitative research design (Luitel, 2012).

Methodology: MultiParadigmatic Design Space (MDS)

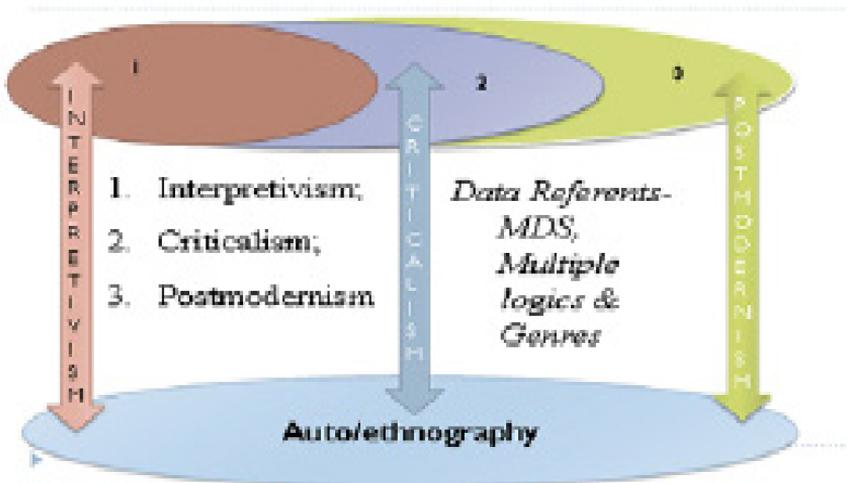


Figure 1: Multi-Paradigmatic Design Space

Though it has many paradigms, I am interested only in

interpretivism, criticalism and postmodernism with sound justifications for our selection. Therefore, I take on board these selected paradigms for my research design and based on my own interest I developed the following research design within MDS.

Why auto/ethnography why not other space. I strongly favor the idea of “challenging the reductionist myth of conceiving research design” (Luitel, 2009, p. 37) that guides a researcher to follow some rigid rules- a canonical approach, a Newtonian Science research. Because, a positivist paradigm either in natural or social science does not have the capacity to fulfill needs and demands of this research to carry out. However, a methodological space like auto/ethnography within MDS in contemporary social science can better facilitate researcher to engage with exploration of lived experiences as the primary source of evidence (Luitel, 2009).

The reason why a pure natural science paradigm does not fit into this case is because of its nature that the empirical facts which do not separate from our lifeworld within a complex web of sociocultural context. So objective meaning of life as basis of empiricism makes no sense (Luitel, 2009). Therefore, a pure quantitative objectivist paradigm of research is not a feasible for this type of research project to adopt in order to achieve the *subjective cum objective* demands of this research (Luitel, 2009).

In case of qualitative research paradigms within traditional social science research, there are many well established research designs, for example, case studies design - if the research participant and researcher are different entities, a researcher can employ tools like structure/semi-structure interviews, document analysis and observations for data collection, analysis and interpretation of the data etc. But here, the case in this research project is quite different where the researcher and primary research participant – the subject is *the complex undetached-fluid-self*.

Thus an innovative approach within MDS can better serve the purpose of exploration of *undetached-fluid-self*. An autoethnographic design using personal accounts of

the researcher to understand the phenomena “within a phenomenological notion of the lifeworld as subjective space” seems to be the most suitable space (Luitel, 2012, p. 102).

To this end, I am studying the *undetached-fluid-self as researcher and researched* through *storying* the lived experiences, writing reflections, poems, and using other multiple logics to understand the phenomena within a sociocultural context. In such a case, within MDS among other emerging new designs of qualitative research, I purposefully select auto/ethnography as *methods of inquiry* and *research genre* to conduct this type of research.

The *interpretive, critical theory and postmodernist* paradigms (Luitel, 2012) provide enough space to come with my own world views- re/viewing, re/thinking, reflecting, meaning making and re/constructing old notions of existing knowledge etc. Auto/ethnography as methodology and method of inquiry using the notions of reflexivity can facilitate us to come with rich array of data to justify the arguments regarding phenomena under exploration. Ellis et al. (2011, p. 3) claim that “... as a method, auto/ethnography incorporates aspects of autobiography and ethnography.

In writing an autobiography researcher usually relies on past experiences and does not live through these experiences solely to make them part of a document”. The autobiographical aspect “fosters excavation of deeply *sedimented* cultural memories, thereby enabling the researcher to identify and examine his/her personal experience of historically established educational policies and practices (Taylor, 2013, p. 19).

These powerful features of auto/ethnography help social science researcher to use “... autobiographies that self-consciously explore the interplay of the introspective, personally engaged self with cultural descriptions mediated through language, history, and ethnographic explanation” (Ellis & Bochner, 2000, p. 742). The montage flavor of self narrative - the autobiography, and methodological tools - the ethnography all together embedded in the nature of auto/ethnography which is a powerful means of study self, exploring and reflecting self and meaning making out of the lived experiences in a particular

sociocultural construct through constructivist, interpretivist, critical and postmodernist lens (Luitel, 2012).

Interpretivism. The paradigm of interpretivism seems focusing on generating context-based subjective meaning (Denzin, 1997). However, it is highly dependent on individuals' ability to interpretation of events and eventualities, their way of doing, interacting with others based on the thoughts, beliefs, and values embedded in their lifeworld (Luitel, 2012). Within innovative research paradigms, the form of data through *a priori* and invisible worldviews are central to cultural, hermeneutic, phenomenological and aesthetic sensibilities(Luitel, 2009) that is a powerful way of learning self and others within the context. This paradigm helps researcher/s in understanding new meaning to life events by creating meaning from the events and situations. Thus it helps to understand my own situation, existing learning conditions of my prospective teachers in their learning progressions in the course.

Through interpretive ways of understanding self and others enable first author to better reflect on self with reference to others in the context. According to Luitel (2008) "... epistemologically, interpretivism gave rise to two key epistemic metaphors so as to guide my research journey: knowing as interpreting and constructing" (p. 31). Thus the paradigm of interpretivism make use of a "mix social and radical constructivist epistemological knowledge claims, for claiming to know is an adaptive, interactive and active process of meaning making" is used as a referent space to achieve this objective as well (Luitel, 2012, p. 103). Thus I use the *ontologically relativistic element*, as one of the key elements of interpretivism, by "giving rise to multi-perspectival view of reality" in order to know the holistic view of the reality (Luitel, 2009, p. 42).

Criticalism. From critical theory perspective transformation occurs due to continual learning with a new mindset, an innovative and critical way of thinking(Mezirow, 2009). Critical theory talks about multi-disciplinary approach to deal with life experiences, the phenomenon in a society with humanity and justice by allowing individuals to be reflective rather simply recital.

Moreover, I used the metaphor of *finger pointing towards others* which actually informs to think critically how many fingers are pointing towards self. So, using this metaphor within criticalism I reflected critically my ways of teaching instructional technologies, to what extent that help the students in developing their thinking about possibilities to use the knowledge of ICT in their lives.

Similarly, epistemological and methodological views of critical research paradigm which is historically subjective, transactional, dialogical and dialectical (the relationship between two or opposite forces or ideas, nature of the reality, its meaning and way of knowing) (Guba & Lincoln, 1989) helps us to understand self and others. Thus the metaphors of “*knowing as interpreting and constructing* (Luitel, 2009, p. 42) helps us to understand the subjective nature of the reality in the research journey.

According to Taylor (2013) “critical social theory is concerned with creating societies free from dehumanizing policies and practices that perpetuate social injustice, cultural exclusion, social inequity, racism, sexism, ageism, scientism and many other forms of repression (p.9). This subjective transactional nature of criticalism is using tools of dialogical and dialectical to come closer to the reality through lived experiences that is contextually subjective. According to Luitel (2012) the paradigm of criticalism emphasis on the “political turn” by putting questions like “whose interests are being well-served by a particular form of lived experiences?”

In examining a “host of disempowering conditions by helping researchers to critically examine distortions and false consciousness” on way to knowing and understanding things through linking with a particular cultural context (Luitel, 2012, p.103) is the aim of criticalism. This empowers researchers to understand the reality in a very close contextual way not only how things are but how things might be and should be (Taylor, 2014).

Postmodernism. The paradigms of postmodernism, on the other hand, are very useful to enrich the holistic meaning of the events or phenomena under discussion. This postmodern

research paradigm adds both pluralism and liveliness to the auto/ethnographer's work, providing a rich repertoire of modes of inquiry (Taylor, 2013).

Thanks to the critique of postmodernism and that is basically on notion of "the real" which opens the doors of many questions and problematizes how people, places, and practices come to be represented in qualitative research texts which further give space to the development of many genres of representation like "auto/ethnography, postmodern ethnography, interpretive ethnography, and performance ethnography", to name a few (Anderson, 2006; Burnier, 2006, P.1).

And using these paradigms an aesthetic turn occurs in order to describe the "rich, colorful, disruptive and nuance account of the lived experiences" of researcher as subject by using "epistemic pluralism" – challenging the one size fit for all notion, "arts-based sensibility – poetry" and creative writings, photographic expressions, expressions of emotional scenes and stories and different "modes of thinking and expressing" (Luitel, 2012, p. 104).

All these paradigms, notions and philosophies within these new emerging paradigms in one or the other ways can be taken as referent points and spaces employing auto/ethnography as a method of inquiry rather one fixed framework as positivist ways of looking to objectivist research inquiries. Therefore, this integrative, holistic and hybrid nature of auto/ethnography (Luitel, 2009) that allows a researcher a teacher-educator to generate data from MDS sources that is one of the best and suitable methods of inquiry for transformative research to conduct.

Use of multiple logics: Auto/ethnography is a 'post positive approach' to research that meaningfully uses multiple logics to enrich meaning making of phenomena under study (Dayson, 2007, p.37). For example dialectical logics are used to depict both sides of a picture – flip side of the cases, positive and negative meaning of a term, possibility of 'anything and everything' (Luitel, 2014) understanding of opposite views, to name but a few.

This dialectical relational symbolic notation ‘/’ in auto/biography and auto/ethnography as methods (Reed Danahay, 1997) ‘to have others explore important issues related to education’ creates ‘cultural-historical and sociocultural possibilities’. On the other hand the use of ‘/’ enables us ‘rather than ...retreating into an inner subjectivity, I can use critical methods together with inner subjectivity to bring about a maximum of intersubjectivity, that is, understanding the self to understand the other’ in a sociocultural setting (Roth, 2005, pp. 14-15).

In so doing it “displays multiple layers of consciousness connecting the personal to the cultural” (Ellis & Bochner, 2000, p. 739). Thus within this innovative methodological space, ‘a form of continual life review’ (Ellis, 2013, p.1) along a continuum of self and/or others in sociocultural context writing innovatively and reflecting critically from the vantage point of personal and cultural experiences greatly contributes transformation of researcher throughout the process of research (Brookfield, 1995).

Similarly use of metaphoric logics enables to express symbolic relationships with particular situation that enriches multiple meaning and creates possibility of its richness in meaning making. Thus it opens a new window to think about the possibility of anything and everything that challenges the objective realities as in case of objectivist approach to research which is more restricted, limited and confined within factual realities of a phenomenon.

Whereas the subjective nature of complexity is more illuminating experience in terms of learning of the researcher if the objective is the transformation of self and/or the others. In the same line of thought dialogical logics engages researcher/s and readers in an argument on a central point that enriches understanding and opens new ways of thinking and reflecting on issues under discussion. Similarly other logics for example metaphorical, poetic and none linguistic logics, to name but a few, are used to enrich meaning making of the phenomena under study.

3. Historical views on auto/ethnography

Though auto/ethnography grew along the history, my purpose in this paper is to give a general overview of the development in the field without labeling *premodern*, *modern* and *postmodern* periods. However, very recently in 2015 Toney Adam, Stacy Jones and Carolyn Ellis in their book '*Autoethnography*' write about brief historical developments in the field of autoethnography since 1975 when Karl Heider first time used the term 'auto-ethnography' to 2015 with their latest book. A period of over 40 years of development in the field now 'autoethnography has become an important and legitimate method in many disciplines and research methods'(Adams et al., 2015, p.18).

The first phase, followed by Karl Heider and then Goldschmidt (1977) who used the term 'self-ethnography' and David Hayahno (1979) described 'auto-ethnography' to study anthropologists studying their own people. Adams et al. describe that 'during 1980s many researches in sociology, anthropology, communication, performance, women and gender studies...' extensively used the autoethnography (ibid). In this way it was introduced to many fields of studies to study people and their lives.

These development in thinking, believing and expressing life of people gave birth to auto/ethnography that was coined by Reed-Danahay (1997) challenging old approaches to doing research and taking a strong position against the resistance from 'colonialist, sterile research impulses of authoritatively entering a culture, exploiting cultural members, and then recklessly leaving to write about the culture for monetary and/or professional gain, while disregarding relational ties to cultural members' (Ellis, 2011, p. 3).

The second phase of developments in the field can be noticed during 1900s when many researchers used autoethnography of personal narratives to explore self/others in sociocultural settings to understand complexities of lifeworld. During this period and onwards Carolyn extensively used autoethnography for storying her personal life stories of pain and loss situations

positioning as an evocative autoethnographer. This moment got strengthened through many publications of books, essays and articles till 2000s.

The past recent phase can be seen after holding many International conferences on autoethnography started by Norman and Denzin in 2005 first time and later on many developments in the field opened many opportunities for researchers from multidisciplinary fields. During this period extensive publications and research activities can be seen.

However, in the beginning a number of scholars started to explain the meaning and implications of some particular terms like 'facts /truth' and 'reality' in a non-conventional ways rather than positivist ways to looking and interpreting them under specific scientific conditions (Kuhn, 1996; Rorty, 1982). These efforts helped many scholars of that time to realize the limited, narrowly conceived notions of the research about expressions and representations and the impossibility of one size fit for all ways of doing research (Lyotard, 2004).

The change in thinking out of the box and reflecting critically on different ways of knowing and presenting helped to understand new relationships between authors, audiences, and texts (Ellis, 2011). Resultantly it developed a sense of realization about the complexity of narrative- "as an account of any occurrence is fundamental to communication, social interaction and understanding" that give rise to multiple ways of making meaning of phenomena under study (Adams, 2006) to understand feelings of people about themselves and their cultures.

Thus auto/ethnography is an approach that represents different forms of expressions of personal experiences with elements of emotion, meaningful and contextual with reference to subjectivity embedded with researcher's influence in a particular sociocultural construct by sensitizing readers towards issues of hidden experiences, injustice, and identity politics (Ellis, 2011; Ellis & Bochner, 2000).

Thus in so doing, it draws upon the researcher's own personal lived experience (Van Maanen, 1990) with reference to

sociocultural settings where exploration of self with respect to others along a continuum to make meaning of that experience (Allen-Collinson, 2013; Luitel, 2009; Taylor et al., 2012). The continuum, where self situates on one side and ‘Others’ on the other side, provides opportunity to the self to explore within the framework of self and others. It focuses on exploring and understanding self with reference to sociocultural environment and its influence on self.

4. Characteristics of Auto/ethnography

While discussing the characteristics of auto/ethnography Chang (2008) claims to provide more holistic view of the benefits of auto/ethnographic work in emancipatory and transformative pedagogy: the “forces” that shape people’s sense of self including nationality, religion, gender, education, ethnicity socioeconomic class, and geography. Understanding “the forces” also helps them examine their preconceptions and feelings about others, whether they are “others of similarity”, “others of difference,” or even “other of opposition” (p. 52).

I argue her view of specific forces that shape human life while ignoring the silent voices of self. And this is auto/ethnography that works as a *reveler to unearth such kind of intimate relations and or oppressive/marginalized situations*. Perhaps, what Chang claims are, no doubt, some of the generally visible forces that shape people’s sense of self and others; however, there are some more powerful forces of *marginalization and forces of dominance* – existing within inner self of every individual which cannot be ignored.

Perhaps, the *forces of marginalization/victimization* are created due to social injustices – through individuals, family members, society and/or nations that shape diverse range of identities. The impact of such forces on the abused/self may develop a *negative perception of self* - for being victimized and/or marginalized/oppressed. This negative perception of self may also result in developing a negative perception of others - as retaliation against the injustices has been done.

These *silent voices* and/or emerging voices which create huge amount of magma in the self but cannot give chance to erupt

due to many sociocultural chains of complexities which keep in an iron cage can be express through poetic, metaphoric, art based and imaginary forms of expressions using auto/ethnography. As a result of such feelings, thinking and reactions that shapes ‘self’ looking different from what I call the *personal outer world is an illusion of personal inner world* creating a dichotomy of self which enormously affect the personality in many ways and forms.

On the other hand, the *forces of dominance* create a sense of ‘being elite’ (Gautam, & Luitel, 2013), unique, supreme and privileged from others that create positive perception of self but at the same time a negative perception or inferiority looking for others – considering others as mediocre, lower, less able and incapable, to name a few. For example a person of high class and/or white skin may have a positive perception about the self but this being unique or supreme as a person in a society with having privileges for one or the other reasons and dealing or feeling about others inferior is a kind of negative perceptions of and for others. That is a kind of marginalizing others having a feeling of dominance (self) in the core of mid.

These two powerful forces of self can be added with the list of forces what Chang (2008) mentioned as the “forces” that shape people’s sense of self that becomes sources of identification of self and others. This is the most important characteristics of auto/ethnography and at the same time its benefits which cannot be obtained through any other kind of research methods for one or the other limitations. With the help of this method one can not only explore these covert and overt forces of injustice, social marginalization, and issues of superiority/inferiority that really shape the self but also force the self to develop an image or shape of self and/or that of the others around the self.

Thus auto/ethnography having such unique characteristics as method of inquiry enables researcher to use all possible referent spaces to gather relevant data to make better sense of understanding self/beyond in sociocultural settings. It can “situate the self within the research process and its written product, by making the self the object of research” (Burnier, 2006, p.1) and by developing a “reflexive connection between

the researcher's and participants' lives" (Ellis, 2004, p. 30). Therefore, auto/ethnographers need to shape the characteristics of culture familiar for both insider and outsider by analyzing personal experiences within the facets of cultural experiences of others that other may feel similar epiphanies. In order to achieve this objective auto/ethnographers have to engage in an analysis of personal experiences with relevant literature by observing and/or examining cultural artifacts and/ or 'interviewing cultural members' (Denzin, 2006; Ellis, 2011). Because auto/ethnography is an 'intersection of biography and society' in understanding self which is deeply rooted or connected though emotions, feelings, personal lives and identities in a sociocultural setting in which I live (Anderson, 2006, p.18).

4. Uniqueness of Auto/ethnography

The inclusiveness and 'possibility of anything and everything' (Luitel, 2014/in press) that auto/ethnography claims with its potential to explore the complexity of self/beyond within holism fully serves the purpose of transformation of researcher(s) (Luitel, 2012). In auto/ethnography operating within the framework thinking about the *possibility of anything and everything*, creating and representing within wide range of diversity is so empowering process of research that makes private to public. It can even touch private sensitivities of life that in other methodological spaces researchers even cannot think about. It opens the door of self for others with such kind of epiphanies of self/others events, frame of references and many underground impossibly expressive feelings, beliefs, perceptions, perspectives and events of life that may be socially even unacceptable one for the object and/or the subject. It brings high level of realization with high degree of reflexivity with confessional tools and techniques of representation that cannot simply become possible with other ways and means of knowing.

Therefore, social science researchers who are very much interested in personal transformation, deep consciously knowing, accepting self-denial (events, eventualities that cannot express openly) and committed to realization and acceptance of personal weaknesses and strengths in order

to enable socially others to come out of their shells for the purpose of emancipation and social transformation heavily rely on use of auto/ethnography.

Thus auto/ethnographers use 'autobiographies that self-consciously explore the interplay of the *introspective personally engaged self* with cultural descriptions mediated through language, history, and ethnographic explanation' (Ellis & Bochner, 2000, p742). On the other they use diverse range of logics (including, dialogical, dialectical, poetic, and metaphorical, to name but a few) and genres of fictive, semi fictive and non-fictive to make the im/possibilities of complex self/others possible (Liutel, 2009, 2012, Taylor *et. at.*, 2012).

The montage flavor of self narrative (the autobiography) and other ways of self-expression and representation using a methodological tool - the ethnography all together embedded in the nature of auto/ethnography is so incremental, a transformative process, and interesting to unearth the interior and exterior of self/beyond that is not possible with other ways especially canonical ones. This unique quality of auto/ethnography is a powerful means of self study, exploring and reflecting self (Anderson, 2006) and meaning making of lived experiences including hidden and/or socially unacceptable characters/actions, beliefs, values, and habits, to name but a few.

In so doing, auto/ethnographer have multiple choices of exploration, expression and representation using a diverse range of logics, genere, within constructivist, interpretivist, critical and postmodernist lens (Luitel, 2012, 2009) to make better sense of lived experiences so comprehensively that is not possible with other methodological tools (Van Maanen, 1990).

5. Criticism and use of Multiple Lenses

Perhaps one of the reasons that auto/ethnographers are facing criticism is due to its popularity of effective genre of writing and method of research. For example: 'being too self-absorbed, meaning that it is introspective personally indulgent and exposing the experiential emotions of the self/others; and centering oneself, one can highlight one's own role

and marginalise those of others by discussing very personal events that may create a situation of vulnerability. Similarly, in terms of ethics what are the procedures that are taken to seek proper permission of others to be included in personal stories?

As auto/ethnography is a ‘qualitative transformative research method’ (Custer, 2014, p.1), it uses seven *lenses, filters and angles* (Saldana, 2015, p.4) to generate quality research work. The first – ‘auto/ethnography *changes time*’ – it changes the perception of an individual about time – the past, present and future. The notion of Rosemarie Anderson’ (2001) interpretation of time dimension “...What is true today interpretively is not necessarily so tomorrow” (p. 87) makes sense to us when I recall my memories of past and the difference of my interpretation at that time and today, it gives a different picture. However, recalling those memories and make sense in my present situation can enable me to construct my imagination of future that is what Nancy Mangano Rowe (2009) refers to this concept as “space-time dimensions of movement” (p. 127).

Second, auto/ethnography requires *vulnerability*—to heal wounds/pain of self/others while writing auto/ethnographically exposing hidden/covered character, killing shame for being nakedness in sharing actual scenes of life world that in other ways of express seem impossible because of the ‘facade of etiquette and protocol’. Thus ‘writing auto/ethnography is a test of one’s ability to be vulnerable to his or her self. It cuts and it rips at our spiritual and psychological bodies... Old wounds are reopened and exposed to the world’ (Custer, 2014, p.4).

Third, auto/ethnography fosters *empathy* – compassion, understanding and pity feelings for others. Writing auto/ethnography has the potential that evoke readership to keep themselves in places of the auto/ethnographer’s situation. It not only develops the feelings of cry and joy but also develops thinking about his/her own situations that fosters transformation.

Fourth, auto/ethnography embodies *creativity and innovation*—it is a creative process using imaginative and artistic writing.

Writing stories of personal lived experiences with innovative tool can promote skills to re/evaluation, re/interpretation, and re/invention with an inside out approach (Custer, 2014). Fifth, auto/ethnography *eliminates boundaries*- using metaphor and symbols to create inner out close link are one of the potentials of the genre. Sixth, auto/ethnography *honors subjectivity*. And seventh, auto/ethnography *provides therapeutic benefits*- with confessional accounts of self-realization (Custer, 2014).

6. Ethical considerations and quality standards

I know/am aware that ethical considerations are vital to ensure the quality of research, in all kinds of academic discourses are fundamental, because without *contextual ethical considerations* the whole process seems undesirable, and even unacceptable, to make a sense within academia. These considerations not only useful to guide the way researcher involves from the beginning to end of a whole process but also add its worth among readers in general and the community in particular. Therefore, as guiding principles, they are there to help researchers. The selection of suitable standards which need to be relevant, fair and true to the participant/s in order to collect the data, make meaning of the data and present to the audience and other readers to inform about the whole process leading to findings, recommendations and implications in an acceptable and believable manner.

However, there are many ethical considerations which may not necessarily applicable to every researcher but some of the design specific and context specific considerations which are vital to follow for every research/er depending on the nature of research. For example there are general ethical considerations which commonly researchers usually have to follow (within their context). According to Cohen Menion and Morison (2011), some of these considerations are as under:

Informed consent; gaining access to and acceptance in the research setting; the nature of ethics in social research generally; sources of tension in the ethical debate, including non-maleficence, beneficence and human dignity, absolutist and relativist ethics; problems and dilemmas confronting the researcher, including matters of privacy, anonymity, confidentiality, betrayal and deception; ethical

problems endemic in particular research methods; ethics and evaluative research; regulatory ethical frameworks, guidelines and codes of practice for research; personal codes of practice; sponsored research; and responsibilities to the research community. (p.51)

But this does not mean that every researcher needs all of these ethical considerations to consider and abide by these rules one by one. In fact, this depends upon the nature of study one is going to conduct and varies from context to context, for example, keeping the names of participants secret is one of the ethical considerations in the context of west but in the east it is not because most of the participant would even love to mention their real names in research studies.

Therefore, defining fixed universal principles which can be applicable in every study in every context are simply not possible. But at the same time it is very important, at least, to know about them and use as per nature of study demands. However, Tracy (2010) argues that there is a need to have some universal principles in this regard.

The analysis of rich array of data layers generated through MDS using auto/ethnographic inquiry can enable researcher to 'cultivate pedagogical possibilities' within the post formal logics and genres, for example dialogic, poetic, metaphoric and narrative logics to mention a few, rather than Piagetian formalist logics. The quality standards which according to Luitel (2012) the post formal logics and genres which hold six quality standards would be the most feasible for auto/ethnographic research to use. These six quality standards are as under:

incisiveness as focus on significant issue, illuminating as cultivating subtleties, verisimilitude as likeliness, transferability as viability, pedagogical thoughtfulness as evoking readers and critical reflexivity as transformative process; are dialogical logic for complimentarily, metaphorical logic for multi-schema analysis and envisioning, poetic logic and genres for unpacking ineffability, narrative logic and genres for diachronic representations and nonlinguistic logics. (pp.107-109)

These quality standards, within MDS, are 'parallel to the positivist standards of validity and reliability' (Taylor,

2013, p. 13). These six quality standards seem to be most suitable guiding principles for auto/ethnographer/researcher/research participant/s - the subject, and/or the self/others. For example, in case of incisiveness as focus on significant issue, keep focusing on the main issue to capture it from multiple dimensions and keeping the focus in mind to make a sense of the wholeness of the phenomena under study.

Likewise, illuminating as cultivating subtleties, researcher need to come with very delicate matters that are embedded in researchers' notions, beliefs, and practices by being very true to the subjects (researcher) and others. In case of verisimilitude as likeliness, researchers write personal stories which would create a sense of feelings of sameness – similarity in readers and making them feel as that is their own story.

Similarly I use the standards of transferability as viability and pedagogical thoughtfulness as evoking readers to make them recall and realize what kind of beliefs, notions they have and involve in practices within their context. And how they can make sense of such stories and lived experiences for themselves and others to whom they are interacting. This will further let us and others be very much critical to notions, beliefs and practices to improve professionally in my field by using the standards of critical reflexivity as transformative process.

Moreover, I create some discussions in the form of dialogue using the standards of dialogical logic for complementarily rather monological ways of presentation, metaphorical logic for multi-schema analysis (Luitel, 2012) using different possible metaphors to make sense of my notions and practices as a teacher educator and envisioning poetic logic – like writing poems and genres for unpacking ineffability – indescribable, which might be difficult to express in the form of text(O'Sullivan, 1999).

At the same time I also used non-linguistic logics to express my views and understanding in the form of pictures, calligraphy and art which can carry sources of multiple ways of knowing from the vantage point of subjects at individual levels. Finally the standards of narrative logic and genres for diachronic representations of researchers' developmental process during

the period of research work in the form of narrative writings. These are the quality standards which regulate fieldwork, data generation, data analysis and reporting structure throughout the whole journey. The considerations of these standards help researcher/s to produce a standard research work and at the same time help readers to evoke pedagogical thoughtfulness, emotional attachment with the stories of lived experiences. It makes them feel same situation in their own professional lives as they use educational technologies in the teaching learning practices in order to achieve the desired learning outcomes they teach.

In the whole journey of research the ethical considerations within the boundaries of three kinds of ethics – the first one is *procedural ethics* which operates within the board of reviews or the exam committee etc. and the second one is ethics in practice or *situational ethics* and the third one is *relational ethics*- to act from heart and mind (Ellis, 2007, p. 4). The third dimension of ethics, according to Carolyn Ellis is more closely related to the *ethics of care*. However, the matter is to what extent a researcher is not only well aware of the ethical understanding but also is ethically behaving or demonstrating.

Moreover, the essence of *substitute criteria* which Guba and Lincoln suggested in case of interpretive research, the *general criteria* that Cohen Menion and Morison (2011) came with and the *eight Big Tent* criteria suggested by Tracy (2010) appears to be skillfully embed in the six quality standards which Luitel (2012) suggested for auto/ethnographic research studies. Use of relevant quality standards in auto/ethnographic studies can only improves quality of research work.

7. Conclusion

Embracing an auto/ethnographic journey not only enables to reflect critically on past and present experiences of the lifeworlds to bring a paradigm shift in thinking, beliefs and perspectives but also it empowers to make the private, *undetached-fluid-self* as public. And such kind change at conscious level that alters my way of being in the world is central to the field of transformative learning.

Transformation is not a momentary and/or a temporary shift in the way I look at the world differently but it is a permanent change in lifeworlds. Thus sharing the intimate delicacies of professional practices in the form of misconceptions, taken for granted assumptions and habits of non-reflective thinking and behavior in my everyday practices that may harm self/others seem to be one of the most powerful features of auto/ethnography that transforms the researcher/s. In so doing, it does not only critique the *undetached-fluid-self* but also critiques sociocultural others who may be directly or indirectly as part of the self. So it at the same time critiques self and critiques others to make meaning of ones' everyday practices to improve. Thus embracing the agenda of self transformation ultimately may lead towards transformation of sociocultural others.

Therefore, this paradigm can better serve an emancipatory agenda of research to fight against inequalities in societies by developing capacities and awareness at personal and societal levels. And interestingly this research paradigm equally facilitates every agent, regardless of his/her field of study, of personal/self and/or social change in achieving his/her agenda. It is because of the '*high deep*' (Saldana, 2015) nature of auto/ethnography that embraces *multiparadigmatic design space* within *integralism* and *holism* that enables the researcher/s to generate wealth of data layers to make meanings of the phenomena at conscious level that is under exploration/explanation.

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