



Cultivating Openness to the Other in Higher Education through Phenomenology, Beginner's Mind, and Storytelling

Shafik Nanji (St. Francis Xavier University)

To make higher education inclusive and support Indigenizing the curriculum, we must acknowledge the limits of our knowledge when engaging others and create safe spaces for them to share their experiences. How can we foster a space where the knowledge embodied by others is ethically engaged and its interpretations respectfully explored? As praxis, I will share personal-professional stories to illustrate how I integrate Merleau-Ponty's phenomenology, the concept of shoshin or "beginner's mind" in Zen Buddhism, and Indigenizing storytelling principles into a unified approach that honors the preconceptual aspects of others' stories. This approach avoids imposing fixed interpretations, allowing for exploration of diverse meanings with others that honors both the sensible and intelligible. To deepen understanding, I will include brief exercises in suspending preconceptions, attending to the sensible, and sharing personal-professional stories. By the presentation's end, participants will understand the interplay of the sensible and intelligible in engaging others' stories ethically and feel inspired to adapt these examples and exercises in their own teaching.

References

Dōgen. (1994). *Master Dogen's Shobogenzo* (Vols. 1-4, G. Nishijima & C. Cross, Trans.).
Dogen Sangha.

Louie, D. W., Poitras-Pratt, Y., Hanson, A. J., & Ottmann, J. (2017). Applying Indigenizing principles of decolonizing methodologies in university classrooms. *Canadian Journal of Higher Education/La Revue Canadienne d'enseignement supérieur*, 47(3), 16–33. <https://doi.org/10.47678/cjhe.v47i3.187948>

Merleau-Ponty, M. (1995). *Phenomenology of perception* (C. Smith, Trans.). Routledge.