

# From Integrative Worldview to Holistic Education Theory and Practice

By Fan Yihong

从整合世界观到全人  
教育理论与实践



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范怡红 著

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Fan Yihong ( 范怡红 著 )

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## DEDICATION

To the cherished memory of Huang Fan (黄凡):  
November 14, 1983-April 8, 1997,  
For a life beyond its length,  
Whose light shines on me across space and time.

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## BRIEF INTRODUCTION

### FROM INTEGRATIVE WORLDVIEW TO HOLISTIC EDUCATION: THEORY AND PRACTICE

The theoretical framework of my research weaved from five perspectives. These five literature strands are: 1) new science discoveries and their significance in restoring a integrative worldview that provides the epistemological and ontological ground of the research; 2) from integrative worldview to holistic education that focuses on the pedagogical and ethical strand of the research; 3) expanded model of scholarship of integration and its significance to faculty development; 4) creativity and the learning environment that tries to bring more creativity theory and practice into the educational arena; and 5) the phenomenological approach which informs the methodology for the research.

The field study employed phenomenological inquiry into the concrete and lived experiences of educators in a holistic school in Ecuador and from the founder of a creativity methodology program in Vietnam. These educators embarked on the remarkable journey from realizing the importance of integrative worldview to bringing about holistic education. The purpose of the study was to explore the significance of integrative worldview for education through investigating life-world stories. Using in-depth phenomenological interviews, the study explored these educators' past experiences, their present experiences and the integration of their past experiences with their present experiences.

From a cross-case synthesis the salient themes and patterns evolved and unfolded into an interwoven web of *knowing*, *doing*, *being* and *becoming*. When this web is displayed in a two dimensional form it depicts the four most important dimensions of holistic educators: 1) the *integrated knowing* of the self, the subject, the students and the world; 2) the *harmonious doing* to create nurturing learning environments; 3) the *genuine being* to serve as authentic modeling; and 4) the *ever-evolving becoming* that seeks deeper meaning and larger purpose of life. When transform this web to a three-dimensional spiral, it portrays the dynamic, evolving, uplifting and transcending nature of the journey of holistic educators, where the four elements merge into an ultimate oneness that represents the essence of holistic educators. As Mario Solís suggests in my interview with him, "in a deep sense, my capacity as an educator comes from my choice to allow life to unfold through me and to demonstrate from my entire being."

The study manifests that when educators' entire being lives through their knowing and strives for becoming, namely, a higher purpose and deeper meaning of life, their vision and mission are not empty words on paper, but rather a reality of life that they have created as the result of drawing from energy and resources from the creative, implicate order of life. The major insight of the journeys of these holistic educators is about touching the higher values of themselves, allowing themselves to manifest the excellence from within, and in turn, allowing others to manifest their

inner resources, creativity and excellence. The study demonstrates how the holistic educators have successfully created a caring, nurturing, and nourishing learning environment where loving for life, appreciating relationship, learning to live and to create, living to transcend, and educating for peace are modeled and fostered.

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# **CHAPTER 1**

## **INTRODUCTION**

### **Purpose of the Study**

This study was a phenomenological inquiry into the concrete and lived experiences of educators who embarked on the remarkable journey from realizing the importance of integrative worldview to bringing about holistic education. The purpose of the study was to explore the significance of a integrative worldview for education through investigating life-world stories. Using in-depth phenomenological interviews the study explored these educators' past experiences, their present experiences and the impact of their past experiences on their present experiences. Through a hermeneutic phenomenological approach, I was able to generate story telling from the people I interviewed which was descriptive and explanative from the part of their meaning-making. It also gave me the opportunity to undergo an interpretive process, which connected my understanding with their meaning making. In order to know how these educators carried out holistic educational programs and the impact holistic education has brought for both faculty and students involved, the case study methods played a complementary role throughout the research.

The philosophical underpinning and the conceptual framework of the study have drawn largely from literatures from diverse fields in order to synthesize knowledge in various fields of new science such as quantum physics, evolutionary biology, biosociology, brain research, complex systems theory and chaos theory. As a result of exploring the new sciences discoveries, the study confirms that findings from different fields are pointing to the same recognition that the global interdependence of world affairs demands a holistic new worldview or, we can say rekindling the ancient holistic worldview.

### **Fundamental Issues of the Study**

I chose to explore integrative worldview and its significance for education because my sixteen years of teaching in China and three years of teaching and studying in the United States gave me the urge to investigate a fundamental issue: Education—limiting or liberating? If we want education to be truly liberating, what fundamental changes need to happen as the prelude? From my personal experiences I know that I had to go through several stages before I felt free to create and carry out educational programs that were creative, innovative and liberating. What processes do other



educators go through to accomplish transformative and liberating educational experiences?

From both my personal experience and my broad range of reading, I have realized fundamental change only happens when I look at the world differently and see my relationship to the world differently. For example, brought up immersed in Eastern cultural values, for the first thirty-six years of my life there was very little sense of self in my life dictionary. I always lived for someone else, for my siblings, my family and my classmates when I was little; for the fellow youths in my youth brigade when I was in the countryside; for my husband and son when I got married. Because I ignored and suffocated so much my inner self and my own higher values of life, for about ten years of my life, I was constantly ill. Finally I was taken to the hospital for three months. It was in that three months in the hospital that I got opportunities to reevaluate my life, my beliefs and values and my inner self. I realized that in order to be happy I had to make my work represent my deep values of life. Consequently I decided to change my attitude toward life when I returned home from the hospital. I started to carry out my teaching in a different way. Instead of organizing my teaching following what I was supposed to do, for example, teaching for test scores, I started to carry out programs to bring out the potentials from the students and in this way to restore the original aim of education.

Nothing had changed in the reality around me, but my way of looking at it changed dramatically. I could look at things from different perspectives and act differently.

By discovering my inner self and how it could be linked with my work I was able to become a more integrated person, not only in relation to myself but also in relation to the world around me. From that time on I investigated the English learning situations at my university and designed different, integrated programs to meet students' needs, which resulted in campus wide activities and finally the five-year project won the National Award for Best-Carried-Out Educational Program in 1997. For me that was an experience of changing my worldview, liberating my way of seeing things, doing things, refining and uplifting my being, and adding more meaning and higher value to my life and my work.

Coming to study in the United States, I discovered other problems with the western society in general and western academic world in particular. My own experience of learning in the western academic world makes me realize more and more keenly the fundamental problems and limitations of the dominant, mainstream western worldview. The dominant western notion of competing, conquering, and consuming, though has served well in the industrial age, is not going to help maintain the ecological conditions of the world, strengthen connections and promote coexisting in