Abstract

This thesis addresses student anxiety in school. Many students feel a deep and chronic sense of anxiety, and this thesis thematizes this topic around the author’s experience as a primary school teacher. The author undertakes autobiographical reflections on her teaching experience and observations about students she teaches, studies the literature on student anxiety, and finally brings all of these into the conceptual framework of contemplative inquiry. The contemplative inquiry framework provides a lens through which to interpret and understand students who are anxious, and moreover, it provides ways of working with anxiety. The thesis presents the understanding that, for students to feel comfortable and safe in the classroom atmosphere, it is vital for educators to help create a classroom that students may feel is positive. The thesis goes into detail on inner work, mindfulness, and living curriculum. The author’s first-person experience of studying and learning in her Master of Education program, as well as autobiographical writing that capture the author’s childhood memories that pertain to the thesis topic, are presented in this thesis. Finally, the thesis also contains a useful “toolbox” or treasure chest of ideas that can be adopted by students and teachers who wish to try out contemplative ways of building a classroom for students with anxiety.

Keywords: anxiety; school children; mindfulness; inner work