



**University
of Victoria**

Graduate Studies

Notice of the Final Oral Examination
for the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy

of

MICHAEL McGRATH

MEd (University of Calgary, 1998)
BA (University of New Brunswick, 1993)

**“Safety Education: Culture, Leadership and Learning in the
Workplace: A critical discourse analysis”**

Department of Curriculum and Instruction

Friday, January 5th, 2018
9:30 a.m.
Clearihue Building
Room B017

Supervisory Committee:

Dr. Kathy Sanford, Department of Curriculum and Instruction, University of Victoria (Supervisor)
Dr. Darlene Clover, School of Educational Psychology and Leadership Studies, UVic (Co-Supervisor)
Dr. Budd Hall, School of Public Administration, UVic (Outside Member)

External Examiner:

Dr. Peter Sawchuk, Department of Leadership, Higher and Adult Education, University of Toronto
(OISE)

Chair of Oral Examination:

Dr. Kimberly Speers, School of Public Administration, UVic

Dr. David Capson, Dean, Faculty of Graduate Studies

Abstract

Workplace fatality and injury rates have been consistently high for the past 25 years (AWCBC, 2017, Table 22). According to Association of Workers Compensation Boards of Canada statistics, approximately 1000 workers have been killed on the job every year since 1993. Major incident reports are produced in response, in part, to guide how industries and corporations need to move forward on education, learning and safety. Questioning what these reports actually say is necessary in terms of adult education for safety, but there is little in the literature that shows any focus in this area. These reports are important because what they tell us, or do not, guides the future. Using critical discourse and content analysis, my study primarily explored one major report – *The Report of the BP U.S. Refineries Independent Safety Review Panel* (2007) – written in response to the 2005 BP Texas City Refinery accident. I chose this report because, more than a typical root cause analysis with lessons learned, it offered unique insight into the many assumptions held tightly by organizations and regulators about safety, leadership, culture and learning. As much as it is unique, it is also similar to many other reports that have been produced. It is comprehensive, influential, and available publicly.

Findings show that on one hand, the Baker Panel actively held BP accountable for the 2005 accident, calling out the company for poor training, leadership selection, cost-cutting and lack of investment, as well as ignoring unrealistic production pressures for the Texas City facility. The report also perpetuates a rigid, narrow view of leadership, bases its recommendations, in part, on the safety culture ‘myth’, fails to recognise workers’ knowledge, and fails to recognize the importance of informal learning or mentorship on safety. Further, it maintains a technical-rational status quo, supporting, even promoting, the existence of a ‘traditional’ corporate infrastructure framework that oppresses workers, and inhibits their safety.