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

of

RHONDA GERES-SMITH

MA University of British Columbia, 2015
BA (Hons) University of Victoria, 2011
MEd University of Victoria, 2007
BEd University of Regina, 1987

“Transdisciplinary Inquiry: Exploring a New Approach to Professional Learning in Education”

Department of Curriculum and Instruction

Monday March 24, 2020
1:00pm
Clearihue Building
Room B017

Supervisory Committee:
Dr. Kathy Sanford, Department of Curriculum and Instruction, University of Victoria (Supervisor)
Dr. Michelle Wiebe, Department of Curriculum and Instruction, UVic (Member)
Dr. Tim Hopper, Department of Exercise Science, Physical and Health Education, UVic (Outside Member)

External Examiner:
Dr. Janice Huber, Department of Elementary Education, University of Alberta

Chair of Oral Examination:
Dr. Cecelia Benoit, Department of Sociology, UVic

Dr. David Capson, Dean, Faculty of Graduate Studies
Abstract

Traditional, transmission methods of professional development (PD) for educators have been criticized as being ineffective, failing to provide enough time, context, autonomy, active engagement, and content information to enable educators to meaningfully shift their practice. This case study examined if and how transdisciplinary inquiry could be used as a vehicle for professional learning in the public-school system. Over six months, seven educators with diverse academic backgrounds, developed into a team, identified a shared concern, and engaged in transdisciplinary inquiry. To address the issue of concern, they created and utilized a set of mini-lessons on metacognitive strategies to help intermediate grade students, with a wide variety of learning exceptionalities, to reflect on and regulate their own learning. At the same time, the educators purposefully attended to their own learning as well as the learning of their fellow team members.

Interview and focus group data suggest it was possible and productive to use transdisciplinary inquiry as the vehicle for professional learning. Participants reported that the experience facilitated educator learning, provided opportunity to apply knowledge, introduced multiple perspectives, and fostered positive relationships. Findings suggest that the transdisciplinary team acted as a complex system with cohesive and divisive forces working together with information from the environment to occasion learning within the system. Findings also suggest that the use of transdisciplinary inquiry projects as professional learning opportunities may be an effective and practical supplement to traditional PD methods currently used in the public education system.