Notice of the Final Oral Examination
for the Degree of Master of Arts

of

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BA (Arak University, 2008)
MA (Arak University (2011)

“How international students describe their transformation: A photovoice study”

Department of Educational Psychology and Leadership Studies

Wednesday, March 18, 2020
1:00 PM
MacLaurin Building
Room A341

Supervisory Committee:
Dr. Darlene Clover, Department of Educational Psychology and Leadership Studies, University of Victoria (Supervisor)
Dr. Tatiano Gounko, Department of Educational Psychology and Leadership Studies, UVic (Member)

External Examiner:
Dr. Kathy Sanford, Department of Curriculum and Instruction, UVic

Chair of Oral Examination:
Dr. Tamara Humphrey, Department of Sociology, UVic

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

International students come to graduate school with diverse backgrounds and differing perspectives. Research shows that tertiary education is a different experience for them with distinctive, longitudinal impacts on their lives. When individuals are presented with alternative ways of engaging with and understanding social issues, they have the opportunity to make critical assessments that have an impact on their thinking and lives. Having experienced a fundamental transformation regarding my understandings of LGBTQ2S+ issues, Indigenous peoples, and gender inequalities as result of coming to UVic, my study explored how other graduate international students described and experienced their own coming to consciousness. Using photovoice, six international graduate students, including myself as a researcher-participant, this study explored the contributions an academic institution-in this case UVic-had made on their thinking and particularly, how the visuals (e.g. signs, symbols, films, etc.) on UVic campus, and their own photographs, encouraged students' transformation.

The results showed that these international students became ‘agent-learners’, taking charge of their own learning as a result of their exposure on the UVic campus and beyond. As they negotiated the cultural differences they encountered-not always something that was easy - their lack of consciousness about inequality and had to think through its implications for when they returned home. Findings also show that for this small group of participants it was the combination of signs and symbols on campus with all levels of education and learning-formal, nonformal, and informal that had the most impact. In addition, the power of storytelling and the imaginative and symbolic language of arts, specifically photography, were significant means for transformation and change.