Teaching Hatha Yoga: An Auto-Ethnographic Study.

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This dissertation is presented for the degree of Master of Education (Research), Murdoch University, Perth, Western Australia, 2008.
I declare that this dissertation is my own account of my research and contains as its main content work which has not been previously been submitted for a degree at any tertiary education institution.

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Abstract

This dissertation is grounded in my praxis as a Hatha yoga teacher in the community. I noticed that particular students were drawn to specific styles of Hatha yoga, whilst avoiding others. I took the styles of Hatha yoga into consideration, but further exploration also gave rise to whether methods of instruction were a fundamental component of the class demography. This in turn led to an examination of my own teaching pedagogy to explore how my philosophical approach to teaching, was in fact, carried over into to my praxis and if this was a factor in student retention in my classes. Studying my own pedagogy as a Hatha yoga teacher meant reviewing my philosophies, both from a theoretical perspective and later from a practical level, to see if my practice followed my philosophy. This could only be realised through a full investigation of my teaching methods, which was achieved by video taping one of my Hatha yoga classes. I believe that understanding originates from personal knowledge; therefore, the research must begin by examining my own pedagogy. In order to answer these questions I have investigated the historical foundations of yoga and the meaning of yoga in the modern Western world. During this process I became aware of the misrepresentations of Hatha yoga and the misconceptions that have derived from this. In order to answer my research question, whether my teaching pedagogy directly influenced the cohort of students who attended my yoga class, I have had to be cognisant of my own pedagogy. In order to achieve this I employed heuristic enquiry and more specifically the methods outline by Clark Moustakas (1990). Heuristic epistemology is achieved by creating phases in which the researcher uses her own experience to investigate and create meaning in which to discover a phenomenon. This method of enquiry offers the researcher non-linear steps with which to structure the process of a personal reflection. Explication of the pedagogy resulted from numerous viewings of the video recording. I reviewed my teaching methods to ascertain if what I said and thought I was doing was what I actually taught.
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