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TEACHING FOR CHANGE: A QUALITATIVE STUDY ON TEACHERS' PRACTICES AND BELIEFS IN IMPLEMENTING TRANSFORMATIVE EDUCATION

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ABSTRACT

This qualitative phenomenological study explores the lived experiences of four purposively selected teachers from the Department of Education (DepEd) and higher education institutions in Davao City, focusing on their implementation of transformative education. Grounded in Jack Mezirow's Transformative Learning Theory, the research investigates how educators navigate disorienting dilemmas, engage in critical reflection, and utilize rational discourse to foster personal and professional transformation in their teaching practices. Data were collected through semi-structured interviews and analyzed using Colaizzi's (1978) seven-step method to identify significant themes.

The findings reveal a modified paradigm illustrating the dynamic and cyclical process of transformative learning among educators. Key themes identified include Disorienting Dilemma, with sub-themes of unexpected student disengagement, self-questioning of effectiveness, and language barriers and generational gaps. Critical Reflection encompasses processing and questioning teaching approaches, seeking feedback, and recognition of the need for flexibility. Lastly, Rational Discourse is characterized by communication and shared understanding, connecting learning to real-life and personal experiences, and the teacher as a listener and facilitator." The study highlights that challenging classroom experiences serve as crucial triggers for teachers to shift from content-heavy instruction to learner-centered, inclusive pedagogies.

To sustain this transformation, the study recommends that future research directly link teacher perspective shifts to measurable student outcomes and classroom climate. Additionally, it is recommended that disorienting dilemmas and structured reflective practices be intentionally integrated into pre-service teacher education programs. Finally, the study suggests exploring the role of digital platforms and AI-powered tools to facilitate ongoing rational discourse and professional collaboration among educators.

KEYWORDS: *Transformative Education, Teachers' Lived Experiences, Transformative Learning Theory, Critical Reflection, Rational Discourse, Disorienting Dilemma*

INTRODUCTION

Education is globally acknowledged as a powerful tool for personal development, social progress, and economic growth. However, despite this recognition, the global education system is experiencing a deepening crisis. According to the World Bank (2023), over 250 million children are out of school, and many of those attending school are not acquiring foundational literacy and numeracy skills. UNESCO (2022) further reports that millions of learners' complete formal education without developing the competencies needed to respond to real-world challenges. These outcomes reveal the limitations of traditional, content-heavy, and test-driven education in cultivating meaningful and relevant learning. The COVID-19 pandemic exacerbated these issues, especially in low- and middle-income countries (UNESCO, 2022; World Bank, 2023).

In the Philippines, the scenario is no less troubling. The 2022 Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA) placed Filipino 15-year-olds at the bottom ranks globally in reading, mathematics, and science (OECD, 2023). These students performed at levels equivalent to those five or six years younger in more advanced countries. Additionally, the Southeast Asia Primary Learning Metrics (SEA-PLM) showed that 90% of Grade 5 learners could not read simple texts and 83% could not solve basic mathematical problems (UNICEF Philippines, 2023). These statistics underscore deficits not only in academic achievement but also in essential 21st-century skills like critical thinking, creativity, and social responsibility.

At the local level, schools in urban centers like Cagayan de Oro face overcrowded classrooms, teacher shortages, and limited teaching resources. Some educators have resorted to makeshift classrooms due to insufficient infrastructure (Rappler, 2023). Teachers also report that students struggle with low motivation, a lack of independent thinking, and difficulties applying knowledge in real-world contexts (SunStar CDO, 2023). These challenges are compounded by economic inequalities, mental health concerns, and a widening digital divide.

These realities prompt us to question the adequacy of traditional educational models. There is growing global and local recognition that education must move beyond standardized curricula and rote memorization. Transformative education—an approach centered on critical reflection, dialogue, and personal and social transformation—has emerged as a meaningful

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alternative. While its principles are well-documented in educational theory and global frameworks (Mezirow, 1991; Cranton, 2006), the actual implementation of transformative education by teachers in the Philippine context remains underexplored. A research gap exists between the philosophical ideals of transformative education and the practical challenges of applying it in resource-constrained classrooms. Through this study, we aim to address that gap by exploring how Filipino teachers experience, understand, and enact transformative education in their teaching practices.

Significance of the Study

This study holds several key contributions. First, it provides an in-depth understanding of how teachers in the Philippines interpret and apply transformative education in diverse and often under-resourced educational contexts. By highlighting the voices and practices of educators, we aim to illuminate how they serve as catalysts for critical thinking, self-awareness, and social change among their students.

Second, the findings can inform teacher education programs by identifying the skills, reflective practices, and institutional support systems necessary to cultivate transformative teaching. It can also assist policymakers and educational leaders in aligning professional development, curriculum design, and classroom conditions with the principles of transformative learning.

Third, this study offers a framework for addressing broader educational inequalities by focusing on pedagogy that values dialogue, inclusion, and critical consciousness. It contributes to the ongoing global dialogue on educational reform and social justice, particularly in developing contexts.

Alignment with the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)

This research directly contributes to Sustainable Development Goal 4: Quality Education, which aims to "ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all." By investigating how teachers implement transformative learning in their daily practice, we support global efforts to make education more relevant, learner-centered, and empowering. Our study promotes lifelong learning, equity, and teacher agency—core aspects of achieving SDG 4.

Theoretical Lens

This study is grounded in Jack Mezirow's Transformative Learning Theory, which provides a framework for understanding how adults, particularly educators, experience deep, meaningful change in their perspectives and practices. Transformative learning occurs through a process of perspective transformation**,** which involves three key phases: disorienting dilemma, critical reflection, and rational discourse (Mezirow, 1991, 2000).

In the context of this study, the disorienting dilemma refers to the challenging experiences teachers encounter that disrupt their established beliefs or teaching routines. These may include changes in curriculum, student needs, institutional expectations, or socio-cultural issues, which compel educators to question the adequacy of their current pedagogical approaches.

As a result, teachers engage in critical reflection, a core process in transformative learning. They begin to examine their assumptions about teaching, learning, and their roles as educators. Through reflective practice, they reconsider ingrained habits, biases, and values, allowing for the emergence of new, more inclusive perspectives on education.

Rational discourse plays a vital role in this transformation. Teachers participate in open dialogue with peers, mentors, and students to explore different viewpoints, test their revised assumptions, and collaboratively construct new understandings of transformative education. Such discourse fosters professional growth, mutual support, and shared commitment to learner-centered and socially responsive teaching.

By applying Mezirow's theory, this study examines how teachers undergo and implement transformation, not only in their thinking but also in their classroom practices, thereby contributing to the broader goal of transformative education.

Paradigm

This study is anchored on Mezirow's Transformative Learning Theory (1991), which emphasizes the critical reflection of assumptions, engaging in dialogue, and taking informed action to bring about personal and professional transformation. In this framework, teachers are not only facilitators of student learning but also adult learners who continuously evolve through reflective practice.

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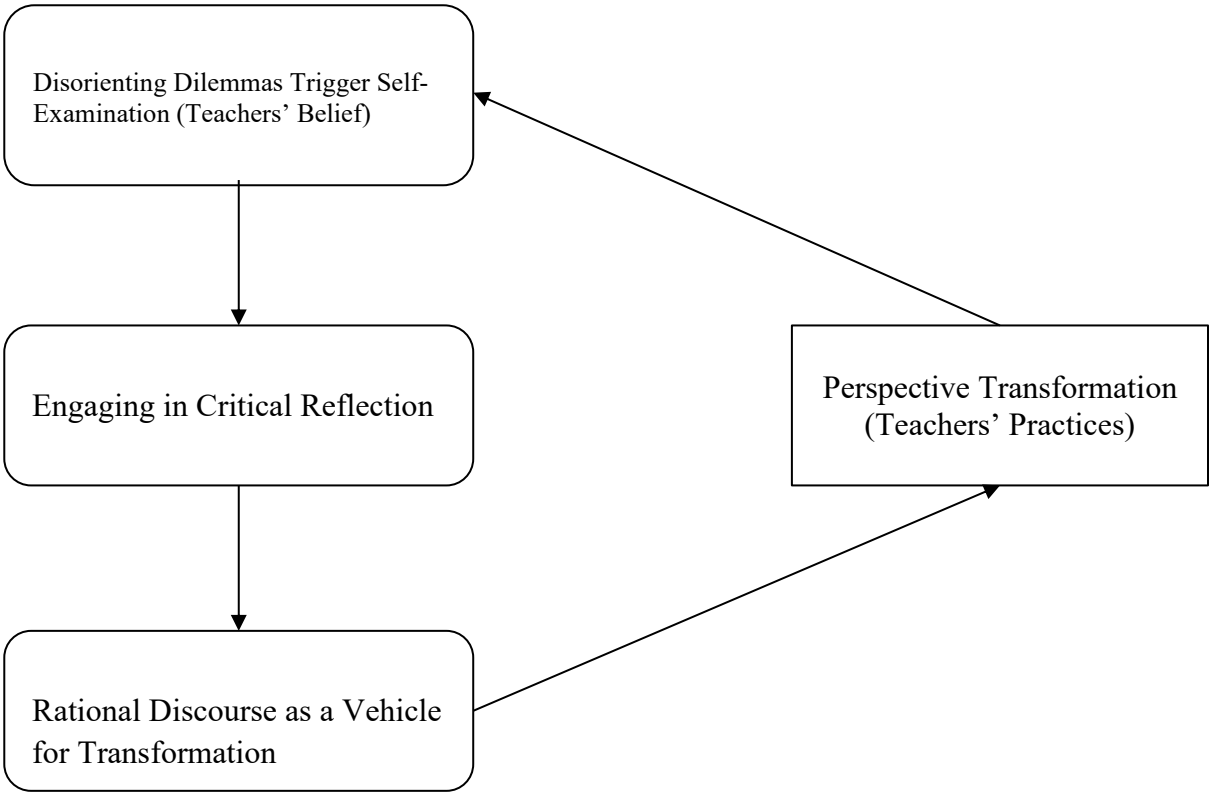


Figure 1. Paradigm

Research Questions

The core issue this study addresses is the gap between the theoretical ideal of Transformative Education and its actual implementation in the classroom. While Mezirow's theory provides a clear roadmap for perspective change, many teachers struggle to translate these psychological shifts into daily teaching practices.

Specifically, this study seeks to answer:

1. How do teachers describe their lived experiences when encountering "disorienting dilemmas" in their professional roles?
2. In what ways do teachers engage in critical reflection to evaluate their long-held educational beliefs?
3. How do these internal changes manifest in their classroom practices and their facilitation of rational discourse with students?

METHODOLOGY

Research Design. I, as the researcher, employed a qualitative research design using a phenomenological approach to understand teachers lived experiences in practicing transformative education.

Participants. I purposively selected four teachers from the Department of Education (DepEd) and higher education institutions in Davao City. The participants varied in teaching experience, subject specialization, and institutional affiliation to ensure diverse representation.

Data Collection. I conducted semi-structured interviews using an interview guide, with sessions lasting approximately 10–20 minutes. These interviews aligned with the study's research questions. All interviews were audio-recorded, transcribed verbatim, and anonymized to protect the identity of the participants.

Data Analysis. I, as the researcher, employed Colaizzi's (1978) method of data analysis to examine the lived experiences of teachers implementing transformative education. This method is especially appropriate for phenomenological research, as it emphasizes describing and understanding the essential structure of participants' experiences. Colaizzi's method consists of seven systematic steps:

- **Familiarization.** I read all the interview transcripts multiple times to become thoroughly familiar with the data and gain a general sense of the participants' experiences.
- **Identifying Significant Statements.** From each transcript, I extracted significant statements, phrases, or sentences that directly related to the phenomenon of transformative education in teaching practice.
- **Formulating Meanings.** I then interpreted the significant statements by formulating meanings that captured the essence of what the participants expressed. This step involved carefully reflecting on each statement's implicit and explicit meaning

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- **Organizing into Themes.** The formulated meanings were clustered into themes that represented patterns across participants' experiences. These themes were cross-checked with the original statements to ensure they remained grounded in the data.
- **Developing an Exhaustive Description.** I wrote a comprehensive description of the phenomenon based on the thematic clusters, capturing the full scope and depth of teachers lived experiences with transformative education.
- **Producing the Fundamental Structure.** From the exhaustive description, I distilled the essential structure of the phenomenon, highlighting the core elements that defined how teachers experienced and implemented transformative learning.
- **Validation by Participants (Member Checking).** To enhance the study's credibility, I returned the findings to the participants and asked them to validate whether the results accurately reflected their experiences. This feedback was used to revise and finalize the themes and descriptions if necessary.

Using Colaizzi's method ensured that my data analysis remained true to the phenomenological approach, emphasizing participant voice, rich description, and essence-seeking interpretation. This aligned well with my goal of understanding how teachers personally and professionally engaged with transformative education in real-world classroom settings.

Ethical Considerations. I obtained informed consent from all participants and ensured that they understood their participation was voluntary and confidential. Ethical guidelines for research involving human participants were strictly followed throughout the study.

Trustworthiness of the Study. To ensure the credibility, dependability, confirmability, and transferability of my qualitative study, I implemented the following strategies:

- **Credibility:** I engaged in prolonged interaction with the participants through multiple interview sessions to build trust and promote in-depth responses. Member checking was conducted by allowing participants to review their transcribed interviews and my initial findings to confirm their accuracy and authenticity (Lincoln & Guba, 1985).
- **Dependability:** I maintained a detailed audit trail documenting every phase of the research process—from the development of the interview protocols to decisions made during data analysis. I also utilized peer debriefing with colleagues and advisors to validate the consistency of my interpretations.
- **Confirmability:** To acknowledge and manage my own biases, I kept reflexive journals throughout the research process. Triangulation was also applied by comparing data from interviews with relevant documents such as lesson plans and reflective journals, ensuring my findings were grounded in the data rather than shaped by my assumptions.
- **Transferability:** I provided rich, thick descriptions of the research setting, participant profiles, and educational context. Although my findings were not intended to be generalizable, they offered valuable insights for similar educational settings or contributed to broader conversations about transformative education in public schools.

RESULTS

In this chapter, I presented the results of the study, including the modified paradigm, themes, and sub-themes gained from in-depth interviews, and my reflections as a researcher. I analyzed the data to explore thoughts and meanings, providing insights from both my viewpoint and standpoint.

Modified Paradigm

Below is the modified paradigm presented in this study that illustrates the dynamic and cyclical process by which educators undergo transformative learning within the context of evolving educational demands. The given paradigm was based on Jack Mezirow's Transformative Learning Theory. This paradigm serves as a conceptual lens for understanding how teachers experience meaningful changes in their perspectives and professional practices. Mezirow (1991, 2000) posits that transformative learning occurs through a series of interconnected phases: disorienting dilemmas, critical reflection, and rational discourse. These phases collectively lead to a fundamental shift in the way individuals interpret their experiences and act upon them. After interviewing our participants, we analyzed their experiences and identified emergent themes. For a disorienting dilemma, the sub-themes are unexpected student disengagement, self-questioning of effectiveness, and language barriers and generational gaps. For critical reflection, the sub-themes are processing and questioning teaching approaches, seeking feedback, and recognition of the need for flexibility. For rational discourse, the sub-themes are communication and shared understanding, connecting learning to real-life and personal experiences, and the teacher as a listener and facilitator. These elements are contextualized within the lived experiences of educators navigating curriculum reforms, diverse learner needs, institutional expectations, and sociocultural challenges. This model underscores that transformation isn't a straightforward progression but rather a dynamic, cyclical process of dialogue and introspection. This journey empowers educators to critically examine their existing beliefs, re-evaluate their professional roles, and implement teaching strategies that are both more inclusive and responsive.

Themes and Sub-Themes

As I spoke with teachers, they shared those big moments in their careers, the ones that really made them rethink things and grow. It was fascinating to see how, just like Mezirow's theory suggests, reflecting deeply, talking things through, and taking action truly shaped their professional journeys.

Disoriented Dilemma

When I talked to the teachers, I felt that their challenging experience disrupted their established beliefs or teaching routines. These moments compelled them to question their existing

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teaching approaches. My participants' feelings during these dilemmas ranged from surprise and confusion to frustration and self-doubt. These experiences acted as triggers for reflection and transformation.

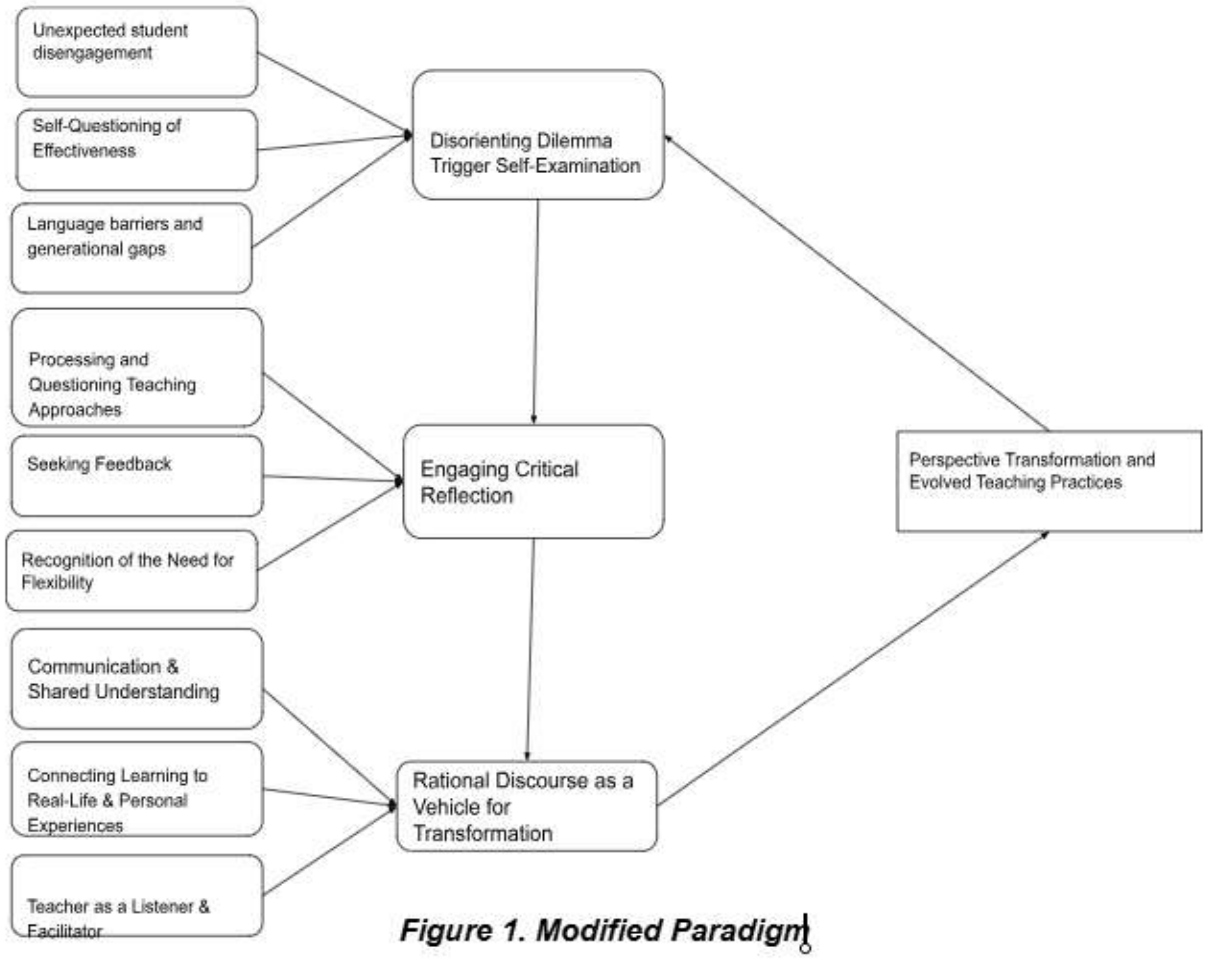


Figure 1. Modified Paradigm

Unexpected Student Disengagement

I remember one teacher, her voice tinged with a mix of frustration and a hint of vulnerability, describing how they'd be in the middle of a science lesson, looking out at her students flipping through notebooks rather than participating actively. This led to a realization that students were missing foundational knowledge. She said,

"One time, nag-explain ko sa usa ka topic sa science, pero nakita nako nga murag lost ang mga students, murag ga-browse lang sila sa ilang notebooks, pero walay klaro nga understanding. I expected nga diretso nila masabtan kay familiar na sila sa basic concepts, pero pag-check nako, wala diay sila'y solid foundation sa previous lessons. " (P1)

("I was explaining a topic in science, but I noticed that the students seemed lost—they were just browsing through their notebooks without really understanding. I expected them to grasp it quickly since they were already familiar with the basic concepts, but when I checked, it turned out they didn't have a solid foundation from previous lessons.") (P1)

This statement indicates a moment of realization for the teacher that their traditional method of explanation was not effective, as students appeared disengaged and unable to grasp the concepts.

Another participant shared a similar moment. I could almost feel the weight of that frustration in their words, the palpable sense of disconnect in the classroom.

"During a math lesson on fractions, nakabantay ko nga daghan sa akong mga estudyante naglisod og sabot sa concept sa parts and wholes gamit lang ang traditional nga textbook explanations. Some were hesitant to participate, ug ang uban kay klaro gyud nga na-frustrate." (P2)

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("During a math lesson on fractions, I noticed that many students were struggling to understand the concept of parts and wholes using traditional textbook explanations. Some were hesitant to participate, while others were visibly frustrated.") (P2)

This highlights a common issue where conventional teaching methods fail to connect with all students, leading to difficulty in comprehending abstract concepts.

This sub-theme shows how disconnection in student behavior can spark re-evaluation of pedagogical strategies. It reflects the start of the "disorientation" process Mezirow refers to.

Self-Questioning of Effectiveness

My interviews revealed that teachers encountered classroom experiences that made them question their effectiveness. This self-questioning did not stem from formal evaluations or external feedback but from internal reflection prompted by student disengagement, silence, or unexpected reactions during instruction.

These experiences reflect what Mezirow calls a disorienting dilemma, a moment when habitual assumptions are challenged, prompting the individual to examine their beliefs, role, and identity. In the case of our participants, such dilemmas served as turning points in how they viewed themselves as educators.

One participant expressed,

"When I instructed them to do some dance steps, they didn't listen. I realized maybe my voice wasn't commanding enough. I'm soft-spoken. Maybe they don't take me seriously." (P4)

Here, the teacher attributes her perceived lack of authority as a possible cause of poor classroom management. This quote reveals not just a questioning of methods but of the teacher's personal characteristics, voice tone, delivery style, and classroom presence. This level of vulnerability is central to transformative learning; it reflects an openness to acknowledge one's limitations.

For some participants, ineffective classroom management and perceived lack of student respect led to critical self-questioning. One young teacher, in particular, reflected on how her soft-spoken nature may have affected student behavior:

"Maybe they're too close to me… maybe I'm not strict enough. I think I need to set boundaries. I realized I didn't even give them classroom rules at the beginning—and that was a big mistake." (P4)

This reflection demonstrates that questioning effectiveness is not limited to instructional strategy, it extends to leadership and classroom climate. The teacher's realization of this gap signaled an opportunity for both professional and personal growth. Another participant, said

"Because sometimes they ask questions and others didn't. And then whenever I discuss matters, I call them. I call a few students. They don't answer me. I even ask myself, who am I? Am I effective? Did the students grasp the things that I have explained?" (P3)

This illustrates a deeper level of self-doubt stemming from a lack of student response, leading the teacher to question their own identity and impact in the classroom.

"I questioned myself, my teaching strategies, also. Because sometimes, maybe I have these poor authoritative skills because students sometimes didn't listen to my instruction. That's why I questioned that maybe there is lack in me that needs to improve." (P4)

The teacher connects student non-compliance to their own authoritative skills, indicating a critical self-evaluation of classroom management.

Such introspection signals movement beyond technical adjustment into professional identity transformation. Teachers did not blame external factors alone, they turned inward, questioning their voice, classroom management, and even identity as educators. This self-doubt was painful but essential for transformation.

Language Barriers and Generational Gap

As I interviewed participants, I consistently heard that language emerged as a significant barrier to learning. As the teacher reflected on how the exclusive use of English in her instruction created a barrier to communication and participation, especially among students who were more comfortable in local languages,

"Maybe they are also afraid to ask questions because I use English as a medium because that's the constitutional right so I use English as my medium and then students are maybe ashamed of answering me."(P3)

The teacher speculates that the use of English as a medium of instruction might be intimidating for students, causing their reluctance to participate.

"Considering my age… I even ask myself when I handle the students—am I effective enough to them? Because sometimes they ask questions, and others don't. I call them, they don't answer me… I even ask myself, 'Who am I?' (P3)

The teacher explicitly identifies an age gap as a potential factor influencing classroom dynamics.

Teachers realized that strict use of English or generational mismatches were alienating students. Recognizing this forced them to rethink inclusivity and linguistic access in their classrooms.

As I analyzed these narratives, I saw a consistent pattern: when teachers encountered unexpected difficulties, they internalized these as moments of self-inquiry. This process was emotional,

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often involving doubt, guilt, or frustration, but it also marked the beginning of meaningful transformation. Reflecting a sincere desire to improve for the benefit of their students. Importantly, this internal struggle did not paralyze them; instead, it became the seed for rethinking pedagogy, revising classroom rules, experimenting with language use, and seeking feedback.

Critical Reflection

As I listened to the participants' narratives, they engaged in deep self-examination about their teaching methods, roles, and philosophies. The paradigm revealed that educators critically questioned their prior beliefs, becoming more aware of their own biases and limitations. This reflective process helped them to reframe their perspectives toward more learner-centered, inclusive, and responsive teaching practices.

Processing and Questioning Teaching Approaches

As I listened, this was a consistent theme. I heard participants admit to moments that made them "pause and reflect on my teaching approach."

Participant 1 said,

"After that experience, nakarealize ko nga dili pwede nga purely theoretical ang pagtudlo—kinahanglan adunay klaro nga connection sa real-life scenarios aron mas daling masabtan sa mga estudyante. Mas na-appreciate nako ang importance sa formative assessments ug frequent check-ins sa ilang understanding before mo-proceed sa mas complex nga topics. Kung dili nako masiguro nga naa silay solid foundation, sayang lang ang next lessons kay dili nila fully ma-digest." (P1)

("After that experience, I realized that teaching can't be purely theoretical—there has to be a clear connection to real-life scenarios so students can understand more easily. I came to appreciate the importance of formative assessments and frequent check-ins on their understanding before moving on to more complex topics. If I can't ensure they have a solid foundation, the next lessons would be wasted because they won't fully absorb them.) (P1)

The teacher concludes that abstract theoretical teaching is insufficient and real-world relevance is crucial for student comprehension. It became clear to us that their change was not just about new methods. It was a profound shift in how they viewed student learning, seeing it as dynamic, diverse, and fundamentally relational. Another participant shared the same thought. She said,

"Realizing that my usual approach wasn't reaching them effectively, I decided to introduce a more interactive method using real-life objects like pizza slices and paper cutouts." (P2)

That clearly shows self-assessment and a decision to change the approach. Another one added.

"I was really feeling frustrated and self-doubt that time, like, am I really effective in teaching? So, I look back again with my strategies." (P3)

As I listened, her voice was experiencing emotional distress, specifically frustration and self-doubt. It was so profound that it made them question their fundamental competence and effectiveness as a teacher. This internal struggle prompted a crucial response to critically re-evaluate and review their teaching strategies.

From Participant 4: "I need to go back to what the problems are. I realized that there are actually gaps in their understanding that need extra attention. And I realized that teaching isn't one-size-fits-all; it has to be personal and relevant."

Her answer shows a powerful moment of realization and a shift in pedagogical approach.

Seeking Feedback

As I explored their journey of critical reflection, I was keen to understand how they moved from internal self-assessment to external validation and insight. It became clear that simply thinking about what went wrong was not enough; many of them exhibited a genuine courage to reach out and ask for help, for critiques, and for honest opinions. This active seeking of feedback became a powerful tool in their transformative process. One participant, in particular, articulated this beautifully.

"It actually encouraged me to reflect on my own teaching and seek feedback from students and fellow teachers... we are not that perfect and sometimes commit mistakes, but we are willing to learn more and accept criticisms." (P4)

That moment revealed a decisive pivot; this was not a 'wait and see' scenario for these educators. Instead of simply presuming their strategies' effectiveness, they intentionally sought direct input from those influenced by their teaching."

Some teachers actively asked students about their learning experiences through surveys or informal conversations, using feedback to inform their teaching.

Oo, nag-seek ko ug feedback gikan sa akong mga estudyante ug kauban nga mga teachers. After sa klase, nagpa-simple survey ko kung unsa ilang pinakalisod nga part sa lesson, ug asa sila nakasabot ug maayo. Ang ilang honest nga tubag nakatabang nako nga mas makita ang gaps sa akong pagtudlo. Nakat-on ko nga dili tanan mo-express sa ilang kalisod during discussion, pero kung hatagan ug chance, daghan diay ganahan mo-share. (P1)

("Yes, I sought feedback from my students and fellow teachers. After class, I gave a simple survey asking them which part of the lesson they found most difficult and which parts they understood well. Their honest responses helped me see the gaps in my teaching. I learned that not everyone expresses their struggles during discussions, but when given the chance, many are actually willing to share.) (P1)

This indicates a proactive and open approach to professional development. The teacher recognizes that self-reflection alone

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may not be sufficient and actively leverages external perspectives from both direct recipients of their teaching (students) and professional peers. This demonstrates a commitment to a comprehensive feedback loop for improvement. Another participant added,

"I also talked with my fellow teachers, and that's when I realized that most of us face similar challenges when teaching complex concepts." (P3)

This points to the power of collegial support and shared experience. Discussing with peers provided not only advice but also validation. The realization that others face "similar challenges" normalizes their own difficulties, reducing feelings of isolation and inadequacy, and fostering a sense of collective problem-solving.

Recognition of the Need for Flexibility

This theme captures the pivotal shift in participants' mindsets as they move away from rigid, one-size-fits-all teaching methods towards adaptable, student-centered approaches. Confronted by the disorienting dilemmas of disengagement and unresponsiveness, teachers come to understand that effective instruction demands a willingness to adjust strategies, embrace diverse learning styles, and fluidly respond to the evolving needs of their students. This realization is not merely about making minor tweaks; it represents a fundamental change in pedagogical philosophy, fostering a classroom environment that values adaptability and innovation as core tenets of learning.

As participant 1 expressed,

"Nausab akong teaching mindset—imbes mag-focus lang sa pagtapos sa syllabus, mas gihighlight nako ang pag-adjust sa pacing ug approach depende sa estudyante. Dili tanan klase parehas ug learning style, so nagdugang ko ug interactive activities, storytelling, ug practical applications sa akong lessons." (P1)

(My teaching mindset changed—instead of just focusing on finishing the syllabus, I began to prioritize adjusting the pacing and approach depending on the students. Not all classes have the same learning style, so I started incorporating more interactive activities, storytelling, and practical applications into my lessons.") (P1)

This is a comprehensive description of applied flexibility. It highlights a move away from syllabus-driven instruction to student-driven instruction. The adoption of "interactive activities, storytelling, and practical applications" demonstrates a wide range of flexible strategies employed to cater to diverse learning styles and make lessons more engaging and meaningful. This shows a robust and multifaceted response to the disorienting dilemma.

In direct response to observed challenges, teachers reported that,

"Kini nga experience nagpalig-on sa akong pagtuo nga importante ang pagka-flexible sa pagtudlo—nga andam mo-adapt sa strategies base sa reaksyon sa mga estudyante. " (P2)

(This moment reinforced the importance of flexibility in teaching—being willing to adapt strategies based on how students respond.) (P2)

This explicitly states the learned principle of flexibility. The emphasis on "willingness to adapt strategies" highlights a responsive and agile teaching approach. It indicates that the teacher is now prepared to continuously monitor student responses and adjust their methods accordingly, rather than adhering to a rigid plan.

Participant 3 expressed,

"I refrained from talking. I asked them to speak either in Visayan as long as they speak in Visayan and then they speak English. Then that's it so it transformed into an interactive and very active and lively classroom." (P3)

This is a concrete example of linguistic flexibility directly addressing the language barrier. The teacher's decision to "refrain from talking" and allow students to speak in their native language (Visayan) or a mix (Visayan and English) dramatically shifted the classroom dynamic. This adaptive communication strategy immediately fostered an "interactive and very active and lively classroom," demonstrating the immediate positive impact of teacher flexibility on student engagement and comfort.

Rational Discourse

This theme of Rational Discourse highlights the profound impact of open, thoughtful, and interactive communication in the classroom. This section delves into how teachers, by encouraging students to share perspectives, engage in constructive debates, and connect learning to their personal lives, transform passive learning environments into dynamic spaces of shared understanding and genuine connection. It underscores the shift from a teacher-centric delivery of information to a more collaborative and meaningful exchange, ultimately empowering students to become active participants in their own learning journey.

Central to improved understanding was the finding that, Participant 1 explained,

"Ang open discussions naghatag ug kahigayonan sa mga estudyante nga mag-share sa ilang perspectives, mosulti sa ilang doubts, ug mo-articulate sa ilang ideas, nga makatabang sa ilang deeper understanding sa lesson." (P1)

("Open discussions give students the opportunity to share their perspectives, express their doubts, and articulate their ideas, which helps deepen their understanding of the lesson.") (P1)

This statement emphasizes the multifaceted benefits of open communication in the classroom. "Sharing perspectives" promotes diverse viewpoints, "expressing doubts" allows for clarification of misconceptions, and "articulating ideas" solidifies individual understanding. The teacher sees these discussions as a

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mechanism for actively constructing deeper comprehension, moving beyond surface-level learning.

Participant 2 also expressed,

"Nakita nako nga usahay, simple lang kaayo nga question maka-lead og insightful debate, nga nag-encourage sa mga estudyante nga mo-explore beyond sa rote memorization." (P2)

("I've witnessed moments when a simple question led to an insightful debate, encouraging students to explore concepts beyond rote memorization.") (P2)

This illustrates the generative power of good questioning within a communicative environment. The teacher observed how a seemingly minor prompt could ignite deeper intellectual engagement, moving students from simply recalling facts to actively investigating and grappling with complex ideas. This highlights the teacher's role in facilitating a learning environment where questions lead to genuine inquiry and critical thought.

Participant 3 highlighted:

"Students tend to develop confidence and they tend to express their ideas confidently because I allowed them also to speak in Visayan and with that they are, comfortable enough to speak to share what's their ideas about the certain topics." (P3)

This statement provides a direct link between linguistic flexibility (as discussed in Critical Reflection) and increased student confidence in communication. By removing the language barrier, the teacher enabled students to feel "comfortable enough to speak," leading to more confident and open sharing of their ideas. This demonstrates how a small adjustment in communication policy can significantly enhance rational discourse in the classroom.

Participant 1 stressed that,

"Instead nga mag-stick lang sa textbook learning, mas nagiging dynamic ug relevant ang pagtulon-an kung naay exchange of thoughts ug varied viewpoints." (P1)

(Instead of sticking only to textbook learning, the lessons become more dynamic and relevant when there's an exchange of thoughts and varied viewpoints.) (P1)

This highlights how rational discourse energizes learning, transforming static content into a vibrant intellectual space where diverse perspectives are considered and integrated, fostering a more nuanced and permeable understanding.

Connecting Learning to Real-Life and Personal Experience

Complementing the power of rational discourse, the theme of Connecting Learning to Real-Life and Personal Experience emerges as another vital pathway for teachers implementing transformative education. By deliberately linking abstract classroom concepts to students' lived realities, personal histories, and observable phenomena, educators provide the concrete anchors necessary for critical reflection and the formation of new meaning schemes. This approach moves beyond theoretical understanding, enabling students to recognize how knowledge directly impacts their world and fosters an empathetic engagement with diverse perspectives, thereby catalyzing a deeper, more personally resonant, and ultimately transformative learning experience. Teachers frequently facilitated this connection; for example, Participant 1 recounted,

"Pero sa dihang naghatag ko ug real-world scenarios ug nagpa-share ko sa ilang personal experiences, naay usa ka estudyante nga nag-istorya bahin sa ilang barangay nga naka-experience ug baha tungod sa deforestation." (P1)

("When I presented real-world scenarios and asked them to share their personal experiences, one student talked about how their barangay experienced flooding due to deforestation.") (P1)

This demonstrates a direct application of Mezirow's concept of validating new perspectives through contextualization, as personal experiences provide concrete evidence for critical discussion and understanding of broader issues.

This personal connection often yielded a ripple effect, where Participant 1 observed,

"Pagkadungog sa iyang story, daghan sa klase ang ningsunod, sharing their own concerns ug observations sa ilang komunidad." (P1)

"After hearing that story, many other students followed, sharing their own concerns and observations about their communities." (P1)

This illustrates how connecting learning to real life can spark a broader collective rational discourse, transforming individual experiences into shared points of reflection and critical inquiry.

Participant 2, stated that,

"I introduced a more interactive method gamit ang mga real-life objects sama sa pizza slices ug paper cutouts. Paghatag nako sa ilang chance nga sila mismo ang mo-manipulate sa mga pieces, mas ni-engage sila, and I saw nga nagsugod na sila og kasabot sa relationships between different fraction sizes. " (P2)

"I introduced real-life objects like pizza slices and paper cutouts... students became more engaged, and I could see the excitement on their faces as they physically manipulated the pieces to understand fraction sizes."(P2)

This specific example powerfully demonstrates how tangible, relatable tools spark active engagement and provide a common ground for shared understanding and subsequent rational discourse about complex ideas.

Remarkably, personal sharing sometimes transcended academic boundaries, as Participant 4 recounted,

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"She didn't consider me as a teacher but she also considered me as her ate or mother because she shared something that is related to the lesson but it is actually beyond. The connections. It is a connection but it's beyond." (P3)

This profound connection highlights how fostering an environment of trust and empathy allows for rational discourse that extends beyond the curriculum, integrating personal narratives and supporting a holistic view of the learner's evolving meaning schemes.

Furthermore, connecting through personal anecdotes proved effective, as Participant 4 explained,

"And what meaningful discussion is that every time when I talk about teaching experiences and they really like to listen and I can see that I can also observe that through their outputs and they learned about how to create the lesson plans and through that, I can see that they are improving also." (P4)

"Every time when I talk about teaching experiences and they really like to listen and I can see that I can also observe that through their outputs and they learned about how to create the lesson plans and through that, I can see that they are improving also." (P4)

Here, the teacher's sharing of personal, real-world experiences served as a powerful catalyst for students' learning and development, providing authentic context for their own pedagogical understanding and fostering a more relevant, applied form of knowledge.

Teacher as a Listener and Facilitator

Within the framework of rational discourse, the sub-theme of Teacher as a Listener and Facilitator represents a fundamental shift in pedagogical roles, crucial for implementing transformative education. In the context of Mezirow's theory, effective transformative learning often hinges on the creation of a supportive environment where individuals can critically examine their assumptions and construct new meaning. This theme highlights how teachers, moving beyond the traditional role of knowledge transmitters, actively cultivate such an environment by deeply listening to students' emergent ideas, questions, and even their moments of struggle. As facilitators, they strategically guide dialogue, encourage the exploration of diverse perspectives, and foster an atmosphere of trust and respect. This active listening and skillful facilitation are essential not only for the ongoing process of rational discourse, but also for empowering students to articulate their evolving viewpoints, critically reflect on their experiences, and ultimately achieve a more profound and personally relevant perspective transformation.

A key finding was that teachers recognized their role shifting to, as Participant 1 explained,

"Ang pinaka-dako nga kausaban siguro kay ang akong mindset, dili lang ko instructor, kundi facilitator sa ilang learning journey. Mas nakatuon ko nga ang pagtudlo dili one-size-fits-all; kinahanglan personal ug relevant para sa estudyante."(P1)

("The biggest change, I would say, is in my mindset—I no longer see myself just as an instructor, but as a facilitator in their learning journey. I've come to understand that teaching isn't one-size-fits-all; it has to be personal and relevant to the students.") (P1)

This statement from Participant 1 shows a big change in how teachers think about their job and teaching. They no longer see themselves as just giving instructions, but as helpers who guide students on their learning path. This new way of thinking fits with the idea that teachers should listen and help, not just tell students what to do.

This facilitative role provided crucial insights, as Participant 3 stated,

"Through these discussions, I could clearly see where they struggled and where they were more confident, giving me a better picture of how to improve my teaching style." (P3)

Active listening during discourse serves as a diagnostic tool, providing the teacher with invaluable feedback to refine their pedagogical approaches and better support students' individual learning journeys toward transformation.

Ultimately, the interviews highlighted that Participant 3 reinforced,

"They have reinforced the importance of listening to students' ideas, questions, and even their struggles—so that learning becomes a collaborative and meaningful experience rather than just a one-way exchange of information." (P3)

This emphasizes the critical role of the teacher as an attentive listener in fostering an environment where students feel heard and valued, transforming learning into a truly collaborative, meaning-making endeavor as conceptualized by Mezirow.

Viewpoint and Standpoint

In conducting this research, I view transformative education not merely as a change in teaching strategies but as a deeply personal and professional journey that educators undertake. I believe transformation begins when teachers encounter moments that challenge their long-held beliefs—moments that I refer to as disorienting experiences. Guided by Mezirow's Transformative Learning Theory, I see this process as one that unfolds through critical reflection and meaningful dialogue. My perspective is that real, lasting change in education happens when teachers are given the space to question, reflect, and reconstruct their understanding of teaching and learning. Through this study, I sought to highlight how transformation is not imposed—it is experienced, lived, and internalized by educators.

As a researcher and educator, I stand by the belief that teachers are not simply implementers of policy or curriculum; they are reflective practitioners and change agents. I recognize the complexity of their roles and the multiple pressures they face,

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from institutional demands to the diverse needs of learners. This study is grounded in the conviction that professional growth must be rooted in authenticity, reflection, and collaboration. I advocate for a transformative model of teacher development—one that values the lived experiences of teachers and supports their ongoing journey of growth. In taking this stance, I aim to contribute to a more humane, reflective, and empowering vision of what it means to teach and to learn.

DISCUSSIONS

In this chapter, I presented and interpreted the results of the study by closely examining the lived experiences of the participants. I used their insights to affirm, refine, or question the claims of existing literature, weaving in the emerging themes and sub-themes that surfaced from their narratives. These findings were contextualized through Mezirow's Transformative Learning Theory, highlighting how disorienting experiences, critical reflection, and dialogic engagement contributed to shifts in their professional perspectives and practices.

Disorienting Dilemma

As I listened to the participants, I could feel their internal conflict, the tension between their professional identities and the reality unfolding in their classrooms. These emotionally difficult moments, marked by student disengagement and communication gaps, served as the initial shift in long-held beliefs. I realized that discomfort is not a sign of failure but an essential signal for growth. When teachers are brave enough to acknowledge that something is not working, they open the door for transformation. These moments, though painful, are powerful. They remind us that teaching is not static; it is an ongoing negotiation between our intentions and our learners' realities.

Unexpected Student Disengagement

Teachers described situations where students were passively flipping through notebooks or disengaging during lessons. These experiences prompted educators to question the effectiveness of their instruction. This aligns with Mezirow's (2000) assertion that a transformative learning process begins with a disorienting event that challenges an individual's assumptions. The unexpected nature of this disengagement, particularly when teachers believed their lessons were well-prepared, created a significant cognitive dissonance. This sub-theme highlights how observable student behavior can serve as a powerful trigger for self-assessment. Liu (2015) further emphasizes that such classroom disruptions are often catalysts for meaningful pedagogical change, as they force educators to confront the gap between their intended outcomes and actual student responses. *For instance, a teacher who traditionally relied on lectures might be disoriented by a classroom full of students staring blankly, compelling them to consider alternative instructional methods.*

Self-Questioning of Effectiveness

Teachers began to reflect on their classroom authority, voice tone, and even personality traits. This type of introspection mirrors what Brookfield (2017) describes as "critically reflective teaching," where practitioners re-examine their identities and power dynamics in the classroom. The disorienting dilemma moved beyond mere observation of student behavior to a deeper, more personal interrogation of their own pedagogical self. This internal scrutiny involved questioning deeply held assumptions about their role as an educator and how their personal attributes might impact student learning. Similarly, Benade (2015) stresses that this internal dialogue marks the first movement toward becoming a reflective and adaptive educator, indicating that the initial discomfort is a necessary precursor to growth. *For example, a teacher might ask themselves if their strict classroom demeanor is hindering open communication, or if their monotonous voice is contributing to student boredom.*

Language Barriers and Generational Gap

Teachers identified English-only instruction and age differences as hindrances to classroom interaction. This finding resonates with recent studies on culturally responsive pedagogy, which advocate for linguistic inclusivity and generational awareness in teaching practices (Gay, 2018). The discomfort caused by these barriers also supports the notion of "disorienting dilemmas" (Mezirow, 2000) that prompt rethinking instructional approaches. The realization that their traditional methods were not effectively reaching all students due to these barriers created a sense of inadequacy and urgency for change. This sub-theme underscores the importance of acknowledging the diverse backgrounds and experiences of students and how neglecting these can lead to significant pedagogical challenges. *A teacher might have previously assumed that all students could easily follow English instructions, but faced with widespread confusion, they were prompted to explore code-switching or alternative communication strategies.*

Critical Reflection

Following disorienting dilemmas, teachers demonstrated critical self-reflection, a key stage in transformative learning. This reflection was not superficial; it involved reconsidering beliefs, strategies, and the nature of learning itself. This theme demonstrates a deeper engagement with the initial discomfort, moving from simply acknowledging a problem to actively analyzing its root causes and potential solutions.

Processing and Questioning Teaching Approaches

Many teachers acknowledged that purely theoretical methods were insufficient and began incorporating real-life examples and formative checks. This sub-theme illustrates a shift from a content-delivery mindset to one that prioritizes student comprehension and application. According to Sullivan et al. (2016), questioning long-held assumptions about instructional delivery is fundamental to developing responsive, student-centered pedagogies. Teachers moved beyond simply identifying a problem to actively evaluating the efficacy of their established teaching approaches and considering new ways to engage students. This sub-theme echoes the importance of ongoing reflection as a means of professional growth (Brookfield, 2017), where teachers continuously scrutinize and refine their methods based on classroom observations and student feedback. *A teacher*

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who previously relied solely on textbooks for history lessons might, after critical reflection, begin incorporating local historical anecdotes or current events to make the subject more relatable.

Seeking Feedback

Participants actively sought feedback from students and colleagues. This aligns with research by Liu (2015), who notes that transformative educators value collaborative dialogue and critique as tools for growth. The act of seeking feedback signifies a move beyond internal reflection to an external validation and refinement of their emerging understanding. This willingness to invite external perspectives demonstrates a genuine commitment to improvement and a recognition that their own reflections might be limited. Merzel (2023) also emphasizes that continuous feedback loops foster an adaptive and reflective mindset necessary for transformative teaching, highlighting the iterative nature of this process. *For instance, a teacher might distribute anonymous student surveys to gauge comprehension and engagement, or ask a peer to observe a lesson and offer constructive criticism.*

Recognition of the Need for Flexibility

Teachers realized that effective teaching demands constant adjustment. This supports Benade's (2015) findings that flexible, context-aware pedagogy leads to improved student engagement and teacher satisfaction. This realization is a direct outcome of critical reflection, where teachers moved away from a rigid, predetermined approach to one that is adaptable to the dynamic nature of the classroom. The move away from a rigid syllabus-driven mindset toward responsive instruction also aligns with Mezirow's (2000) concept of perspective transformation, as teachers fundamentally changed their understanding of what it means to be an effective educator. *Instead of rigidly adhering to a lesson plan regardless of student understanding, a teacher now understands the importance of pausing, re-explaining, or even deviating from the plan to address student needs.*

Rational Discourse

Mezirow (2000) highlights "rational discourse" as essential for transformation. In this study, I saw how dialogic exchanges between teachers and students and among peers enhanced understanding, challenged assumptions, and validated new insights. This theme represents the outward manifestation of internal transformations, where new perspectives are tested, refined, and solidified through open communication

Communication and Shared Understanding

Teachers facilitated open discussions, where students were encouraged to express themselves in languages they were comfortable with. This practice aligns with Freire's (1970) pedagogy of dialogue, which emphasizes mutual learning and empowerment. This sub-theme demonstrates a fundamental shift in classroom dynamics, moving from a teacher-centric model to one that values student participation and linguistic diversity. By creating a safe space for students to express themselves authentically, teachers fostered a more inclusive and democratic learning environment. It also supports Merzel's (2023) argument that inclusive dialogue enhances student confidence and engagement, as students feel heard and valued in the learning process. *Instead of simply asking questions with single correct answers, teachers began to pose open-ended questions that encouraged diverse perspectives and allowed students to elaborate in their preferred language.*

Connecting Learning to Real-Life and Personal Experience

Participants who linked lessons to students' personal experiences observed greater engagement and understanding. Research supports that Gay (2018) argues that culturally relevant pedagogy, anchored in students' lives, enhances meaning-making. This practice reflects a conscious effort to bridge the gap between academic content and students' lived realities, making learning more relevant and impactful. This personalized approach to instruction facilitated deeper comprehension and fostered a sense of ownership over their learning. This practice also enables students to develop critical consciousness (Liu, 2015), as they begin to see the connections between their personal experiences and broader societal issues. *When teaching about economics, a teacher might connect the concepts to students' experiences with local markets or family budgeting, making the abstract principles more concrete and relatable.*

Teacher as a Listener and Facilitator

Teachers began to see themselves as facilitators rather than sole knowledge providers. This role shift reflects what Brookfield (2017) calls the "democratic educator," and it resonates with Mezirow's (2000) emphasis on guiding learners through self-exploration rather than dictating content. This sub-theme highlights a fundamental change in the teacher's perception of their role, moving from an authoritative figure to a guide who supports and encourages student inquiry. By actively listening to students, teachers gained deeper insights into their understanding and misconceptions, allowing them to tailor their instruction more effectively. Listening actively to students, according to Sullivan et al. (2016), fosters collaborative inquiry and strengthens student-teacher relationships, creating a more dynamic and supportive learning environment. *Instead of simply lecturing, a teacher might pose a problem and allow students to collaboratively brainstorm solutions, stepping in only to guide the discussion or offer clarifications.*

In reflecting on these themes, I observed that teachers moved from experiencing discomfort and doubt to engaging in self-reflection, collaboration, and innovation. Their stories confirm Mezirow's (2000) three-phase process of transformative learning: disorienting dilemma, critical reflection, and rational discourse. This study contributes to the growing body of evidence that professional transformation is not only possible but necessary when teachers are empowered to reflect, adapt, and connect deeply with their students. The journey depicted by these themes underscores the dynamic and iterative nature of professional

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growth, highlighting how challenging experiences can ultimately lead to profound and positive changes in teaching practices.

Future Directions

Guided by my modified paradigm, future research may directly link the observed transformative learning in teachers to measurable changes in student learning outcomes, engagement levels, and classroom climate. This may involve mixed-methods approaches, combining qualitative data on teacher transformation with quantitative data on student performance and qualitative data from student perspectives.

Secondly, Future studies may examine how disorienting dilemmas and critical reflection can be intentionally integrated into pre-service teacher education programs to foster transformative learning from the outset of a teacher's career. This may involve innovative curriculum design, simulated classroom experiences, and structured reflective practices.

Lastly, Future studies may investigate how various digital platforms, online professional learning communities, or AI-powered reflective tools can support teachers in their critical reflection processes and facilitate rational discourse with peers and mentors. This may lead to the development of new and accessible professional development resources.

Challenges

While Mezirow's theory outlines clear phases, assessing the depth and completeness of "perspective transformation" can be challenging in a qualitative study. It is difficult to definitively state when a teacher has fully transformed their perspective, as opposed to simply adapting their methods or gaining new skills. The synthesis mentions "innovation," but how consistently or radically was this observed? Developing more robust qualitative analytical frameworks or rubrics for assessing levels of transformative learning, perhaps by looking for consistent shifts in behavior, sustained changes in underlying assumptions, and evidence of generative learning.

Integrating quantitative measures (e.g., surveys on teaching beliefs, attitudinal scales) alongside qualitative data to provide a more nuanced picture of changes over time. Focusing on specific, observable behavioral changes in the classroom that directly result from transformed perspectives, such as sustained use of culturally responsive practices or consistent facilitative teaching styles.

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Semi-Structured Interview Guide

Main Objective	Research Questions	Probing Questions (Aligned to Mezirow's Phases)
To explore the lived experiences of teachers in the implementation of transformative education in their teaching practices.	1. How do teachers describe their lived experiences when encountering "disorienting dilemmas" in their professional roles?	* "Can you describe a specific moment in your classroom where you felt your traditional teaching methods were no longer effective?" * "What were the specific challenges or 'surprises' that triggered a shift in how you view your role as an educator?" * "How did you feel emotionally when you realized your previous beliefs about teaching were being challenged?"
	2. In what ways do teachers engage in critical reflection to evaluate their long-held educational beliefs?	* "After experiencing a challenge in the classroom, what steps did you take to think through or 're-evaluate' your own biases or assumptions?" * "In what ways did you question the traditional way you were taught to teach?" * "How has your understanding of 'success' in the classroom changed since you started implementing transformative education?"
	3. How do these internal changes manifest in their classroom practices and their facilitation of rational discourse with students?	* "How do you now create a 'safe space' for your students to debate and challenge each other's ideas (Rational Discourse)?" * "Can you give an example of a specific activity where you stepped back to let students lead their own learning?" * "How has your relationship with your students evolved because of these new practices?"
	4. What characterizes the resulting 'Perspective Transformation' in the teachers' professional identity?	* "If you could talk to the 'version of yourself' from five years ago, what is the biggest difference in how you view the purpose of education now?" * "How has this transformation changed your behavior during faculty meetings or when discussing curriculum with peers?" * "How do you handle the ongoing tension between transformative goals and the standard requirements of the school system?"