


“Confronting the Dragons at the Door”: A Call for Transformative Learning in Teacher Education

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Abstract

This paper examines the beliefs of Nepali teacher educators about the potential of transformative learning (TL) experiences in teacher education. It further explores the ways in which they are promoting TL among the graduate students aspiring to become teacher educators and among the in-service teachers in Nepal. Data collection consisted of qualitative methods, particularly narrative interviewing and observation. Key participants included three emerging transformative education practitioners (teacher educators) and a transformative education pedagogue from Kathmandu University. The narratives of the participants showed that they were stepping up to promote TL in teacher education programmes in Nepal. Their stories revealed that changing the frame of reference of the conventional teachers and thereby instilling in their mind-set the simple thought of TL was like confronting the dragons. Nonetheless, their engagement in teacher education programmes have exposed how students and educators can co-create TL experiences. Their experiences and also my observation of their training programmes showed that Nepali teachers are in want of TL opportunities. The findings suggest that teacher education should foster Critical Consciousness in teachers so that they can develop the ability in their students to analyse, pose questions, and take action on the diverse social, political, cultural, and economic contexts that influence and shape their lives. Moreover, the community of practice among the emerging transformative education practitioners should grow in focus from critical self-reflection to include an emphasis on promoting a contemplative mode of teaching and learning, which will offer an effective pedagogic model to nurture transformative learning in teacher education.

Keywords: Transformative Learning; Critical Self-Reflection; Critical Consciousness; Teacher Education; Transformative Learning Practitioners

Introduction

Teachers and teacher educators are believed to be the agent of change – often contributing to the transformation of the society through education. Likewise, it is customary to believe that teachers are role models, know-all in the society, and that they show the way. Above all, we expect teachers to prepare our kids for the changing world, yet, few really think about the need to grow teachers who grow our kids. All of us know that problems prevail in all education systems, in all educational institutions, literally throughout the world. We know in our part of the world in general and in Nepali community schools in particular, entry-year teachers often find their classrooms lacking instructional resources (Gratch, 1998, as cited in Gordon & Maxey, 2000) which, unfortunately lasts till their retirement. Consequently, “the discrepancy between the beginning teacher’s vision of teaching and the real world of teaching can cause serious disillusionment” (Jesus & Paixao, 1996, as cited in Gordon & Maxey, 2000, para. 10). We have realised much earlier that there is some kind of a disconnect between the schools we need and the schools we have. But why does this disconnect persist? This reality compels us to think how we can develop our teachers who can transfer to the classroom the skills they learned during their teacher education.

Teacher preparation or teacher education at the institutes of higher learning these days call for introducing innovative pedagogies including transformative learning (TL). In the recent years, transformative learning is gaining growing popularity in the West and its influence is inching forward to cover up world academia. However, it is difficult to find education institutions that have formally introduced TL as a pedagogical inquiry in the developing countries, yet there is a growing interest among the scholars working in teacher education programmes (Belbase, Luitel, & Taylor, 2008). Yet, there is a critical need to assist teachers in a process of self-transformation as they learn the art and science of teaching (Ukpokodu, 2007) and training. Since the recognition, application, and experience of transformative learning are relatively new to the educational processes, especially in the South Asian countries, it is important to understand what constitutes transformative learning and how it is being promoted in this part of the world, especially in Nepal.

It is against the above backdrop, this paper examines the beliefs and practices of Nepali teacher educators about the potential of transformative learning (experiences) in teacher education. It further explores the ways in which they are promoting TL among the graduate students aspiring to become teacher educators and among the in-service teachers in Nepal.

In the following section, I will discuss transformative learning and transformative learning as a pedagogical inquiry in teacher education.

Transformative Learning in Teacher Education

Mezirow is regarded as the “father” of transformative learning, though he himself acknowledged his being influenced by Paulo Freire. For him, all learning is geared towards

change, albeit not all change is transformational (Mezirow, 1991). Other scholars also hold that the basic purpose of learning is to effect change in the learner (Dewey, 1966), and that education anticipates to transform self and society in an emancipatory way (Kalantzis & Cope, 2012). For Miller and Seller (1990), learning to be transformational should result in a shift in perspective. Precisely, Mezirow (1997) argues that in order to foster transformative learning, students have to change their frames of reference by critically reflecting on their assumptions and beliefs and consciously making and implementing plans that bring about new ways of defining their worlds and understanding. Similarly, Jackson (1986) identifies two types of learning: mimetic and transformative. Mimetic learning seems closer to the popular belief of what education is all about – transmitting predetermined knowledge to students, especially through imitative processes (Jackson, 1986, p. 117). It means, mimetic teaching/learning follows the “transmissional” model, whereby knowledge is “transmitted” from the teacher to the student (Miller & Seller, 1990), which students have to memorise. By contrast, learning that is transformative in nature, focuses on the transformation of the students, especially by modifying their character and beliefs, instilling new values, shaping attitudes, generating new interests, and changing the frames of reference.

Mezirow (1978) is credited to formalise transformative learning as a change process that transforms frames of reference – the structures of assumptions through which we understand our experiences which ultimately influence how individuals perceive the world with a specific worldview. The transformative learning literature highlights the central importance of cultivating a process of critical self-reflection (Mezirow, 1991; Sokol & Cranton, 1998) and considers critical self-reflection to be the “means by which we work through beliefs and assumptions, assessing their validity in the light of new experiences or knowledge, considering their sources, and examining underlying premises” (Cranton, 2002, p. 65). Another critical element of the transformative learning process is the context in which the learning occurs (Taylor & Cranton, 2012). In this sense, “Transformative learning leads us to view learning as a process of becoming aware of one’s assumptions and revising these assumptions” (Cranton, 1994, p. 730). As teachers and teacher educators, we certainly have some sets of assumptions that are guiding our teaching practices. However, it is important to challenge our basic assumptions and perspectives if we want change to take place. It means educators using the transformative design framework should consider the students and their various learning styles first. Then they differentiate curriculum content, processes, and products before delivering instruction.

While Mezirow (1978) initially focused on how adults achieved transformative learning by addressing disorienting dilemmas through rational means, later scholars stressed the importance of emotional, kinaesthetic, extra-rational or holistic means of transformative learning (Cranton & Roy, 2003; Hoggan, Simpson, & Stuckey, 2009). In this regard, Sokol and Cranton (1998) highlighted that “transformative learners question their perspectives, open up new ways of looking at their practice, revise their views, and act based on new

perspectives" (p. 14). Transformative learning theory affirms that the fundamental purpose of development in educating adults is the transformation of individuals and society – giving adult learners the ability to think autonomously (Mezirow, 1997).

Mezirow (1991) suggests a model of transformation and explains 10 phases of this transformation, from facing a dilemma, to exploring alternatives and planning a course of action (pp. 168-169). Three common themes characterise Mezirow's theory of the mechanism of transformative learning in the classroom. These are experience, critical reflection, and rational discourse (Mezirow, 1991). Mezirow considers critical reflection to be the distinguishing characteristic of adult learning, and sees it as the vehicle by which one questions the validity of his world-view. He identified rational discourse as a catalyst for transformation, as it induced the various participants to explore the depth and meaning of their various world-views, and articulate those ideas to their instructor and classmates. Likewise, Mezirow discusses three types of reflection that help teachers and students create a learning process. For him, the first kind of reflection is the reflection on meaning, which is an examination of the content or description of a problem leading to the learning the contents (WHAT). The second type is the reflection on process, which includes an examination of learning or problem solving strategies (HOW). And the third type is the reflection on premises, which leads to the meaning perspective of transformation (WHY). Encompassing these basic concepts in Transformative Learning framework, I have devised the following model of transformative learning for teachers and teacher educators.

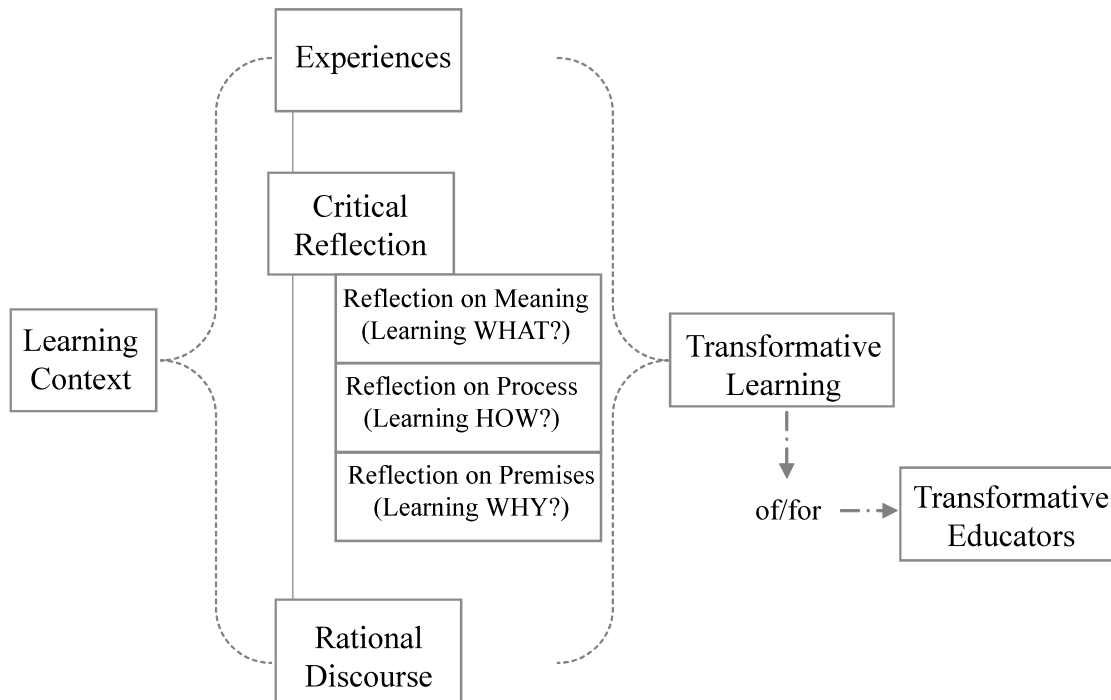


Figure 1. A model of transformative learning for educators.

Applying the basic premises of transformative learning, teachers and teacher educators can change themselves (their frames of reference) and that they can change others. Such changes can be conceived via heightened consciousness. Therefore, through transformative learning opportunities we can encourage teachers and teacher educators to imagine the world beyond the given.

Research Design

I framed this study in a qualitative design with an interpretive explication of the meaning of transformative learning in teacher education in Nepal. The study was primarily based on the narrative interviewing (Powell, Fisher, & Wright, 2005) of three teacher educators (emerging TL practitioners) and a transformative education pedagogue about their experiences of teaching in-service teachers, prospective teachers and teacher educators at the university and also their training experiences in the rural community school settings in Dang and Banke districts from the mid-western development region. This design made it possible to explore, in an in-depth and intimate fashion, why and how teacher educators at Kathmandu University School of Education (KUSOED), Nepal were purposefully engaged in fostering transformative learning experiences in teacher education. The core of data collection strategy took the form of one-on-one, in-depth narrative interviews conducted between April and July 2016 with four key participants.

Moreover, I also observed the training sessions (in the second week of May 2016) delivered to three groups of community school teachers (English, Math and Science) by the respective individual teacher educator (three of my key participants), held informal conversations with the teacher participants, and listened to their remarks and comments on the training sessions they received. Actually, I was nominated to observe the week-long training and represent the university in the closing ceremony. However, I did not collect data from the regular master level students at the university, and thus their perspective is beyond the scope of this study. The master level students at the university, who were mostly in-service teachers, or prospective teachers and teacher educators were somehow familiar with the TL practices; however, the teachers from the rural community schools were brought through trainings into the abstrusely set TL framework. By ‘abstrusely set TL Framework’ I mean that unlike the university students, the participating teachers in the training were not vividly informed about / known to transformative learning. Likewise, they were little exposed to such a practice earlier, both in terms of their formal education and the trainings they received thus far. On the other hand, the teacher educators could also not fully assert that the trainings delivered were dedicated transformative learning sessions. Yet my observation and information interactions with the teachers revealed that they felt that the trainings have encouraged transformative learning.

In the section that follows, I present the field data with my reflection, interpretation and discussion.

Discussion

My interpretation of data resulted in two discursive themes: Putting TL in Perspective, and Practices of Promoting TL in Teacher Education Programmes. The acquired data highlighted the necessity for change in the organization of the educational process and the need to ensure a paradigm shift - transition from conventional transmissive to transformative teaching and learning. Along the subheadings that follow, I present my discussion of the field findings.

Putting TL in Perspective

In this section, I have discussed the beliefs of Nepali teacher educators (also changing beliefs of Nepali teachers) about the potential of transformative learning (TL) experiences in teacher education and training.

Transformative learning for the research participants occurred at the personal level. By personal, the participants meant that it is often the person doing the critical self-reflection and examining their personal frames of reference against some learning experiences. As a participant expressed in the interview:

I was simply a transmitter of knowledge, and now I can make my students co-creator of knowledge. I have realised that there has been a shift in my teaching practice from a more traditionalist and behaviourist approach to a modern and constructivist approach in terms of both conceptual understanding and practice as well. And this shift has occurred because of my self-reflection on my own teaching-learning practices. (Teacher Educator, English, 24 April)

The research participants often characterized TL by the sense of critical self-reflection and heightened consciousness. Other scholars have also characterised TL in more or less similar fashion. For Taylor (1998), TL promotes student autonomy, participation, and collaboration; and it is essential to discuss and work through emotions and feelings before critical reflection. For Kalantzis and Cope (2012), reflexive pedagogy, inherent in TL, challenges learners to engage in deeper thinking and develop deeply perceptive conceptual schemas, and that, the learner becomes the knowledge creator and undertakes activities that are meaningful (pp. 273-276). As such, the notions embedded in transformative learning pose some serious concerns for the perceptions and experiences of both pre-service and in-service teachers. My participants considered TL as an affective learning, and educators as transformative practitioners (more particularly, emerging TL practitioners) and students as transformative learners. Here it may be worth quoting a participant when he reflects on his experiences and relates how he turned out to adopt a more transformative pedagogy.

My own experience of teaching mathematics taught me more about student centred teaching and I introduced new approach of group work and peer work in practice, to give you some crude examples. My practices these days are more activity based,

encouraging collaborative projects, interactions and discussions, and engaging in co-teaching and learning. My classroom teaching practices have become more self-reflective. This way, I have found myself changed in terms of understanding teaching and learning and in terms of practice – teaching to co-learning. (Teacher Educator, Math, 8 June)

Evident in his response, teacher educators who have inclination towards TL are reflective practitioners – who engage on reflection on both on action (reflecting after teaching is completed) and in-action (reflecting as teaching occurs) (Schön, 1983). As such, teachers become reflective practitioners when they are more self-aware and critical towards their own teaching responses and assumptions (Boud, Keogh, & Walker, 1985; Mezirow, 1991). Moreover, it was exhilarating to see participants focus on themselves as individuals and their professional roles – as knowledge professionals, and of teacher educators – in an institute of higher education as co-learners and co-creators of knowledge. In this regard, Taylor (2008) also states that transformative teachers are “collaborators with an emphasis on group inquiry and narrative reasoning” (p. 9). Moreover, Very much like Boyd’s (1989) claim, the participants considered an outcome of TL to include a change in self.

Likewise, the educators also reflected on their decade of classroom practice as conventional teacher and a recent experience of transformative pedagogue. They then shared that their own community of practice has grown in focus from critical reflection on experience to include an emphasis on promoting a contemplative mode of teaching and learning. For the purpose of this study, knowing through contemplation (mindfulness) implies conscious creation of a space in the classroom where both teachers and students can engage in mindful awareness of their learning experiences (Herbers, Antelo, Ettlring, & Buck, 2011). My research participants were contemplative in that they were self-aware about the limitations of their teaching practices and were seeking ways to improve them. For Christie (2007), “The use of reflection to improve teachers’ classroom practice is an intense process of self-examination as well as an in-depth, honest confrontation of longstanding perceptions and attitudes toward student achievement and its connection to the teaching and learning process” (p. 483). It occurred to me that beliefs and practices of the teacher educators have changed with experience, critical reflection and rational discourse, as discussed by Mezirow (1991). Likewise, the shift in the practices of teaching and learning from behaviourist to constructivist or traditionalist to modernist and postmodernist constitute what Belbase, Luitel, and Taylor (2008) term “pedagogical metamorphosis” (p. 93). It means the participants reflected upon their own pedagogical practices and realised the shortcomings in their practice and then intervened with some alternative approaches. This is how emerging TL practitioners are building on their TL experiences.

The participants also related TL to cover wider social world and not merely the education process. Which is actually a manifestation of committed performance of an individual in a social setting, including school; such performance is often shaped by

critical thinking and reflection on one’s own activities, psychological condition, feelings and experiences. Through self-reflection, people make sense of their experiences, explore their own cognitions and self-beliefs, engage in self-evaluation, and alter their thinking and behaviour accordingly (Pajares, 2002, para. 13). Relating it to the specific case of teacher education, it can be said that critical thinking and reflection shape the interaction among different specific components of the professional competences of a teacher educator. It is basically a reflective practice in pedagogy that helps one to challenge one’s assumptions and to fit into the context by reflecting on the content, process and premises of problem solving (Mezirow, 1990).

My participants also characterized TL as following: exploration of alternative personal perspectives, problem-posing, and critical self-reflection. One of them asserted in the interview that:

When a teacher becomes aware of holding a limiting perspective, and then critically examines this view, opens himself to alternatives, and consequently changes the way he sees things, then he has transformed his view of himself or of the world. This also helps him to make sense of his experiences. (Teacher Educator, English, 15 July)

Likewise, other participants also talked about self-awareness, critical examination of one’s practices, and shifting away from the normative standards as typical features of transformative learning. According to Cranton (2006), “When people critically examine their habitual expectations, revise them, and act on the revised point of view, transformative learning occurs” (p. 19). Precisely, Mezirow (1991) argues that transformative learning is a form of learning through which previously uncritically assimilated beliefs, attitudes, assumptions and emotional reactions are questioned and thereby become more explicit and thoroughly validated. In other words, Mezirow (2012) defined transformative learning as “the process of using a prior interpretation to construe a new or revised interpretation of the meaning of one’s experience as a guide to future action” (p. 74). In this light, I understood that TL requires one to challenge the existing assumptions, unlearn the preoccupied skills and grasp the changed perspective. Similar idea has been expressed by Taylor (1998) who said that “Episodes of transformative learning and critical self-reflection often involve intensive emotional experiences, particularly grieving the loss of old meaning structures and the acquiring new ones” (p. 58). Moreover, the theory of transformative learning is concerned with how learners critically reflect on experiences including existing knowledge and beliefs and how they integrate new knowledge to reflect a change in experience (Ukpokodu, 2009).

All of my participants were aware of one thing – critical self-reflection to perceiving TL. However, their own perceptions of what constitutes critical self-reflection were diverse. For one, it meant being aware of one’s assumptions, for the other, it meant challenging the normative standards. Defining critical reflection, Ukpokodu (2007) states that it is the “careful questioning of practices, issues, and assumptions embedded within a discipline” (p.

19). Above all, all of my participants and TL scholars (e.g. Cranton, 1994; Mezirow, 1991, 1997; Ukpokodu, 2007, 2009) agreed on a common understanding that critical reflection is an important aspect of transformative learning and that they can develop pedagogical thoughtfulness to improve their pedagogical practices through critical self-reflection.

The reflection of the teacher educators clearly demonstrated that transmissive education patterns are dominating contemporary teaching and learning in Nepal and its neighbourhood. They further reflect that until recent past they were also undergoing similar patterns, and in other schools within their university system, the usual pattern of education is still transmissive. They agree that they are just at the initial stage of applying the TL practices in their pedagogy, and which till date has been a practice among a limited number of educators. But this is spreading in an extraordinary scale since the teacher educators, and the current students at the Master of Education and Master of Philosophy in Education level are gaining increasing popularity as transformative teacher trainers and they are reaching out to rural community schools gradually. This way, the limited practice at KUSOED has encouraged others too since students now desire transformative practices. Therefore, the transition towards transformative learning is in a way becoming an essential component of teaching and learning in our teacher education programmes.

Referring to the competitive edge transformative education as philosophy and transformative learning as practice has given, a pedagogue extols his institutional growing success.

Actually, we have leapfrogged other university faculties and institutes that are offering teacher education programmes in Nepal. To explain this further, we have surpassed other teacher education institutions in this short span of time primarily because of two reasons: one is the advocacy and practice of transformative education and learning, and the other being research rigour. Yet we have a lot to do to become truly a transformative learning centre. (Transformative Education Pedagogue, 2 June)

This participants remarks indicates that they a way ahead of other conventional teacher education programmes, offered by other universities in Nepal, with the introduction of transformative education. Relating to the transformative learning experiences, the participants expressed that their commitment and engagement in teacher education programmes have shown how students and educators can co-create transformative learning experiences in teacher education. Moreover, their experiences and also my observation of their training programmes, showed that the teachers needed transformative learning opportunities and with that they were committed to making a difference – towards the path to transformative learning. I believe, as educators, teachers do make a difference, however, the direction of the difference are different.

Practices of Promoting TL in Teacher Education Programmes

I further explored the ways in which my participants are promoting TL among the graduate students aspiring to become teacher educators and among the in-service teachers in Nepal. Since the practice of TL is relatively new to Nepal, the participants have contributed in their capacity in designing of the curriculum with some components of TL in the teacher education programmes at a university in Nepal. They were advocating TL in teacher education, and in school education through teacher trainings.

During an interview with one participant, he elaborated the practice at the university. He highlighted why and how they making a shift to happen from the conventional classroom practice to a more constructivist and transformative one. He shared:

Transformative education also allows us to build reflective capacity for lasting teaching improvement. Educators at all levels can improve their practices by taking a more self-conscious and reflective turn in their profession. That's why, we thought it good to go for transformative pedagogy. Looking back over our recent practices, I am excited by the range of practices, especially teaching methods that are used to foster transformative learning. These days, we maintain a professional portfolio of each educator, and provide them peer coaching when needed. We also review our classroom practices in our fortnight meetings. Our mission is doing better: doing what matters most to change the continent and pedagogy for teacher effectiveness and student success. (Transformative Education Pedagogue, 24 April)

As I observed a week long teacher training programme delivered by my participants to the rural community school teachers from Dang and Banke, I found that though the trainers did never talk about transformative learning during the training sessions, the engagement, reflection, and informal conversations of the participants clearly showed that the sessions had some transformative effect on the participating teachers. Actually there were three groups of teachers (English, Math and Science) and each group was led by one of my three participants who belonged to the respective subject area. The training was an intensive programme, participants were brought from three two VDCs (Manpur and Duruwa) of Dang and one VDC (Tejpur) of Banke to the district headquarter (Nepalgunj) of Banke and were offered a week-long residential package. Therefore, the training sessions started at 8 am and went on at least to 5 pm. It was often the case that at least one subject training was pushed till 7 or even 8 pm. Interestingly, the participants were equally active even towards the end of the sessions.

The participants have realised that TL helps one to look at alternative approaches to traditional patterns of teaching and learning. A good example is demonstrated by a participant (Science educator) who explored how a story-telling (life-cycle of a tree); drama-in-science class; science slam poetry, etc. facilitated changes in understanding and practices among science teachers. Literature emerged as being an important part of the

lateral experiences in science teaching – leading to affective learning of the previously considered tough and insipid subject. It was evident that drama-in-education provided a holistic and hands-on medium by which one can explore transformative learning, along with other theoretical models, as a process of change in understanding the practice of teaching (Gallagher, 1997, as cited in Taylor, 2000, p. 12). Moreover, such experiential, hands-on, learning activities offered a powerful medium for promoting transformative learning (Taylor, 1998).

On the closing day of the week-long training, a participating teacher (trainee) reflected during his closing speech:

I did not believe in the beginning; what could these chhokras teach us. In fact, we were expecting some grey haired old professors to come and deliver a lecture about how we should be teaching. Most of my teachers during my teacher education college and trainers thus far (13 years of in-service teacher) explained what I, as a teacher, should do in my classroom, but I had never actually seen a teacher or trainer model what an effective and diverse classroom and a learning community should be. I was not in a mood to sit in the training; however, as the ETC trainer, RP and DEO were also there, I had to. But later at the end of the day, I found myself a totally different me, a shocked me, in fact! As I worked with each person, I learnt new things about and from the different class members. Now, this is how I would like my class in the school to be. The sessions were delightful and I felt like his relationship with us (as students) was warm and professional. This was very refreshing and respectful. (Lakhan Chaudhari, a trainee, 14 May)

The observed training sessions gave me an impression that TL has become an emergent pedagogy in teacher education and training in Nepal. This led me to agree with Taylor (2008) who argues that “transformative learning seems to have replaced andragogy as the dominant educational philosophy of adult education” (p. 12). Moreover, the important role of the educator is not only to encourage learners to clinch different learning modes but also to facilitate the learning experience (Tsai, 2013, p. 36). The trainees were highly motivated and enthusiastic about implementing their new learning experiences in their classrooms. Yet, I questioned whether the trainees could really transfer the learning they had during the training to their classrooms where they would gradually slack down given the circumstances. For my participants, at some crossroads, there are some challenges, not necessarily of TL itself, but because of other restraining forces in our conventional education system. This means there needs to be time and opportunity for participants to reflect and act on their group learning experience, along with generating new knowledge base on the reflective action experience (Finlay, 2008; McCarthy, 2016). The participants have realised that instilling this simple thought of TL in our teachers and prospective teachers is a challenging job, but implementing the little learnt TL experiences is even

more challenging given the circumstances the trainees face in their actual schools and classrooms.

The study showed that changing the frame of reference of the teachers who were brought up with the conventional system was a real challenge; where instilling in the mind-set of the conventional in-service teachers the simple thought of transformative learning was like “confronting the dragons at the door” (Brown & Moffett, 1999, p. 58). As experienced by the emerging TL educators and TL pedagogue, changing teachers’ (especially, in-service teachers’) lifelong learning trajectories has become a real challenge.

Their stories revealed that the problems they would not even like to hear are those that are most common among the in-service teachers in the public schools, especially in the rural settings. They asserted that encouraging transformative learning, especially among the in-service teachers, is an arduous task because they were grappling with the feelings of self-doubts whether pondering on their experiences will result in positive self-transformation. Nevertheless, they firmly believed that gradually the in-service teachers are also realising that it is far more practical and that it adds much to the effectiveness of teaching and learning. Anyway, the first thing we have to confront is to develop readiness in our teachers to adopt TL practices in their teaching and learning. Taylor (2008) states that “a response to learner resistance

and barriers to transformative learning are for educators to develop awareness of learner readiness for change” (p. 12). Some participants felt that TL is time consuming and difficult to apply when traditional modes of teaching and learning are pervasive. Similar was heard from the trainee in Nepalgunj when they shared that they liked the activities and the approach, however, it would be difficult to implement especially when they had to rush to finish the syllabus.

Despite the fact that they have clearly visualised opportunities of TL, at the same time, there is a need to redesign our education system. This calls for transformative learning not

A Reflective Note

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Initially, on the first day of training, the teachers who were mostly senior to the trainers seemed indifferent and did not believe that the *chhokras* (a derogatory term in indigenous *Tharu* dialect for the young and inexperienced persons) could actually teach them anything. As the training days progressed with ample activities to challenge their existing notion of ‘education’ and ‘content knowledge’, and encouraging them to critically reflect on their practices and promoting alternative perspectives, they felt that the *chhokras* really had something to learn from. On the last day of the week long training, as I observed and listened to the participants’ comments, they felt like getting a new way to make their teaching and learning effective and believe that they can take their teaching to a new height then.

only in teacher education, but in the entire education system – requiring us to reengineer our education system to be welcoming to allowing the practice of TL.

Conclusion

The understanding and application of TL in teaching and learning is increasing all over the world. However, despite the growth in understanding transformative learning, there is still much to be discovered about the practice in Nepali teacher education institutes. The narratives of the participants showed that they were stepping up to promote TL in teacher education programmes in Nepal. Their stories revealed that changing the frame of reference of the conventional teachers is a daunting task. Nonetheless, their engagement in teacher education programmes have exposed how students and educators can co-create TL experiences. Their experiences and also my observation of their training programmes showed that Nepali teachers are in want of TL opportunities so that they can develop pedagogical thoughtfulness to improve their pedagogical practices. The findings suggest that teacher education should foster Critical Consciousness in teachers so that they can develop the ability in their students to analyse, pose questions, and take action on the diverse social, political, cultural, and economic contexts that influence and shape their lives. Moreover, the community of practice among the emerging transformative education practitioners should grow in focus from critical self-reflection to include an emphasis on promoting a contemplative mode of teaching and learning, which will offer an effective pedagogic model to nurture transformative learning in teacher education.

In fact, the practice of transformative pedagogy at a small scale by a few educators at KUSOED is gaining momentum recently. Gradually other university, colleges and schools have already started to be dragged by the increasing influence TL has exerted in the learner community. In the recent years, many teacher educators have realised that TL is an important agenda in teacher education, close to Mezirow's idea of adult learning, however, TL in its current form as being practiced in Nepal is only a good start, but it is not enough! Yet, we know just a few creative educators can make shift happen. Therefore, we need to make this limited school wide initiative a university wide initiative in the first phase, then we can make it a national educational pedagogy agenda.

As I conclude this paper, I think about several questions: Did all participants experience transformative learning? What were the characteristics of the participants who experienced transformative learning? Could trainees or graduate students transfer their transformative learning to their classrooms? To what extent? What aspects of the transformative pedagogy were most successful in bringing about participants' transformative learning? How can we reengineer our education system so as to facilitate the adoption of transformative pedagogy? Whose interest are we serving by fostering transformative learning? These question lie beyond the scope of this paper and thus demand further examination. And, I plan to investigate some of these questions in the future.

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