



## Promoting Transformative Learning of Preservice Teacher through Contemplative Practices

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### Abstract

Preservice teacher is an important role to fulfill quality of education in the future. They have to be initially grown transformative learning for helping students to aware knowing and nature of knowledge. This paper explores an application of contemplative practices, which enhance transformative learning of preservice teachers. Forty four preservice teachers were participated and reflected their transformative learning through contemplative pedagogy. The result can be discussed and provide future suggestion for teacher preparation program.

**Keywords:** Transformative learning, Contemplative practices, Contemplative pedagogy, Preservice teacher, Teacher preparation

### 1. Introduction

Mezirow's research in the early 1990s, raised transformative learning in conscious-raising, critical reflection, development, or individuation (Dirkx, 1998). Much research on strategies and approaches for fostering and promoting transformative learning (Nelson, 2006). More teachers begin to integrate meditation techniques with their curricula. They have little relationship to their learning process with what they learn is limited. Transformative learning is the process by which question taken of mindsets more inclusive, discriminating and open. It is about awaking learners and getting them engaged. Mezirow (2000) defined transformative learning as changing a frame of reference, which is made up of two dimensions: a habit of mind and resulting points of view. It may occur when learners reflect on the assumptions of others or on one's own assumptions.

Transformative learning relates to education of the whole person and includes the development of insight as much as knowledge (Gunnlaugson, 2009). It is based on personal experience, but it can draw inspiration and guidance from many fragments, including ancient wisdom traditions, philosophy, social sciences, and the arts. It gives students inspiration and confidence to explore their individuality which they connectedness to others and the world (Sable, 2007).

Mezirow (1991) described cognitive and behavioral changes that characterize transformative learning as following;

- when one experiences an enhanced level of awareness of the context of one's beliefs and feelings, when one can critique one's own assumptions and particular premises
- when one performs an assessment of alternative perspectives

- when one makes a decision to negate an old perspective in favor of a new one or when one makes synthesis of old and new
- when one takes action based on new perspective
- when one cultivates a desire to fit the new perspective into the broader context of one's life

Contemplative practices are systematic methods of invoking heightened states of consciousness or awareness (Sarath, 2003). It can be drawn contemplative practices in that ways involve learning infused with the experience of awareness, insight and compassion for oneself and others through the practice of contemplative disciplines. Contemplative practices are essential tools in the process of education in terms of teacher preparation to become the best teacher, student and human being one can be. It is not just about the content of the subject and the teaching methods or strategies, but also about the people with whom we are working and the academic components (Mackler *et.al.*, 2008).

In the relation to promote transformative learning in terms of teacher preparation program, it needs to adopt contemplative practices that consciously directing attention to the state of consciousness and connecting to extraordinary clarity, insight, and inner calm. If it is appropriately applied, it will function for different purposes at different levels. Also, it is a way to quiet the mind and promote concentration, empathy, perceptual, acuity, and reduce anxiety and stress (Hart, 2004). Therefore, classroom can integrate contemplation into the content of courses for more effective learning. Meaningful teaching and learning implies being truly present and engaged with people and with the subject.

All above-mentioned strongly support that contemplative practices, the ever lasting wisdom and devices on broadening the scope of human development. It has a great value and significant role to play in teacher preparation program particularly, teaching for transformation.

## 2. Methodology

In this study, the term “contemplative practice” is used as a variety of reflective practices that were intended to cultivate or enhance transformative learning. Qualitative frameworks with an inductive, descriptive, phenomenological method were employed. The study began exploring pedagogical methods to cultivate transformative learning for preservice teachers in course foundations of educational philosophy, enrolled in the first semester, academic year 2009. Participants were 44 teacher students which subject to apply contemplative practices. They have to learn fourteen week or 42-hour classes, learn to fulfill human values and contemplation education with many learning activities.

Methods to lead students have transformation including formless meditation practice, personal journals, journal reading, role-playing with ethical drama, active listening, and facilitated class discussions. Data collection procedures involved participant observation classroom. The focus group was interviewed after class finished. Meaning of transformative learning were analyzed the concepts in transformative learning theory.

*Formless meditation:* Meditation in this context is not particularly a religious practice. It means training one's attention to be focused on the present and open. Basic instruction was given a few times in class. Students were encouraged to try the practice on their own, on a daily basis. Students inevitably experienced thoughts, feelings, etc., that form the filter of ordinary consciousness. Students in this class are commonly reported at least some of the cognitive and behavioral changes associated with transformative learning.

*Personal journals:* Students are encouraged to make short journal entries (a page or less) each time. They are encouraged to include questions, paradoxes, or whatever comes from their own experiences. The point here is to train the mind to greater observation in the present moment, encourage inquiry, and allow genuine insights to emerge, rather than fall back on habitual patterns of response.

*Journal reading:* Students read their journals to each other in groups. The discussion that ensues within the small group has been left completely open. Also, experiment with more structured approaches, including active listening and inquiry techniques. Short periods seemed more beneficial than longer periods because students wanted to move into free form discussion.

*Role-playing with ethical drama:* Students make a discussion about some case or situation that concerns ethical analysis. They have to prepare scripts and materials to share and express comprehension on human value and ways to do good things in society at all level. They learn to have intra- and inter-personal dimensions for construct story based on merit story and do a story telling with individual competency.

*Active listening:* Active listening acts students as reader and the listener often find it instructive to discover mindset through analytical thinking process. This technique requires the listener to become more aware of their assumptions and projections as they listen and also tends to ensure depth of understanding.

*Facilitated class discussions:* After small groups have finished, a spokesperson in each group summarizes their responses to contemplation in a whole class. The instructor leads a discussion using the words and insights of the

students. The instructor encourages the students to explore their own language, and engage students to explore the meaning and implications of the subject matter. This technique tends to engage students respect, share, and explore meaningful learning.

### 3. Results

This study indicates that a clear majority of preservice teachers show increasingly characteristics associated with transformative learning. Preservice teachers raised their opinions about contemplative practice influencing their change in mind and will to learn. The activities lead them to create new ways to think and promote worldviews of inner change. They have to adapt their mind and behavior to survive with others that surround them, contemplative practices can change their world based on systematic thinking especially new paradigm of instruction in the changing world.

Preservice teachers generate and express their opinion based on self reflection which relevant to useful of contemplative pedagogy on learning outcomes. All of them showed positive domain of perception about class of contemplative practices. It stimulates inner perception in each level and enhances eager to know what they have learned by beginning with “what do I learn?”, “how do I learn?”, and “why do I learn to be teacher?”. Preservice teachers try to answer themselves based on thinking and doing through contemplation.

*“Still awareness open windows opportunity to learn new things” Ruthairat*

*“Learning activities help me to practice ways of thinking, to conceptualize understanding of education, and principle to live with others in the concurrent society” Nikom*

*“I learn what the meaning of education is, and also what ways we should be done for professional teachers. I am not shy to express my opinions with others, dare to share ideas including love to think about knowledge” Mesa*

*“I think, it is very useful for learning how to survive in a modern society. I have to learn by sharing knowledge, caring mind, taking positive thinking, and having a reason before to do something” Khaekamon*

*“Before course begins, I hate someone and no need to talk with, but now I have learned and changed my mind to live with them by employing reason than those before” Sasisakoon*

*“Learning activities allowed me to think in deeply meanings, learn to read and listen more than talk a lot” Aroonwan*

*“I have just received inspiration through some word of instructor to do the best, think positively, and change my life in forward” Aroonwan*

These phenomena can reflect what preservice have learned by employing contemplative practices in the terms of tools to promote transformative learning. They have been transforming way of learning paradigm. They need more answer why people surroundings give them with different answering. Contemplation help them to understand why people think and act diversely in the same situation. Preservice teachers learn to develop positive thinking and transform feeling, perceiving, understanding, and doing to people around them. They learn to study the value of human being, reflect value of the self, and ready to expose any situation.

The results of contemplative practice in teacher students classroom can be listed. They explained that contemplation can shift their learning paradigm, it can change the old to the new ways of learning perception;

- can help them to make contemplation and sensual learning through inner perception
- provide alternatives to live with others based on inner mediation and deep merit
- stimulate systematic thinking and holistic view to survive in different situation
- learn to have self-efficacy to do a merit and ready to support people do the best
- make dialogue based on reasoned argumentation
- dare to express ideas and feelings in positive domain and have deep listening with others
- learn to share and love others by no means of rewards

The effect of contemplative practices or mindfulness-based instruction can reduce classroom climate stress, enhance teaching and learning process and students’ ability to focus their attention, and promote caring mind and concern for others. Contemplative practices can be successfully introduced outside of their spiritual context toward others surround them. Teacher students were engaged in transformative learning appear in the comments. Yet comments such as, “This was the first time I had to think!”, “I have just found ways to be a good teacher”, “This course fulfill my mind and life to live with others”, and “This course has changed my life” are inspired instructor to incorporate contemplative practices into another course.

### 4. Discussion

Students learn positive ways of thinking and doing in classroom, and it also influence their life even though out of classroom. They are deeply appreciated to have more experiential, transformative, and reflective learning (Zajonc,

2006). They have small group responses to the contemplation of what they heard and perceived. The purpose of facilitated class discussion is to engage students to explore the meaning and implications of the subject matter. It tends to engage students readily, since their own contributions are being respected, shared, explored, and put in the context of the learning objectives. They have to reflect what they perceived in positive ways. Reflection can result in deeper learning not only about the subject studied but also about the learner.

Moreover, critical reflection can challenge embedded assumptions, beliefs, and values. A major focus of the study is sharing specific examples of how and when to add introspective practice throughout a management course. Concerns about the consequences of opening up one's classroom for reflective learning are also discussed (Headberg, 2009). They are encouraged to make short journal and communication whatever comes from their own experiences to reflect what they have learned. Also, discussion that ensues within the small group including active listening and inquiry techniques seem to beneficial students move into free form discussion. They learn to listen and make a journal by beware of their assumptions and projections as they listen. They confirm their understanding through questions about the content and its meaning.

The result can be discussed that preservice teachers can reflect their own personal knowledge through a various kind of contemplative practices. Activities in classroom allow them to have contemplation and concern the meaning of transformative learning. Nuangchalem (2009) reported that preservice teachers reflect their own perception through meaningful learning in terms of social, cultural and personal frameworks. Contemplative practices can help students to go beyond a merely cognitive understanding of their responsibilities as global citizens, and to find an authentic motivation to serve (Kahane, 2009). This study answers contemplative practices can promote transformative learning. Teaching and learning process should begin to incorporate contemplative practices into pedagogy and curricula (Bai *et.al.*, 2009). It concerns students about awaking learners and getting them engaged to learn congruence (Dirkx, 1998; Nelson, 2006). Contemplative practices should be invited into classroom by allowing new possibilities for the emergence of creativity and promotes depth of understanding and personal relationship with course content (Brady, 2007; Sun, 2007). It is not only fulfilling content students learned, but also human values are awareness. The results showed that contemplative practices can be used in classroom for teacher preparation program and human resources development for our society.

## 5. Conclusion

The new paradigm of learning in the age of global warming needs more contemplation about way to think and to do. Preservice teachers should be embedded transformative learning by means of holistic views to learn with others.. Contemplative practices are compatible with contemporary educational theory in that ways to support personal strengths. It requires to provide understanding the value of human being and to help students do their best with surroundings. Preservice teachers can increase well-being, freedom from anxiety, sharpened mental and other benefits from their contemplative practices. They can have opportunity to inspire doing with their best. Contemplative practices should be invited into classroom by allowing new possibilities for promoting depth of understanding and personal relationship with course content. It should be considered to implement for teacher preparation program.

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