Teaching for transformation:
Leaving the zone…

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Abstract

• Need for transformative teaching: anticipating needs of uncertain future
• Transformative teaching dynamic:
  comfort zone (prior knowledge) \( \rightarrow \) ZPD (discrepant events) \( \rightarrow \) transformation
• Critical reflection = mechanism for change
• We must both model and facilitate critical reflection
Theoretical Base

• “More central than elaborating on established meaning is the process of reflecting back on prior learning to determine whether what we have learned is justified under present circumstances” (Mezirow, 1990)

• i.e., perspective transformation is necessary to (a) reconceptualize our practices and (b) prepare new teachers with transformative disposition
Critical Reflection Model (Mezirow)

- Actions: reflective or non-reflective
- Non-reflective actions = habitual or thoughtful but without reflection
- Reflective actions can be thoughtful without being critically reflective
- Critically reflective actions = analysis of content & processes through examination of assumptions & premises on which they are based!
Discrepant Events

• Construct of ‘zone of proximal development’ (Vygotsky) supports discrepant events as scaffolding mechanism
• We facilitate critical reflection through identification and analysis of discrepant events in prior experience (critical incidents)
• We facilitate critical reflection through intentional introduction of discrepant events
Facilitating examination of critical incidents: The ‘aha’ moments

- Identify experience with child or group of children that ‘stuck’ with you
- Describe change that occurred to beliefs, practices, or identity
- Why did that happen?
  - What assumption did you previously hold that was challenged?
  - Where did that assumption come from (premise)
  - What was it about the incident that challenged the premise of that assumption?
  - What are the new assumptions?
  - What are the premises on which new assumptions are based?
Intentional introduction of discrepant events

- Challenge the familiar
- Challenge the most deeply held assumptions (socio-political, cultural, educational, personal/spiritual)
- Focus on development of pluralistic and empathetic dispositions
Examples of activities

- Owning dilemmas - empathy
- Gatekeeper – social values
- Dylan poem – bias/egocentrism
- Macro/micro-cultural analysis – marginalization
- Labeling- diversity
- Myvote.com – political ideologies
- Mid-term learning analysis-metacognition
- Autobiographical narratives - bias
- School scenarios – developmental assumptions
- Position statements – conscious action