
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) → ZPD (discrepant events) → 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