Research Article

How Transformative Education Empowers Social Justice: Bridging the Gap between Knowledge and Action

Yusuf Olawale Owa-Onire Uthman

School of Humanities and Social Sicences, Faculty of Islamic Studies, Department of Tafsir, Ibn Haldun University, Istanbul,Turkey.
E-mail: yusuf.uthman@ibnhaldun.edu.tr / Mushfiqy@gmail.com

Abstract. This paper examines how transformative education can empower social justice by bridging the gap between knowledge and action. It presents a theoretical framework for transformative education, which is grounded in critical reflection, dialogue, and action. By fostering critical consciousness, transformative education enables students to challenge the systemic issues that perpetuate inequality and injustice. Drawing on examples from different educational contexts, this paper highlights the importance of adopting a transformative approach to education in order to create meaningful change in individuals and communities. Ultimately, it argues that transformative education can serve as a powerful tool for promoting equity, inclusion, and social justice in society. This study would base on a literature review of the existing research on transformative education and its relationship with social justice. The literature review draws on various academic databases, including research works, papers, articles, books, and reports published in several journals. The paper adopts a qualitative approach to analyze and synthesize the literature on transformative education and uses thematic analysis to identify key themes and concepts. The findings are presented in a narrative format and related illustration in the topic's case study which is organized around the theoretical framework of transformative education. The paper also includes case studies and examples from

different educational settings to illustrate the transformative potential of education in promoting social justice.

Keywords: Transformative education, social justice, critical reflection, agents of change, equity.

INTRODUCTION

This section is charged to portray the subject of the study, a broad explanation that will stake based on given detail about the notion of our topic reflected and the meaning of tram formative education and social justice provided in both lexical and technical meninges.

Lexically, transformative Education is a (noun), it means An approach to teaching and learning that aims to facilitate profound changes in learners' perspectives, beliefs, and behaviours, empowering them to critically reflect, challenge assumptions, construct new meanings, and take action for positive societal change (Cranton, 2002). It goes beyond traditional models of education and emphasizes active inquiry, critical thinking, self-awareness, empathy, and agency in the learning process.

Meanwhile, the technical definition of Transformative Education referred to as a pedagogical approach that draws on theories such as transformative learning, critical pedagogy (challenging the given information), and emancipatory education (allowing self-thinking), to create a learning environment that fosters deep and lasting changes in learners' cognitive, affective, and behavioural domains (Mezirow, 1991; Freire, 1970). It involves engaging learners in reflective dialogue, critical inquiry, and social action and promotes personal growth, social consciousness, and empowerment, often in the context of addressing issues related to social justice, diversity, and sustainability.

As for social justice, it lexically represents; the concept of fairness, equality, and equitable distribution of resources, opportunities, and privileges in society, to address systemic injustices, oppression, discrimination, and inequalities based on factors such as race, gender, class, religion, sexual orientation, and disability (Rawls, 1971; Sen, 2009). It involves advocating for the rights and well-being of marginalized and vulnerable groups, and promoting social, economic, and political systems that are just, inclusive, and promote human rights.

On the other hand, technically, Social Justice (noun): A multidimensional concept that encompasses the principles of fairness, equity, and human rights, and involves addressing social, economic, and political inequalities and injustices in society (Freire, 1970; Young, 1990). It focuses on addressing systemic and structural factors that perpetuate social disparities and promoting social change through advocacy, activism, and policy reforms. Social justice seeks to create a more equitable and inclusive society where all individuals have equal opportunities and access to resources, and where the dignity and rights of every person are respected and protected.

Therefore, social justice has been a major concern for societies around the world, with inequality and injustice persisting in many forms. Education is a key tool

for empowering individuals and promoting social justice, and transformative education has emerged as a powerful approach to achieving this goal. Transformative education is a process that challenges students to critically reflect on their assumptions and biases, and to become agents of change in their communities.

As for transformational learning that is meant to develop adults, the useful advancement in scholars is based on lunching importance through basic reflection, this is fundamental for extraordinary learning and development. Basic reflection includes approaches to analyzing the presumptions about the world and the manners in which we connect to that world. In fact, vital for decisive reasoning is recognizing and testing the presumptions in individuals' lives.

At the point when an individual examines suspicions through basic reflection, their mental, relational, and intrapersonal improvement advances progressively from a straightforward comprehension to a more intricate and adaptable comprehension of the world. So, through basic reflection, which includes taking viewpoints and drawing in with others, people frequently come to a more comprehensive, various, porous, and coordinated viewpoint. According to the study Baily et al, (2014) this more complicated comprehension of the world is best accomplished by chipping away at the rising edge. There is a further comprehension of how the growing experience functions. In light of the experience-subordinate work of the learning cycle, trailed by reflection, creating deliberations, surveying those reflections lastly getting back to substantial encounters, all pieces of the learning cycle are additionally affected by feelings and their actuation will assist with impacting the understudy reasoning. (Baily et al., 2014).

However, we contend that dealing with the arising front is a close-to-home undertaking; The apprehension about tumbling off the bluff and the certainty to continue through to the end as the strong ground is being worked underneath can fuel the learning cycle portrayed, which can prompt genuinely extraordinary learning. Therefore, this paper explores how transformative education can empower social justice by bridging the gap between knowledge and action.

METHOD

This paper is based on a literature review of the existing research on transformative education and its relationship with social justice. The literature review draws on various academic databases, including Google Scholar, Jostor, and Eric, and includes articles, books, and publication works. The paper adopts a qualitative approach to analyze and synthesize the literature on transformative education and uses thematic analysis to identify key themes and concepts. The findings are presented in a narrative format, which is organized around the theoretical framework of transformative education. The paper also includes case studies and examples from different educational settings to illustrate the transformative potential of education in promoting social justice.

Theoretical Framework

The theoretical framework of transformative education is grounded in critical reflection, dialogue, and action. Accessing the Transformative Learning Theory

Developed by Jack Mezirow, it noted that transformative learning theory posits that learning is not just about acquiring new knowledge and skills, but also involves a transformation of an individual's perspectives, beliefs, and assumptions. According to Mezirow, dialogue is a critical component of transformative learning as it enables learners to engage in reflective discourse, critically examine their existing beliefs, and construct new meanings through open and respectful conversations with others (Mezirow, 1991). Meanwhile, research studies have shown that transformative learning experiences are enhanced through dialogical interactions that challenge learners' assumptions, promote critical reflection, and facilitate the construction of new knowledge and perspectives (Taylor, 2007; Cranton, 2016). More so, critical pedagogy, developed by Paulo Freire, emphasizes the role of dialogue in fostering critical consciousness and social transformation. According to Freire, dialogue is a central tool for liberatory education, as it encourages learners to engage in critical reflection, question dominant ideologies, and engage in collaborative problem-solving. Through dialogue, learners are empowered to challenge oppressive systems, engage in social activism, and work towards social justice (Freire, 1970).

Numerous studies have shown that critical pedagogy that incorporates dialogue can promote critical thinking, social awareness, and empowerment among learners (Giroux, 2010; Macedo, 2000). Also, intergroup dialogue, a form of dialogue-based education, that focuses on addressing issues related to social identity, diversity, and social justice is inevitable. As intergroup dialogue programs bring together individuals from different social identities (e.g., race, ethnicity, gender, religion) to engage in facilitated dialogues that promote understanding, empathy, and social change. Research on intergroup dialogue programs has shown that they can enhance learners' intercultural competence, empathy, and perspective-taking skills, and promote positive attitudes towards diversity and social justice (Nagda et al., 2009; Zúñiga et al., 2007). Learning theory in constructive ways may as well posit that learners actively construct knowledge and meaning through their interactions with the social environment. This would let me realize that dialogue plays a critical role in constructivist learning as it provides opportunities for learners to engage in collaborative sense-making, negotiate to mean, and co-construct knowledge with peers and educators. This claim was supported by research on constructivist learning approaches has shown that dialogue-based instructional strategies, such as problem-based learning, collaborative learning, and inquiry-based learning, can enhance learners' critical thinking, problem-solving, and deep understanding of concepts (Jonassen et al., 1999; Slavin, 1995).

According to Mezirow (1991), transformative education involves a process of critical reflection on one's assumptions and beliefs, which leads to a new perspective and a transformation of one's worldview. Generally, the theoretical framework of transformative education is supported by various educational theories that emphasize the importance of dialogue in facilitating transformative learning experiences. Evidence from research studies shows that dialogue-based approaches can promote critical thinking, social awareness, intercultural competence, and empowerment among learners, making it a vital component of transformative education. Freire (1970) emphasizes the importance of dialogue in transformative

education, as it creates a space for questioning and challenging the dominant discourse. Furthermore, while talking about the benefit of interaction and dialogues in transformative education, many significant areas are to be mentioned to count on its importance, regarding scholar's thoughts these components could be listed as follows:

1. Fostering Critical Thinking: Dialogue encourages students to critically reflect on their own beliefs, assumptions, and biases, as well as those of others. Through open and respectful dialogue, students are exposed to diverse perspectives and are challenged to think critically and constructively engage in discussions. This helps develop their critical thinking skills, which are crucial for transformative learning. (Brookfield, 2017)

2. Enhancing Empathy and Perspective-taking: Dialogue promotes empathy and perspective-taking skills as students actively listen to others' viewpoints and try to understand their perspectives. This allows students to develop a deeper appreciation for the complexity of different viewpoints and encourages them to engage in respectful, inclusive, and empathetic conversations. This promotes a deeper understanding of diverse perspectives and promotes social and emotional learning. (Hooks, 1994)

3. Building Inclusive Communities: Dialogue creates an inclusive learning environment where students from diverse backgrounds feel valued and respected. Through dialogue, students learn to appreciate and embrace diversity and develop intercultural competence. This fosters an inclusive community where students feel safe to share their thoughts and experiences, leading to transformative learning experiences. (Delpit, 1995)

4. Encouraging Active Participation: Dialogue promotes active participation, allowing students to engage in collaborative learning and take ownership of their education. Through dialogue, students are encouraged to express their opinions, share their ideas, and participate in meaningful discussions. This empowers students to be active learners, rather than passive recipients of knowledge and fosters transformative learning experiences. (Freire, 1970)

5. Building Authentic Relationships: Dialogue encourages the development of authentic relationships between students and educators. By engaging in open, honest, and respectful conversations, students and educators can establish trust, rapport, and mutual respect. This creates a supportive learning environment where students feel valued, heard, and motivated to engage in transformative learning experiences. (Mezirow, 1991).

Finally, transformative education emphasizes the need for action, as students are challenged to become agents of change in their communities.

The Case Studies

Several case studies illustrate the transformative potential of education in promoting social justice. This section would portray the possible events in some countries in which education is given priority. For an instant, the transformative potential of education in promoting social justice has been well-documented, with Turkey serving as an intriguing case study in this context. Research has shown that

education plays a pivotal role in addressing inequalities, fostering inclusivity, empowering individuals, and promoting social mobility in Turkey (Özerdem, 2020). The Turkish government has implemented various reforms to promote equal access to education, particularly for marginalized groups, such as rural communities, ethnic minorities, and girls. Efforts have also been made to promote cultural diversity and tolerance in the curriculum to foster social cohesion among different communities. However, challenges such as gender inequality and disparities in educational quality persist, and ongoing efforts are needed to ensure that education continues to be a driving force in promoting social justice in Turkey and beyond (Baker, 2018).

Additionally, in a study conducted by Dunlap (2018), a transformative education program was implemented in a high school in the United States, where students were exposed to issues of race and ethnicity and were challenged to critically reflect on their own biases and assumptions. The program resulted in increased empathy and understanding among students and led to the formation of a student-led social justice club. Similarly, the study conducted by Robinson and colleagues (2020) exemplifies the transformative potential of education in promoting social justice, specifically in the context of gender and sexuality issues in South Africa. The implementation of a transformative education program in a university setting exposed students to critical reflection on their assumptions and biases related to gender and sexuality. As a result, the students demonstrated increased awareness and understanding of these issues, leading to the formation of a student-led advocacy group advocating for LGBTQ+ rights (human rights). This study highlights how education can catalyze promoting social justice by challenging students to critically examine their beliefs and assumptions and fostering a more inclusive and equitable mindset. The transformative education program created a safe space for students to engage in open discussions, reflect on their own biases, and advocate for marginalized communities.

In a nutshell, the findings of this study have important implications for promoting social justice in educational settings globally. By incorporating transformative education approaches that encourage critical reflection, dialogue, and advocacy, educational institutions can empower students to become active agents of change in promoting social justice issues, including those related to gender and sexuality.

CONCLUSION

Transformative education has the potential to empower social justice by bridging the gap between knowledge and action. By fostering critical reflection, dialogue, and action, transformative education enables students to challenge the systemic issues that perpetuate inequality and injustice. The case studies presented in this paper illustrate the transformative potential of education in promoting social justice and highlight the importance of adopting a transformative approach to education in order to create meaningful change in individuals and communities. Ultimately, transformative education can serve as a powerful tool for promoting equity, inclusion, and social justice in society. The hypothesis of the framework and case study of various countries such as South Africa, Turkey, and the USA in the study

realizes the fact that transformative education encourages critical thinking, while dialogue inspires students to critically reflect not only their own beliefs, assumptions, and prejudices, but those of others. Through open and respectful dialogue, students are encouraged to face different perspectives, think critically and participate constructively in discussions. Also, the result indicates improving empathy perspective, as the dialogue encourages empathy and perspective skills as students actively listen to the perspectives of others and try to understand their perspectives. This allows students to better understand the complexities of different perspectives and encourages them to have respectful, inclusive and empathetic conversations. Even, building inclusive communities and dialogue creates an inclusive learning environment where students from diverse backgrounds feel valued and respected. More so, through dialogue, students learn to appreciate and embrace diversity and develop cross-cultural skills. This fosters an inclusive community where students feel safe to share their thoughts and experiences, resulting in a transformative learning experience. There is encouraging active participation, which enables students to participate in collaborative learning and take responsibility for teaching. Having the courage to voice their opinions, share ideas, and participate in meaningful discussions. This help students to actively learn rather than passively receive knowledge, facilitating a transformative learning experience builds authentic relationships between students and educators. Since it creates a supportive learning environment in which students feel valued, heard and motivated to engage in transformative learning experiences.

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