On Transformative Inclusive Learning: Towards a Framework for Contextualizing Education

DANILO N. KEH, JR., LPT, Ph.D.
QlickHealth QFZ LLC, Doha, Qatar

ALVIN A. SARIO, LPT, Ph.D.
University of Santo Tomas – Legazpi,
Legazpi City, Philippines

Abstract

The present study discusses the possibility of creating a contextual approach to education based on the primary ideas of transformative pedagogy and inclusive learning. Using textual analysis, the views of transformational thinkers such as Freire, Mezirow, and Daloz and the principles of inclusive learning are analyzed and critiqued. With constructivism, principles of contextual education have been formulated: (1) Forming a Community of Critical and Rational Inquirers, (2) Critical Development for Personal and Social Transformation, (3) Encouraged Change, (4) An Experiential Approach to Teaching, (5) Support for Educators, (6) Dialogue and Ecumenical Attitude, and (7) Revitalization of the Local Language. Using these principles as a guide in educational decisions, schools can now champion inclusivity and individuality to address the academic challenges brought about by globalization and postmodernity.

Keywords:
Contextualization, Education, Inclusive Learning, Transformative Pedagogy

Introduction

The advent of globalization and postmodernism have had a tremendous impact on teaching and learning. In effect, the way people think, study, and learn have changed tremendously as well. "The effects on education can be seen in the rapid developments in technology and communications, changes within learning systems, the changing roles of students and teachers, and major concern on lifelong learning." (Dayagbil, 2102, 1) Undoubtedly, the educator is at the forefront of meeting the challenges that this new era presents. He/she is tasked to make sure that lessons are not only carried out effectively but also something that the learners can relate to.

Education must, in a way, be something that learners can be a part of, even something that they can call their own. A contextual approach to education guarantees this. With the globalized postmodern world moving along the lines of objectivity and pluralism, contextual education promotes individuation (as oppose to objectivity) and dialogue (as oppose to pluralism). Education, seen as contextual in nature, becomes relevant to the learner's life. The demarcation, therefore, between real life and lessons learned vanish as contextualization becomes real life education and vice versa. Transformation and learning indeed have overlapping meanings. Learning has transformative effects and transformation can create learning.

Learning should be contextual. "We do not learn isolated facts and theories in abstract, ethereal land of the mind separate from the rest of our lives. Rather, we learn in relationship to what else we know, what we believe, our prejudices, and our fears."

(Santalucia & Johnson, 2010, 2) Hence, learning has a direct corollary to the learner's life. It cannot and should never be divorced from his/her actual life and daily struggles as he/she creates meaning out of the manifold experiences he/she faces. For genuine education to happen, how the educators teach and who the learners are must meet halfway.

The problem, however, is how to make sure that contextualization in education is realized. What does it take to be an educator in this day and age of globalization and postmodernism? What is expected of the learner in this period of rapid change and growth? What are the principles to be used so that such end is achieved?

A framework for a contextualized education is needed. Contextualization happens when education adheres to transformation as its key concept. Transformation, in this context, is seen as the ability of the educator to present information in a way that learners are able to construct meaning based on their own point of reference. In addition, transformation gives the learner the opportunity for actualization through personal and social change. What is learned has to be seen as personally significant and should reflect virtues and qualities valued by a person or a group.

Aside from transformation as a key concept in contextualization, Inclusive Learning must also be addressed. There is a growing understanding of the interconnectedness of life. This is not just a metaphysical or abstract truth. This is life itself. Therefore, in the teaching and learning process, inclusivity is crucial. Inclusive Learning then is understanding the individuality of the learner in his/her context. In addition, it also fosters a dialectical relationship between the individual's context and the other broader contexts to which that specific context is bound up and part of. Inclusive Learning is innately contextual as it promotes a greater appreciation for the learner's context resulting to the appreciation of other's context as well. Only by taking pride in one's culture, background, and values can one be able to work in harmony with others. Taking the principles of Transformative Education and Inclusive Learning together, a framework for a Contextualized Education is inevitable.

Problematique

Given the premise that Contextualized Education is of utmost importance in this day and age, learners and educators should continue to uphold transformation and inclusivity in the school, community, and society. Taking the various principles of Transformative Pedagogy and Inclusive Learning, there is now a necessity to conceive of a framework that speaks to the contexts of those involve in the educational process. To realize the main objective, the study poses the following arguments:

1. That Inclusive Learning identifies the learner as an individual with a particular context.
2. That the principles of Transformative Education engage learners in critical reflection and upholds the notion that the learner is the center of the educational process.
3. That contextualization, as guaranteed by the principles of Inclusive Learning and Transformative Education, should have a

framework guided by the principles to realize itself.

Methodology

The study employs two levels of analysis in order to arrive at the framework of Contextualized Education: textual analysis and constructivist approach. In textual analysis, the paper critically examines the concepts and principles involved in Transformative Education as well as Inclusive Learning. The textual analysis made in the aforementioned theories of learning resulted in the articulation of the principles of an education that is highly contextual. A critique is also provided to exhaust the principles at hand. With the constructivist approach, the principles (which also serve as reconstructions of the critique) were extrapolated to make education relevant to the learner's life and transcendent of dividing barriers set up by differences in value-systems and perspectives.

Analysis and Discussion

1. The Merits of Inclusive Learning

The learner is at the center of the educational process. Hence, all content, strategies, and approaches must answer the leaner's needs, context, and particular experiences. However, not one student is the same as the other. Diversity is key here. What do educators teach (content) and how should they teach (pedagogy) in a sea of diversity and variety?

"The learner is a complex combination representing one or more of the multiple intelligences qualifying individual differences." (Morales, 2012, 10) Moreover, every learner in the classroom is a representative of varying cultural presuppositions and holds a certain

understanding of what is real and important in life. Every learner that goes inside the classroom holds within him/her, his/her people's most cherished-beliefs that should never be overridden or compromised. This diversity, added to content and pedagogy, makes the teaching-learning process more complicated and demanding as ever.

"The classroom is a community where learners represent varying cultural orientations that teachers need to look into and address." (Morales, 2012, 10) Learning today has so much evolved that uniformity in the classroom is seen as restrictive since education today is moving along the lines of diversity and otherness. Inclusive Learning presents its relevance as it tries to meet the learners in their own contexts. It also provides students with the opportunity to see the other and foster a spirit of collaboration, acceptance, and dialogue. Its main goal is to make the learners aware that each student does not interpret the world from a neutral point-of-view and that each one subscribes to his/her own set of doctrines which he/she uses to make sense of reality.

Inclusive Learning gives learners the opportunity to be aware that the same realities can be viewed differently. It also tries to shatter the walls built by racial, ethnic, and cultural stereotypes and biases. Hence, it promotes the values of tolerance and openness making the learner become more sensitive of other contexts paving the way for inter-cultural dialogue. This approach, used correctly, bridges the gap that separates the *I* from the *other*. "An Inclusive approach to education cultivates a school environment which supports mutual acceptance of, respect for, and an understanding of human

differences, and provides a balanced viewpoint on key issues involved in such teaching." (Morales, 2012, 10)

1.1 Principles of Inclusive Learning

Inclusive Learning enables the learners to be in the other learner's shoe. It promotes a classroom atmosphere that allows the learners freedom to be themselves. The ideas and concepts at work in Inclusive Learning provide educators the chance to rethink the way to teach children from diverse multicultural backgrounds. The following, therefore, are the principles of Inclusive Learning.

1.1.1 Inclusive Learning Recognizes Context

"Being and becoming human in time and space requires specificity." (De Mesa, 2003, 13) People find themselves imbedded in a particular context having a particular culture and speaking a particular language. Admittedly, this context makes the world intelligible. It supplies people with interpretations of experienced reality. How people see the world depends on this basic disposition towards life.

Inclusive learning recognizes that each learner belongs a specific context. It posits that the learner uses his/her context to view the world. The context determines reality but in no way are learners the prisoners of their own context. Though much determined by their context, the learner has the capacity to bracket differences and accept ideas which may run contrary to what he/she believes.

Sensitivity to context could bear much fruit. Educators are encouraged to work

with the context that the learner has. To recognize context is to be able to identify what the learner cherishes and believes in life. To recognize context is to be able to see the learner as in individual not just part of a group or a class. To recognize context is to be able to formulate strategies and approaches in teaching and learning that would accommodate all the contextual differences. Inclusive Learning welcomes everyone and transcends ethnic, lingual, and economic differences.

1.1.2 Inclusive Learning Uses the Vernacular

Language is the vehicle of culture. It is, in fact, the cornerstone of every culture. It is an "abstract system of word meaning and symbols for all aspects of culture." (Parpa, 2012, 1) Through language, "the culture understands and explains itself in its own terms: categories, structure, and style." (De Mesa, 2003, 78) Perhaps this is one of the reasons why one feels at home when one communicates using his native language. It is "the bank of experience and the collective unconscious of a people." (Mercado, 1992, 12) Since the language encodes the culture, the experience and the worldview of the people, its use is imperative in Inclusive Learning.

There is a great need to use the vernacular in Inclusive Learning. Though divided by varying familial, societal, and economic differences, the vernacular (local language) represents a common ground for the learners to arrive at a common understanding. The vernacular unifies the learner's varying contexts as it transcends their differences since the local language is something they all share. Through the

vernacular, the learners "can immediately construct and explain their world, articulate their thoughts, and add new concepts to what they already know." (Parpa, 2012, 3)

The learners, therefore, have the right to be taught in a language that they can call their own. It is comical for educators to force the learners to adapt and even assimilate a foreign language. Not only would it be alienating, the symbolisms and presumptions that go along with that foreign language would never be fully grasped and would do injustice not only to the learner but also to the language itself. Teaching in an inclusive setting should provide a venue where the learners can express themselves easily and freely because they can understand what is being discussed and what is expected of them.

1.1.3 Inclusive Learning Encourages Content Integration

Inclusive Learning promotes holistic growth. Hence, it should be eclectic in nature. Its curriculum should be characterized by the "infusion of various cultures, ethnicities, and other identities." (Morales, 2012, 11) The curriculum should be a melting pot of all the contexts of the learners. It should not show bias on one context while putting others on the pedestal.

Content integration is a tool that promotes equity and justice. It seeks to incorporate, in the teaching and learning process, the idea that each learner is unique and his/her ideas are true hence must be respected. It is a grass root kind of approach which allows the small narratives to be told and little voices to be heard. It also describes lessons and activities "that teachers

implement to assert positive images of ethnic groups and to improve intergroup relations." (Morales, 2012, 11)

1.1.4 Inclusive Learning Promotes a Fusion of Horizon

Inclusive Learning encourages the learners to respect others. It does not seek to breed contempt and even aggression on other's context. On the contrary, it enables them to embrace the otherness of the other without pretensions and prejudice. It reminds the learner to approach the other in a spirit of mutual respect and openness. To approach the other is to *take of one's shoes* because the place he/she is treading a sacred place. Else, he/she might trample on other's beliefs and ultimately, other's identity.

Inclusive Learning invites a fusion of horizon. Although divided by a differing conception of the good, learners are tasked not so much to focus on the differences but to work together as one. To fuse each other's horizon is not imposition of one's ideas but collaboration to produce the best ideas. To fuse each other's horizon is not to see one as superior to the other but to see the fellow learner as a partner in construction of shared and collective meaning.

Critique

A pedagogy of inclusion is an ideal approach to teaching learners coming from different backgrounds. This approach to education offers possibilities and challenges as well. Inclusive learning is anti-discriminatory. Schools should encourage wider participation for all learners. Admittedly, an inclusive pedagogy is a developing context. There is a need, thus, to establish the principles at work to make sure

that nobody is excluded and all the aspects of education which makes one learner feel different from another learner should be eradicated.

Inclusive Learning champions context. Context is important and in effect, pluralism becomes unavoidable. In the classroom setting, diversity and even conflict becomes the normal understanding of things. In addition, extra effort is required from educators to make sure that none is left out. How can leaners work together if they are divided by differing conceptions of what is good, true, and beautiful? Is it possible for them to set aside their convictions to work in unison? How can educators respond to the additional workload that goes along with this kind of learning?

2. The Merits of Transformative Education

"Knowledge is generally viewed as something outside of the learner to be taken in through the learning process." (Dirkx, 1998, 2) Knowledge, in transformative education, is never just handed to the learner. To consider knowledge as something external to the learner becomes haphazard. To say that the proliferation of knowledge happens outside the learners is to deprive them of the capacity to be responsible for their own education. To say that they are just recipients of fabricated ideas and concepts is to deny them of the freedom to change the way they seem themselves and the world they live in. Learning would be alienating instead of welcoming, senseless instead of relevant, restricting instead liberating, preserving the status-quo instead of fostering critical-mindedness.

Transformative Education prides itself with the contention that knowledge is co-produced and co-created by the learners. It is not something passively given to them. On the contrary, they are seen as active agents, taking an active role in the production of relevant and meaningful ideas to better themselves, and by extension the society in which they live in. Learners are seen to be involved in the learning process as much as the educators are and learners and educators alike should ideally be given the opportunities to be engaged in this process. Transformative Learning exists in an atmosphere of mutual respect and collaboration which can only occur when the learners are seen as partners, never as mere recipients, in the learning process.

"Transformative Education is emancipatory and liberating at both a personal and social level." (Dirkx, 1998, 3) Human beings should always be seen as the end of the educational process. Gone are the days when knowledge was considered a gift bestowed by the learned to the ignorant. Genuine learning should not be characterized by the implantation of a prescribed set of ideas since these ideas are bound to be created not merely transmitted. Transformative Education trains the learner to think for themselves and not to rely on someone else to do the thinking for them. Hence, it nurtures openness, reflection, and critical-thinking.

2.1 Principles of a Transformative Education

Transformative Education puts high premium on the learner as the center of the educational process. "This approach to education involves experiencing a deep,

structural shift in the basic premises of thought, feelings, and actions." (Lozarita, 2012, 73) This paradigm shift stems from the notion that the content of education exists for the learner and not the other way around. The ideas and concepts that make up transformative Education are reflected in the work of several transformational educators such as Paulo Freire, Jack Mezirow, and Larry Daloz. Their work provide us with the basic understanding of the meaning and merits of Transformative Education.

2.1.1 Transformative Education as Critical Pedagogy

Paulo Freire, a Brazilian educator and philosopher, popularizes this theory of Transformative Learning. Critical pedagogy refers to an educational theory of teaching and learning that is designed to enhance the learner's critical consciousness regarding oppressive social conditions. It is a teaching approach which attempts to help students question and confront domination and practices that govern them.

One of the characteristics of critical pedagogy is a call for the end of the banking system of education. In his work, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed,* Freire criticizes the banking conception of education:

> In this conception of education, the educator knows and the learners don't know; the educator thinks and the learners are "thought"; the educator speaks and the learners listen quietly; the educator makes and prescribes his choice and the learners follow his prescription; the educator chooses the content of education and learners' ideas on educational content are never heard and they have to get used to it. (Saleh, 2013, 13)

Freire is disappointed with the process of teaching and learning. "The teacher talks about reality as if it were motionless, static, compartmentalized, and predictable. His task is to "fill" the students with the contents of his narration—contents which are detached from reality, disconnected from the totality that engendered them and could give them significance." (Freire, 1970, 69) Hence education becomes an act of depositing like in banks. Knowledge becomes a donation, a dole-out to those who do not know from those who do know. This banking education thoroughly maintains the demarcation between the informed and the ignorant. It denies the learner and educator the possibility of dialogue. "The tendency of students' memorization of their lessons is a common practice in banking education." (Saleh, 2013, 102) "Some teachers believe that by implementing banking education they assist students through offering them a packed content of knowledge to repeat and memorize." (Saleh, 2013, 101) "Instead it kills curiosity, creativity and any investigative spirit in the learners and encourages the passive behavior of the learners." (Nyirenda, 1996, 13)

"Freire's analysis of education and social change centers on his contention that education cannot be neutral." (Nyirenda, 1996, 9) Education can either be liberating or dominating. "Educative processes domesticate people where there exists a dominant culture of silence. In this culture people are taught to accept what is handed down to them by the ruling elite without questioning." (Nyirenda, 1996, 9) Hence, the people's understanding of reality is limited to the reality imposed on them which they were told to accept and believe. "Critical education theorists view school knowledge as historically and socially rooted and interest

bound." (McLaren, 2009, 63) Knowledge or information acquired is never neutral or objective but is structured and ordered in a very specific manner. "Knowledge is a social construction deeply rooted in a nexus of power relations." (McLaren, 2009, 63)

To domesticate education is to deprive people of the capacity to become captains of their own life. It denies them the capacity to think critically and meaningfully about the world they live in. "It does not provide them with a critical perception of their own social reality which would enable them to know what needs changing and actually take action to change." (Nyirenda, 1996, 9) Freire argues for an education that is liberating. People are educated with a deliberate aim and intention of "raising their awareness and liberating them from their naive acceptance of life and its dehumanizing effects on them." (Nyirenda, 1996, 12) It is a critical and active process through which the culture of silence perpetuated by the elite and the powerful is defeated and shattered.

Freire holds that the banking approach to education is the pedagogy of the oppressor. The dialogical approach to education, on the contrary, is the pedagogy of the oppressed. Banking education implies manipulating learners by forcing them to conform to the objectives of the dominant elite who do not wish to lose their power. By accepting their passive role in the learning process, learners encourage more manipulation to be practiced upon them. "The capability of banking education to minimize or annul the student's creative power and to stimulate their credulity serves the interests of the oppressors, who care neither to have the world revealed nor to see

it transformed." (Freire, 1970, 73)To end banking education, one must not only liberate oneself from the situation of oppression but also liberate oneself from the consciousness of oppression that is covertly hidden by this system of learning.

Freire maintains that the teacher is not the sole possessor of knowledge and wisdom. In fact, the teacher can learn as much as he/she teaches. This is the reason why Freire proposed a dialogic and problem-posing approach rejecting rote and mechanical learning and encouraging teachers and students to develop their critical thinking and enhancing self-confidence. In his words, it is "an active educational method which helps a person to become consciously aware of his context and his conditions as a human being a Subject, it will become an instrument of choice." (Freire, 1974, 51)

The dialectical nature of Freire's work "see the school not simply as an arena of indoctrination or socialization or a site of instruction, but also a cultural terrain that promotes student empowerment and self-transformation." (McLaren, 2009, 62) Dialectical understanding of education not only provides the students with the necessary skills and knowledge to be a functioning literate but also to empower them around issues of social justice.

"Freire's methodology of teaching and learning describes the class is a meeting place where knowledge is sought, not transmitted." (Saleh, 2013, 97) It should enhance the student's confidence to address and even solve their own problems instead of merely relying for help or accepting solutions offered by others. Those teachers whose teaching approach depends on memorization

are considered anti-dialogical. The more the students allow the teachers to deposit information in their minds like it is some form of *tabularaza*, the less they become critical of the things around them. Hence banking education is a way to maintain the oppressive social order. "Students who are taught through banking education are likely to internalize the same rigid patterns of relationship structure of paternal authority." (Saleh, 2013, 95) Freire criticized the traditional way of teaching as an impediment to critical thinking. "This is because it is not connected with students' lives, but focusing on teaching isolated words and lacking in concrete activity." (Saleh, 2013, 95)

2.1.2 Transformative Education as Critical Reflection

This theory of Transformative Education is made known by Jack Mezirow. Central to this theory is the "process of making meaning from our experiences through reflection, critical reflection, and critical self-reflection." (Dirkx, 1998, 4) He eventually named this process as *perspective transformation*. Admittedly, each person subscribes to a particular set of perspectives, a set of beliefs, ideas, and assumptions acquired through life experiences. These perspectives are used as a lens to view reality and to make sense of the manifold experiences that one has. In a nutshell, the way we see the world is so much colored by the perspectives that we have.

In as much as these perspectives help us understand reality, they can also distort or limit our understanding of it. This accounts for the disparity of beliefs and the plurality of what a person considers good, true, and beautiful. Our perspectives may not be as

reliable as we want it to be and may not be the basis of some of our truth-claims. It can, at times, be faulty and misleading.

Critical reflection reflects a change in central meaning structures which people use to make sense of outside reality. Transformation occurs and it changes the learners' perspectives and habits of the mind. "An important part of transformative learning is for individuals 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." (Lozarita, 2012, 74) "Through Critical Reflection, we come to identify, assess, and possibly reformulate key assumptions on which our perspectives are constructed." (Dirkx, 1998, 4) The goal of education is for the learners to change their frame of reference, a set of basic assumptions we use to interpret and understand the world.

Like Freire, Mezirow also posits that reflection and dialogue are key elements in Transformational Education. However for Mezirow, a big part of the learning process involves reflecting rationally and analytically on one's perspectives. For Mezirow (1991), "the outcome of transformative learning reflects individuals who are more inclusive in their perceptions of their world, able to differentiate increasingly its various aspects, open to other points-of-view, and able to integrate differing dimensions of their experiences into meaningful and holistic relationships." When learners begin to critically and analytically reflect and examine their preconceived ideas, they would be more willing to change. Therefore, the product is a learner who is open to collaboration with

others and has the ability to change his/her perspectives if these perspectives prove to be defective.

2.1.3 Transformative Education as Development

Transformation as development is crucial in Daloz' theory of learning. Like Mezirow, Daloz understands the need to find and create meaning in our lives. He conceives the development of the individual as directly proportional to our ability to understand and make sense of our experiences. As individuals grow older, their frame of reference, to use Mezirow's concept, changes. Learners move within phases of development which is characterized by the acceptance of new structures of meaning and letting go of the old irrelevant ones. In so doing, learners are able to move towards the constructions of a new self, a deliberate and conscious decision to move from who the learner was to who the learner is.

"The development tasks of this period require the replacement of these old ways of meaning-making with ones that are more appropriate to the demands that one encounters at this point in life." (Dirkx, 1998, 5) The journey towards the new self requires that the learner is able to construct new meanings that will help him/her make sense of the new challenges and possibilities being offered by the new development phase he/she is at. Transformative Education is characterized by growth and it is the task of the educators to help the learner in this new phase of his/her life.

Like his predecessors, Daloz' theory of Transformative Education relies on constructivism. This approach to education contends that the way learners interpret and reinterpret their experience is essential to meaning-making and therefore, to learning. What differentiates Daloz' theory from that of Mezirow and Freire is that his concept of Transformative Education is less concerned with toppling down structures of inequalities (Freire) and puts primary not just on the learner's frame-of-reference (Mezirow) but how this frame is created, changed, and recreated. His theory can serve "both disrupt old patterns of meaning and encourage the construction and formation of new ways of seeing the self and the world." (Dirkx, 1998, 6)

Critique

Transformative education is hostile to the idea of a banking concept of education. Learning and teaching should be dialogical. The learner and the educator are partners in the creation of knowledge. To say, however that they are partners, in no way mean that they stand on equal footing. The educator knows more than the learner and it is the task of the educator to identify the content of the learning process. To consider the learners as partners, does it mean that they have as much say in the content as the expert? If the content proves to be tedious for the learners, should it be abandoned to give way to simpler contents? Undeniably, there are also merits to the banking concept. There are required contents that needed to be discussed and the banking concept of education makes sure that these required contents are taught. How can the merits of the banking concept of education be reconciled with a dialogical approach to teaching and learning?

In addition, Transformative Education challenges how the learners see

themselves. However, not all are up to the challenge to change their most cherished beliefs. Some may even be hostile to the idea of change itself. Learners are already comfortable with their own beliefs and things they know. "When those beliefs are challenged, it can feel uncomfortable or be perceived as threatening, and many people may now want to consider alternatives and therefore do not engage in reflection or consideration of alternative points of view." (Santalucia & Johnson, 2010, 3) Some may not even attempt to undergo a process of change due to a deeply seated need to hold on to the truth for them. What then is the purpose of changing how one sees reality if change represents discomfort and anxiety?
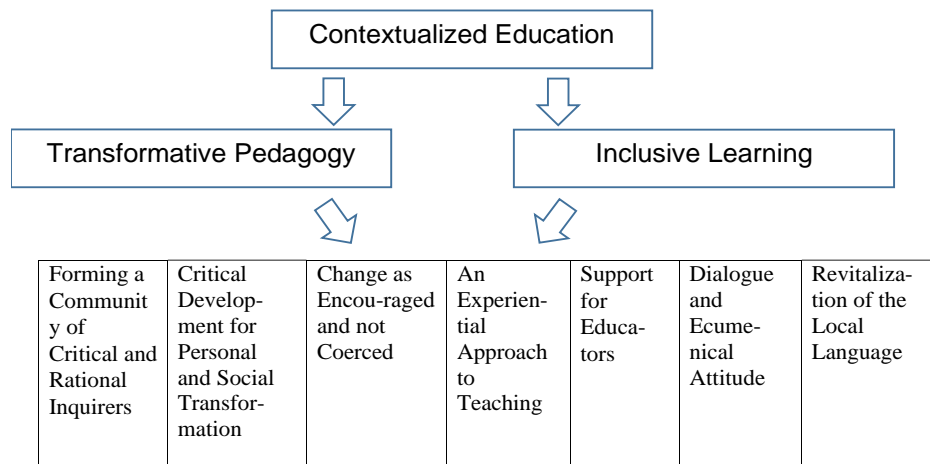
Transformative Education fosters change. The methodology on how to promote change in Transformative Education is still in question. Change is fearsome. Given the fact that not all learners would be willing to change, the educator might resort to some kind of coercion and manipulation to put forward his/her agenda. How can the educator distinguish encouraging methods of change from coercive ones?

A Framework of Contextualized Education based on Inclusive Learning and Transformative Pedagogy

A Contextualized Education is needed in this postmodern modern which is hostile to the idea of an objective way of teaching and learning. The study proposes that a framework for a Contextualized Education be based on the principles of Inclusive learning and the merits of a

Transformative Pedagogy. Below are the principles for the aforementioned framework.

1. Forming a Community of Critical and Rational Inquirers
2. Critical Development for Personal and Social Transformation
3. Change as Encouraged and not Coerced
4. An Experiential Approach to Teaching

Forming a Community of Critical and Rational Inquirers	Critical Development for Personal and Social Transformation	Change as Encouraged and not Coerced	An Experiential Approach to Teaching	Support for Educators	Dialogue and Ecumenical Attitude	Revitalization of the Local Language

5. Support for Educators
6. Dialogue and Ecumenical Attitude
7. Revitalization of the Local Language

1. Forming a Community of Critical and Rational Inquirers

The banking concept of education, proposed by Freire, kills creativity and critical-thinking by promoting rote learning and memorization of facts. It sees the individuals never as the end of the education process but only as means. Education then needs to be liberated from the banking approach it has used for so long. To liberate people from this approach is to see them as the end and the only goal of the education process. It starts when individuals are

considered active agents in the proliferation of knowledge and the flow of discourse. Liberation motivates people to pose questions and be critical of the information being handed to them. They are encouraged to participate, clarify, and analyze information. This enables them to probe the deeper nature of things.

To liberate education from the banking concept it has used is to hone and form a community of critical and rational inquirers. The learners are encouraged to pose questions about the teaching and learning process. The believers question the content not because they are skeptical about the process but because they want to know more. They question because they are trained to be critical and to never accept an idea without analyzing its content. Undeniably, it is only through forming a critical and rational mind in the learner can they truly understand the deeper meaning and relevance of the ideas they learn. To have a critical mind is in no way doubting the educational process itself. It just goes to show that the learning and teaching are so important a matter that deeper probing is necessary.

Contextual Education emphasizes the learner's actualization. However, "this actualization is constrained through the presence of coercive forces within our personal and socio-cultural contexts. These forces limit or shape the ways in which we come to understand who we are as persons and communities and what might be our best interests." (Dirkx, 1998, 8) The goal then of forming rational and critical thinkers is for them to be able to identify these forces through pedagogical structures and critical reflection. Transformation depends on a deeper understanding (of rational and critical thinkers) of the social, political, economic, and cultural situation which one lives.

2. Critical Development for Personal and Social Transformation

An important consideration in Contextual Education is how the learners' expectations, framed within their culture and context, directly influence the meaning they derive from their experiences. Perspectives operate as filters that organize, classify, and analyze experiences. When learners come upon a new experience, the perspectives act as a sieve to validate, accommodate, and even reject this new experience. Albeit valid, however, these expectations change as learners enter into the different phases of life. It is inevitable that the learner's perspectives change because old construe would prove to be ineffectual to solve the fresh issues brought about by the new phase of life one is experiencing.

The learners' personal transformed perspective should add to their individual growth. It must be a stepping-stone not a stumbling block to their maturity as a person. Their transformed perspective should facilitate the transition from who they were to who they are now and what they will become in the near future. This personal changed perspective must be in line with the collective understanding of the good and the true. At the same time, this transformed changed perspective must allow them to see structures of injustice in the society. It must encourage them be a catalyst of social transformation. Hence, the personal transformed perspective formulated must be parallel and part of a societal transformed perspective. Through this, one can see the effect one can make not only on oneself but more so to others. And whatever decision

and action one makes creates a ripple of effects as one begins to realize the all are interrelated and interconnected.

The rational and the critical changes and develops because this development is needed. Although change represents fear and anxiety, the rational and the critical knows that he/she must allow himself/herself undergo a process of change. The rational and the critical deliberately and actively engages in the process of critical self-reflection. He/she does not stay in what is comfortable and conventional but goes beyond the comfort zone in order for transformation, and in extension contextualization, to be achieved.

3. Change as Encouraged and not Coerced

The heart of Contextual Education is change. Nevertheless, this change should not be forced upon the leaners. To use elements of coercion defeats the purpose of transformation itself. Educators should promote change, without imposing any agenda, in a learner-centered way. Change is encouraged and educators must convince the learners to move beyond their own particularities. The educators, facilitating Contextual Education should present the learners with situations and concepts that may challenge, alter, and improve the learner's context.

4. An Experiential Approach to Teaching

To contextualize education, learning and teaching must start with context. This inductive teaching is characterized by using experience as the springboard of curriculum and any lesson for that matter. The classical approach was to start with general statements. There is nothing wrong with deductive teaching. The problem arises, however, when the learner tries to bridge the gap between

these general statements and the vicissitudes of his/her experiences.

The study contends that education starts from experience. It must start with the particularities of the context so that the learner may participate actively in the flow of the discussion. To start from experience is to see people as key players in the education process. Through experiential teaching, the participants may be able to see the connection of their experiences to the experiences of others. It may lead to the acknowledgement that their experience is valid because he/she shares it with other people or somehow needs analysis as his/her experience differs.

5. Support for Educators

Accommodating the different learners in their respective context puts a lot of extra work on the educator. Schools, therefore, should pour all-out and unwavering support to the educators. School structures should be 'teacher-friendly'. Economic assistance, appropriate trainings, professional development, and mentoring programs are some of the 'teacher-friendly' policies that needed to be implemented. This would not only make the lives of the educator more bearable but may also strengthen their commitment to the pedagogy of inclusion.

6. Dialogue and Ecumenical Attitude

Contextual Education is hostile to the idea that "knowledge is a gift bestowed by those who consider themselves knowledgeable upon those whom they consider to know nothing." (Freire, 1970, 72) On the contrary, it champions dialogue as the truest way to genuine knowledge. Education should be dialogical in nature. As beings of communication, dialogue belongs to the very nature of human beings. Dialogue is important in the education process because

it is "creative and re-creative." (Freire, 1987, 3) It enables the education process to be a two-way process characterized by mutual respect and cooperation.

Transformative learning has to integrate the students and the teachers into a mutual creation and recreation of knowledge. In the past "knowledge is produced at some distance from the classroom, by researchers and scholars and textbook writers and official curriculum committees, but it is not created and re-created by students and teachers in the classroom." (Freire, 1987, 8) Dialogue, is key in contextual education, since true knowledge can only be created when the learner and the educator engage in a process of overlapping consensus.

Dialogue paves the way for liberation while an ecumenical attitude promotes tolerance towards the other. Inclusivity is not only based on dialogue but also on the attitude that enables learners to see others not as someone different but as a fellow human being. An ecumenical attitude is expected even required from a learner. Although learners come from different contexts, it does not necessarily mean that conflicts will always arise. Context may separate one from the other, nevertheless, there is always the possibility to work in harmony. Community-based collaborative efforts are needed in the contextualization of education. Dialogue and ecumenical attitude develops interdependence with other learners beyond oneself.

7. Revitalization of the Local Language

Language is thought. If Filipinos speak their native language, they think and feel Filipino. When one is hurt, one would say *aray*. This is a more automatic response than saying, *ouch*! *Aray* expresses pain the Filipino way better than the word ouch. To speak therefore of a foreign language is to think and feel non-Filipino.

However, the colonial mentality brought about by many years of foreign rule brought a stigma to the Filipino language. English has been, for the most part, regarded as the language of the elite, the elegant, and the academe. It has been considered, even by many Filipinos, as superior to their native language. To speak English with a certain accent is good. Any person who deviates from speaking English in this particular accent is ridiculed, even laughed at. They are accused of using non-standard English (carabao English.) In the process, Filipinos put so much effort to speak English with a certain twang. The danger here is when people use western language, they accept the western ideas and paradigms that come along with it.

There is a need to revitalize the local language. In no way is the local language inferior to the other world languages since each language has its own symbolisms and meanings. Learning English and other world languages is not the solution to illiteracy and poverty. The use of the vernacular (mother tongue) proves efficient in "improving educational quality by building upon the knowledge and experience of the learners and the teachers." (Parpa, 2012, 5) There is a need to allow and even encourage the learners to use, expound, and enrich the vernacular. As learners begin to appreciate the richness, virtues, and myths of their local languages, they might just be able to overcome regionalism and prejudices and in a way, a step closer to building a more inclusive and transformative society.

Conclusion

Contextualization makes education relevant in this contemporary time. A framework for a Contextual Education is therefore needed not just for relevance's sake but for human flourishing. This framework is based on the principles of Transformative Education and Inclusive Learning. On one hand, Transformative Education sees the learner as the be-all and end-all of the education process. On the other hand, Inclusive Learning is inclusive and includes all the aspects of the learner.

Education is not only a basic and fundamental right but avenues for inclusion and change. A contextual approach to education makes the school a place where students feel accepted and which manages to meet the learner's individual need. It is also a place where they are trained to think critically about themselves and the structures of society that enforce critical-thinking or prevent them from doing so. In a nutshell, a contextualized education requires two things: transformative yet inclusive in methodology and in application.

References:

Dayagbil, F. (2012). A Teacher for the World: Are You In? *Special Topics in Education* Vol. 3 (1-6). Cubao, Quezon City: Lorimar Publishing Inc.

De Mesa, J. (2003). *Why Theology is Never Far from Home*. Manila: De La Salle University Press.

Dirkx, J. (1998). Transformative Learning Theory in Practice of Adult Education: An Overview. *PAACE Journal of Lifelong Learning* 7, 1-14.

Freire, P. (1970). *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*. (M. Ramos, Trans.) New York: Continuum.

_____. (1974). *Education for Critical Consciousness*. New York: Bloomsbury Academic.

_____. (1987). *Pedagogy of Liberation: Dialogues on Transforming Education with Ira Shor and Paulo Freire*. Massachusetts: Bergin and Garvey Publishers, Inc.

Lozarita, M. (2012). Transformative Education. *Special Topics in Education* Vol. 2 (73-82). Cubao, Quezon City: Lorimar Publishing Inc.

McLaren, P. (2009). Critical Pedagogy: A Look at the Major Concepts. In A. Darder (Ed.), *The Critical Pedagogy Reader* (69-96). New York: Routledge.

Mercado, L. (1992). *Inculturation and Filipino Theology*. Manila: Divine Word Publications.

Mezirow, J. (1991). *Transformative Dimensions of Adult Learning*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.

Morales, K. (2012). Teaching those who don't Talk and Look like Us. *Special Topics in Education* Vol. 2 (10-18). Cubao, Quezon City: Lorimar Publishing Inc.

Nyirenda, J. (1996). The Relevance of Paulo Freire's Contributions to Education and Development in Present Day Africa, 10(1), 1-20.

Parpa, J. (2012). Mother Tongue Based-Multilingual Education. *Special Topics in Education* Vol. 2 (1-9). Cubao, Quezon City: Lorimar Publishing Inc.

Saleh, S.E. (2013). Paulo Freire's Philosophy on Contemporary Education. *University Bulletin*, 1(15), 91-111.

Santalucia, S. & Johnson, C. (October, 2010). Transformative Learning: Facilitating Growth and Change through Fieldwork. *Continuing Education Article*, 1-19.