




## EVIDENCE OF TRANSFORMATIVE TEACHING EXTRACTED FROM THE REFLECTION LOGS OF PRE-SERVICE TEACHERS USING BUTIN'S CULTURAL LENS

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### ABSTRACT

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This study aimed to analyze the Music, Arts, Physical Education and Health (MAPEH) pre-service teachers' reflection logs using cultural lens of Butin's model. Using the critical social design, this study investigated transformative teaching from 21 MAPEH pre-service teachers. The pre-service teachers were selected using maximum variation sampling method. Data were gathered from their written reflection logs in response to the questions crafted by the researcher. Findings revealed that pre-service teachers put premium to cultural competency and considered diversity in the educative process. Pre-service teachers have developed appreciation of student diversity by helping them understand and appreciate their uniqueness through meaningful connection with them. They even discussed with them issues beyond the classroom including personal problems and emotional concerns. In addition to this, MAPEH curriculum touches on the personal lives of students. Music and Arts depict culture, tradition, and beliefs of various groups. This study is based on the premise that MAPEH is best taught if teachers welcome cultural diversity, make learning forceful by touching on the personal experiences of the learners, and enhance the skills of students to make them useful in improving their lives and their community. These attributes require the adoption of transformative teaching and learning.

**Contribution/Originality:** This study is one of very few qualitative studies which have investigated pre-service teachers' reflections on their practical teaching experiences in the Philippines. The results of the study have significant implications in designing and implementing a culturally relevant curriculum that fosters transformative teaching and learning in pre-service teacher education.

### 1. INTRODUCTION

Cultural diversity plays a vital role in formulating the behavior of students in a classroom. Teachers must understand that students come from different backgrounds and their personalities and preferences are shaped largely by their environment where they were born and where they were raised. These diversities among learners must be fully considered in choosing methodologies, strategies, and techniques to transfer learning successfully (Mondal, 2015). The Teachers are provided with teaching and learning theories which would guide them as they embark on their journey with the learners towards enlightenment, empowerment, productivity, competence, and excellence (Littky and Grabelle, 2014). Likewise, teachers need to choose appropriate theories to suit students' varying learning needs. There are times when teachers need to veer away from the usual strategies to be relevant in

a classroom scenario. Transformative learning is one of those innumerable theories that can be used for effective teaching.

Education must go beyond current theories and principles to become functional and meaningful in teaching. Just as technology has dramatically inflicted change in the processes and services of the world, education must also be essentially innovative to cope with these changes in the society. It must be in touch with the actual environment to provide practical and functional teaching and learning to the point that students no longer need to wait after graduation and employment to apply what they learned, but are able to make sense of their classroom learning and use what they had learned to solve their daily problems.

The experience of the researchers as a classroom instructor and supervisor has made them realize that teachers must exert more effort in providing meaningful learning. They encountered some pre-service teachers who tried to manage learning based on available theories without thorough reflection of the students' circumstances. This results in rote learning or students' tendency to just store the information in their memory and soon forget it after an examination.

Pre-service education must teach students to be smart, resilient, and reflective so that they can address the pressing needs of their learners. They should be transformative rather than prescriptive. Prescriptive teachers limit the learners to ideals and norms. On the other hand, a transformative teacher broadens the learners' horizons and considers other alternatives that are potential and practical in solving problems.

Transformative teaching and learning emerged because of the work of Mezirow (1981); Mezirow (1991); Mezirow (1997). During the time of Mezirow (1981) adult learning focused primarily on mastering the basic skills but he thought that adult learning must be transformative. According to him, this style of learning would enable the adults to recognize and reassess the structure of assumptions and expectations, which frame their thinking, action and feeling rather than acquiring only basic skills. Transformational learning has a unique feature of inducing far-reaching change in the learner, such as using learning experiences to shape and to develop a learner and to produce significant impact that would in turn determine subsequent learning experiences (Khabanyane, Maimane, & Ramabenyane, 2014).

Transformational learning involves three dimensions, namely: psychological (changes in understanding self), convictional (revision of self of belief systems), and behavioral (changes in lifestyles). This entails critical understanding of oneself-knowing what one has and what one does not have, identifying what is still lacking or what needs modification, recognizing the need to reinvent beliefs and value systems until things become part of lifestyle (Kitchenham, 2008). Additionally, in transformative learning, the need for reflection is very important. Learners should regard themselves as adults capable of self-introspection; they need to make sense of their experiences and interpret them. Reflections enable learners to correct distortions of existing beliefs and embrace new value system as a result of experience (Mizerow, 1990).

Reflections lead to transformative learning which requires learners to re-evaluate their lives and remake them. Through reflective thinking, adults develop their own set of strategies with solutions to their problems. Their experiences in classroom or outside the classroom enables them to think and analyze the relevant and the irrelevant, which in turn will shape a new paradigm of doing things.

Reflective or critical thinking, as an arm of transformational learning, is also one of the learning skills that the K to 12 curriculum envisions to develop among the 21st century learners along with creativity and innovation, problem solving, communication, and collaboration (De Dios, 2012; Department of Education, 2012). These skills are believed to be important in achieving functional literacy in the society. This would bolster the need to utilize transformative learning theory in the classroom, not only in the tertiary level but also as early as in basic educational ladders.

One of the best avenues to use transformative learning is during pre-service teaching. In this phase, students are exposed in the field to experience actual classroom environment under the guidance and mentorship of

cooperative teachers. Pre-service teaching is vital in developing student teachers' technical, pedagogical and content competencies (Hu & Fyfe, 2010; Mergler & Spooner-Lane, 2012) since they are exposed to real-life experiences with learners, teachers, parents and other school stakeholders. Students have the opportunity to handle actual classes and are expected to apply learning theories, classroom management strategies, teaching methods and instructional strategies which they learned under the auspices of their college professors (Corpuz, Salandanan, & Rigor, 2006). Pre-service teaching also reinforces classroom learning which clearly indicates that students continue to acquire teaching competencies in their experiential exposure. This training would help them muster classroom management which is the focus of the teaching profession (Freeman, Simonsen, Briere, & MacSuga-Gage, 2014).

However, an actual field teaching may challenge pre-service teachers' knowledge schema, skills, and attitude. It can make pre-service teachers realize that principles and theories, which they learned in their principles of teaching class, may not be applicable to some learners as echoed by in the study of Zeichner (2010). Accordingly, the old paradigm of university-based teacher education where academic knowledge is viewed as the authoritative source of knowledge about teaching needs to change to one where there is a nonhierarchical interplay between academic, practitioner, and community expertise. This is true today given the fact that children are born in a world where technology has changed the landscape of how things are done and how they acquire information. Students no longer rely on their teachers for new information as access to information is just a fingertip away. Children at their tender age can use gadgets more efficiently than their parents or grandparents. Teachers must cope with this turn of events in information-dissemination. This new philosophy of teacher education will better prepare pre-service teachers in enacting complex teaching practices. They must be alert to take the lead and complement what learners know in order to make classroom learning meaningful and rewarding.

In the Philippines, pre-service teaching is given utmost attention (Department of Education, 2015; Teaching Education Council, 2011) because of the wide opportunities and rich experiences that prepare pre-service teachers to meet the challenges in the real learning environment. As these pre-service teachers go to the field, they would be encountering learners with diverse needs. They would also be confronted with problems such as inadequacies of teaching resources, which is one of the problems besetting public schools in the Philippines, and curricular changes like the K to 12 curriculum, which they had not learned in their classrooms (Ortilla, 2015). The researcher was a part of a team who were upskilled to train DepED teachers in the implementation of the K to 12 curricula. During the training, the need for resources and extensive training was reiterated to carry out the lessons following standard guidelines. The need to train pre-service teachers and fully prepare them for the work ahead was also emphasized.

Because of the new curriculum, processes and procedures in teaching and learning in classroom are different from the actual situation. The changes necessitate mass trainings for teachers and school heads because the tools which they acquire may no longer be useful once they implement the K to 12 curriculum (Official Gazette, 2012). This study was therefore conceptualized to help enrich the field exposure of MAPEH (Music, Arts, Physical Education and Health) pre-service teachers in Region 3. The study explored some evidence of transformative teaching from the reflection logs of pre-service MAPEH teachers using Butin's cultural lens. The pre-service teachers were enrolled in their final professional education course, practice teaching, which aimed to provide them with essential first-hand experiences about the nature and behavior of learners, to establish conducive learning environment, design lesson plans based on the prescribed curriculum and learners' needs and abilities, implement lesson plans using appropriate instructional strategies and materials, assess learning outcomes utilizing valid tasks and tools, and participate in other activities relevant to the teaching profession. As a result, the pre-service teachers have the opportunity to apply the pedagogical theories into real classroom situations. The changes brought about by the K to 12 Curriculum and changes in the communities brought about by technology should not derail the confidence of the pre-service teachers in the actual field. They can only do this if their training enables them to acquire the skills to be resilient and transformative in their approach in the actual field. The initial tool to possess

resiliency and transformative teaching is to be observant and reflective of the learners and their learning environment. Using critical thinking, they are expected to design teaching that meet the learning needs of the students and equip them with skills to confront their daily problems to their advantage.

### 1.1. Framework of the Study

Pre-service teaching is a vital aspect in the lives of students who are just a step away from graduation and soon will join the teaching force in an actual field. Being in an actual classroom enables the development of critical thinking among them. Pre-service teachers should analyze classroom scenarios vis-à-vis theories acquired and act on events accordingly. At some point, they may need to vary their approaches depending on the situation.

Critical social theory is a school of thought that stresses reflective assessments and critique of society and culture by applying knowledge from the social sciences and humanities (Corradetti, 2015). This theory was pioneered by Marx and Freud when they started to criticize capitalism as an economic ideology. They strongly criticized the oppression of the working group by the capitalists. They opined that only when the working group rises against the dominant groups can liberation of the oppressed be achieved (Seiler, 2008). Critical theorists believed that examining social conditions would uncover hidden structures. They believed that knowledge is power. When one understands that one is being oppressed, this understanding propels one to take action in order to change the situation.

In education, critical social theory has influenced radical changes in curriculum and pedagogy over the years (Ross & DeLeon, 2010). Prominent theorists who are members of the Frankfurt School such as Max Horkheimer (1895-1973), Theodore Adorno (1903-1969), and Herbert Marcuse (1898-1979) introduced upheavals in educational thoughts and systems (Jessop, 2012). Another prominent critical theorists is Jurgen Habermas whose theory of communicative action is receiving increasing attention in education theory and is of great importance to anyone seeking to understand and defend the role of schools in developing democratic values and practice (Bolton, 2005). In addition, critical pedagogy, a term coined by Henry Giroux in 1983, has its origins in Critical Theory and describes the work of theorists and practitioners alike that has an emancipatory orientation (Guilherme, 2006). Hudson (2014) holds that Giroux's critical pedagogy elaborated the philosophical foundations for a theory and practice of education that would be not only critical of established institutions and practices but also capable of transforming those institutions and practices, with the ultimate goal of transforming society itself.

The arm of critical learning theory and social learning is reflective thinking. Through reflections, an individual could analyze events and derive logical conclusions. According to Carrington and Selva (2010) reflective practice can and should be explicit, direct, thoughtful and patient, using personal reflection-in-action, to interpret one's service, reaction and dealings with people.

In teaching, the role of reflective thinking in the search for quality and relevant outputs is paramount. Teachers could use their reflections to transform learning. As emphasized by Facun and Nool (2012) teachers should reflect on their ways of teaching the concepts to children. Through critical social theory in education, quality is proportional to the depth of analysis that teachers and students have at their disposal (Makam, 2012).

The use of critical social theory in pre-service teacher education programs can help pre-service teachers to become fully cognizant and introspective of their own assumptions through self-reflection and self-criticism (Agger, 1991). Through this theoretical framework, the unexamined beliefs and knowledge about learning, teaching and the role of schools in society that the pre-service teachers initially bring into teacher training will be analyzed and evaluated to develop a sound pedagogical belief system that serves as their guide in instructional practices. For example, a pre-service teacher may at first think that students learn in the same way. However, upon their exposure to the teaching-learning process by serving as a classroom teacher during practical teaching and reflecting as to why some students do not perform well as other students do, they will be prompted to realize that students have different background and abilities and will be directed to plan varied learning activities and multiple instructional

strategies and materials. Another belief that pre-service teachers may hold at first is that schools have the sole major responsibility in educating learners. But their direct classroom teaching experience and thoughtful reflection will lead them to believing that education needs cooperative participation of different stakeholders including parents and community. The actual teaching practice and introspective examination of their practices will lead pre-service teachers to transformative teaching.

The 21st century teachers are urged to mold critical thinkers in order to confront issues surrounding them (Smith, 2014). Dewey, the theorist who revolutionized educational strategies through his modern views of what teaching and learning must be, suggested that reflective thinking is an active, persistent, and careful consideration of a belief or supposed form of knowledge, of the grounds that support knowledge, and the further conclusions to which that knowledge leads (Reflective Thinking, 2012).

Poyraz and Usta (2013) investigated the reflective thinking tendencies of 449 preservice teachers who studied in various public institutions in Istanbul. Reflective thinking would make more sense in teaching rather than acquiring merely acquiring pieces of information. Meaningful learning is anchored on processing, transforming, and reproducing information acquired appropriate in a given classroom environment. The findings of the study conducted showed that reflective thinking abilities of the participants were varied with respect to the growing up place and gender. The present study also delved into the reflection logs of 21 pre-service teachers to determine evidence of transformative learning and emancipation in their actual classroom teaching experience.

Furthermore, recognizing the importance of reflective journals in teaching, Yasin, Rahman, and Ahmad (2012) developed and validated a framework for reflective learning using portfolios. The framework included rubric to evaluate the reflections of students in the portfolios. It is then imperative that teachers should guide students in reflective thinking, which is an arm of critical social learning theory.

As part of classroom requirements, reflective thinking should be encouraged by the teachers and should be used by the students to make sense of their classroom activities and write them in diaries or journals (Aquino & Nool, 2018). Lee (2005) suggested that reflections depend upon interplay of factors which include personal background, field experience contexts, and the mode of communication. Reflections must be evaluated based on content and depth. Even so, Butin (2006) developed a ruler to evaluate teachers' journals or reflection logs based on cultural lens.

A cultural perspective reflects how the exposure of the pre-service teachers increased their appreciation for diversity. This dissects the realizations of the pre-service teachers on individual differences as a result of varying cultural beliefs, traditions and values and how their field exposures have developed stronger moral and ethical sense and spirit of volunteerism and civic engagement.

The Butin's model was used in the study of Tangen, Mercer, Spooner-Lane, and Hepple (2011) when they explored the developing intercultural competence of Australian pre-service teachers. The written reflection logs of pre-service teachers were analyzed using four lenses. They were challenged by the presence or inclusion of non-Australian students until they were able to project how they could take their new understandings into the classrooms as inclusive teachers. Likewise, Butin's cultural lens was used in analyzing the reflection logs of the MAPEH pre-service teachers.

### *1.2. Effect of Culture in Teaching and Learning*

The study of Futterman (2015) concluded that cultural tendencies of the learners impact the way they participate in education. Accordingly, in order to engage students effectively in the learning process, teachers need to be acquainted with the students' academic abilities, individually, rather than relying on racial or ethnic stereotypes or prior experience with other students of similar backgrounds. This assertion of Futterman (2015) implies that culture plays a significant role in meaningful teaching and learning.

### 1.3. Objective of the Study

This study aimed to analyze the Music, Arts, Physical Education and Health (MAPEH) pre-service teachers' reflection logs using cultural lens of Butin's model. This study looked into how MAPEH teachers use their reflection logs in planning and executing teaching and learning using the cultural lens of Butin's model. Specifically, it delved into the reflective logs of the pre-service teachers from selected teacher education institutions (TEIs), which offered Bachelor of Secondary Education (BSED) major in MAPEH particularly and had acquired at least Level III accreditation.

## 2. METHOD

### 2.1. Research Design

This study adopted the critical social design in analyzing and integrating all the components of the study and addressing the research objectives. Critical social research is based on the concept that knowledge is constructed by current sets of social interactions (Harvey, 1990). Data gathered from the reflection logs of the participants were based on such interactions, e.g., their classroom experiences. Knowledge was then generated on how MAPEH pre-service teachers use reflections in enhancing their pedagogical competencies and exercise transformational teaching.

### 2.2. Participants and Setting

This study delved into the reflection logs of select pre-service teachers in Music, Arts, Physical Education and Health who were exposed to these disciplines in partner schools to carry out their experiential learning. The researcher selected 21 MAPEH pre-service teachers from seven Teacher Education Institutions in Region 3 as participants of the study. The participants were selected through maximum variation sampling method. This technique of sampling enabled the selection of conservative number of participants which maximized the representation or diversity relevant to the research questions (Robert Wood Johnson Foundation, 2008).

Participants represented the slow, average, and best learners to achieve balance in the analysis of the problem at hand. Seven of the students represented the best pre-service students (one from each TEI); seven came from the average cluster (one also from each TEI); and another seven represented the bottom cluster (one from each TEI). The researcher had asked the supervisors in each school to recommend their exemplary pre-service teachers, the average, and bottom performers based on their General Weighted Average (GWA). The researcher believed that the supervisors from the respective schools knew their participants' academic performance so their recommendations were considered in the selection of study participants. Reflection logs of these 21 students in their prescribed field study books (three from each TEI) were analyzed. The small number of participants enabled thorough analysis of their reflection logs and yield rich conclusions. To maintain anonymity of participants, only their numbers and not names were reflected in their logs.

### 2.3. Data Sources

The main data sources of this study were the reflection logs (based on the questions from the Experiential Handbooks) of the participants. The participants answered the questions in their handbooks which detailed their pre-service experiences. According to Thomas, Nelson, and Silverman (2012) qualitative data recording devices include notebooks, narrative field logs, and diaries, in which researchers record their reactions, concerns, and speculations. Moreover, aside from the questions in the handbook, other questions were also included which served as scaffolds or guides to elicit reflections that enquired how the participants addressed diversity in class, faced political pressures and about their realizations during pre-service teaching exposure. These additional questions were crafted by the researcher, which enabled the participants to share their experiences in handling cultural diversity and pressures from stakeholders such as parents, cooperating teachers and principals. These questions



were essential in extracting their thoughts and how they had resolved pressures. These are key elements in transformational teaching.

The additional questions were framed in such a way that they had to dig deeper into their thoughts and their realizations that norms may differ considering school environments and principles, philosophies, techniques, methods and these may be modified in some aspects, upheld in other areas, or totally look for new ways of approaching educational confrontations. The reflection logs of some pre-service teachers showed their realizations and their attempts to transform pedagogies. These were the indicators of their emancipation from teaching constraints which emanated from their actual field exposure.

Furthermore, interviews were conducted with some of the participants to ensure that the researcher captured the participants' thoughts correctly. The researcher arranged a schedule of interview with the supervisors. The said interview had extracted substantial information which deepened the researcher's understanding of the reflections from the participants' logs. The interview was deemed necessary to clarify short reflections from some of the participants especially since the researcher observed some participants' responses which were substantial but were only presented in bullet forms or phrases. Lastly, the researcher also conducted actual observation with three participants whom he had supervised during their pre-service teaching.

#### *2.4. Data Collection Procedure*

The researcher sought permission to conduct the study from the presidents of the TEIs where the study was conducted. Upon approval, the deans were approached to arrange meeting with the participants. The researcher oriented them about the study and sought their consent. Upon approval, the participants were asked to reproduce their Experiential Handbooks after writing their journals on a weekly basis. For the additional questions, participants wrote their reflections on a separate paper. There were a total of 19 questions which the participants answered. Five questions were from the handbook and 14 were crafted by the researcher.

Data from the reflection logs of the participants were gathered. The coverage of the journal was from Week 1 of their exposure up to the end week during the Second Semester, AY 2015-2016. These reflection logs were analyzed by the researcher using Butin's technical lens framework. To determine whether the researcher's analyses of the pre-service teachers' journal entries were accurate, he sought the help of two experts. As a result, themes were extracted from the participants' reflections.

#### *2.5. Data Analysis*

Qualitative data analysis techniques were employed in the study. In extracting themes from the participants' reflections, the researcher tabulated all the reflections by each question to enable the use of constant comparison technique in analyzing qualitative data (such as the participants' reflections in this study). The tabulation was facilitated by a general matrix which contained the participants' codes, participants' reflections, meanings, concepts, and themes.

In coding, the researcher assigned capital letter alphabets to represent the school of the participants and Hindu-Arabic numerical was assigned to the corresponding individual participant. For example, A1 would represent participant 1 from the best pre-service teachers out of seven participants from each school; B1 would represent second participant from the average cluster in the same school; A2 was the participant from the best pre-service teacher from the second school and so on. The capital letter alphabets represented the best, average and bottom clusters, while the Hindu-Arabic numerals represented the schools.

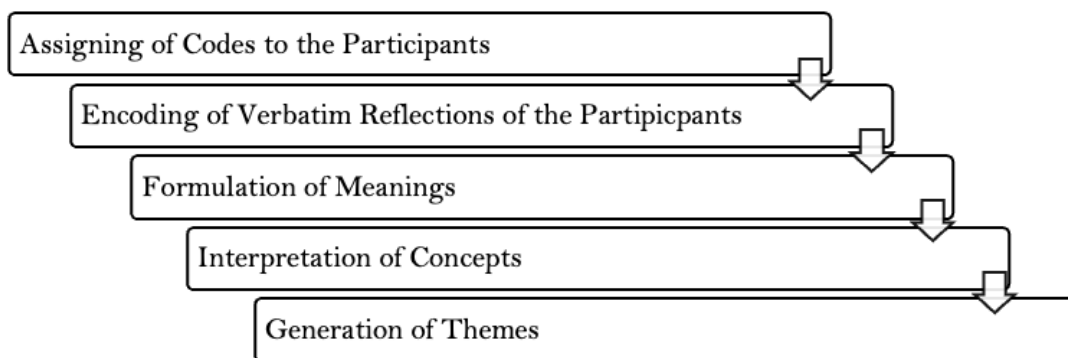


Figure-1. Data Analysis Process.

Figure 1 shows the process by which the data were analyzed. First, codes were assigned to the participants. Second, the participants' verbatim reflections in response to the questions prepared by the researcher were encoded. Third, meanings were formulated based on the analysis of the researcher. Fourth, concepts were elicited based on the interpretation of the researcher. Lastly, themes and categories were generated guided by cultural lens of Butin's model. Categories or themes generated using thematic analysis technique required constant comparison and evaluation of the emergent understandings with the help of two experts, as suggested by [Stemler \(2001\)](#). These experts must independently review the content and come up with a set of features. The first expert was the director of Physical Education and supervisor of experiential learning in a reputable university in the National Capital Region. The other expert was a supervisor in experiential learning and held an undergraduate degree in Physical Education, masters in Teaching Physical Education and doctorate in Educational Leadership. The purpose of engaging expert evaluators was to avoid the researcher's bias in appraising the reflection logs of students. The evaluators, including the researcher, compared the analysis and discussed on some points where they may have had variations. With this method, the evaluation became more objective. The themes generated through this process eventually were adopted to address the problems of this study.

### 2.6. Ethical Considerations

To uphold research ethics, the participants were asked to fill out consent form after orienting them thoroughly on the purpose, process, and benefits of the study. Their anonymity would be secured by ensuring that their names were not mentioned anywhere in the paper. In addition, they were advised to withdraw from the study any time they decide to. Moreover, they were advised that they will not receive any compensation as participants of the study, but they would be informed of the benefits gained from the study. They were told that the framework developed in the study would be useful in improving the competence of pre-service teachers.

### 2.7. Enhancement of Quality

To ensure the trustworthiness and quality of the data gathered, five qualities offered by [Lincoln and Guba \(1994\)](#) were observed ([Robert Wood Johnson Foundation, 2008](#)). All throughout, the researcher upheld credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability that required the avoidance of the researcher's personal bias and those findings were shaped by the participants only. The themes were generated using varied techniques by comparing the reflections. The researcher based his techniques on the study by [Ryan and Bernard \(2003\)](#) that validated ways in generating themes from qualitative data. In their study, they used word repetitions, indigenous categories, key words in context and cutting and sorting. The researcher used highlighters to find similar words repeatedly used by the participants and later grouped them together under the Butin lenses. The reflections were



cut from the general matrix and pasted to the appropriate lens in another matrix. Based on the dominant words used by the participant, themes were formulated.

The inquiry audit was utilized by engaging the assistance of two experts in analyzing the data. Data recording was carefully done to include presenting excerpts of verbatim narratives, while maintaining confidentiality of identity of participants in discussing the data. In instances where the researcher needed to validate entries in the reflection logs, interviews were conducted with the concerned participants. In addition, to guarantee credibility, transferability, confirmability of data and to avoid bias, the researcher ensured coding of reflection logs. The coding helped to sort out differences and similarities of responses and to arrive at generalizations or conclusions. The study also presented verbatim accounts of the participants to support findings. Casual interviews with some cooperating teachers and supervisors were also conducted to triangulate the entries of the participants in their reflection logs. The results were also discussed with some cooperating teachers and supervisors. Also, to ensure data sufficiency or saturation, the researcher conferred with two experts for extensive and unbiased analyses.

### 3. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

#### 3.1. Cultural Competency Enables Appropriate Pedagogical Interventions to Address Diverse Learning Needs

The inclusion and consideration of culture in the teaching and learning process is essential in obtaining purposeful learning. [Ubben and McCann \(2003\)](#) emphasized that teachers must integrate cultural sensitivity and cultural relevance into the curriculum through an attitude of transformation process of beliefs and instructional practices. The reflections of the participants showed that being familiar with the culture of students would help in adjusting their approach in teaching. Likewise, they showed their awareness that learners are unique, and they have to spend time to be familiar with their culture or personality. This provided them flexibility in utilizing varied teaching methods and strategies and to be considerate in accepting the learners 'uniqueness.'

The participants were fully aware that the knowledge of the learners' culture would enable the development of individualized learning. B6, for instance, was convinced that knowing the culture of the learners is the first step to take in preparing for classroom teaching.

*"I have to know first their culture... I have to be prepared because it is a different situation and embrace them with happiness..." – B6, 2015*

Participant B6 perceived that students had varied culture, and a teacher's acquaintance of the students' culture enabled her to construct teaching and create learning environment appropriate to their unique needs. The participant was cognizant that her teaching plans had to be tailored to the cultural circumstances of the learners. This was affirmed in the report of [Rosenberg, Westling, and McLeskey \(2010\)](#) that the culture of students had an impact on education. Accordingly, teachers' lack of familiarity of the students' culture led them to interpret behavior based on a collective culture. For example, they pointed out that Asian students tend to be quieter in class while Americans were more aggressive and active. With this knowledge, teachers must devise strategies to motivate Asian students to be more active and capitalize on the aggressiveness of American students to make learning fun and meaningful.

Similarly, B3 had related her learning about personality differences. Particularly, B3 learned that students had varied reasons for coming to class late, others were too sensitive in class, and learners had their own motivations in performing in class.

*"There are many things that I learned from my learners, I learned that some of them are too sensitive so that you cannot easily scold them. I notice one of my students because she is always late and one time I ask her why and I found out that she needs to walk how many kilometers and passed through the river in order to reach the school, so I learned that every performance of the students there are many reasons behind and as a teacher it is your to find out." – B3, 2015*

Personality differences resulted from cultural differences. [Nada \(2012\)](#) contended that different personality traits enroot in an individual because of cultural factors. [Cole \(2016\)](#) also found, in his metacognitive study, the

involvement of cultural factors in virtually all aspects of socio-emotional functioning of children. He then recommended cross-cultural research in understanding the role of social and cultural conditions in the development of social competence and problems of individuals. Similarly, Cole (2016) accentuated the significance of classroom teaching in a multi-cultural context. This is enhanced when students are inculcated in understanding themselves first, through school projects that encouraged involvement of parents, grandparents, or the community.

In teaching MAPEH, the culture of students needs to be integrated in their learning activities and projects especially in Music and Arts. Various ethnic groups in the Philippines have rich Music and Arts which must be highlighted in schools. In health, hygiene and sanitation practices depend on the cultural beliefs and traditions of the students; this is seen among cultural groups who advise women not to take a bath during menstrual period because this might cause mental illness. These are examples of cultural influence on the behavior or personality of individuals.

Likewise, B7 expressed the importance of knowing the individual student's needs and respond accordingly. There is also a need to know students' strengths and weaknesses. After which, there should be a supplement on students' strengths or how to improve the areas where they fall behind.

*"First, I will listen on what they need to do inside the class. Second, I need to understand every need (s) of my learners and lastly, I will sum up these so that I can give a proper response to my learners." (B7, 2015)*

The participants' reflections were supported by Schreiner (2016) who asserted that respect begins with acknowledging the rights, dignity, and perspectives of everyone. Teachers must get to know the learners by asking them about their customs and traditions.

A3 (2015) also wrote:

*"...I have to be creative and flexible on dealing with learners especially with every learner's diverse background and experiences. Let's say for instance on their learning style preferences, I have to take it seriously from where they learn the most for them to learn efficiently and to have deeper understanding."*

A3 acknowledged that learners have diverse background and experiences that determine their learning preferences and needs. Because of this understanding, appropriate teaching strategies were constructed. This was supported by the assertion of Parks (2012) that multicultural teaching and activities foster positive regard of one's culture and uniqueness. Corollary to this, multicultural teaching promotes close working relationship in the learning environment. According to Schreiner (2016) understanding differences is a challenge but it is vital in keeping harmony in the classroom. Instead of fighting against differences, teachers must embrace and respect them. They must use the challenges as opportunities to grow and develop. Recognizing and respecting individual differences in a class help teacher respond or handle students with unique needs successfully.

Moreover, the reflections of the teachers showed their application of the multiple intelligence theory to appreciate individual differences. They were aware that students have varied inclinations and have learning paces. B3 (2015) openly shared that:

*"By applying the nine multiple intelligences by Howard Gardner, we all know that the students have different intelligence some of them are good in math some of them are not, so as a teacher you need to know their strengths and weaknesses in order to support/supply their needs to learn well."*

The participant recognized the role of multiple intelligence theory in understanding and responding to individual differences. The application of the multiple intelligence theory avoided comparison and aided the teacher in developing the talents of the students. Further, the multiple intelligence theory was developed by Gardner in 1983. This theory had grabbed the attention of many educators and used this philosophy to re-direct curriculum and pedagogy.

The American Institute for Learning and Human Development (2015) put emphasis on the role of multiple intelligence theory in adult education. The application of the theory paved the way in redesigning education as it addressed the differences in student inclinations. It gave adults a new way of looking at themselves and in

maneuvering their lives toward their fulfillment and satisfaction. In this study, pre-service teachers had found this theory relevant to the students they handled.

C3 (2015) even attested that:

*“As a teacher, we must be very flexible and very sensitive to your learner’s needs. You must use variety of teaching methods were all the learners could cope up and learned. We must always consider to different type of learners whether they are visual learners, audio visual, or even tactile learners.”*

As mentioned, teaching is not collective or prescriptive. Rather, it is individualized and exploratory. Students find themselves –their inclinations and use their faculties toward reaching their goals. The teacher’s role then is to guide them toward their chosen paths. Simply put, C3 considered the importance of the students’ learning styles in designing pedagogical strategies. According to Lane (2015) “...where individual differs is the strength of this intelligence... and in the ways that such intelligence is invoked and combined to carry-out different tasks, solve diverse problems, and progress in various demands...”

The mentioned reflections are pieces of evidence that the participant knew how diversity and uniqueness affect teaching and learning. They were aware of the need to diagnose and understand the culture or personality of the learners in designing strategies to meet their learning needs. This fulfilled the core teaching and learning strategy of the K to 12 Curriculum – to contextualize and localize learning based on the characteristics and culture of the student’s teachers are handling (Department of Education, 2012). As Dean (2016) also puts it, “an effective teacher should take into account the intellectual, social and cultural characteristics of each student being taught. Remaining cognizant of the fact that each child is different and has different learning styles, a teacher in a diverse world is enthusiastic about their responsibility to teach all students in the most effective way.”

### 3.2. Touching on Real Life Experiences Allows Consequential Learning

Considering the culture of students in the educative process is touching on their real life. The cultural factors are considered in designing the educative process and they must also contextualize learning. Independent teaching considers wider range of activities in their classrooms and focuses more on applying teaching principles and theories to the situation of learners (Mayer, Lan, & Baillie, 2010). Knowledge of the theories does not determine successful teaching, but the students’ application of lessons to real life is more effective for learning to take place. In short, teachers must contextualize learning. This idea was reflected in the logs of some pre-service teachers.

The reflections of the participants hinted their awareness that meaningful learning is achieved when teachers touch on the personal lives of the students. To get their interest, teachers must not detach lessons from the real life of students.

As B2 (2015) expressed:

*“In teaching MAPEH is not about the knowledge, theories. But great part of teaching MAPEH is you should know how to apply the theories that you’ve taught your students. Skill is one of the aspects that a MAPEH teacher should have. Because most of the activities in MAPEH are hands-on, teaching MAPEH is not just about knowledge and theories; but the greatest part in teaching MAPEH is that you should know how to apply the theories that you’ve taught your students. Skill is one of the aspects that a MAPEH teacher should have because most of the activities in MAPEH are hands-on...”*

It was evident from the reflection that B2 fully embraced the principle that teaching is not just all about memorizing concepts or theories; it is more about teaching students how they can apply them in real life. It is training them to use their knowledge to grapple with daily life. According to McGonigal (2005) the most solitary part of transformational teaching is critical reflection which requires students to examine current assumptions in real life. Teachers, ergo, must connect to the actual situation of the students.

In line with this, A7 (2015) broached:

*“I have seen that students are interested if I give examples that they are experiencing at home and with their friends.”*

A7 successfully aroused the interest of the learners by touching on familiar experiences of students. When lessons are related to the experiences of the students, they are stimulated to respond. Students are also taught to reflect on events in their personal lives. Reflecting enables drawing forth cognitive and emotional information from several sources. Through reflection, students find meaning in their lessons and enables students to be producers and not just consumers of knowledge.

This connects to the Microsoft Expert Educator Kalpana Kishore Kumar's statement "Real Teachers are Part of our Lives." According to Kumar (as cited in (The Global Forum, 2014)) teachers who inspire possess the ability to connect to their students, give pieces of themselves, learn from them and guide them along the path of knowledge and change. Kumar's philosophy in teaching is training the students to possess skills that are essential in life. He saw the promise of tourism industry in Brunei. So, what Kumar did was to group students to propose ways to improve tourism using technology. Throughout the project, Kumar worked closely with the students. They exchanged and passed on and ideas and experiences. They collaborated well within and among the groups. This is the kind of teaching approach teachers must design for the students. They should teach within the context of community needs where the students belong; students must feel the importance of their lessons in understanding and improving their lives.

#### 4. CONCLUSION

Pre-service teachers put premium to cultural competency and considered diversity in the educative process. To develop appreciation of students to classroom learning, they need to see the practical application of the knowledge and skills in their personal life, family, and community. They should feel significant in changing their society. Teachers must help them understand themselves and appreciate their uniqueness. To do this successfully, teachers need to connect with students. They can talk to them about issues even beyond the classroom. They can talk about students' problems and concerns. They need to be familiar with their students to make classroom learning relevant. This familiarity with students elevates teaching-learning process to a level that will produce students equipped with skills to survive the complexities of life.

Corollary to this, MAPEH curriculum touches on the personal lives of students. Music and Arts are two disciplines that are considered significant by people either for inspiration, expression of loneliness or admiration, and as a source of livelihood. Music and Arts also depict culture, tradition, and beliefs of various groups. There is a force that goes with musical and artistic expressions. Teachers can use the force to inspire their students to get involved in their communities. Likewise, sports have come a long way in bringing people together. Despite cheering for different teams during competitions, in a way, people widened their acquaintances and appreciation for other people. MAPEH therefore, is best taught if teachers welcome cultural diversity, make learning forceful by touching on the personal experiences of the learners, and enhance the skills of students to make them useful in improving their lives and their community. These comprise the attributes of transformational teaching and learning.

#### 5. STUDY'S LIMITATIONS

The researcher acknowledged some limitations of the study. Firstly, the researcher failed to observe all the participants in their classrooms to record his own observations. His observations were only confined to three participants whom he handled in the pre-service teaching. Secondly, no information was generated from the cooperating teachers; parents and students were not also interviewed. Thirdly, the researcher mainly based his analyses on the data from the reflection logs of the pre-service teachers. These limitations must be included or catered in a similar study in the future to come up with a more credible and conclusive generalizations.

## 6. RECOMMENDATIONS

The classroom experience of pre-service teachers in actual teaching and learning environment must enhance their competence as teachers and enable them to use reflection as a means towards transformative teaching and emancipation. Depending on the situation, learned pedagogical principles, approaches, strategies and techniques may not apply but it does not mean teaching must stop. It should challenge teachers to be resourceful and innovative to cope with changes in the teaching-learning environment.

Teachers must have the ability to appreciate cultural diversity and be able to design learning based on individual needs and preferences. Teachers must put into mind that students have diverse backgrounds that may affect teaching-learning process. Teachers must capitalize on the uniqueness of students and put them together to enrich teaching and learning. Diversity breaks monotony if teachers can blend each uniqueness into harmony in class just like a beautiful orchestra where all musical instruments are unique but altogether create amazing music provided a conductor is there for guidance. Teachers could make cultural diversity as an opportunity to make learning interesting and fun.

The researcher, however, was not able to cover some aspects, which could be considered as pertinent in this study, like the non-inclusion of other school stakeholders such as parents, teachers, and cooperating teachers as sources of data. This could be considered in future studies. In view of these limitations, future studies may be conducted to enable more comprehensive gathering of data from all the stakeholders so that the reflections of the pre-service teachers may be validated. This will enable deeper understanding and appreciation of the ability of the pre-service teachers for transformational teaching. The deeper is the understanding of the teachers' ability for transformative teaching, the better curriculum will be designed for pre-service teaching that will allow pre-service teachers to be more reflexive of the events in their learning environment.

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