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Transformation in Context: A Self-Study of Facilitating Transformative Learning in Undergraduate Management Education

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Abstract

This self-study explores the learning experiences and transformative professional development of a management educator facilitating transformative learning theory in Nepalese undergraduate business education. The main purpose of this study is to creatively narrate, critically reflect, and constructively discuss my lived experiences as an educator who has set out on a transformative learning intervention with learning steps that facilitate and guide students through stages of (i) disorienting dilemma, (ii) critical reflection, (iii) dialogue and engagement, discussions, rational discourse, and engagement, and culminating in (iv) perspective transformation. Self-study research has been applied in this study to inquire into my own professional learning experiences and to generate experience-based knowledge. This study finds that the facilitation of each learning step enhances students' critical thinking, self-awareness, and real-world problem-solving skills. Similarly, evaluation of challenges encountered by the educator/researcher in these learning steps indicates that prevalent academic standards, existing pedagogical practices, and social and cultural variables affect undergraduate students' educational needs and expectations, as well as how and when they perceive their learning as transformative. Hence, before implementing transformative learning interventions into practice, academic institutions claiming to provide transformative education in Nepal must establish a realistic context-based educational framework. Furthermore, this study has generated pathways for educators in Nepal who teach business and management studies to implement instructional designs, pedagogical orientations, and learning methodologies that provide adequate context for perspective transformations that support transformative learning praxis in higher education.

Keywords: *Transformative learning. Self-study. Undergraduate. Perspective Transformation.*
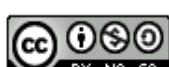
Introduction

This self-study delves into my lived classroom experiences as an educator who has initiated the facilitation of transformative learning in undergraduate business and management studies to enhance his student's critical thinking, self-awareness, and ability to handle real-world business and professional situations (Hoggan & Hoggan-Kloubert, 2023). Transformative learning creates a teaching and learning context where students can critically reflect upon their frame of references and recognize how these references influence the way they perceive, understand, and interpret emerging business, economic and political realities and transformations taking place at personal, professional and social levels (Mezirow, 2008). With the implementation of transformative learning, this study argues that undergraduate students of business and management studies can develop an inclusive, critical, open, creative, and reflective perspective on the business environment and cultivate their self-awareness, critical thinking, and creative confidence (Closs & Antonello, 2011; Longmore et al., 2018)

Moreover, this study explores the transformative professional development of an educator who has chosen to abandon traditional methods of teaching management education in favor of a transformative education framework that encourages critical reflection, dialogues, collaborations, and active participation (Cranton, 2016; Mezirow, 2018; Luitel & Dahal, 2021). Before taking a turn towards transformative learning, as an educator/researcher, I was also committed to prevailing methods of teaching management sciences and business studies in the Nepalese context, limiting my professional practices and pedagogical references to theoretical frameworks, conceptual models, descriptions and de-contextualized case studies. More importantly, in undergraduate business education in Nepal, the educator standing in front of the class is still framed as the primary source of knowledge with a responsibility to follow a set syllabus with prescribed learning objectives and provide comprehensive insights into established management theories, concepts and models (Datar et al., 2010; Christie et al., 2015).

In addition, due to the emphasis on written exam to evaluate students' academic outcomes and prioritizing test scores over more integrated, holistic, or transformative learning, students in undergraduate management and business studies classes have limited opportunities for contemplative, creative, creative, integrative, personalized, and in-depth understanding of subject matter (Christie et al., 2015). Due to this, undergraduate management students lack openness to diversity, independence, thinking, creative self-concept, innovation, and entrepreneurship efficacy (Closs & Antonello, 2011). More importantly, within a conventional education setting still prevalent in Nepalese management education, an educator like me is taking a turn to facilitate transformative learning in the classroom context and stumbles into disorienting dilemmas (Green, 2023). This experience of disorienting dilemmas has stimulated me to critically reflect and question the underpinning educational assumptions, norms, standards of expectations and evaluations, and curriculum frameworks commonly accepted and applied for teaching management and business studies in Nepal (DeAngelis, 2022).

Doubts, Dilemmas, and Critical Reflections

As Mezirow (2008) describes, a disorienting dilemma is the first phase of transformative learning, referring to the situation when an educator experiences unexpected situations; it culminates in the disruption of his pre-existing perceptions. As an undergraduate management educator, after my thoughtful reflections on transformative learning theory, a sense of shock and surprise emerged within my consciousness as to why undergraduate students in management education in Nepal still emphasize rote memorization, note-taking, standardized tests, and have limited themselves as passive learners, and where they are satisfied

with absorbing information from the educator standing in front of the class? (Cunliffe, 2002; Close & Antonello, 2011)

Here, as an educator, I began to reflect on lecture-based instruction methods critically and started to ask myself, without opportunities for critical reflections, rational dialogues, and perspective transformations, how can undergraduate students of business and management studies translate and integrate what they've learned into decisions and actions in real-world scenarios. I began to realize that nothing fits in with the realities of the business market; we have the dynamism of the market, disruptive innovations, divergent thinking, self-efficacy, professionalism, creativity, critical reflections, interdisciplinary thinking, and design thinking. However, inside our classes, we have undergraduate students who often remain passive recipients of information, resulting in superficial understanding among students regarding complex dynamics of business realities and markets (Datar et al., 2010). Hence, confronted with a disorienting dilemma and self-doubts as an educator, I was instigated to challenge and critically reflect on previously unquestioned teaching experiences, beliefs, and standardizations (DeAngelis, 2022). After all, a disorienting dilemma prompts individuals to reevaluate their understanding of the world, and such dilemmas also encourage critical reflection as individuals when we begin to doubt the validity of their previous assumptions (Laros, 2017). Hence, having faced a disorienting dilemma I began to seek new perspectives on teaching and learning practices as an educator. This process involves exploring alternative viewpoints and understanding the complexities of the issues at hand (Cranton & Taylor, 2012).

Shift in Perspective

After processing my disorienting dilemmas and engaging in critical reflection, I decided to integrate my shift in perspectives and insights regarding pedagogical orientations, reflective practices, collaborations, and learning steps regarding transformative learning into my teaching and behavior, attitudes, and classroom decision-making (Laros, 2017). Eventually, my turn towards transformative learning has encouraged me to become an empowered agent of change, equipped with a deeper understanding of myself and the educational context around me. (Laros, 2017; DeAngelis, 2022). Furthermore, these calls for transformative learning and praxis have become more prominent in recent years in the Nepalese higher education system as well (Luitel & Dahal, 2020). Still, concerns and conversations are rarely translated into an implementable framework designed for transformative learning theory that includes pedagogical strategies and learning steps. Transformative research in the Nepalese higher education context has been thus far dominated by specific classroom practices, key components of teacher education and faculty development programs, and interpretive research models for reflecting upon autoethnographic lived experiential narratives and stories of teachers/researchers (Luitel, 2020; Manandhar, 2022; Shrestha, 2022; Dahal et al., 2023; Wagle et al., 2023)

In the Nepalese context, previous studies have applied transformative learning as a theoretical or conceptual referent to interpreting their lived educational experiences or used it as an approach for critical reflection that allows educators to frame and understand their education journey or classroom practices without any comprehensive and stepwise transformative learning interventions. Hence, there is no research covering the comprehensive transformative learning stages and steps that result in the facilitation and assessment of transformative learning in the context of Nepalese higher education concerning business studies and management education (De Witt et al., 2024). More importantly, transformative learning theory is not just an objective of study within itself for theoretical or conceptual reflections. It also includes a critical exploration of perspectives from which one engages in the educational context with plans, facilitation of learning designs, and pedagogical strategies (De Witt et al., 2024). Besides, this paper exemplifies how transformative learning theory enables

an educator to understand that social structures and belief systems can influence undergraduate students' attitudes toward learning and how they make meaning of their educational experiences based on the value systems they develop.

Realizing the importance of transformative education is not enough; it is necessary to explore how educators are applying transformative learning interventions through a learning journey with students (Hoggan, 2023). Hence, this research moves from the reflective and interpretative domain to transformative learning praxis, which refers to the practical application of transformative learning orientations as a learning stage in educational settings of management education in Nepal (Luitel & Dahal, 2020). The primary purpose of this self-study is to explore a management educator's journey in applying transformative learning theory to enhance critical thinking, self-awareness, and real-world problem-solving skills among Nepalese undergraduate business students. Furthermore, in Kathmandu Valley, business schools affiliated with different universities make a broad claim, at least in their prospectuses, promotional campaigns, learning outcomes, course objectives, and assessment evaluation criteria, that they are committed to transformative education. However, reluctantly, they don't mention the gradual learning steps or transformative learning intervention required to put theory into practice. After all, transformative learning is a process that fundamentally changes the way individuals think, feel, and act. It involves a deep, critical reflection on personal beliefs and assumptions, leading to a shift in perspective (Cranton & Taylor, 2012). The most challenging aspect here is facilitating learning approaches and stages that invite, sustain, and support transformative learning (De Witt, 2024).

Theoretical Referents

This study has formulated its theoretical foundations on the transformative learning theory. According to this theory, transformative adult learning is a metacognitive reasoning process that challenges problematic assumptions and expectations toward an inclusive, discriminating, reflective mindset that is more open to change (Mezirow, 2008). In other words, the transformative learning process enables the undergraduate to transform their perspective and question their own beliefs and assumptions, culminating in learning experiences that are dynamic, vibrant, holistic, and integrated. Transformative learning theory indicates that critical reflection on problematic frames of reference is necessary to become more inclusive, discriminating, reflective, open, and emotionally able to change both personally and in professional contexts (Mezirow, 2018). Based on the theory of transformative learning, this study explores that the claim for transformative education in business and management studies at the undergraduate level needs to be sustained by adequate educational design and pedagogical orientations that support changes in their frame of reference (Mezirow, 2008). Besides, any university or institution proclaiming to provide transformative education needs to align its educational activities and decisions towards the most significant learning outcome of transformative learning, which is perspective transformation. Hence, transformative learning steps need to culminate in a context where a student develops an entirely new frame of reference (Cranton & Taylor, 2012). In other words, if a student continues with the same frame of reference regarding purpose, meaning, significance, and functions of management education and maintains fixed assumptions about business realities and professional potentials throughout their undergraduate level education, this suggests evidence that transformative education has not occurred (Cranton, 2016; Young et al., 2022).

In this study, Mezirow's (2018) theory of perspective transformation also offers a reference for understanding and implementing the changing process when the research educator initiates transformative learning steps in his pedagogical practices to facilitate perspective transformation among his students. Likewise, Seatter and Kim (2017) suggest that

using a transformative learning approach overcomes the paradox of using pedagogies focused on knowledge transfer to teach a curriculum that can potentially transform students' thinking and actions. Moreover, regarding management studies and business education, Closs and Antonello (2011) argue that transformative learning theory stimulates critical reflection that stimulates autonomous thinking among management students and encourages them to explore collaborative, responsible, and ethical ways to manage organizations. Likewise, transformative learning theory intervention in business education encourages critical reflection, reminding students to examine their assumptions and beliefs (Mezirow, 2008). Students are guided to challenge their perspectives, enhancing problem-solving and decision-making skills. Ultimately, it transforms students into lifelong learners equipped for dynamic business environments (Closs & Antonello, 2011). In another article, Paik (2020) signifies that business educators are responsible for preparing students to become future global leaders and citizens through transformative pedagogy that combines the acquisition of knowledge and skills across multidisciplinary disciplines with meaningful and practical experiences within the subjects they are learning.

Likewise, this study is built on Luitel and Dahal (2020), where transformative praxis has been conceptualized as a methodology embedded in the commitments of practitioners to engage in the process of holistic meaning-making and reflexive engagement in the lifeworld context that results in professional development. McCusker (2013), in a study, finds that for the majority of students, transformative learning has occurred in the domain of knowledge and assumptions. Besides, Sterling (2011) specifies that transformative education challenges learners to consider their basic assumptions, ideas, and values critically, potentially involving a restructuring of their mindset, which may result in a lengthy and deep process over time as mental models undergo radical changes. Further, regarding transformative learning in a Nepalese context, Wagle et al. (2023) describe the inner transformation of educators as a missing link in transformative professional development programs and suggest that the inner transformation of the educator in the first steps towards implementation of transformative learning through pedagogical practices. In addition, Manandhar (2022), using theoretical references of transformative learning theory, reflects and portrays his educational journey, resisting disempowering educational practices, advocating progressive and empowering practices, and envisioning a transformative educational perspective.

Similarly, Luitel (2020) discovers that using context-based activities increases students' engagement in mathematics and is a component of the transformative learning process through moments of critical self-reflection. Shrestha (2022) analyzes, interprets, and gives meaning to his lived emotional experiences by utilizing the theoretical framework of transformative learning as an interpretive tool. Here, this paper highlights a research gap concerning transformative educational interventions that an educator has used to support student's transformative learning by following learning stages within the framework of transformative learning, based on a review of Nepalese literature. Although the importance of transformative education has also been recognized in conjunction with the context of Nepalese higher education, business schools and institutions involved in management sciences and business studies, including its educators, are unaware of how to design, facilitate, and implement transformative learning as an educational intervention (Longmore et al., 2018; Shrestha, 2022)

Hence, in this study, I, as a researcher, have followed learning steps as pedagogical intervention based on reference to transformative theory to generate perceptive transformation and a new frame for reflecting on management studies, business environments, and market dynamics among my students (Cranton & Taylor, 2012; De Witt et al., 2024). After all, besides subject-matter expertise, undergraduate students also require specific learning-oriented competencies such as critical reflection, problem-solving skills, adaptability, and a collaborative mindset, and business education has come under heavy criticism in Nepalese

context also for its failure to produce human resources compatible with 21st-century business environment (Longmore et al., 2018). In this study, transformative learning praxis applied as educational intervention in a classroom and institutional setting emphasizes the integration of theory and practice to facilitate perspective transformation among undergraduate business and management students. The transformative learning intervention in this study begins with students encountering disorienting dilemmas with new information, innovative classroom activities, and experiential pedagogical orientations that challenge their existing beliefs and assumptions, prompting critical reflection on their values and perspectives (DeAngelis, 2022).

In addition, through collaborative dialogue and rational discourse with educators, entrepreneurs, and business professionals in guest interactive classes, workshops, debates and discussion sessions, and seminars, they explore diverse viewpoints and gain new insights, leading to perspective transformation. This shift encourages individuals to make a perspective change by applying their new understandings of real-life business contexts (Cranton & Taylor, 2012; De Witt et al., 2024; Luitel & Dahal, 2020).

Transformative Learning

This section of the research illustrates and reconstructs four four-step transformative learning journeys, with references to reflect insights recollected from the responses and feedback of participating students critically reflected through self-study. Here, transformative learning steps take students into different stages of (i) disorienting dilemma, (ii) critical reflection, (iii) dialogue and engagement, discussions, rational discourse and engagement, and culminating into (iv) perspective transformation. The educator has provided adequate context for his students to engage in various educational activities, expecting that these transformative learning initiations affect a process of change in students' meaning-making process (Mezirow, 1997; De Witt et al., 2024). Under each stage, the researcher's educational interventions, actions, beliefs, and decisions have been presented, including his self-critical reflections, emerging challenges, and transformative development of educator as a self-report.

Self-Study as Research Methodology

In this study, self-study research design has been applied. This research design entails a qualitative approach focusing on educators examining their practices, experiences, and contexts to foster personal and professional growth (Pithouse-Morgan, 2022). In this study, the researcher has designed educational interventions with specific actions and strategies based on transformative theory and has examined the qualitative data to identify patterns, successes, struggles, doubts, serious limitations, and areas for improvement regarding his transformative educational interventions. Reflections of the educator facilitating each transformative learning steps in an undergraduate academic setting have been presented in the self-report format. Besides, I have implemented and facilitated my transformative educational practices with my students in this study, studying its possibilities, expansions, limitations, and challenges in the context of undergraduate business and management studies in Nepal (Pithouse-Morgan, 2022).

Based on a self-study research design, this study has incorporated methodological elements like emphasizing the value of oneself, using educator's learning experiences, illustrations, narrations, self-awareness, doubts, storytelling, and reflections as data for research (Feldman et al. 2004). More significantly, self-study research design has been employed in this study from the beginning when I was involved in critically analyzing transformative learning theory and education and curiously exploring its possible application in the context of undergraduate management education. Through self-study research, this study describes context-specific and practitioner-led pedagogical initiations and academic practices drawing

on creative and participatory approaches to invite and facilitate undergraduate students into transformative learning steps. The intervention period lasted for one semester, with n=128 students at four different business schools; however, only n=17 undergraduate students participated and provided responses and feedback regarding transformative interventions through reflective interview sessions and group discussions based on which I have reflected upon my change of perspectives in the format of self-report. The course model students were studying during this research facilitated by the educator/researcher included foundations/principles of management, business research, human resource management, and managerial communication.

In this study, I have applied various associative activities and pedagogical approaches derived from each transformative learning step and stage in an academic setting, considering course structure, syllabus, semester level of students, administrative support, and final exam modalities. Here, my experience-based knowledge serves as the epistemic foundation for constructing and narrating my learning experiences (Pithouse-Morgan, 2022). During the intervention period, I documented the developing narratives of my learning experiences in a daily journal as class notes, both in handwritten a on digital platforms. For the reflective process, I turned back on those illustrations and recollections, scrolling down the files and rough papers and scribbling after completing each phase of the learning steps (Ellis et al., 2010). It is important to note that although students were part of these transformative learning stages, their educational experiences, resistances, and feedback have been limited to the researcher's self-experiential report. For data illustrations and interpretations, I have exclusively used personal construction of those events, incidents, responses, challenges, and feedback that have influenced my perspective transformation regarding educational practices and personal development. (Pithouse-Morgan, 2022). Here, reflections and responses of students have been presented through critical reflexivity that enables the researcher to deeply examine values, assumptions, beliefs, and practices of self and others (Luitel & Dahal, 2021). Hence, this self-study covers the reflective journey of an education with a pedagogical model anchored in transformative learning, from his disorienting dilemmas to perspective transformations (Cranton & Taylor, 2012; Longmore et al., 2018).

More importantly, this study builds on the scholarly commitment of self-study research that encourages educators through the process of self-examination and investigation to create, explain, and disseminate new knowledge about teaching and learning possibilities for the professional development of other educators (Soslau, 2015; Pithouse-Morgan, 2022). In this study, learning steps have been applied as transformative learning facilitations that support students regarding disorienting dilemmas they have encountered while critically reflecting upon their prior knowledge and presumptions, together with structural opportunities for reflection, experience, dialogue, discussion, and perspective transformations (De Witt et al., 2024).

Muddling the Water: Disorienting Dilemma

During this stage of transformative learning as an educator, I activated disorienting dilemma scenarios for management students with the metaphor of muddling the water to invite students to challenge their assumptions, engage in critical thinking, and participate in classroom discussions. As an instructor of management studies, I facilitated students into thinking about different assumptions students have about the business environment of Nepal with statements such as (i) Nepal's economy is always volatile, (ii) There are few business opportunities available in Nepal; (iii) corruption is a given occurrence within most of the business dealings that involves government agencies and institution in Nepal (iv) the government does not support businesses and young entrepreneurs. I created these scenarios to

challenge students' preconceptions and forced them to confront complex managerial and practical issues related to Nepalese business realities and practices. In this stage, I instructed students to come up with several questions and unearth their latent knowledge, assumptions, and associations regarding these propositions and issues (Longmore et al., 2018; De Witt et al., 2024). After presenting the scenario, students were divided into small groups to discuss their initial reactions. I encouraged students to engage in a collaborative dialogue, where students were asked to justify their choices, consider alternative viewpoints, and formulate conclusions. Following group discussions, more extensive class discussions were facilitated to explore the dilemmas further. While students were engaging in their deliberations, I realized that educators could create a dynamic and thought-provoking learning environment that fosters critical reflection and prepares students for real-world challenges (Cranton & Taylor, 2012).

In another course session, beyond students' expectations for lecture-based instructions, I asked students to ponder over their assumption that business education only benefits those aspiring to become managers or entrepreneurs. In reality, skills learned in business and management studies, like leadership, communication, networking, data analysis, decision-making, and problem-solving, are also helpful in accomplishing various socio-political roles and responsibilities. I asked them, how can someone improve their parenting style with managerial skills, roles, and functions? Students told me they had never participated in something like this before. They certainly did not think about issues in this way. My purpose as an educator was to help students see beyond the facts and categories of our lives, the boundaries of social and economic structures, the influence of cultural conditioning, and self-structure to place the disorienting dilemma in the classroom and move toward a process of meaning-making that is integrative, holistic, and transformative (Dobson, 2008). The dilemma arises, after all, when students have experiences, something does not match their previous frame of reference, and they cannot get out of the situations without altering their perspective on the world (Laros, 2017). Moreover, it infuses a sense of disorienting dilemmas, I continue to associate thought-provoking scenarios that challenge students to confront their assumptions, values, and beliefs, often leading to significant cognitive dissonance in my classroom practice (Cranton, 2016). For the next three weeks, I continued with dilemmas of ethical conflicts, such as choosing between profit maximization and corporate social responsibility or navigating team dynamics where personal loyalties clash with organizational goals. Students engaged with such dilemmas to critically evaluate their perspectives, consider multiple viewpoints, and develop a deeper understanding of the complexities inherent in managerial decision-making (Anand et al., 2020). This process enhances them and prepares them for the unpredictable challenges they will eventually encounter in their careers. In this intermediate stage, as I was questioning the assumptions of undergraduate management students and providing feedback, there were also some spicy movements of resentment toward the educator (Robertson, 1996).

During this learning stage, I also realized that for some learners, their current ways of understanding and interacting with the world are functioning adequately for them (Hoggan, 2023). Seeking predictable faculty behavior and passive student roles, I observed that most undergraduate students preferred clear-cut answers and linear lectures resisting unknown and unfamiliar educational practices. They also struggled with propositions and case studies that challenged their previous learnings and avoided complex discussions altogether. Therefore, students' readiness and desire for transformation are essential for any chance of perspective shift (Snyder, 2008).

Thinking About Mental Models: Critical Reflections

After recognizing the disorienting dilemma, the next stage of transformative learning moved toward critical reflection. This stage involves questioning beliefs, values, and

assumptions. It's about analyzing the root causes of their discomfort and understanding different perspectives. During critical reflection, I facilitated students to actively analyze their experiences, beliefs, and the complexities of managerial practices concerning established management theories they have studied, encouraging them to question the assumptions of these theories. Here, I selected Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs and asked the students to think beyond the strict hierarchical structure of this theory (Robbins & Coulter, 2009). My purpose was to encourage students to think critically about their mental models that frame and box their conclusions. At times, I also provoked them with statements such as Why the same old answer—can't you think outside the box and shift your perspective? You need to question your existing assumptions and beliefs.

Here, my position as an educator was to enable my students to engage in reflective practices that encourage analytical thinking, enabling learners to assess information more rigorously and make informed decisions (Closs & Antonello, 2011). During these pedagogical activities, I observed my students struggling to embrace new ways of thinking and of being (Kreber, 2012). During their management studies, they found it difficult to maintain a critical stance towards a theory they had memorized and internalized as something reliable, valid, and factual. This is because we are often unaware of our mental models and how they affect our behavior until we are faced with a disorienting dilemma. Mental models are deeply ingrained assumptions, generalizations, or even pictures and images that influence how we understand the world and how we take action (Senge, 1990). They are often barriers to change and can impede transformative learning. Critical reflection sessions enhance their understanding of management principles, concepts, and theories and prepare students to navigate the complexities of real-world challenges. As a part of transformative learning strategies, critical reflective practices engage undergraduate students to assess their assumptions, biases, and decision-making approaches in various management scenarios so that they gain a deeper understanding of their beliefs, values, and assumptions, allowing them to recognize biases and areas for growth (Kreber, 2012). Moreover, during another critical reflection session based on role-play activities, I asked students to reflect on theoretical concepts of scientific management theory, developed by Frederick W. Taylor, as a team of operational managers and supervisors and come up with practical applications that can be implemented for optimization in manufacturing (Chen & Martin, 2015). Here, students explored a case study of a manufacturing company looking to improve its production line efficiency. They analyzed and reflected on how the company can apply Taylor's conceptualizations by conducting time studies to identify the optimal time for each task in the production process (Robbins & Coulter, 2009).

While dealing with this case study, I asked students to reflect on decision-making processes, outcomes, and alternative strategies. During this session, as an educator, I realized that these reflective case study sessions developed the critical thinking skills of students as they realized that when analyzing real-world scenarios, they need to consider different and alternative perspectives rather than limiting themselves to singular or linear solutions (Seatter & Kim, 2017). Students worked in groups with a leader as an operational manager to propose a new layout for the assembly line based on their findings, detailing how they would standardize procedures and assign specialized roles to workers. They also created a performance incentive plan that rewards employees based on productivity metrics. Hence, after this reflective session, students realized that management theories also have practical implications (Chen & Martin, 2015; Anand et al., 2020). Here, undergraduate students shifted their mindsets away from the taken-for-granted frames of reference and generated beliefs and opinions that are more justified to guide action (Mezirow, 2008). In this step of transformative learning, I was creating space for students to connect the learning topic to their interests and real-world problems through self/collaborative reflections. In this way, transformative learning

is different from other learning situations where fundamental structures of meaning-making are unaffected and learning is additive rather than transformative (Hoggan, 2023; Mezirow, 1997).

Dialogues, Discussions, and Rational Discourse

After these initial steps, expecting students to prepare for some more profound and more personal explorations, small group discussions using dialogical and role-playing scenarios, group work, guest lectures, and professional lead workshops were included in this learning step. The primary focus was guest- sessions and practitioner-initiated interactive workshops with the basic assumption that students would want to hear experienced voices and share their own experiences, insights, and questions (De Witt et al., 2024). In this stage, rational discourses of business practitioners and entrepreneurs engaging in dialogues and discussions helped students explore different viewpoints. Here, students were involved in the process of communicative learning, where they asked open questions and discussed their experiences, challenges, doubts, perspectives on emerging market trends, and strengths with practitioners and entrepreneurs. After these interactive sessions and dialogical encounters, students were able to realize that experiential knowledge gained through direct experience, practice, and involvement in real-world situations is as relevant in academic settings as theoretical knowledge based on established theories, concepts, and principles that explain how things work (Longmore et al., 2018). During these interactive sessions with practitioners, undergraduate students also learned the importance of having mindful conversations, highlighting the insight and connection that can emerge when deeply listening. When listening deeply, people can also become aware of the mindsets they listen to, allowing them to reflect on the tendencies in their thinking (Berger, 2004).

I realized that incorporating dialogues, discussions, and rational discourse during a guest lecture session in a management classroom can significantly enhance student engagement and understanding (Berger, 2004). While interacting with professionals and practitioners in guest lecture sessions, I encouraged students to ask thoughtful questions that require more than yes/no answers. For example, can you elaborate on how you handled resistance during a change initiative? (Closs & Antonello, 2011). More importantly, after each professional and practitioner session, students were instructed to engage with ideas in their reflective journal, where they wrote down their thoughts on what they learned, any new perspectives gained, and how they might apply this knowledge in their future careers students were supported to reflect on the activity using a journaling exercise actively. Reflective journaling is a significant support for transformative learning, as it provides opportunities to uncover assumptions, articulate thoughts, and piece together life's threads. (Bass et al., 2023). Besides, these sessions have helped students realize that meaning exists within themselves rather than in external forms such as books and that personal meanings we attribute to our experience are acquired and validated through human interaction (Mezirow, 1997). Hence, by fostering an environment of dialogue and rational discourse, guest lecture sessions can become dynamic learning experiences that deepen students' understanding of management concepts and their practical applications.

Metamorphosis or Stagnation: Perspective Transformation

This stage explores whether students have absorbed new understanding. During previous sessions resulted in significant changes in how they conceptualize management education and interact with their educators and business schools and re-orient their career choices and professional decisions with perspective transformations (Mezirow, 2018). For example, after critical reflection sessions that dealt with leadership styles in the Nepalese

financial sector and after interacting in a guest lecture with the human resource manager of a commercial bank, students had a shift in perspective regarding collaborative efforts and transformational leadership, leading to more inclusive and functioning team dynamics. Likewise, before rational discourses with business practitioners, many students believed that monetary rewards were the primary motivator for employees; however, after active listening and critical reflections on intrinsic motivation theories, the students began to appreciate the role of job satisfaction, quality of work-life, recognition, and personal growth. (Cranton, 2016).

However, ironically, most students were concerned whether these activities will be assessed in the exam, or they will get sufficient internal marks for their participation. The reinforced emphasis on grades suggests they are still tuned to an existing frame of references regarding educational practices that prioritize grades as the primary measure of success, leading students to equate grades with their worth and capabilities (Closs & Antonello, 2011). Perhaps students were not reflecting on and examining their beliefs critically, questioning their validity, and exploring alternative viewpoints with questions such as, why internal marks and grades are so important to me, and why do I care about my grades so much in the first place? (Cranton, 2023). Due to a lack of coordination, collaboration, and connection with the rest of the course, students hesitated to embrace new ideas or methodologies, often influenced by established norms and practices within business and management studies. Even after their energetic and thoughtful participation in previous steps, I felt students stagnated in their perspective transformations. This experience may be particularly important for educators as students at this stage of their education journey during the initial part of undergraduate education are not always ready to engage in transformative processes (De Witt et al., 2024). Therefore, embarking on a journey can potentially cause uncomfortable or challenging feelings. For educators like me, explaining the notion of the growth mindset and transformative learning steps to students is necessary to make them aware of why they are participating in these pedagogical activities differently from usual standard protocols (Hoggan, 2024). More significantly, rather than becoming critical and judgmental of students, I reminded myself that we sometimes forget that as educators we're also learners; we learn about what is important and what isn't important in a transformative learning journey (Young et al., 2022).

Transformative Professional Development

Based on my self-reflection, I have realized a strong focus on established theories and models, prioritizing textbook knowledge over practical application in business studies and management education. Besides, the existing mindset of management students regarding standardized testing and evaluations often associates academic success with grades rather than genuine understanding or application of concepts. Moreover, due to an excessive focus on exams and memorization, there is a greater tendency among students to continue on with their surface learning mindset to pass exams, at the expense of deeper engagement with the course materials (Longmore et al., 2018). Hence, the educator in this study has realized that there is a need to explore alternative, sustainable, more institutional, holistic, and integrative transformative learning steps and strategies with a larger time frame to help students achieve perspectival transformations (Young et al., 2022). Besides, students in this study have also indicated that transformative learning steps applied in a particular course were not well linked and assimilated with other courses.

This self-study is also part of my transformative professional development, where I critically examine my own personal and professional values and beliefs, which has culminated in formations of inclusive visions and a transformative outlook regarding my pedagogical practices and institutional associations (Mezirow, 2008; Taylor, 2007). More importantly, I have realized that, as Alfred (2002) notes, social and cultural contexts shape what an adult

needs and wants to learn, when and where the learning takes place, and how the learning is perceived. Hence my own perspective transformation after these initiations have enabled me to realize that, as an educator, I need a critical awareness of the specific situation where I am applying these learning stages and create adequate context before initiating transformative learning steps (De Witt et al., 2024). Besides, there is always a beginning with every end.

Significantly, as an education after facilitating these learning steps, I feel competent and confident enough to refine, adapt, and innovate to expand these steps, including alternative learning orientations or alternative ways to structure these stages in different contexts as a management educator; this is my methodology. During this culminating stage of perspective transformations, I have assimilated the fact that valuable learning does not primarily deal with the transformation of learners (Hoggan, 2023). Even if most of my students have not realized perspective transformation, they have accepted, participated, embraced and assimilated valuable and practiced life-long lessons while encountering disorienting dilemmas, critical reflective visions and rational discourses, dialogues, and engagement with professionals and practitioners. After all, to assume that it is within the rights of the individual educator or the institution to try to change other human beings is highly problematic (Hoggan, 2023). Besides, making one's teaching more transformative is a daunting task; learning indeed, the transformation doesn't occur until the individual acts on the basis of the new set of assumptions (Young et al., 2022).

Discussion and Conclusion

Transformative learning praxis is a dynamic approach that emphasizes the integration of theory and Practice to facilitate profound personal and social change. It begins with encountering disorienting dilemmas that challenge their existing beliefs and assumptions, prompting critical reflection on their values and perspectives (Mezirow, 2008). This study followed the sequence of disorienting dilemma, critical reflection, dialogue and engagement, and perspective transformation. In this study, the transformative learning steps only covered these four phases. After engaging with critical reflexivity, the researcher realized that students, during the process, similar to the findings of De Witt et al. (2024), were indeed distracted during the transformative learning process due to immediate educational concerns.

More importantly, comparable with the assertion of Hoggan (2023), based on critical reflections of students' responses and the quantum of their participants, this study also reveals that in most situations, when learners enroll in an educational program, their purpose is not to transform. This study specifies that transformative learning is not merely focused on the content of the study; rather, this learning orientation includes the subjective perspectives of an educator that result from critical explorations (De Witt et al., 2024). With the application of these transformational learning interventions, undergraduate students have critically examined their existing frame of reference, opened themselves to alternative worldviews and have changed the way they perceived major market trends and transformed how they interpret and interact with emerging business realities (Longmore et al., 2018). Critical reflective practices, analyzing challenging assumptions, journaling, and interactions with professionals and practitioners have enhanced the critical thinking, self-awareness, and real-world problem-solving skills of undergrad students.

Along with Mezirow (1997), this study clarifies that transformative educator in their classroom practices need to assume their roles as a facilitator rather than subject-matter expert. Their main responsibility is to involve students in a learning process that encourages them to explore and investigate emerging concepts, dynamic realities and new information, pay attention to their inner direction, and create learning objectives that reflect humility, openness, and inquisitiveness. This is as opposed to merely imparting a body of knowledge (Mezirow,

2018). In this study, also teaching and learning model anchored in transformative learning engage students through interactions with facilitators, other learning agents, and actors in a learning context (Longmore et al., 2018). Similarly, to Cranton (2023) this study also emphasizes that transformative learning is not just an individual cognitive process but also a social one, where interactions with diverse perspectives can catalyze change. Hence, this study finds that interactions with educators, business professions, domain experts who have diverse and diverse perspectives on various dimensions of business studies management education can also become catalysts for transformative mindset that helps students overcome their problematic references through critical thinking, dialogues, discussions and rational discourse (Dobson, 2008).

Moreover, the study also illustrates, in alignment with Christie et al. (2019), that transformative learning in Practice involves educators creating inclusive environments and learning steps that encourage critical reflection and open dialogues, which foster deep, meaningful change in student's perspectives and behaviors. Transformative learning initiatives like project-based learning, guest speakers and industry panels, diverse perspectives and reflective journals, and experiential activities enable students to connect theoretical concepts with real-world business issues and improve their problem-solving skills (Closs & Antonello, 2011). Likewise, in line with McCusker (2013), this study also finds that critical reflection seminars encourage students to question, reevaluate and discuss their assumptions about the business environment and managerial practices, and such sessions are integral components of transformative pedagogy modules for enhancing critical thinking, self-awareness, and real-world problem-solving skills of undergraduate management studies students. In addition, similar to Wagle et al. (2023), this study also signifies that transformative education involves the expressions of inner dimensions of educators, which cover inner components such as dilemmas, values, perceptions, beliefs, worldviews, commitment, convictions, and attitudes.

Besides, this study also confirms with Brookfield (2017) that initiations of educators in the domain of transformative learning also require retrospective reflection, which refers to reflection on events, activities, and pedagogical outcomes accomplished in the past. The main purpose of such reflection is to explore events, situations, and contexts that inspire new possibilities when it comes to business faculty engagements in educational contexts. More importantly, such an approach to reflection-in-action in transformative learning makes practitioners mindful of ongoing events and eventualities. (Luitel & Dahal, 2020). Similarly, the findings of this study also point towards the suggestions of Mah y Busch (2014) that contemplative and conventional philosophies of education can work things together for transformative education. Hence, this study argues that in the progress of creating adequate context for the application of transformative learning theory, educators need to adjust and adopt within conventional education setting and develop transformative pathways through their commitments and convictions. Moreover, as envisaged by Luitel & Dahal (2021), this research also culminates in transformative professional development grounded within the socio-cultural approach of formulating educators' identities by highlighting personal empowerment and organizational transformation. In this study, my professional development as an educator has been guided by transformative learning theory, where I have achieved transformative growth by implementing action plans, reflective activities, and critical discourses in my academic practices (Cranton & Taylor, 2012; Luitel & Dahal, 2021).

After all, transformative professional development involves a process of critically examining personal beliefs and professional values to develop inclusive and transformative visions of their decisions, actions, and initiations (Cranton & Taylor, 2012). Indeed, educators are agents for facilitating transformational change at the individual, group and organizational levels in business schools associated with management education in Nepal. Although this study has its limitations in terms of constrained learning steps, methodology, research context,

sample size and timeframe, the end of this journey is only the beginning of another learning cycle. As for future inquiry, this transformative journey has flashed out in-depth explorations of educational policies, practices, socio-economic status, parenting styles, and social contextual influences that create barriers for critical reflections, challenging assumptions and perspective transformations among students (Taylor, 2007). Even faculties members in a collaboration with institutional support can initiate action research regarding transformative learning strategies. More importantly, this study concludes with a realization as indicated by Hoggan (2023) that without in-depth research and analysis, it would be unrealistic and grossly unfair to students when universities and educational institutions seek to transform their learner without assimilating with their current ways of understanding and expectations about educational policies, standards, expectations, and practices.

Data Availability Statement

The raw data supporting the conclusions of this article will be made available by the corresponding author, without undue reservation.

Conflict of Interest

Author would like to declare that the research is conducted in the absence of any commercial or financial support. The authors declare that the research was conducted in the absence of any commercial or financial relationships that could be construed as a potential conflict of interest.

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