

Reorientation Of Contemporary Educational Theory Based On Transformative Learning And Critical Awareness

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ABSTRACT

Social change, the advancement of digital technology, the growing complexity of global issues, and the increasing need for human reflective capacity have prompted the need for a reorientation of contemporary educational theory. Educational paradigms that have long been oriented toward the transmission of knowledge and the achievement of technical competencies face limitations in fostering individuals who are able to understand, critique, and transform their social realities. This article aims to analyze the theoretical construction of contemporary education through the perspectives of transformative learning and critical consciousness as a basis for developing a more humanistic, reflective, and emancipatory educational paradigm. This study employs a qualitative approach using a library research method through critical analysis of academic literature on transformative education theory, critical pedagogy, social constructivism, and the development of twenty-first-century education. The research data were obtained from the review of reputable international journal articles and recent scholarly publications, which were analyzed using critical content analysis techniques. The findings indicate that transformative learning functions not merely as a pedagogical strategy, but as an epistemological framework that enables learners to engage in deep reflection on the assumptions, values, and social structures that shape their learning experiences. The integration of critical consciousness strengthens the role of education as a space for dialogue, the development of agency, and social transformation. This article offers a theoretical contribution in the form of a transformative-critical education model that integrates cognitive, reflective, ethical, and social dimensions within the learning process. Practically, this model has implications for curriculum development, pedagogy, and educational policy oriented toward cultivating individuals who are critical and adaptive in response to global change.

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1. INTRODUCTION

Accelerating social, economic, cultural, and technological changes have brought contemporary education into a fundamental paradigmatic transformation phase. The presence of digital technology,

the development of artificial intelligence, changes in the characteristics of the world of work, and the increasing complexity of global problems have shifted the orientation of education from just the transmission of knowledge to the development of human capacity holistically. Modern education is no longer sufficiently understood as a mechanism for reproducing information and mastering technical competence, but as a process of forming individuals who are able to understand reality reflectively, critically evaluate various problems, and produce transformative actions in social life. In the perspective of 21st century education, critical thinking skills, creativity, collaboration, digital literacy, and social responsibility are the main dimensions that determine the success of education in facing global change (Biesta, 2022; OECD, 2023).

The development of educational theory shows that the learning process is not only related to the reception of information, but also to how individuals build understanding through experience and social interaction. The constructivist perspective makes an important contribution by placing learners as active subjects who construct knowledge through the process of interpretation of the social and cultural environment. However, constructivist and humanistic approaches still face limitations when explaining the dimensions of changing individual consciousness towards social structures, inequality, and power relations that affect the educational process. Therefore, the transformative learning theory developed by Mezirow is an important perspective because it understands learning as a process of profound change to the individual's frame of reference through critical reflection on assumptions, values, and experiences that were previously considered to be truth (Mezirow, 2020). This perspective expands the understanding that learning is not only a change in knowledge, but a transformation of the way humans understand themselves and the world.

Transformative learning in the context of contemporary education has an increasingly strong relevance because it offers a theoretical framework for how individuals experience a change in perspective through critical reflection, dialogue, and the reconstruction of meaning to life experiences. In contrast to traditional learning paradigms that emphasize the accumulation of knowledge, the transformative approach views experience as the main source of the formation of new consciousness. The learning process does not stop at the ability to understand concepts, but develops towards the ability to question assumptions, evaluate values adhered to, and build an alternative perspective on reality. Recent studies show that transformative learning plays an important role in higher education, professional education, and community education because it is able to improve adaptability, complex problem-solving, and individual readiness to face dynamic social changes (Taylor & Cranton, 2021; Kitchenham, 2022). Thus, transformative learning is a strategic approach in building lifelong learners.

In addition to the dimension of personal change, transformative education is also closely related to the concept of critical consciousness developed through the thought of Paulo Freire. This concept places education as an intellectual liberation process that allows students to understand the relationship between individual experiences and broader social structures. Critical awareness is not only related to the ability to think analytically, but also the ability to recognize social problems, question injustices, and take reflective actions (praxis) to create change. In the context of today's global education, critical approaches are increasingly relevant because students face various challenges such as digital disinformation, environmental crises, social inequality, and cultural change due to technological developments. Recent research shows that education based on dialogue and critical reflection is able to strengthen students' agency as well as enhance their ability to actively participate in democratic life (Giroux, 2021a; UNESCO, 2023).

Although the study of transformative learning and critical awareness has developed widely, there is still a conceptual gap in integrating the two perspectives as the foundation for the reconstruction of contemporary educational theory. Most research on transformative learning emphasizes changing individual perspectives, while critical pedagogy tends to focus on the socio-political aspects of education. This separation causes the relationship between personal transformation, knowledge construction, and social change to not be fully formulated in a comprehensive theoretical framework. In fact, the education of the future requires a paradigm that is able to connect the epistemological, psychological, social, and ethical dimensions simultaneously. Therefore, the integration between transformative learning and critical awareness can be an alternative approach to building an educational theory that produces not only competent individuals,

but also human beings who have reflectivity, agency, and social responsibility (Jääskelä et al., 2022; UNESCO, 2021).

Based on these theoretical gaps, this research offers novelty through the reconstruction of contemporary educational paradigms that integrate transformative learning and critical awareness as an integrated conceptual framework. The perspective developed in this study views education as a multidimensional transformation process that includes three main aspects, namely epistemological transformation through changes in the way individuals understand knowledge, personal transformation through the development of self-awareness, and social transformation through active involvement in social change. This model places students not only as recipients of knowledge, but as reflective subjects who are able to create meaning and actions based on learning experiences. Thus, education can function as an instrument of human development that is adaptive, critical, and oriented towards social sustainability. This research aims to analyze the position of transformative learning and critical awareness in the development of contemporary education theory and offers a conceptual model of future education based on reflection, dialogue, experience, and social change.

2. METHOD

This study uses a qualitative approach with the library research method which aims to explore, interpret, and conceptually reconstruct the contemporary education paradigm based on transformative learning and critical consciousness. The qualitative approach was chosen because the research focuses on a deep understanding of the meaning, theoretical construction, and relationships between educational concepts, rather than on quantitative testing of intervariable relationships. The literature review was carried out by analyzing various theoretical perspectives, including Mezirow's transformative learning theory, Freire critical pedagogy, social constructivism, and humanistic approaches as the foundation for developing a reflective and humanist educational paradigm. Literature studies allow researchers to identify thought patterns, theoretical developments, and conceptual gaps in academic literature through a systematic selection and evaluation process of sources (Snyder, 2022; Paul & Criado, 2020), as well as relevant for theoretical research directed at the formation of conceptual synthesis through the integration of various scientific perspectives (Tight, 2022; Xiao & Watson, 2019). The research data is sourced from primary and secondary academic literature, including articles from reputable international journals, accredited national journals, academic books, as well as reports from global educational institutions relevant to transformative learning, critical pedagogy, and 21st-century educational theory. Literature selection is carried out through the stages of literature identification, screening based on conceptual relevance (screening), academic quality evaluation (critical appraisal), and extraction of key ideas related to perspective transformation, critical reflection, pedagogical dialogue, student agency, and social change. Furthermore, data is analyzed through a critical content analysis approach by categorizing concepts, comparing theories, interpreting epistemological relationships, and conceptual synthesis to produce an integrative transformative education model. The validity of the research is maintained through triangulation of sources by comparing various perspectives from the fields of educational philosophy, learning psychology, critical pedagogy, and social studies. With this interpretive-critical approach, the research not only describes the development of existing theories, but also reconstructs the conceptual understanding of education as a transformation process that includes cognitive, personal, ethical, and social dimensions, by placing students as active subjects who have the capacity to build meaning, develop critical awareness, and contribute to change in society.

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

3.1.1. Contemporary Education Theory: A Shift from Knowledge Transmission to Human Transformation

The development of contemporary education theory shows a fundamental paradigm shift from an educational orientation centered on knowledge transmission to an approach that places education as a process of overall human transformation. In the traditional paradigm, the educational process tends to be understood as a mechanism for conveying information from educators to students, where teachers play the role of knowledge authority and students as knowledge recipients. Although this

approach has contributed to building the basic structure of learning, this paradigm has been criticized for not providing space for subjective experiences, creativity, reflection, and students' ability to build meaning to complex realities. Modern education is then directed at developing human capacity that is not only academically competent, but also reflective, adaptive, and socially conscious (Biesta, 2022; OECD, 2023).

The new paradigm in education is further strengthened by the development of social constructivism theories that provide different understandings of how humans acquire and build knowledge. Vygotsky views learning as a social process that occurs through interaction between individuals and the cultural environment, so that knowledge is not understood as something that is only passively transferred, but is constructed through experience, communication, collaboration, and social practice. The perspective of social constructivism then became the basis for various modern learning approaches such as problem-based learning, collaborative learning, and experiential learning that place learners as active actors in the process of knowledge formation. Contemporary research shows that constructivistic approaches are able to increase learner engagement because they provide opportunities to develop understanding through authentic activities and meaningful social interactions (Darling-Hammond et al., 2022; Jääskelä et al., 2022).

Although constructivism makes a major contribution to explaining the process of knowledge formation, it still has limitations when used to understand the function of education in dealing with more complex social problems. Education is not only concerned with how individuals acquire knowledge, but also with how individuals understand social structures, power relations, cultural values, and various forms of injustice that affect human life. These limitations are what encourage the development of critical pedagogy that views education as a dialogical space to build critical awareness and the ability to transform society. Freire emphasized that education must enable students to read the world before reading texts, so that the learning process becomes a reflective activity that connects personal experiences with social reality. This approach is increasingly relevant in facing global challenges such as inequality, technological change, and democratic crises (Giroux, 2021a; UNESCO, 2023).

Thus, contemporary education theory is evolving towards a transformational paradigm that not only asks how humans learn, but also questions the fundamental purpose of education in social life. Education is understood as a multidimensional process that involves the construction of knowledge, the formation of identity, the development of critical awareness, as well as the ability of individuals to participate in societal change. The integration between social constructivism, critical pedagogy, and transformative approaches provides the theoretical foundation that learners are not just educational objects, but active subjects who have the ability to create meaning and make changes. This perspective is in line with the development of 21st-century educational studies that emphasize the importance of learners' agency, lifelong learning, transformative competence, and social responsibility. Therefore, the education of the future requires a paradigm that is able to connect cognitive, personal, ethical, and social dimensions simultaneously (Taylor & Cranton, 2021; UNESCO, 2021).

3.1.2. Transformative Learning in Jack Mezirow's Perspective

Transformative learning is one of the important theories in the study of adult education and contemporary education that explains how individuals experience profound changes in the way they understand themselves, experiences, and the social reality around them. This theory was developed systematically by Jack Mezirow with the main idea that learning is not only related to the process of acquiring new information (informative learning), but also involves changes to the frame of reference that individuals use to give meaning to experiences. In Mezirow's perspective, humans have a set of assumptions, values, and beliefs that shape their way of thinking. When individuals face new experiences that are contrary to their previous perspectives, there is a need to do critical reflection to allow for a more rational, open, and adaptive understanding of change (Hoggan, 2023; Taylor & Cranton, 2021).

In Mezirow's theory, transformative learning takes place through a process of critical reflection on the fundamental assumptions that have shaped the way a person understands the world. Critical reflection is a key element because it allows individuals not only to evaluate the information obtained, but also to question the validity of perspectives, values, and beliefs that have been inherent in them.

This process distinguishes transformative learning from traditional learning approaches that emphasize knowledge accumulation and behavior change. Individuals who experience perspective transformation will be able to build new frameworks that are more complex, inclusive, and contextual. In the context of modern education, the ability to do critical reflection is increasingly important as learners face a social environment full of change, uncertainty, and enormous information flows due to the development of digital technology (Kitchenham, 2022; Cranton, 2023).

Conceptually, according to Mezirow, the transformative learning process involves several important interrelated stages, namely the emergence of experiences that disrupt the structure of previous understanding (disorienting dilemmas), critical reflection on the assumptions they have, rational dialogue with other perspectives, exploration of the possibility of new meanings, and the implementation of new understandings in real actions. These stages show that learning transformation is not just a cognitive change, but a process of epistemological and personal change that affects the way individuals see themselves and their relationship with their social environment. Through the process of dialogue and reflection, individuals gain the ability to develop self-awareness and make decisions based on a more mature understanding. Contemporary research shows that transformative learning has a great contribution to building adaptability, complex problem-solving, and professional identity development in various educational contexts (Hoggan, 2023; Stuckey & Taylor, 2023).

In the context of contemporary education, transformative learning theory has strategic relevance because modern society faces rapid changes due to globalization, digitalization, and the development of artificial intelligence. This condition requires individuals to have abilities that go beyond the mastery of factual knowledge, namely the ability to evaluate information, understand various perspectives, and adapt through a process of deep reflection. Transformative learning provides a theoretical framework that education must help learners become individuals who are able to interpret experiences, build critical awareness, and take actions based on reconstructed understanding. Thus, learning is not only an academic process, but a process of human formation that has agency, autonomy of thinking, and social responsibility. This perspective is in line with the direction of 21st-century education that emphasizes transformative competence, lifelong learning, and holistic human development (OECD, 2023).

3.1.3. Paulo Freire's Critical Consciousness and Education as a Process of Emancipation

The concept of critical consciousness developed by Paulo Freire is one of the important foundations in the development of critical education theory that places education as a process of human liberation. Freire makes a fundamental criticism of the conventional educational paradigm that he calls the "banking model of education", which is an approach that positions students as passive containers that only receive, store, and repeat the knowledge provided by educators. According to Freire's perspective, this model has the potential to strengthen the dominance of certain knowledge because it limits students' ability to question the social reality they experience. Education then loses its emancipatory function because it only produces individuals who are able to adapt to existing systems without having the reflective ability to evaluate and transform them (Freire, 2021; Giroux, 2021b).

As an alternative to dominative education, Freire offers the concept of dialogical education that places educators and learners as active subjects in the process of knowledge creation. In the dialogical paradigm, learning is not understood as a one-way process, but rather as a critical interaction that allows individuals to connect personal experiences with broader social realities. Through dialogue, reflection, and action (praxis), learners gain the ability to understand their living conditions more deeply while developing the capacity to make changes. The concept of praxis is a key element in Freire's thinking because it shows the dialectical relationship between reflection and real action. Meaningful education not only helps humans understand the world, but also provides the ability to participate in shaping and improving the world. Studies of contemporary education show that the dialogical approach plays an important role in increasing students' agency and building social involvement in the learning process (Jääskelä et al., 2022).

In Freire's perspective, critical consciousness has a broader meaning than the ability to think critically in an academic context. Critical thinking generally relates to the ability of individuals to

analyze information, evaluate arguments, and make decisions based on rational considerations. Meanwhile, critical consciousness encompasses social, historical, and ethical dimensions that allow individuals to understand the relationship between personal experiences and the social, economic, political, and cultural structures that affect their lives. Individuals who have critical consciousness are not only able to recognize problems, but also understand the root causes of a phenomenon and have an orientation to take transformative action. Therefore, critical consciousness-based education does not stop at the development of intellectual capacity, but also aims to form human beings who have social concern, moral responsibility, and the ability to participate in societal change (Diemer et al., 2022; Watts et al., 2023).

In the context of contemporary education, Freire's idea of critical consciousness has an increasingly strong relevance because modern society faces various complex problems such as social inequality, digital transformation, the dissemination of information that is not always valid, and changes in the structure of life due to technological developments. It is not enough to produce individuals who have professional competence, but also to build the ability to understand the social consequences of human knowledge and actions. Critical awareness provides a theoretical foundation that students are agents of change who are able to read reality, reflect on experiences, and take actions based on the values of justice and humanity. The integration of critical awareness, transformative learning, and experiential-based education is a strategic approach in building a more humanist and democratic educational paradigm. Thus, education functions not only as a means of adaptation to change, but also as a space to build human capacity to create sustainable social transformation (Taylor & Cranton, 2021).

3.1.4. Integration of Transformative Learning and Critical Awareness as a New Educational Paradigm

The integration between transformative learning and critical consciousness provides a more comprehensive theoretical framework for understanding education as a process of human change as a whole. Transformative learning, as developed by Mezirow, explains how individuals experience a change in perspective through critical reflection on experiences, assumptions, and frameworks that previously shaped the way we understand reality. Meanwhile, Freire's concept of critical consciousness expands this dimension by emphasizing that the educational process cannot be separated from the social, cultural, and power relations contexts that affect human life. Thus, the integration of the two perspectives shows that education is not only a process of individual cognitive transformation, but also a process of forming social awareness that allows humans to understand and respond to problems in their environment (Hoggan, 2023).

In the perspective of theoretical synthesis, transformative education can be understood as a multidimensional transformation process that includes three main dimensions, namely epistemological transformation, personal transformation, and social transformation. Epistemological transformation refers to fundamental changes in the way individuals acquire, interpret, and validate knowledge. This process is not only related to the increase in the amount of information a person has, but also the ability to question assumptions, evaluate sources of knowledge, and build a more reflective understanding of reality. This dimension is becoming increasingly important in the digital age when individuals are dealing with complex information flows and require critical literacy skills. Recent research shows that today's education needs to develop epistemic abilities so that learners are able to become independent learners who can understand and evaluate environmental changes in a sustainable manner (Zawacki-Richter et al., 2023).

In addition to changes in the way knowledge is understood, the integration of transformative learning and critical awareness also includes personal transformations related to changes in individual identity, values, and self-awareness. Through critical reflection and dialogical experiences, learners not only gain a new understanding of the world, but also experience changes in the way they see themselves as part of the social environment. Personal transformation allows individuals to develop autonomy of thought, moral responsibility, and the ability to make decisions based on ethical considerations. However, personal transformation in the perspective of critical education does not stop at individual self-development, but must be directed at the ability to understand the relationship between the self and the broader social structure. Contemporary studies of learners' agency show that

reflective learning processes are able to strengthen the ability of individuals to take an active role in their social environment (Jääskelä et al., 2022; Diemer et al., 2022).

The final dimension in this integrative model is social transformation, which is the ability of individuals to use their knowledge and critical awareness to contribute to societal change. This dimension is the main differentiator between transformative education and an educational paradigm that is only oriented towards instrumental competencies. Individuals who experience social transformation not only understand various problems, but also have the capacity to engage in problem-solving through reflective and responsible actions. In the context of contemporary education, the integrative model between transformative learning and critical awareness offers a new paradigm that places learners as active, reflective, ethical, and socially concerned subjects. This approach is in line with the direction of global education that emphasizes the importance of holistic human development through lifelong learning, democracy, sustainability, and social justice (UNESCO, 2021; UNESCO, 2023).

3.2. Discussion

3.2.1. The Crisis of the Contemporary Education Paradigm: From the Reproduction of Knowledge to the Transformation of Consciousness

The development of contemporary education shows that there is a paradigm crisis related to the limitations of educational models that are too oriented towards the reproduction of knowledge and the achievement of instrumental competencies. In the dominant modern education paradigm, learning success is often measured through quantitative indicators such as academic achievement, productivity, and students' readiness to enter the job market. Although this approach has contributed to the development of human professional capacity, this paradigm faces criticism because it tends to reduce the essence of education to just a process of human resource production. (Biesta, 2022) emphasized that education has a broader purpose, which includes the dimensions of qualification, socialization, and subjectification. Therefore, education needs to be directed at the development of human beings who are not only competent, but also reflective, ethical, and have an awareness of their social responsibilities.

The crisis of the educational paradigm is increasingly visible in the context of a digital society that has undergone major changes due to the development of information technology and artificial intelligence. Access to increasingly open information is not always directly proportional to the increase in individuals' ability to understand, evaluate, and use knowledge critically. Phenomena such as the spread of disinformation, social polarization, digital literacy gaps, and the increasing complexity of global problems show that education is not enough to equip students with the ability to access information. Education must develop epistemic capacity so that individuals are able to distinguish valid information, understand the social context of knowledge, and use technology responsibly. Recent research on digital transformation in education shows that technological integration must be accompanied by strengthening critical and ethical dimensions so that technological innovation truly supports human development as a whole (Zawacki-Richter et al., 2023; UNESCO, 2023).

In the perspective of critical theory of education, the fundamental issue of education is not only related to how the learning process is carried out, but also concerns fundamental questions about the production, legitimacy, and distribution of knowledge. Education is always in a social context and is never completely neutral because it is related to values, culture, interests, and power relations that shape the way humans understand the world. Therefore, critical theory emphasizes the importance of education as a space for reflection that allows students to question assumptions that have been considered to be truth and understand how knowledge relates to social structures. This awareness is important because education that only focuses on the transmission of knowledge has the potential to produce individuals who are able to adapt to existing systems, but lack the ability to evaluate and transform social reality (Freire, 2020; Giroux, 2021a).

Based on these conditions, contemporary education requires a paradigm reconstruction from a learning as acquisition approach to a learning as transformation approach. The transformational paradigm views learning not only as a process of acquiring and storing information, but as a process of profound change in the way individuals understand knowledge, themselves, and their relationship to their social environment. In this perspective, learners are positioned as active subjects who are able

to reflect, construct meaning, and take action based on the awareness that develops through learning experiences. This paradigm shift is in line with the idea of transformative learning that emphasizes critical reflection, perspective change, and the development of individual agency. Thus, the main goal of education is not only to produce human beings who have technical skills, but human beings who are capable of thinking critically, acting ethically, and contributing to societal transformation (Hoggan, 2023; Taylor & Cranton, 2021).

3.2.2. Theoretical Analysis: The Limitations of the Conventional Education Paradigm

The conventional educational paradigm oriented towards knowledge transmission departs from the assumption that the learning process mainly occurs through the mechanism of conveying information from educators to learners. In this framework, teachers are positioned as the main source of knowledge, while learners play the role of recipients in charge of understanding, remembering, and reproducing the information that has been provided. This approach has a historical contribution to building formal education systems, particularly in the development of basic knowledge and procedural skills. However, in the context of modern society characterized by complexity, uncertainty, and rapid change, the transmission paradigm faces limitations because it does not provide space for the development of students' reflective skills, creativity, complex problem-solving, and adaptability. Education is no longer enough to produce individuals who have knowledge, but it is necessary to form human beings who are able to understand and create meaning from their learning experiences (Biesta, 2022).

In the perspective of critical theory of education, the limitations of the transmission paradigm are not only related to learning methods, but also concern the way education understands the nature of knowledge and the position of students in the learning process. Freire through the concept of banking education criticizes education that places knowledge as something that can be "stored" and mechanically transferred from teacher to student. According to Freire, this pattern has the potential to maintain dominance relations because students are not given the opportunity to question reality, develop critical awareness, and build understanding based on their own life experiences. Such education tends to produce individuals who are able to adapt to existing social structures, but lack the ability to evaluate or transform these social conditions. Contemporary critical pedagogical studies affirm that education needs to create a dialogue space that allows learners to become active subjects in knowledge production (Giroux, 2021a).

In response to the limitations of the transmission paradigm, constructivism theory presents an important change in understanding the learning process by placing learners as active actors in building knowledge. The perspective of social constructivism emphasizes that knowledge is not simply received passively, but is constructed through experience, social interaction, language, and cultural context. This paradigm shift has made a major contribution to the development of various modern learning approaches such as problem-based learning, collaborative learning, and experiential learning. Nevertheless, constructivism still has room for development when dealing with the question of how the knowledge that individuals build can be used to understand broader social problems. The focus of constructivism, which tends to emphasize the process of forming individual understanding, has not fully explained the dimensions of value, power, and social transformation in education (Auda, 2022; Darling-Hammond et al., 2022).

These limitations demonstrate the need to expand the educational paradigm towards an approach that not only explains how humans construct knowledge, but also how it changes the way individuals understand themselves, society, and the world. Transformative learning and critical awareness offer a theoretical perspective that expands constructivism by including the dimensions of critical reflection, values, identity, and social action as integral parts of the educational process. Through reflection on experience and critical dialogue with various perspectives, learners not only gain new understanding, but also experience changes in the way they perceive reality and make decisions. Thus, education is understood as a multidimensional transformation process that includes epistemological, personal, and social changes. This approach is becoming increasingly relevant in the face of 21st-century challenges that require individuals with critical thinking abilities, agency, and social responsibility (Hoggan, 2023; Taylor & Cranton, 2021).

3.2.3. Theoretical Comparison between Transmission Paradigms, Constructivism, Transformative Learning, and Critical Pedagogy

The development of educational theory shows a fundamental shift in orientation from the paradigm of knowledge transmission to the paradigm of human transformation. The transmission paradigm places education as the process of conveying information from educators to students, with teachers functioning as the main source of knowledge and students as recipients of information. The main orientation of this approach is material mastery, knowledge reproduction, and achievement of certain competency standards. Although this paradigm has a contribution to building a foundation of basic knowledge and procedural skills, this approach has limitations because it does not provide space for creativity, reflection, and agency development of students. In the context of 21st-century education, the educational paradigm is no longer enough to focus only on what students know, but also on how they understand, evaluate, and use knowledge in real life (Biesta, 2022).

In contrast to the transmission paradigm, constructivism presents conceptual change by placing learners as active actors in the process of knowledge formation. In the perspective of social constructivism, learning is understood as the process of constructing meaning that takes place through interaction between individuals, experiences, language, and cultural environments. The role of teachers has changed from a single source of information to a facilitator who creates a learning environment that allows for exploration, collaboration, and reflection. This paradigm has made a major contribution to the development of active learning approaches such as problem-based learning, collaborative learning, and experiential learning. However, constructivism still has limitations because it explains more about how individuals build understanding than how the knowledge is used to understand social problems, injustices, and societal transformation. Therefore, an approach that expands the epistemological dimension towards the social and ethical dimensions of education is needed (Darling-Hammond et al., 2022).

Transformative learning and critical pedagogy then offer theoretical expansion by placing education as a process of changing perspectives and the formation of social consciousness. Transformative learning focuses on the internal change of the individual through critical reflection on the assumptions, experiences, and frameworks used in understanding reality. Learners are seen as reflective individuals who are able to reconstruct their understanding through meaningful learning experiences. Meanwhile, critical pedagogy expands this orientation by emphasizing the relationship between education, power, culture, and social structures. In Freire's perspective, learners are not only individuals who experience personal change, but also subjects who have the capacity to understand and transform social reality through a process of dialogue and praxis. Both approaches make important contributions to building a more humanist and emancipatory education (Hoggan, 2023).

Although transformative learning and critical pedagogy have strong theoretical contributions, they also have limitations when applied separately. Transformative learning has the potential to overemphasize the psychological dimension and individual experiences if it does not consider the social, cultural, and political contexts that shape these experiences. On the other hand, critical pedagogy can face implementation challenges if it does not pay attention to the process of cognitive development, personal experience, and reflective readiness of students. Therefore, a theoretical synthesis is needed that integrates personal transformation and social transformation as the foundation of contemporary education. This integration views education as a multidimensional process that includes changes in ways of knowing (epistemological transformation), changes in personal identity (personal transformation), and the ability to contribute to social transformation. This perspective is in line with the global education agenda that emphasizes agency, sustainability, and social responsibility (Taylor & Cranton, 2022).

3.2.4. Theoretical Synthesis: Integration of Transformative Learning and Critical Awareness

The results of the theoretical analysis show that transformative learning and critical awareness have a conceptual relationship that is complementary in building a contemporary educational paradigm. The transformative learning developed by Mezirow emphasizes the process of individual internal change through critical reflection on experiences, assumptions, and frames of reference used in understanding reality. Meanwhile, the concept of critical consciousness developed by Freire expands the dimension of transformation by providing a social orientation through an understanding

of the power structures, cultures, and inequalities that affect human life. The integration of these two approaches shows that education is not just a knowledge transfer activity or a change in individual perspectives, but is a comprehensive human transformation process that includes intellectual, personal, ethical, and social aspects (Hoggan, 2023; Taylor & Cranton, 2022).

The theoretical synthesis between transformative learning and critical awareness can be formulated through the stages of transformation that start from critical experience. This initial stage occurs when individuals face experiences that challenge the framework of previous understanding, whether through social problems, value conflicts, technological changes, or real-life complexities. In Mezirow's theory, this condition is referred to as a disorienting dilemma, which is an experience that causes individuals to question assumptions and perspectives that have been considered right. Critical experience has an important function because it triggers the emergence of a process of reflection and reconstruction of meaning. In the context of modern education, authentic and problem-based learning experiences allow learners not only to understand academic concepts, but also to connect knowledge with the complex realities of life (Kitchenham, 2022).

The next stage in the transformation process is critical reflection and dialogue as the main mechanism for the formation of new understanding. Critical reflection allows students to evaluate the assumptions, values, and beliefs that have been used in understanding the world. In contrast to ordinary thinking processes, critical reflection leads individuals to question their own thinking bases and open up possibilities to alternative perspectives. In this stage, teachers have an important role as facilitators who create dialogical spaces, not as the only source of knowledge. Freire's perspective emphasizes that dialogue is a fundamental process in education because through social interaction humans build awareness of themselves and the surrounding environment. Thus, learning becomes a collective process that allows students to develop critical thinking skills, social empathy, and understanding of diverse perspectives (Jääskelä et al., 2022).

The final stage of the synthesis of transformative learning and critical awareness is transformative praxis, which is the process when new understanding is realized through real actions in social life. In Freire's perspective, knowledge gained through reflection has no meaning if it is not followed by actions aimed at improving reality. Therefore, education must produce individuals who are not only capable of understanding the world, but also have the capacity to participate consciously in shaping social change. This concept expands the goals of education from simply developing individual competencies to the formation of human beings who have agency, ethical responsibility, and concern for society. The integration of critical reflection, dialogue, and action results in a transformative educational paradigm that is relevant to the needs of the 21st century, especially in the face of global issues such as inequality, technological change, and social sustainability (Diemer et al., 2022).

3.2.5. Reconstruction of Contemporary Education Models Based on Transformative Learning and Critical Awareness

Based on the results of a theoretical synthesis between transformative learning and critical awareness, this study reconstructs a contemporary educational model called the Critical Transformative Education Model. This model departs from the assumption that education can no longer be understood only as a process of knowledge transfer, but as a process of human transformation that includes changes in ways of thinking, self-awareness, value orientation, and social involvement. The first dimension in this model is the epistemological dimension, which is a change in the way of understanding the nature of knowledge. Knowledge is not seen as a static collection of facts, but as a dynamic construct that develops through experience, dialogue, reflection, and social interaction. Consequently, the learning process needs to be directed towards a problem-based approach, research, authentic experience, and critical exploration of reality (OECD, 2023).

The second dimension in the Transformative-Critical Education Model is the pedagogical dimension that places the teacher no longer as the sole source of knowledge, but as a facilitator of the intellectual and social transformation of students. This paradigm shift shifts the role of the teacher from a knowledge transmitter to a learning facilitator, from a single evaluator to a reflection companion, and from an instructor to a dialogue partner in the learning process. Teachers have the responsibility to create a learning environment that allows students to explore ideas, question assumptions, and build understanding through meaningful interactions. In the context of

contemporary education, dialogical pedagogical relationships are becoming increasingly important because learning not only aims to improve cognitive abilities, but also develop agency, creativity, and adaptability to complex changes (Zawacki-Richter et al., 2023).

The third and fourth dimensions of the Transformative-Critical Education Model relate to the psychological and ethical aspects of the educational process. The psychological dimension emphasizes that educational transformation cannot occur without the personal involvement of learners in the learning experiences they are undergoing. The learning process must pay attention to the development of individual identity, motivation, self-awareness, and reflective abilities. Meanwhile, the ethical dimension emphasizes that education should not only be oriented towards the achievement of technical competence, as abilities without a moral foundation can produce individuals who have expertise but lack concern for the social impact of their actions. Therefore, transformative education needs to integrate human values, justice, sustainability, and global responsibility as part of educational goals. This perspective is in line with the idea of transformative learning that places personal change as the basis for the formation of more conscious and responsible human beings (Hoggan, 2023).

The final dimension in the Transformative-Critical Education Model is the social dimension that places education as an instrument for the formation of citizens who have the awareness and ability to contribute to social change. Education does not stop at the success of individuals academically or professionally, but is directed at the development of students' ability to understand social problems, participate in democratic life, and take constructive action against various societal challenges. In Freire's critical consciousness perspective, an educated human being is not only an individual who understands the world, but an individual who has the capacity to reflect and transform the world through real actions (praxis). Thus, the Transformative-Critical Education Model offers an educational paradigm that integrates epistemological, pedagogical, psychological, ethical, and social dimensions as the foundation for the formation of people who are reflective, critical, characterful, and globally responsible (UNESCO, 2021).

3.2.6. Implications of the Model on Contemporary Educational Practice

The reorientation of educational theory based on transformative learning and critical awareness has fundamental implications for the reconstruction of contemporary educational practices, especially in the aspects of curriculum and learning strategies. At the curriculum level, this approach demands an orientation shift from a curriculum centered on content transmission to a curriculum that is experience-based, critical reflection, authentic problem-solving, and student involvement in understanding social reality. The curriculum is no longer only directed at answering questions about what knowledge students should master, but also how that knowledge is used to read, evaluate, and improve the world around them. At the pedagogical level, teachers need to develop a dialogical approach through project-based learning, problem-based learning, collaboration, and reflective activities that connect theory to students' real experiences. This transformation places students as active subjects who build knowledge while developing their transformative capacities (Hoggan, 2023; Jääskelä et al., 2022).

At the education policy level, the Critical Transformative Education Model has implications for how educational institutions define learning success. Educational success can no longer only be measured through academic achievement, mastery of technical competencies, or cognitive performance indicators, but also needs to consider the development of critical thinking skills, creativity, collaboration, social empathy, ethical responsibility, and adaptability to global change. This perspective is in line with the sustainable education agenda that places people at the center of development through strengthening reflective capacity and social awareness. In a global context characterized by technological development, climate change, and the complexity of social issues, education needs to produce individuals who are not only able to adapt to change, but also have the ability to contribute constructively to society and the environment. Thus, transformative-critical education becomes a strategic framework to build competent human beings while having a moral orientation and global responsibility (UNESCO, 2023; OECD, 2023).

4. CONCLUSION

This study concludes that the reorientation of contemporary education theory requires a fundamental shift from an educational paradigm centered on knowledge transmission to a paradigm of holistic human transformation. The results of the theoretical analysis show that conventional education approaches have limitations in responding to the complexity of the global society because they emphasize more on information mastery and technical competence than on the development of reflective capacity, social awareness, and individual transformative abilities. In this context, transformative learning and critical awareness are important foundations to overcome these limitations by placing students as active subjects who are able to reconstruct understanding, evaluate assumptions, and build reflective relationships with their social reality. The novelty of this research lies in the integrative conceptual construction between Mezirow's transformative learning theory and Freire's critical pedagogy as the basis for the reconstruction of contemporary education theory through the Critical Transformative Education Model which connects five main dimensions, namely epistemological, pedagogical, psychological, ethical, and social transformation. The model emphasizes that education should not stop at changing thinking skills, but must develop towards changing the way individuals understand the world, build identities, develop moral awareness, and take real actions in people's lives, so that education is understood as a process of shaping human beings who have intellectual capacity, moral awareness, and social responsibility. More broadly, this research contributes to the development of 21st-century educational discourse through theoretical frameworks that are relevant to future educational challenges, especially in the face of technological change, social uncertainty, environmental crises, and the complexity of global life. Therefore, transformative learning based on critical awareness can be used as one of the conceptual foundations in the development of curriculum, pedagogical practices, and educational policies that are oriented towards human formation in a holistic, reflective, adaptive, critical manner, and have the capacity to encourage social transformation towards broader humanitarian goals.

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