
Transformative Pedagogy in Women Studies

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Abstract

This is a case study that looked into the pedagogy of transformative education applied to a course in Women Studies in one of the Teacher Education Institutions based in Manila, Philippines. Two sets of cases were included in this study. The first set were the twenty (20) students who facilitated the action research and the second set were the fifteen (15) women who developed the projects in one of the communities in Manila. It investigated how various action research projects of students in Women Studies were able to develop lifelong learning skills that led to empowerment of women in the community. These lifelong learning skills acquired by women include acquiring new mindset, strength of character, sharing one's knowledge, having new disposition in life, taking care of one's body and building self-confidence, patience and resiliency. Lifelong learning skills were not limited to the women in the community. Since students of Women Studies developed action research projects, the process enabled the students to have a deeper understanding of gender issues and women empowerment, self knowledge and application of theories and concepts on Women Studies to real life situation.

Keywords:

lifelong learning skills, transformative education, and women empowerment

Introduction

At present, efforts in gender mainstreaming for empowerment of women and girls have been visible in various sectors including educational institutions. This can be attributed to the hard work of women at the local and national level including conferences and declaration through the agencies of the United Nations (e.g. International Decade for Women, 1985-1995; Nairobi Conference, 1985; Cairo Conference, 1994; Beijing Conference, 1995

and Beijing + 5 in New York, 2000 and now Beijing +20) (World Conferences on Women, n.d.)

Countries in turn operationalized these declarations and framework by integrating women's/gender issues in their development agenda. The Philippines, for instance, has produced major documents that serve as blueprint for the government to take action in promoting the advancement and empowerment of Filipino women and girls. These documents include the Philippine Development

Plan for Women (PDPW, 1989-1992), the Philippine Plan for Gender Responsive Development (PPGD, 1995-2025), the Framework Plan for Women (FPW, 2004-2010), and the Women's Empowerment, Development and Gender Equality (WEDGE) Plan 2013-2016. The FPW and WEDGE were extracted from the PPGD, 1995-2025 (WEDGE Plan 2013-2016).

Part 2 of the WEDGE Plan pursues Women's Social Development Rights, one of these rights is right to education. Education is still the main weapon to attain women empowerment, development and gender equality.

This paper examined how the pedagogy of transformative education was applied to Women Studies. Most studies in transformative education are confined to conceptual development of theories (Mezirow, 2003; Cranton, 2003; Dix, 2015; Dirks, 2006; Mc Gonigal, 2005; Lange, 2012; Poutiatine, 2009), others were focused on adult learning (Cranton, 2006; Taylor, 2008; Clifford, & Montgomery, 2015). Similarly, Fetherson and Kelly (2007) looked into the conflict resolution and transformative pedagogy in higher education. Despite the dearth of literature connecting transformative education theory and Women Studies, there are several studies however, that show transformative learning of women (Irving and English, 2011; Vogelsang M.R., 1993). Several studies are on women's way of knowing that lead to their transformation because of their experiences of oppression (Belenky et al, 1986; Hamp, 2007; Kilgore & Bloom, 2002 in Irving, 2011). Moreover, Irving (2011) cited a number of studies on the importance of relationships, women's body, emotion, race, and class for transformative learning. Hence, the study of women empowerment illustrates transformative learning. The basic assumptions of most of these on women's transformation came from Mezirow's (2003) transformative theory. This study will look into the process and learning applying transformative theory in educating for women empowerment.

Transformative Pedagogy in Women Studies

Similar to previous studies, transformative

pedagogy is framed from the principles of transformative theory (Mezirow, 1997; Moore, 2005; Mezirow, 1997) explains transformative theory as a process of "effecting change" in our own contexts. Transformative education is reflected on transformative learning as shown in Mezirow's statement (2000):

"Transformative learning refers to the process by which we transform our taken for granted frames of reference (meaning perspectives, habits, or mindsets) to make them more inclusive, discriminating, open, emotionally capable of change, and reflective so that they may generate beliefs and opinions that will prove more true or justified to guide action" (pp7-8).

Women empowerment is an affirmative action not only by the United Nations but also by the Philippine government. The idea about women empowerment is reflected on the way women and students show transformation in their mindsets, perspectives and dispositions. Mezirow further elucidated that there is transformation of the self when one "understands oneself, is aware of the self in relation to others, and in turn leads to changes in how one sees the world". In addition, there is transformation when people achieve an "understanding of a common humanity, shared planet and a shared future" (Shultz p.255 in Clifford & Montgomery, 2015). These ideas are relevant to the teaching of Women Studies in higher education institutions.

The mandate to pursue empowerment of women is enshrined in the United Nations through the Beijing Platform for Action and the Convention on the Elimination of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW). In the Philippines, it is articulated in the Philippine Plan for Gender Responsive Development (PPGD, 1995-2025) and most importantly, the Philippine Magna Carta of Women. These documents aim to mainstream gender concepts, issues, and strategies in various institutions that will result to gender equality and empowerment of women and girls.

As one of the seven pioneer universities which offer Women Studies, the sampled university has

sustained the course since the 1990s. In this program, students were trained to do course of action for women empowerment in the areas of research and pedagogy both in the formal and informal sectors of society. The program aims to make both men and women conscious about patriarchal ideology and how such ideology can be deconstructed and later empower women and girls to achieve gender equality. Faculty members who are teaching in this program have developed a pedagogy that will make the students and trainees of students (in this case, the women in the communities) reflect on their own roles and status and later take courses of action that serve as impetus to transform their lives. These goals are consistent with the ideas of Freire (1993) who “sees transformative learners being empowered to become agents of change in their own lives and in the transformation of society”. The pedagogy for Women Studies is one that will make the students critical of their own stand so that they will be able to change the society from having patriarchal ideology to a society that respects the rights of women to attain gender equality.

The goal of Women Studies is to look at gender issues and problems in the society and find solutions to these issues and problems. This affirms Sullivan’s (1999) idea that learning occurs when learners become “change agents to end ecological crisis”. It is premise in this research that learning is meaningful when knowledge and skills are applied in the real world. When applied to Women Studies, such knowledge leads to empowerment of women and the learners themselves.

Purpose of the Research

This study attempted to describe the process of transformative methodology in teaching Women Studies through the: 1) analysis of transformative actions that were developed through the course in Women Studies; and 2) exploration of lifelong learning competencies as a result of the process of transformative education among students and the women who received intervention from the students in Women Studies.

Methodology

The Context

The Undergraduate Specialization in Women Studies has been offered since the 90s in a sampled teacher training university. It is not a compulsory program for students but it has consistently attracted a considerable number of students from various areas of specialization. The course Women Studies (WS)5 or Research Methods in Women Studies was usually classroom-based. For Class 2016 however, the teacher handling the course decided to focus on action research method since such method could develop several learning competencies among learners. Moreover, action research is viewed to be empowering for the teacher and learners.

The research design was a case study that focuses on action research projects of WS5 students. The cases included the student-researchers and the women participants of the projects undertaken by the student researchers that implemented the action research were composed of 20 while the women participants from an urban poor community in Manila is 15. Techniques used in data gathering included documentation of the teaching and learning activities both in the classroom and community, observation of community activities, focused group discussions and interviews with students and women in the community, and analysis of insights and reflections of students as well as the women in the community.

In this research, two important concepts/models were looked into. First: action research as a teaching strategy in teaching the course Research methods in Women Studies and not as a research method. Second: the key thrusts of transformative education that emphasized self-directed learning, critical examination of assumptions and views, openness to alternatives, and advancement of social change.

The Research Process

The research process included various phases such as preparatory phase, data gathering, analysis of data and report writing. In the preparatory phase, about 20 students were oriented on the concept and process of action research and transformative

education. This was followed by classroom based processing and critique of action research projects of students for women in the community. Prior to the development of action research project, the students made a survey on the needs of women in the community. From the identified needs, the students grouped themselves into three and developed three action research projects namely: livelihood program by selling prepared SIM cards and mobile load, a wellness program through *shibashi* and *zumba* dance exercises, and healthy meal preparation activity. The three programs were implemented with the help of resource persons invited by the student-researchers and the programs run for a total of six (6) Saturdays.

Preparation of observation guide, questions for focused group discussions and interviews, and guide for drawing reflections and insights were also done. These guides were later discussed with the students so that they would come prepared for the entire activities. The data gathering phase was composed of two layers, first, was the observation, interview and focused group discussion among women in the community and the second layer was focused group discussion among students who implemented the action research projects in the community. Some of the reflection questions asked from women were (1) What can you say about the three intervention programs? (2) Did you learn from them? (3) Can you use the new learning you've got in your daily lives? (5) What have you become in relation to the three programs you experienced? and (6) How do you describe yourself now after knowing/doing the activities?

On the other hand, students who facilitated the women's projects in the community were ask about their knowledge of women's issues, their concepts, means and ways of empowering women, and their self-reflection in the process of implementing intervention programs in the community

The entire process of the action research from the orientation about the action research and the programs they intended to launch up to the last session were documented with the use of video and audio recorders. Women participants' consent was sought before everything started. The audio recordings were then transcribed for analysis. This research used

thematic analysis in examining the data.

Making Gender Studies Theories, Methods, and Approaches Work for the Learners and Others

The first 15 units in the 18-unit undergraduate specialization in Women Studies introduced Women Studies theories, methods, and approaches to the students. However, it is through the last course, WS 5's action research activity that the teacher could greatly show the specialization's actual significance as a subject of study and as an instrument for transforming lives. In the past semesters, the conduct of Women Studies was always inside the classroom. Though real life cases and contexts were given and studied in class, the direct interactions by the students with the women brought new experiences and learning to students. In the course of their action research concepts such as gender bias, multiple burdens, women empowerment, and patriarchal relationships and the like were no longer academic constructs but societal realities women and their supporters have to contend with. The students clearly saw how the concepts and issues were manifested in real life situation. Since these interactions were authentic and meaningful, learning became meaningful.

Results and Discussion

Transformative Education and Women Studies

One of the goals of Women Studies is for women to attain empowerment in order to achieve gender equality. This research examined the competencies learned by women in the community as a result of the intervention programs implemented by the students. The study described how women were empowered in the process of implementing the programs. It also looked into how the implementers or the students acquired empowering skills as part of the acquisition of lifelong learning skills.

Content, Process and Results: Lifelong Learning Skills that were Developed through the Course in Women Studies

The students in Women Studies have developed different intervention programs with the goal of

influencing the women in attaining gender equality and women's well being. At the outset, the students conceptualized workshops integrating the intervention programs and topics like gender concepts, issues, and gender laws. After a series of group discussions inside and outside the classroom and needs analysis in the community, the students came up with three important programs such as *shibashi* and *zumba* for wellness and well being, livelihood, and proper nutrition.

Shibashi and Zumba program

The goal of the *shibashi* and *zumba* programs were to promote health and well-being of women in the community. The students decided to introduce this program before they started the training sessions on livelihood. *Zumba* is a combination of dance techniques from *samba*, *rumba* and *salsa*. On the other hand, *shibashi* is composed of 18 gentle and relaxing *qigong* movements based on the philosophy of *Tai Chi*, achieving balance to promote inner peace. *Shibashi* was done after the *Zumba* exercise. The women were asked to relax for about 10 minutes after the *zumba*, and moved on to doing the *shibashi* exercise. The *zumba* and *shibashi* exercises were done regularly before the students conducted their training sessions for about six sessions.

Sulong Juana: Livelihood Program

In this training session, the students invited a person that is earning from selling mobile loads. The goal of the session was for women to realize other strategies of earning while enhancing their marketing skills. This program allowed women to become entrepreneurs while enjoying motherhood being mothers.

Pinggang Pinoy: Proper Nutrition

In this project, the students invited two (2) fourth year students specializing in Nutrition and Dietetics to hold lecture-demonstration on how to prepare nutritious food with affordable budget. Preparation of nutritious and quality food within a reasonable and low budget was a big help to mothers in the community.

Integrated in these sessions were discussions about various concepts such as gender stereotyping and its effects on the status of women, issues on multiple

burden and multiple roles of women, well being and health, and gender violence. Most importantly, the sessions usually ended on ways on how women can empower themselves and attain gender equality.

Competencies in Transformative Education

Both women in the community and the student-researchers have certainly enhanced their competencies that illustrate transformative education in the process of implementing various intervention programs. The projects on livelihood, *Shibashi* and *Zumba*, and proper nutrition provided several learning processes among the students who facilitated the projects and women who implemented their projects. In turn, these learning processes lead the students and women to reflect on their learning.

Skills learned by Women in the Community

The women in the community assumed the typical reproductive roles in the family and the attendant roles of maintaining the household, taking care of all the needs of family members, both immediate and extended. While doing household chores, the women were also expected to engage in productive activities that augmented the family income. For some women, their involvement in the multiple roles of reproductive and productive activities was common and acceptable among families. With their exposure to numerous gender trainings, some women in the community were somewhat aware of the various manifestations of gender biases and inequality such as multiple roles and burden of women, gender stereotyping, violence against women and children, and women subordination, among others.

The introduction to intervention programs in the community has enhanced women's understanding of gender issues. In implementing the wellness, livelihood, and nutrition programs, the students emphasized how the said programs could help address and or at least mitigate the ill effects of gender issues. Deep understanding of the issues could immensely help in empowering, transforming, and asserting the rights of women in the family and community.

The manifestations of transformation among the women in the community could be gleaned from

the acquisition and enhancement of certain skills among the women in the community. Some of these skills learned by the women include: knowledge of engaging in small scale business or entrepreneurship; knowledge of food preparation and meal planning; new skills in budgeting; Taking care of one's body; having a new mindset; and educating the self, gaining self-confidence, developing patience and resilience. These competencies were shown when the students interviewed the women's reflections about themselves and the project that they have done.

Knowledge of Engaging in Small Scale Business or Entrepreneurship

The intervention programs, particularly the livelihood program, have provided opportunities for the women to know about putting up a small scale business or engage in entrepreneurship such as mobile loading. The concern, nonetheless, is the lack of start-up capital for the business. The livelihood program encouraged women to explore other options to have additional income for the family. One woman explained that she wanted to sell frozen food such as *tocino* (preserved meat). Another woman said that she was thinking of selling "*palamig*" (ice cold drinks) since she did not have funds for the mobile loading business. She elaborated that "*eh alam mo naman kami mga nanay, isang kahig, isang tuka.*" (as you know, mothers are "one scratch, one peck"). The other women agreed.

There was a realization among women that having their own funds will somehow make them financially independent and not to solely rely on their husbands' earnings. They also learned that small scale business may have the possibility to prosper. The women in the community intend to share the importance of engaging in business or entrepreneurship with their neighbors and relatives. They will encourage others to engage in economic activities to improve their well-being.

Knowledge of Food Preparation and Meal Planning; New Skills in Budgeting

The nutrition program or the *Pinggang Pinoy* enabled the women to be more conscious of meal planning for the family. The program has given them information on food preparation and knowledge of

proper diet for their children, family, and relatives. One mother even shared the value of the nutrition program because she was taking care of her diabetic husband. The program enabled her to make an appropriate meal plan suitable for him and the whole family. She said that "*it is good to have a meal plan since it will determine the appropriate meal for members of the family*".

The program has certainly enlightened the women on the importance of preparing nutritious but affordable meals for the family. The women agreed and even shared their own anecdotes about the matter. They said that they personally go to the market to ensure that the food that they buy is within their means but still nutritious. In addition, women were able to learn how to manage the finances of the family. Their skill in budgeting has been enhanced because of the nutrition program.

Taking Care of one's Body

The wellness program - *zumba* and *shibashi* - had heightened the consciousness of women to be more conscious of their health and their own body. They have started paying attention to their well being by exercising and engaging in relaxing activities. A woman shared that "*what we are doing is not a joke... that doing shibashi is important...*".

For them, the program was a therapeutic and a break of their usual household chores. They have done these exercises at home since the program was introduced in their sessions. As one woman disclosed "*I do this exercise while the family members are asleep because they might make fun of me... but (the exercises) are really relaxing*". The other women exercised upon waking up or before going to bed when all the family members are still asleep because they did not want to be teased.

The women revealed that the wellness program made them realize the significance of regular exercise for their health and well being. The exercises relieved them from stressful workload in the house. The exercises conditioned them to relax before taking care of their children, grandchildren, and sick husband, and doing housework.

Having a New Mindset

After watching a videoclip on the multiple roles of women in the household, the women became more vocal on the unfair work assignment to their households. The mothers were expected to do all the household chores. Even if they were engaged in income-generating activities, they are still expected to perform the said household chores. The men, on the other hand, were merely expected to provide the resources for the family but not to be involved in household work.

The workshop discussions made women realized that both men and women could help each other in doing household chores. Since then, they pushed their husbands to help them in the housework. One woman gladly narrated that her husband now helps her. As she said, *“He is now washing the clothes.”* Discussions on the intervention programs have certainly changed the mindset of women on the negative effects of the rigid division of labor among women. The program has empowered them and enabled them to break the seemingly rigid hierarchical structure of inequality in the household.

Educating the Self, Gaining Self-confidence, Developing Patience and Resilience

The women claimed that all the meetings were learning sessions and avenues for self-realization. Through the programs, the women realized who they are and what they can do for themselves and their families. They became aware that they were industrious, patient, resilient, and strong. In the words of a mother in the community, *“I think I am strong since I endured whatever problem... especially after the death of my husband”*. Another woman disclosed that *“I am still here after all the hardships and experiences...”*. With the intervention programs, the women felt that were equipped to face whatever challenges they will face in the future.

Another good thing about the discussions and programs was that the women are more than willing to share all their experiences and learnings. They explained that they will share these learnings to their relatives residing in Manila and even those in the provinces. Some explained that the information

and insights they learned will be shared with their relatives, especially to their husbands so that they will be more sensitive to each others needs.

The women were more than willing to attend the sessions. There were other activities in the community but most of them opted to attend the interventions programs. In almost all the sessions, the women would always ask the student researchers if they would still come back for follow up activities. In fact, the last session became a crying session among the women and the student researchers.

Self-reflections lead to new ways of looking at the thoughts and mindsets of the women participants. Transformation happened when they were able learn new ways of looking at their personal lives. The same discovery was shown among students in the study of Vogelsang (1993).

Competencies on transformative education acquired by students

The action research projects did not only enhance the lifelong learning skills of the women, but it also strengthened the competencies of Women Studies (WS) students. Teaching action research among students on gender issues engaged students to solve practical problems among women in the community. The process of teaching gender concepts and issues of women in the community has provided learning insights among the WS students.

Ability to Raise Questions, Drawing Insights and Critically Examine Existing Assumptions

The program on *Pinggang Pinoy* intended to teach women how to prepare and cook nutritious but inexpensive food for the family. Everyone knows that in most societies doing household chores are associated with women. One of the student-researchers asked this question while conceptualizing the program: *“Aren’t they themselves (the students of Women Studies) reinforce this long-held notion of women’s reproductive work instead of advancing women empowerment?”*. In addition, one student-researcher while conceptualizing the program remarked, *“Yung meeting po kasi namin para sa Pinggang Pinoy, tinanong ko po noon si Deinielle na*

sa pagtuturo ba natin nitong Pinggang Pinoy sa mga nanay, hindi ba natin nire-reinforce 'yung idea na sila yung maging responsible sa domestic work? kasi po tinuturuan natin sila kung ano yung tamang nutrisyon para asikasuhin yung mga anak nila .. so parang doon nakita ko po na ang mga babae kaya nilang maging empowered kahit nasa loob sila ng tahanan kasi doon po nila nakikita na mahalaga silang bahagi ng tahanan, na mahalaga sila bilang ina, na mahalaga sila habang inaalagaan nila ang mga anak nila". (I asked Denielle, my classmate, if Pinggang Pinoy, as a project reinforces women's reproductive role... but I've realized that women can be empowered because they know that they are important at home, they are important as mothers, and it is important to take care of their children)

The students raised this question and argued for and against the proposed program. In the end, the group decided to pursue the project, bearing in mind that women can benefit from this.

Not only the kind of intervention program for women was critically analyzed, but the students expanded the discussions to gender-related situations beyond their topics in Women Studies class. Like most Filipinos, the student-researchers are mostly Christians exposed to Church's teachings on man-woman relationship and its uncompromising stand on homosexual relationships.

At home, the students were able to question the gendered family relationship they have been exposed to. "*Kapag po lumaki po kayo sa born-again Christian family, ang hirap po sabihin sa nanay mo na "Bakit ka sunod ng sunod kay Daddy? Bakit ka nagpapaganyan sa kanya?" Kasi po titirahin ka niya ng Bible verses na..."sabi sa Aklat ng Mateo: Magpailalim ka sa iyong asawa.. (If you were brought up in a Born-again Christian family, it is difficult to tell your mother "Why are you always obeying Daddy", and mother would answer verses in the Bible: According to the Book of Matthew: Wives should always obey their husbands...)* Constrained by their position in the family.... "*Sa bahay namin kapag nagsalita o nagkomento po ako sa isang balita na kahit hindi involve yung katayuan ng babae na kahit basta makakita ka*

lang ng kahit kaunting gender issue doon sa balitang yaon, 'yung Papa ko po, siya po yung madalas ko na kaaway tapos inaaway pa po ako ng Ate ko na bakit pa po ako nakikipag-talo sa Tatay ko na parang yung labas po, Tatay ko iyon, dapat nirerespeto ko yung paniniwala niya...kaso nga oo nirerespeto ko yung paniniwala niya, pero kung mayroon po siyang bias na pag-tingin sa mga babae at lalaki, sa tingin ko po hindi po ako payag doon...kasi nagiging ipokrito po ako e...kasi ituturo ko po sa magiging estudyante ko, sinasabi ko po sa mga kaklase ko na ganito yung paningin ko...na dapat ganito yung pagtrato sa mga kababaihan, na ganito yung pagpapahalaga sa kanila tapos sa bahay palang hindi ko magawa?" "the students also realized that advocating for women's rights and other minority rights requires persistence for they are not given at hand.

Constrained by their position in the family, the students came to realize that advocating for women's rights and other rights require persistence and will power. Raising questions, drawing insights and examining existing assumptions are important learning experiences of student-researchers. These are important in transformative learning. Transformation happens when individuals start to question existing realities and own values. This process was seen in the transformation learning theory of Mezirow (1997).

In-depth Knowledge and Understanding of Gender Concepts and Issues

The term women empowerment was a concept that usually emerged from discussions on Women Studies classes. Since it was frequently discussed, the students thought that they knew its meaning by heart. one student said that: *Yung empowerment yun 'yung sense na nare-recognize ng babae na mahalaga siya...equally important siya as part of society. (Empowerment is a sense when a woman recognizes her importance.. equally important as art of society).* Through interviews, discussions, and observation among women in the community, the students came to realize that there was more to know about women empowerment. Women empowerment is not just about women asserting their right to work in the productive sphere and become financially

independent. It is also important that they are working for a cause just like when they cook nutritious or quality food for the family.

Through the processes involved in conducting action research, the students were able to acquire in-depth knowledge about gender concepts and issues. For instance, in the course of the action research, the students realized that even “homemakers” could be empowered, too. Now, the students thought about empowerment as something that “enables women to think, act, and decide autonomously”. It is about one gaining control over their destiny and the opportunities that they want to benefit from. If a stay-at-home mother wanted to learn how to prepare nutritious but inexpensive meal for her family, then, it is her right to achieve good health for herself and the family.

Important concepts and principles came out when the students implemented their projects. First, empowerment means that women were able to realize their real worth or value as a person and their work. Second, empowerment should come from the person not from others. Third, empowering women takes time. A support group may facilitate empowerment. And lastly, as empowerment takes place, self-reflection should be facilitated so that women could examine their assumption and gain strength in the process.

More determined to Advocate Women Issues Beyond Women Studies Class

Based on the action research projects, student interaction with women deepened their knowledge of the plight of women. The learning they gained became more authentic and relevant because these learnings propelled them to act, contribute, and effect change in women. The student-researchers noticed how outspoken they have become when confronted by sexism in class and at home. The changes were noticed by their classmates and families who were surprised with their gender-sensitive and feminist ideas. The students also realized that advocating women’s rights was not an easy task. One should be consistent with one’s belief about gender equality and such belief must be manifested at home, in school and the community. Similar reflections were illustrated

among adult women students in the work of Christie et al (2015). For instance, consciousness raising exercises of teachers have made them examined their beliefs that “women’s place should be at home”.

Analysis with References or Previous Research Assessing transformation: Issues and Challenges

Assessment of learning in transformative education proves to be a challenge. One of the issues in assessing outcomes of transformative learning is the truthfulness of statements or stories of learners. In this study, changes in the behavior and perspectives of students and women were assessed on the bases of their testimonies and stories. The intervention projects were rated successful by the students themselves on the basis of pronouncements of women during the focused group discussions. In addition, women’s responses from the training sessions were also considered in looking into the knowledge and skills gained. Similarly, self knowledge and lifelong learning skills gained by the students in their action research projects were assessed through the submitted research report, reflection papers and result of focused group discussions.

However, these statements may be accessed through other data like reflection/reaction papers, feedback from others, or observations of the teacher. The challenge is how to attain consistency of data sets for assessment of transformation.

Another challenge on the assessment of transformation is how to measure transformation-whether or not transformation among learners happened. And if it happened, how is it considered transformation (Malkki, K and Green, L (2014). Since studies on transformative learning are mostly conceptual and processual, the indicators of transformative learning are still to be developed. Moreover, transformative learning happens to individuals who work in a specific context, and thus, assessment tools maybe drawn from such context as well. Hence, assessment of the effectiveness of transformative learning remains a challenge.

Conclusion and Recommendations

The data clearly supports the value of transformative learning to both student researchers/learners and women in the community. It is evident from this action research that due to various intervention programs in the community, both students and women have manifested significant transformation in their behavior, mindsets and perspectives.

Women became empowered due to the added knowledge and skills they have acquired in the course of going through the intervention programs. These knowledges and skills as applied in the women's own contexts have contributed to their understanding of self and the process of empowerment. This research discovers women's way of looking at their problems and ways to solve their problems. Such way of knowing is an important aspect of transformative education because, transformative learning starts from changing ones mindset based on exposure and reflections about the self and the situation (Belenky et al in Irving (2011).

On the other hand, the students were also transformed and empowered in the process of implementing the programs. Their commonly held assumptions of women in the communities were challenged, however, it deepened their knowledge and analysis of gender concepts and issues. They came to realize that classroom learning is different from actual community exposure and experiences. In the process, the students have their own transformative learning experiences which also contribute to their changed consciousness and empowerment.

This study also confirmed that both students and women were more than willing to share and advocate whatever they have learned in the programs. They are more determined to advocate gender issues, transformative knowledge and skills even after the implementation of the programs and beyond the Women Studies class. Transformative learning in this study went beyond ways of knowing. The women and students came to realize that advocating women empowerment is a personal conviction. This proves further that transformative learning is process of learning that starts from the

self, triggered by questioning the situation until perspectives and mindsets have transformed. Once change in mindset and perspective happened, actions for transformation would follow. While most studies dealt with the personal being of women (Irving, 2011). In this study transformative learning for women empowerment is indicated by women and student's conviction for action to elevate women's position in society.

It is clear in this study that the competencies on transformative learning acquired by both students and women were considered as lifelong learning skills since they will be able to apply the skills when confronted with similar situation throughout life. Lifelong learning skills could be acquired from meaningful learning experiences and learning processes.

The challenge to transformative education is its application for teaching and learning process and assessment. Researches on these two important areas may strengthen the theory of transformative education.

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