

## **Transformative Education Research Conference – An Incredible Learning Opportunity**

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### **Abstract**

This non-refereed contribution to the special issue of *Journal of Education and Research* is a joint reflective note which describes the personal contexts and experiences of the two Masters of Ceremony at the First International Conference on Transformative Education Research and Sustainable Development (TERSD) held on 21-23 October 2016 in Dhulikhel, Nepal. We, one after the other, without any formal background to the paper, relate our own individual experiences and learning of the event. More specifically, we have portrayed our personal journeys to the international conference hall, and described our reflective ideas and feelings on running the three-day event among the national and international research scholars and delegates. We conclude with some final thoughts on how we could embrace the learning opportunity and by making a commitment to joining the transformative education community.

**Keywords:** Learning Opportunity; Experience; International Conference; Transformative Education

### **Kausalya**

Time flies so quickly! It was 21st October, 2016 when I along with my friend Anupama Manandhar were on the stage, as we were the Masters of Ceremony of that auspicious occasion which was ready to begin a new era of transformation in the field of education – much talked but less implemented in the context of Nepal. Today, when I sit back and reflect on the conference of 2016, I had nothing but good memories, friends with whom we are still connected with, on the social media and deep learning of great scholars whose messages were vital and interesting. I was not less excited just as the host of the programme and correspondingly my excitement doubled with our learning in various sessions.

Transformative Education Research and Sustainable Development conference was held in Dhulikhel on 21 -23 October, 2016 with the much needed deep message of transformation in every sphere of life including education. The conference included various speeches of

the distinguished guests, plenary sessions by great educationists of different countries and presentation of papers and posters by both the national and international researchers and practitioners. Amidst the various great parallel sessions, we still got some time to click photographs, sip hot coffee, relish lavishly served meals and hearty talks and laughs with the people around.

Not all days are cherished and not every day is an auspicious day in our life- was the first statement I uttered in front of the august gathering of the experts in the First Transformative Education Research Conference, which had grabbed the attention of the audience, and it helped us to conduct the rest of the programme with ease. I along with Anupama, my Co-MC had a great time to acquire knowledge from all the experts. I was amazed at seeing the passion of Rebat Kumar Dhakal, one of the key organizers of the event, to make this programme a success. Associate Professor Dr. Laxman Gnawali recommended us to be MC for the conference and guided us through the journey of MC. We take the opportunity to express our heartfelt gratitude to thank him sincerely. Today I take pride in saying that we witnessed a conference which believed in transformative research and sustainable development in its truest sense. Keynote speeches by Peter Charles Tylor, Mahesh Nath Parajuli, Kenneth Tobin, Bishal Sitaula, and Bal Chandra Luitel were some of the highlights of the conference. The concepts introduced by them transcend from art, culture, social aspects, cognition, alignment of school with socio-cultural context to science and technology for transformation were the thought provoking ideas. Their keynote addresses were commendable with powerful ideas.

Each day there were opportunities for us to get exposed to new learning ideas. Visiting various sessions run by the practitioners from Nepal and across the world gave us the insight into how education can play an instrumental role in making transformation in every sector of human life. There was also the poster presentation on the second day of the conference along with other parallel sessions, which were equally informative for us. Though this was not the first time for me to do such a job, I was still nervous as I had to work in proximity with the experts like Dr. Laxman Gnawali and Dr. Bal Chandra Luitel. We were working closely with Rebat Sir who was a man of few words but his silences spoke volumes and we could read his gestures and manage our MC job accordingly.

Transformative learning was a grand success due to the effort of everyone who was working hard to make things happen. It was a great opportunity for me to meet like-minded personalities from other nations, too. The excitement and anxiousness about the conference helped us to perform at the best of our ability. Nevertheless, the first day of the conference when our performance was applauded, that boosted our confidence and gave the reason to work with full vigour the following two days as well.

Those three days of the conference provided us with much rewarding experience in terms of learning, bonding and reshaping our thinking. We cherished each moment of

our stay in Dhulikhel. We truly appreciate the cooperation of all who were directly and indirectly associated with the conference.

### **Anupama**

It had been only two months after our enrolment at Kathmandu University School of Education (KUSOED) for MEd in English Language Teaching programme. Our new session had commenced on August 7, 2016. It was quite exciting for me to join college after a long gap. I must say I started my study once again after 7 years – a long gap to be considered a regular student. However, I was trying to start afresh with my new career. During that time, Kathmandu University School of Education (Nepal) and Murdoch University School of Education (Australia) jointly announced that the First International Conference on Transformative Education Research and Sustainable Development was going to be held on October 21-23. All the interested students were also invited to volunteer in the three-day-event in Dhulikhel, Nepal where international delegates were also invited. As I was new to the university, I was quite hesitating and not sure how to be part of that wonderful conference. For the time being I just ignored the conference. However, I came to know from one of the staff in college that my name was recommended as Master of Ceremony for that grand conference. I could not believe myself and thought that he had been joking. But to my surprise it was true; our respected teacher who is also my great source of inspiration Professor Dr. Laxman Gnawali had given my name. I did not know how to react because I have never anchored any programme in my life. I had no idea how I was going to do it. I came to know that I was accompanying our classmate who is now my very good friend Ms. Kausalya Devi Khadka – who had had an experience of being an MC in many programmes. She is another person who always inspires me to move on no matter what.

I tried to convince Professor Gnawali that I could not be part of that conference, as I had no such experience before. But he is such a person who can influence anyone with his encouraging words. I still remembered his motivating words. He said that nobody comes to this earth trained beforehand. After thinking for a while, I gave the green signal. I was a little relieved because I was not alone, Ms. Kausalya was there to guide me. We were also given an opportunity to edit the programme and abstract booklet. For this we would like to thank Mr. Rebat Kumar Dhakal, who also mentioned our names as editors in the book.

We started preparing for the conference. We also skipped a few classes in order to create the script for the three-day programme. We practised together our speech and dialogues. It was really a great experience, at times it was really difficult for us to get correct names of the key speakers as some of the names were very difficult to pronounce. Both of us were all set for the conference. For the first time I was leaving my two-and-a-half year old son for three days. We reached the venue of the conference in Dhulikhel, which was managed at the Dental Block of the School of Medicine, Kathmandu University. The auditorium

of the University was all decorated and ready to welcome the national and international delegates. We came to know that the conference was very important as it was related to the transformative education research and sustainable development issues. There were 125 engaging, informative and inspiring presentations and interactions with more than 250 participants from 14 different countries. During the Programme we were fascinated by meeting the research scholars with transforming ideas. In fact, that event made us aware of attending a scholarly and academic conference and its role in setting one's academic career path.

### **Concluding Remarks**

Thank goodness, we could attend such an event at the capacity of the Masters of Ceremony. Not only did we realise that transformative education has become a buzzword in today's teacher education discourse, but also made a commitment that we join the Transformative Education Research and Sustainable Development (TERSD) community. Now, we are in. And you?