

# Transformation of the Role of the "Teacher" in the Light of the Postmodernist Conception of Teaching and Learning

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**Abstract:** This paper, informed by postmodernist theory, reevaluates current primary school art education, proposing a paradigm shift to enhance its development. The central focus is to transition art education from a passive, receptive approach to a more interactive, questioning style. Key suggestions include transforming teaching practices from traditional indoctrination to engaging dialogues, and shifting the teacher's philosophy from a hierarchical 'teacher-over-student' model to one of equality and mutual respect between teachers and students. This shift aims to foster a new art teaching model that aligns with contemporary art curriculum standards, thereby nurturing students' psychological, moral, and cultural development.

**Keywords:** Postmodernist Teaching Perspective; Educational Reform; Art Education; Role Transformation in Teaching

## 1. Introduction

The advent of postmodernism has significantly influenced various academic disciplines in our country, notably affecting pedagogy and curriculum theory. It prompts critical reflection and exploratory research in education [1]. Addressing the challenges and opportunities presented by postmodernist thought, this paper synthesizes a decade of art teaching research. It critically examines the current state of primary school art education from a postmodernist viewpoint, leveraging insights from art, educational psychology, curriculum, and teaching theories. The aim is to reassess and adapt the role of teachers in contemporary classrooms, focusing on the new curriculum reform as a foundational reference. Through this exploration, we seek to reposition and redefine the teacher's role to better align with

the evolving educational landscape [2].

## 2. Transforming Teaching Practices: From "Submissive and Receptive" to "Critical and Questioning"

Guided by the principles of postmodernism, this section explores a paradigm shift in teaching practices as outlined in the Basic Education Curriculum Reform. The reform emphasizes fostering students' independence and autonomy, encouraging them to adopt a questioning and investigative approach to learning. This shift is necessary from both the teachers' and students' perspectives.

### 2.1 Teachers' Reflective Practice

Reflective practice in teaching, a concept crucial in the postmodernist approach to education, involves an in-depth and critical examination of teachers' actions, intentions, and the pedagogical principles underlying their teaching methods [3]. This introspective process encompasses several stages, each designed to enhance the overall efficacy and adaptability of teaching practices. Reflective practice can be categorized into three distinct yet interconnected parts:

**Pre-Lesson Reflection:** This initial stage is fundamental in preparing for effective teaching. Teachers undertake a meticulous evaluation of their lesson plans, ensuring that these plans not only align with educational objectives but also cater to the diverse needs and abilities of their students [4]. This evaluation process involves considering various factors such as the suitability of content, the inclusivity of different learning styles, and the potential impact of the lesson on student engagement and understanding.

**In-Lesson Reflection:** This phase occurs during the actual teaching process. It requires teachers to be highly observant and responsive to the dynamics of the classroom. This type of reflection is characterized by its immediacy

and the need for teachers to make on-the-spot decisions and adjustments [5]. The key here is for teachers to remain flexible and open to modifying their teaching strategies in response to their students' immediate needs and reactions.

**Post-Lesson Reflection:** The final stage of reflective practice involves a thorough analysis and contemplation of the completed lesson. This is a critical phase where teachers assess what went well and what didn't, identifying successes, failures, and areas for improvement [6]. The goal is to extract valuable insights from these reflections, which can then inform future teaching practices.

In summary, the reflective practice is a continuous, dynamic process integral to modern teaching methodologies. It involves proactive planning, responsive in-lesson adjustments, and post-lesson evaluations, all aimed at creating a more effective, engaging, and inclusive learning environment. This approach not only benefits students by providing them with a more tailored and effective learning experience but also aids teachers in their professional development, enabling them to become more adept, versatile, and impactful educators.

## 2.2 Developing Students' Reflective Skills

In the realm of modern education, particularly from a postmodernist perspective, the development of students' reflective skills is paramount. Traditional learning methodologies, often characterized by their rigidity and passivity, have been found to significantly impede the cultivation of these essential skills [7]. Therefore, it's crucial to implement strategies that promote reflection, critical thinking, and independent learning among students. This can be achieved through various means:

**Pre-Class Study:** One of the key strategies in developing reflective skills is to encourage students to engage in pre-class study. This involves more than just assigning readings or tasks; it requires nurturing a mindset of inquiry and curiosity [8]. Students should be guided to approach their pre-class preparations with a focus on not just understanding the content but questioning it. This could involve activities like reflective journaling, where students note down their thoughts, questions, and predictions about the upcoming lesson's topic.

Teachers might also encourage students to conduct independent research, perhaps looking into related topics or exploring different perspectives on the subject matter. By doing so, students are not only better prepared for the class but also develop a habit of independent learning and critical thinking.

**Cooperation and Communication:** Another vital aspect is fostering an environment where cooperation and communication are central to the learning process. This involves creating opportunities for students to work collaboratively, engage in discussions, and share their insights and perspectives with peers and teachers. Group projects, peer-review sessions, and classroom debates can be effective ways to encourage this [9]. In such settings, students learn to articulate their thoughts, listen to others, and consider different viewpoints. This collaborative environment not only enhances their understanding of the subject matter but also develops their ability to reflect on their own learning process and appreciate diverse perspectives.

**Post-Class Reflection:** The period following a class session is equally crucial for reinforcing learning and fostering reflection. One approach is to encourage students to engage in reflective writing, where they can summarize what they've learned, articulate any remaining questions or uncertainties, and relate the lesson's content to their own experiences or future learning goals. Another approach is to use digital platforms where students can continue discussions, share additional resources, and collaborate on extending their understanding of the lesson. Teachers can facilitate this by posing open-ended questions or challenges related to the lesson, prompting students to think more deeply and apply what they have learned in new contexts [10].

These methods represent a substantial departure from traditional, more passive learning methods, aligning more closely with a postmodernist approach to education. By prioritizing pre-class preparation, fostering a collaborative and communicative classroom environment, and encouraging post-class reflection, students are not only better equipped to absorb and apply knowledge but also develop essential life-long learning skills. These skills include the ability to think critically, reflect on one's own learning process,

communicate effectively, and collaborate with others. This holistic approach to learning not only enhances academic performance but also prepares students for the complexities and challenges of the modern world.

### **3. Rethinking the Teacher's Role: From Authority to Equality**

On June 13, 1996, a pivotal moment in educational reform was marked by the promulgation of the 'Decision on Deepening Educational Reform and Comprehensively Implementing Quality Education.' This landmark decision underscored the necessity for teachers to engage with students on a level playing field, emphasizing the respect for individual student personalities and advocating for teaching tailored to each student's aptitude. Additionally, it called for an adherence to exemplary professional and ethical standards in education and teaching.

Historically, the educational ethos upheld the notion that 'teachers are more important than students,' a perspective that positioned teachers in a dominant role, with students relegated to passive recipients of knowledge. This traditional model fostered a hierarchical relationship between teachers and students, characterized by command and obedience. However, the evolving landscape of education, propelled by the advent of the Internet era and the rapid dissemination of information, demands a paradigm shift. Teachers are now encouraged to adopt an egalitarian mindset, recognizing the 'teacher and student as equals.' This approach fosters a democratic, equitable relationship based on mutual respect, love, trust, shared learning, collective progress [11]. Doyle, a renowned figure in postmodernism, encapsulated this sentiment by referring to teachers as 'the chief among equals' in the transformative postmodern curriculum. He articulated that this role doesn't diminish the teacher's importance but rather reconstructs it, shifting from an external authority to a coexistent guide within learning process [12].

#### **3.1 Responding to the Needs of the Times**

The landscape of education has undergone a seismic shift with the proliferation of diverse information sources. In this new era, traditional classrooms are no longer the sole repositories of knowledge. The widespread accessibility of computers, the ubiquity of

various media platforms, the vastness of the Internet, and the constant presence of television and newspapers have collectively revolutionized how knowledge is acquired and disseminated [13]. Students today are immersed in a digital world where information is abundant and readily available. This environment has nurtured a generation of learners who are remarkably proficient at assimilating new information, often rivaling their teachers in their knowledge of contemporary issues, technological advancements, and global affairs [14].

This paradigm shift has led to a blurring of the once clear demarcation between teacher and student roles. In an age where students can independently access a wealth of information, the role of the teacher evolves from the sole purveyor of knowledge to a facilitator of learning. This changing dynamic necessitates a shift towards an equal teacher-student relationship. In this new model, learning becomes a collaborative endeavor where both parties contribute actively [15]. Teachers are no longer just educators; they become learners themselves, exploring new realms of knowledge alongside their students. This approach not only respects the burgeoning intellectual capabilities of students but also acknowledges the value of their insights and experiences in shaping the learning process.

The move towards an egalitarian relationship in educational settings aligns with the broader societal shift towards democratization and inclusivity. It reflects an understanding that knowledge is not a finite entity to be bestowed by an all-knowing teacher but a dynamic, ever-evolving construct. In such a setting, students are encouraged to question, challenge, and contribute, thereby fostering a learning environment that is vibrant, engaging, and deeply resonant with the realities of the modern world.

#### **3.2 Ensuring Efficient Teaching**

In the context of modern education, the establishment of a harmonious teacher-student relationship transcends traditional pedagogical goals. It has become a cornerstone for effective teaching and high-quality education. This relationship, characterized by mutual respect and understanding, significantly impacts students' mental and emotional development. A positive and respectful rapport

between teachers and students creates a conducive atmosphere for learning, where students feel valued, heard, and motivated.

A teacher's ability to recognize and cater to individual differences in learning styles, interests, and capabilities is pivotal in fostering this harmonious relationship. Tailoring teaching approaches to meet these diverse needs not only enhances the effectiveness of the teaching process but also demonstrates a deep respect for the unique educational journey of each student. In such an environment, students are more likely to engage actively with the material, participate in discussions, and express their viewpoints freely, thereby enriching the learning experience for the entire class.

Furthermore, when students perceive their teachers as allies in their educational journey, rather than authoritative figures, it can significantly boost their confidence and willingness to explore new concepts. This dynamic enables students to take intellectual risks, engage in critical thinking, and approach learning with a sense of curiosity and excitement. It also facilitates a deeper internalization of knowledge, as students are more receptive to information presented in a context of mutual respect and collaboration.

The benefits of a harmonious teacher-student relationship extend beyond academic achievement. It plays a crucial role in the overall well-being and mental health of students. In a supportive educational environment, students are more likely to develop a positive self-image, feel empowered to overcome challenges, and cultivate resilience and adaptability. These qualities are essential not just for academic success but for navigating the complexities of life beyond the classroom.

The postmodern curriculum advocates for an "equal relationship" between teachers and students, recognizing the need to respect learners' rights, personalities, dignity, feelings, experiences, and emotions. It's within this balance of emotion and respect that the most effective dialogue and communication can occur.

To cultivate this "teacher-student equality," efforts should focus on two primary areas:

### **3.3 Strengthening Professional Ethics**

In the evolving landscape of education,

teachers are urged to not only comprehend but deeply internalize the ethical codes that govern the teaching profession. This goes beyond a mere understanding of guidelines; it requires a commitment to align their behavior consistently with these standards. This alignment is not a static goal but a dynamic process, involving continuous self-improvement and the establishment of high moral benchmarks.

This process demands that teachers regularly reflect on their teaching practices, assessing and reassessing whether their actions uphold the dignity, respect, and best interests of their students. It's about being empathetic and sensitive to the diverse backgrounds and needs of students, ensuring that no child feels marginalized or undervalued. Teachers must strive to embody qualities such as fairness, transparency, and inclusivity in their daily interactions and decisions.

Moreover, this ethical commitment extends to the nurturing of a genuine love and dedication towards the holistic development of students. It's about seeing the role of a teacher not just as a job but as a vocation that commands selflessness, patience, and unwavering commitment to student welfare. Teachers, in this regard, become role models, exemplifying traits like integrity, resilience, and compassion. They are not just imparting knowledge but also instilling values that students carry with them beyond the classroom.

### **3.4 Establishing Mutual Respect and Love**

To establish a foundation of mutual respect and love, teachers need to reimagine their role in the classroom. They should transition from being seen as authoritative figures to facilitators of learning, adopting a more collaborative and empathetic approach to teaching. This change involves cultivating an environment where students feel valued and heard, and where their opinions and ideas are welcomed and respected.

Teachers should actively encourage students to express themselves, fostering an atmosphere of open dialogue and mutual learning. This means not only listening to what students say but also understanding the context behind their thoughts and feelings. It's about creating a safe space where students can share their experiences and challenges without fear of judgment or retribution.

Respecting individual differences is key in this approach. Teachers must recognize and celebrate the unique backgrounds, abilities, and learning styles of each student. This involves tailoring teaching methods to accommodate diverse needs, ensuring that each student can access and engage with the curriculum effectively. It's also about being sensitive to the varying emotional and social dynamics that students bring into the classroom and responding with empathy and support.

Furthermore, teachers need to move beyond academic performance as the sole measure of student success. They should recognize and nurture other aspects of student development, such as creativity, emotional intelligence, and social skills. This holistic approach helps in developing well-rounded individuals who are equipped to face the complexities of the world. In essence, by establishing mutual respect and love, teachers transform their role from mere educators to mentors and guides, playing an integral part in shaping students' lives. They help foster a generation of learners who are not just academically competent but also emotionally and socially aware, capable of contributing positively to society.

#### **4. Transition to a Dialogical Educational Model**

In contemporary classrooms, a prevalent scenario unfolds where teachers dominate the lecture stage while students passively receive information, often leading to a lack of genuine learning. Paulo Freire, a renowned educator, labels this traditional approach as "indoctrination," characterized by a one-way flow of knowledge from teacher to student, where the teacher is the sole authority, and students are mere passive recipients. Such a model stifles student creativity and inhibits critical thinking, reducing education to a process of mere knowledge transmission without fostering deeper understanding or reflective thinking.

Freire, in his seminal work "Pedagogy of the Oppressed," advocates for a paradigm shift towards "dialogical" education, where teaching is transformed into an interactive dialogue. This approach promotes a two-way flow of knowledge, enabling students to participate actively in their learning process. Through dialogue, students engage in reflective

thinking, developing a deeper understanding and internalizing diverse perspectives.

The essence of dialogical education lies in its departure from the traditional, teacher-centered indoctrination. It is characterized by a dynamic, creative, and critical engagement with knowledge, wherein both students and teachers contribute to the learning process. This method fosters an understanding of knowledge as a continually evolving construct rather than a fixed set of facts to be memorized.

To implement this transformative approach effectively, educators must focus on the following strategies:

**Contextualizing and Initiating Inquiry:** Before engaging in dialogue, it is crucial to set the context and articulate clear learning objectives. The formulation of questions should stimulate student thinking, align with their abilities, and encourage exploration. These questions could range from ethical dilemmas to current events, encouraging students to engage with issues from multiple perspectives.

**Facilitating as Guides and Listeners:** In the dialogical process, teachers play a pivotal role as facilitators and active listeners. Their task is to guide the discussion, provide constructive feedback, and ensure that the dialogue remains focused and productive. Simultaneously, they must be attentive to students' contributions, respecting and valuing their insights.

**Ensuring Inclusivity in Dialogue:** Dialogical education thrives on inclusivity and equal participation. It is imperative that all students, regardless of their background or proficiency levels, are encouraged to engage in the dialogue. This inclusive approach fosters a collaborative learning environment where every student feels valued and is motivated to contribute.

By transitioning from an indoctrination model to a dialogical one, education becomes a collaborative journey of discovery, where both teachers and students explore and construct knowledge together. This approach not only enhances cognitive development but also nurtures inquiring minds and fosters the growth of well-rounded, critically-thinking individuals.

#### **5. Conclusions**

In conclusion, this paper has illustrated the core transformation in the postmodernist conception of teaching and its relation to

primary school art education. This concept argues that the traditional hierarchical model, based on teachers being the main decision-makers and dictators of knowledge as compared to learners, must be shifted towards a more equal approach, through dialogue, based on mutual respect. The paper highlights reflective practice and how teachers can act as facilitators guiding students towards a critical and questioning learning process. Teachers in turn need to be learners themselves. Transforming from the postmodern perspective enhances teaching effectiveness and fits into the current educational trends that promote students' holistic growth. Societal shift towards democratization and self-empowerment of students will require new education paradigm; responsive, collaborative, and inclusive, reflecting the complexity of rapidly changing global context.

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