Transformative Learning: a Concept and Powerful Vision for Adult Education

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ABSTRACT

Transformative learning is a process of learning that individuals to changes their critically assumptions and beliefs and consciously making and implementing plans that bring about new ways. It is a fundamentally rational and analytical process. It is also a process of getting beyond gaining factual knowledge alone to instead become learns in some meaningful way. It involves questioning assumptions, beliefs and values, and considering multiple points of view, while always seeking to verify reasoning. This learning is to make interpretations from the person's own beliefs, judgments and feelings and consciously define the meaning of the experience1 or a process of learning that creates a substantial change in the habits, ideas and/or outlook of an individual. This article highlights concept and theories that deals with the paradigm shift of changes needed among adult learners, role of educators and learners towards development of individual and social lives in addition to existing perspective (traditional) of teaching & learning practice. Practices of transformative learning vision and process in adult education have the scope to bring improved critical thinking and a way of changing life style.

Key Words: Transformative learning, Paradigm shift, Adult learning

Introduction

An adult learning theory that deals the transformative changes within learner and produce a significant impact, or paradigm shift[2]. This type of learning means a person is changed in some way as the result of the learning. Moreover, learning that changes what and how one thinks and acts, especially learning that changes how one thinks about the world and one's self as an actor in it. It is the process by which newly gained (or changed) perspectives provide better insight and understanding.

Transformative learning can simply be explained as learners making sense or meaning of their experiences. Both inner experience and external situations are important to critical reflection. It became popular in North America since its inception in the early 1980s. Gradually universities in North America offer a course in this area. It was later expanded by scholars such as Patricia Cranton in Canada and Kathleen P. King in the United States. Despite criticisms, the transformative learning has remained a useful and powerful theory in the field of adult learning and it does help explain how learners achieve perspective transformation as stated by scholars and researchers. Through transformative learning a student becomes increasingly aware of the information that surrounds them. Students explore these information's, test assumptions and expectations, and begin to think critically about this new information in order to make a tacit change in behavior or action. It engages students to question their own assumptions, beliefs, feelings, and perspectives in order to develop personally and intellectually[3]. Transformative learning as such leads to respect for others, self respect, willingness to accept responsibility for common good, willingness to welcome diversity and to approach others to

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openness[4]. It is also a process of examining, questioning, validating, and revising perceptions which is based on constructivist assumptions of adult learning. It "is the learning that transforms problematic frames of reference, sets of fixed assumptions and expectations (habits of mind, meaning perspectives, mindsets) to make them more inclusive, discriminating, open, reflective, and emotionally be able to change"[5].

Concept and theories of transformative learning. Jack Mezirow, a leading thinker in adult education, developed his characterization of transformative learning (TL) in the late 70s and early 80s. When someone undergoes such a change, he has, in essence, "transformed" his view of himself or of the world or of how he interacts with others and his environment. Transformative learning theory says that the process of "perspective transformation" has three dimensions: psychological (changes in understanding of the self), convictional (revision of belief systems), and behavioral (changes in lifestyle).

Perspective transformation, leading to transformative learning, occurs infrequently. Jack Mezirow believes that it usually results from a "disorienting dilemma" which is triggered by a life crisis or major life transition-although it may also result from an accumulation of transformations in meaning schemes over a period of time[6]. Less dramatic predicaments, such as those created by a teacher, also promote transformation[7]. An important part of transformative learning is for individuals to change their frames of reference by critically reflecting on their assumptions and beliefs and consciously making and implementing plans that bring about new ways of defining their worlds. This process is fundamentally rational and analytical[8]. One of the difficulties in defining transformative learning is that it bleeds into the boundaries of concepts such as "meaning making" or "critical thinking". When transformative learning is the goal of adult education, fostering a learning environment in which it can occur should consider the following: The conception of transformative learning found articulated by the four scholars as: (i). Transformation as consciousness rising by Paul Freire 1970. Jack Mezirow continued to refine his

thinking and his model of perspective transformation, which he came to characterize as "a structural change in the way we see ourselves and our relationships"[9]. This is exactly what we love to see happening in our students: they come to understand that they've held a limiting view of the world or of how things work, and they adjust their thinking to accommodate a more accurate or expansive understanding[10]. developed a theory of adult learning grounded in cognitive and developmental psychology. Mezirow, also opened other points of view, and be able to integrate differing dimensions of their experiences into meaningful and holistic views considering transformative learning the core of adult development. (ii). Transformation as critical reflection also called perspective transformation which may sense of the day to day our experiences through sets of beliefs, values, and assumptions that one has acquired through our life experiences[11]. also described 10 ordered phases of transformative learning process, the core of the learning process itself mediated largely through a process of reflecting rationally and critically on one's assumptions and beliefs. These phases are 1.Experiencing a disorienting dilemma[2]. Undergoing self-examination 3.Conducting a critical assessment of internalized assumptions and feeling a sense of alienation from traditional social expectations[4]. Relating discontent to the similar experiences of others recognizing that the problem is shared[5]. Exploring options for new ways of acting[6]. Building competence and self-confidence in new roles[7]. Planning a course of action[8]. Acquiring the knowledge and skills for implementing a new course of action[9]. Trying out new roles and assessing those[10]. Reintegrating into society with the other perspective as listed[12]. The developmental perspective i.e. (iii).Transformation as development is implicit in Mezirow's views of transformative learning; however provides a central organizing framework for understanding transformative learning as growth[13]. The fourth theory of transformative learning (iv) Transformation as individuation has received less attention from adult educators as represented in the work of 14. Boyd's idea is embedded within transformative education3.

He shared a developmental perspective and a commitment to understanding and facilitating personal information and also emphasized the importance of consciousness in adult learning.

Role of the educator and Learner

As educator

Educators need to provide learners with opportunities to effectively participate in discourse (Cranton, P. 1996). Discourse involves assessing beliefs, feelings, and values. Learners are able to validate how and what they understand, as well as develop well-informed judgments regarding a belief. The educator assists adult learners in becoming more critical in assessing assumptions, better at recognizing frames of references and alternate perspectives, as well as effective at collaborating with others to assess and arrive at judgments in regards to beliefs. It is the role of the educator to promote discovery learning through the implementation of classroom methods such as learning contracts, group projects, role play, case studies, and simulations. These methods facilitate transformative learning by helping learners examine concepts in the context of their lives and analyze the justification of new knowledge (Cranton, P. 1996).

The educator's role in establishing an environment that builds trust and care and facilitates the development of sensitive relationships among learners is a fundamental principle of fostering transformative learning (Mezirow, J. 1981). The educator also serves as a role model by demonstrating a willingness to learn & change. As a result, professional development is important to assist educators in becoming authentic and critically reflective.

As learner

Learners must create norms within the classroom that include civility, respect, and responsibility for helping one another learn. Learners must welcome diversity within the learning environment and aim for peer collaboration (Cranton, P. 1996). Learners must become critical of their own assumptions in order to transform their unquestioned frame of reference. Through communicative learning, learners must work towards critically reflecting on

assumptions that underlie intentions, values, beliefs, and feelings (Cranton, P. 1996). Learners are involved in objective re-framing of their frames of reference when they critically reflect on the assumptions of others. In contrast, subjective re-framing occurs when learners critically assess their own assumptions (Cranton, P. 1996).

The role of the learner involves actively participating in discourse. Through discourse, learners are able to validate what is being communicated to them. This dialogue provides the opportunity to critically examine evidence, arguments, and alternate points of view, which fosters collaborative learning (Cranton, P. 1996). Transformative learning has emerged in the field of adult education as a powerful image for understanding how adults learn. Transformative educators do not necessarily teach content that is remarkably different from more instrumentally oriented educators. They may be found in the work place, running a continuing education program, or teaching an adult basic education class. However, they teach the content with a different end in view, often quite different instructional strategies.

Existing perspective (Traditional) of teaching & learning

It is concerned with the teacher being the controller of the learning environment. They play the role of instructor and decision maker. The learning is chiefly associated within the classroom and is often competitive. The lesson's content and delivery are considered to be most important and students master knowledge through drill and practice.

Conclusion

Transformative learning is a journey that has been ongoing within individual and collective lives with whom we work. It is neither a distinct beginning nor an ending, rather a potential that is eternally present within us and our learners. Like many other things we learn about transformative learning only by engaging both the vision and the process it represents. The best teachers of transformative learning are we, our own lives in community with others. If we want to learn about fostering

transformation among our learners, the most important way to begin with our own work, common, and sacred life.

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Conflicts of Interest

The authors have no conflict of interest in this review article.

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