Transformative Learning and Adult Education

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**How does transformational learning impact functional literacy, education for immigrants, and the transformative value of Christ's teachings?**

Mezirow pioneered Transformative Learning through an influence to research the experiences of women returning to college and the workforce (Mezirow, 1991). According to Mezirow, transformative learning is a lifelong process through which adult learners understand their experiences, cultural experiences that shape their understanding, the processes and dynamics that change meanings, and how meanings change over time.

This discussion marks the initial phase of exploring these key findings:

 a) Functional literacy within the context of transformative learning.

b) U.S. adult immigrants’ journey to higher education utilizing transformative learning while navigating the challenges of acclimating to a new culture.

c) Christ's teachings using transformative learning

 “Functional Literacy is the process and content of learning to read and write to the preparation for work and vocational training, as well as a means of increasing the productivity of the individual” (Gray, 1956, as cited in Verhoeven,1997, p. 128). Vasylenko (2023) note that using a blend of intensive and andragogical methods maximizes the effectiveness of functional literacy training.

National Assessment of Adult Learning (n.d) reported that (55%) of adults with Below Basic Prose Literacy indicate a limited ability to read and write beyond basic and concrete contexts. Functional literacy learning emphasizes a personalized approach to adult learners, fostering motivation and progress through Andragogy, where one-on-one interaction empowers individuals to build their skills and capabilities. (Mukan & Fuchylaas, 2016, as cited in Vasylenko, 2023). Knowles (1980) described Andragogy as “the art and science of helping adults learn.”

Zhu Niu (2021) argued that Chinese immigrant mothers face considerable time management challenges. Educators can employ transformative learning strategies to help these learners achieve their educational goals. Zhu & Niu propose a flexible approach in adult education, offering support through scheduled synchronous and asynchronous lessons tailored to individual availability and specific needs.

According to United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) (2019), “Inclusive education is fundamental to the achievement of human, social and economic development. Equipping all individuals to develop their potential contributes significantly to encouraging them to live together in harmony and with dignity” (UNESCO, 2019, p.73). As immigrants strive to assimilate into the host culture, they embark on a profound journey of inner work. In this journey, they uncover disorienting dilemmas and acquire fresh insights that defy their beliefs. Mezirow (1991) classifies a disorienting dilemma as the challenge of releasing one's biases that hinder the integration of new transformative knowledge into the existing meaning scheme. Drixx et al. (2006) affirm that self-identity and bias describe soul work or inner work. Jardine (2023) affirms that Transformative Learning experiences reshape new immigrants' inner work and encourage personal growth.

Adult learners identify assumptions and make revisions to the assumptions through the lens of Critical Reflection (Journal of Higher Education, 1994). Mezirow (1991) contends that individuals employ mental and sensory codes or habits of expectation to frame their perception, cognition, emotions, and actions in response to experiences. These codes shape one's understanding and interactions with the world.

Further, Cranton (2016) asserted that self-reflection involves questioning one’s assumptions, examining the origins, considering implications, and pondering the significance. This intellectual journey explores the adult learner’s thoughts and beliefs that foster personal growth and a deeper understanding of knowledge and the world.

Jesus led his disciples to help others in need, following his teachings and connecting them with God. Jesus equipped his adult disciples with the necessary tools. He sent them out to minister to others while teaching them how to be followers. (God’s Word Translation, 2010, Matt 28:19-20, 1 John 3:16-18, Matt 23: 3-34). Transformative learning in adult education enables individuals to release their biases and experiences and instead embrace new knowledge. Christ exemplified scriptural lessons through his life, death, and resurrection.

 This study examines functional literacy, immigrant education, and the transformative power of Christ's teachings. Transformative Learning emphasizes the importance of personalized learning approaches and inclusive education for adults to reach their full potential. Through self-reflection and questioning assumptions, adult learners can grow and gain a deeper understanding of the world, knowledge, and themselves.

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