PHI800 Transformative Learning and Adult Education

Cerita Buchanan

Omega Graduate School

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Professor

Dr. Sara Reichard

Assignment

### *Developmental Readings*

Review Assignment #3, the course essential elements, assigned readings, and recommended readings to identify selections of books and scholarly articles to identify and select developmental reading sources and entries.

* Refer to the “[Student Guide to Developmental Readings](https://drive.google.com/file/d/161V_FaYR2BnNGCSFUlWPjUSIQzcH04Hq/view?usp=share_link)” for updated information on sample comments, rubrics, and key definitions related to developmental readings.

**Source One:** Taylor, & Cranton, P. (2013). A theory in progress? Issues in transformative learning theory. *European Journal for Research on the Education and Learning of Adults*, *4*(1), 33–47. https://doi.org/10.3384/rela.2000-7426.rela5000

**Comment 1**

**Quote/Paraphrase:** A concept that is most central to transformative learning and adult learning in general is experience. It is experience, particularly prior experience (that happened in one’s past), that is the primary medium of a transformation, and it is the revision of the meaning of experience that is the essence of learning. ‘Learning is understood as the process of using a prior interpretation to construct a new or revised interpretation of the meaning of one’s experience in order to guide future action’ (Mezirow, 1996, p. 162). It is also experience that forms the basis for habitual expectations (ideologies, beliefs, values), creating the lens from which learners perceive, interpret and make meaning of their world (Mezirow, 1991). As the core substance of a transformation, in concert with dialogue (self and with others) and self-reflection, experience, ‘constitutes a starting point for discourse leading to critical examination of normative assumptions underpinning the learner’s value judgments or normative expectations’ (Mezirow,2000, p. 31). Despite the centrality of experience to transformative learning theory, as a construct it is rarely defined or critically examined in research about transformative learning. Questions are raised, such as: What constitutes an experience (which should lend insight into what is not an experience)? What gives meaning to an experience? What distinguishes a transformative experience from other types of experiences?” pp. 35

**Essential Element:** This comment is associated with the essential element, transformative learning theory.

**Additive/Variant Analysis:** This comment is additive to my understanding of adult learning. The paragraph highlights a key part of the transformative learning process that it starts from past experience and that you are not starting from zero. It highlights the importance of creating meaning in the learner’s world. It asks some critical questions about what gives meaning to experience, what is experience and what is not considered experience and how distinguish transformative experience from other experiences, alluding to the notion of how do we know permanent change has taken place and is life altering.

**Contextualization:**  Transformative learning is an iterative process that uses learning as a stepping stone for improving and going back and forth to extend understanding that becomes life changing. My experience at Omega so far, has been a transformative one as I have been able to use my life experiences and refocus around spiritual formation. Each learning and in particular the development readings have expanded my theological knowledge. I have been able to relate the learning to my passion for young people, my profession and career and my entire life. The learning has impacted my beliefs about theology without ministerial focus and how we can change the world of others through greater walk and communion with God. I am on an exciting journey of transformation.

**Comment 2:**

**Quote/Paraphrase:** Historically, three constructs have been seen as central to transformative learning theory, critical reflection, dialogue, and experience (Mezirow, 1991). Learners’ experience, as previously discussed, is seen as socially constructed, as constituting the starting point for dialogue, as the essential medium through which a transformation is promoted and developed, and as leading to critical reflection where learners question ‘the integrity of deeply held assumptions and beliefs based on prior experience’ (Taylor,2009, p. 7). Missing in this tripartite of core components of transformative learning theory is “empathy” which typically is seen as the ability to ‘subjectively experience and share in another psychological state or intrinsic feelings’ (Morse, Anderson, Bottoroff, Yonge, O’Brien, Solberg & McIlveen, 1992, p. 274). As a construct, empathy has been mentioned in the literature as significant to transformative learning, although it is rarely defined or discussed in much depth, particularly in its relationship to the central constructs of transformative learning (Gum, Greenhill & Dix, 2011; Stevens-Long, Schapiro & McClintock, 2012; Taylor, 2007, 1997; Willis, 2012). An example of how empathy is generally referred to is seen in an article by Mezirow where he embeds the term in a list of other facets important to transformative learning. Here he discusses its significance when participating in critical-dialectical discourse of ‘having an open mind, learning to listen empathetically, “bracketing” prejudgment, and seeking common ground’ (Mezirow, 2003, p. 60).” pp. 37

**Essential Element:** This comment is associated with the essential element, transformative learning theory.

**Additive/Variant Analysis:** This comment is additive to my understanding of transformative learning. It reinforces the process of transformative learning as starting with experience then encouraging dialogue then critical reflection by questioning your own beliefs and assumptions about a subject or life in general. The paragraph introduces a process that is not often discussed or unpacked in the discourse, that of empathy. Empathy is the sharing in others psychological experience, feeling with other learners in a critical discourse that enforces active and empathic listening and as highlighted by Meizrow ‘bracketing your own assumptions to be able to see and feel with the other person who greater transformation.

**Contextualization:** As a social work, empathy is an important part of my professional experience and journey. It is a core principle for building rapport and working with clients. Therefore inclusion of this construct is aligned with my professional practice and daily life working with higher education students, families and communities.

**Comment 3**

**Quote/Paraphrase:** Transformative learning theory is founded on both humanist and constructivist assumptions. From a psychological perspective, humanism presupposes that human nature is intrinsically good and that humans are free and autonomous beings. The emphasis is on the self; the self has the potential for growth, development, and self-actualization, which, in turn contributes to the good of humanity in general (Merriam & Brocket, 1997). Constructivism comes from the work of Piaget (1952), Dewey (1938) and others. In adult education, Candy’s (1991) landmark work on self-directed learning is written from a constructivist perspective. Generally, constructivism describes learning as a process of creating meaning from experience; however, there are a variety of strands that make up this broad perspective, including a distinction between individual construction of meaning and social construction of meaning. The former focuses on learners developing perspectives that help them adapt to and understand experience; the latter is based on dialogue from which people learn the culturally shared ways of understanding the world (Vygotsky, 1978). Both humanism and constructivism reflect Western and particularly North American values and beliefs—anyone can achieve anything, anyone can and should have the opportunity for freedom and happiness, if only they work hard enough to overcome all obstacles.” pp. 39

**Essential Element:** This comment is associated with the essential element, transformative learning theory.

**Additive/Variant Analysis:** This comment is additive to my understanding of humanist and constructivist learning in the transformative learning process. The humanist perspectives, as highlighted in this paragraph denotes an autonomous learner centered on self-development and self-actualization similar to Maslow’s hierarchy of needs. Constructivist learning focuses on the learner constructing knowledge for him/herself rather than passively taking in information, the knowledge is constructed by as similar of information based on experiences and research.

**Contextualization:** From my own perspective learning is personal and made into useful knowledge based on my professional experience as a social worker and social work educator and my own passion and thirst for knowledge creation around work life balance, family life and the notion of the new world of work that allows for well lifestyle. So my humanist and constructivist knowledge as an adult is centered on my own experiences of work and life and own autonomous learning is fueled by this.

**Source Two:** Christie, Carey, M., Robertson, A., & Grainger, P. (2015). Putting transformative learning theory into practice. *Australian Journal of Adult Learning*, *55*(1), 9–30.

**Comment 4**

**Quote/Paraphrase:** “Mezirow’s theory, expressed in lay terms, argues that every individual has a particular view of the world. The particular worldview may or may not be well articulated but it is usually based on a set of paradigmatic assumptions that derive from the individual’s upbringing, life experience, culture or education. When asked to explain their worldview most individuals say, in effect, ‘The world is this way because’. Their explanation is, in turn, based on a set of causal assumptions that are often ingrained and well-rehearsed. If the individual is especially committed to his or her worldview it is highly likely that a proselytising element will creep in. In that case the individual may argue that ‘The world should be this way’, which is a position grounded in a set of prescriptive assumptions. Mezirow claimed that individuals have difficulty changing because their worldviews become unconscious frames of reference constructed of habits of the mind. He argues that particular points of view can become so ingrained that it takes a powerful human catalyst, a forceful argument or what he calls a disorienting dilemma to shake them.” pp. 11

**Essential Element:** This comment is associated with the essential element, transformative learning theory.

**Additive/Variant Analysis:** This comment is additive to my understanding of Meizrow’s theory on transformative learning. He posits that people’s worldview is based on assumptions originating from one’s upbringing and primary socialization, “life experience, culture or education.” These worldviews he contends are difficult to change as they are unconsciously developed and frame logic, thinking and frame of reference. Meizrow goes further to say that people’s viewpoint can be so fixed that it will take a powerful influence or a “disorienting dilemma” to change their perspectives.

**Contextualization:** My worldview is based on my alignment with faith and family. My prescriptive assumption is that we can change the world based on a renewing of faith focus, spiritual formation and family and work alignment. To this end, I have built my career and research and service work around this worldview. The thinking is fueled from my upbringing, values and beliefs and research around work and family life. Life experience, career exposure (social work) and my education and edification has highlighted that a change is needed in these areas in order to change the world to a more family oriented, God focused mindset that can impact negative outcomes of war, domestic and community violence and other social ills.

**Source Three:** Mews. (2020). Leading through Andragogy. *College and University*, *95*(1), 65–68.

**Comment 5**

**Quote/Paraphrase:** In addition to instructional strategies, principles from the andragogy framework can be utilized to enhance the adult learning experience through campus- and online-based student services (Kasworm 2012). In impressionistic offices involving services such as admissions, marketing, financial aid, academic advising, and records, administrators should be cognizant of factors relating to presentation and perception and should be sure to cater to the needs of both traditional and nontraditional students. This is especially true for campuses with growing adult student enrollment and interest, as many existing student services, programs, policies, and procedures are predicated on the needs of traditional aged college students and are not designed for adults in contrasting circumstances (Caruth 2014).” pp. 66

**Essential Element:** This comment is associated with the essential element, andragogy.

**Additive/Variant Analysis:** This comment is additive to my understanding of adult education principles and student services. Andragogical propositions can be used not only for instruction but also student services. Admissions,enrollment, registration, academic advising and other services ought to consider the needs of traditional and nontraditional adult students. Some higher education institutions do not cater to the needs of all adults, students with families, retired persons looking to retool, upskill or change professions or adults with prior learning in an area that can be assessment and given credit. Andragogic principles can aid in these processes.

**Contextualization:** Within my institution we utilise a prior learning assessment tool from our understanding of adults as learners coming with experience and working knowledge of various disciplines. In particular social work is an area that has seen a lot of volunteerism and exposure to social work agencies and has a particular interest that my department has taken on, we offer short courses for these and other students. Additionally, the focus on the online learning that is done through our global campus is testament to an element of andragogic adaptation.

**Comment 6**

**Quote/Paraphrase:** Most adults prefer to know why they need to learn something; they also prefer to maintain responsibility for their own decisions and lives, to utilize their experiences, and to learn from real-life situations. They respond better to life-centered learning and are more responsive to internal motivators. While Knowles did not intend for these andragogic assumptions to constitute a one-size-fits all approach to teaching or leading, they do provide a theoretical framework for creating a welcoming and conducive learning environment for adults (Knowles, et al. 2012). As the median age and generational diversity in the United States continue to increase, it is essential for faculty, staff, and administrators across our nation’s higher education institutions to embrace the needs of adult learners and utilize principles from the andragogy framework to help all students succeed.” pp. 67-68.

**Essential Element:** This comment is associated with the essential element, andragogy.

**Additive/Variant Analysis:** This comment is additive to my understanding of andragogy. The majority of adults prefer to know the usefulness of the knowledge before consumption and maintain for what they learn. They respond better to learning that impacts or changes their lives. Knowles did not assume an andragogic approach that suits everyone, he however provided a framework for learning that is useful in adult education.

**Contextualization:** The approach utilized by Omega Graduate school is in line which this framework. In particular for the developmental readings we focus on the social problem that we would like to change and how as faith scholars we can change the world; this passion approach is in line with the understanding that we use the principles to engage with a concern of our own interest. I am therefore engaged with critical research that is useful to my context and experience and therefore learning is more meaningful.

**Source Four:** Abeni. (2020). Andragogy: A Theory in Practice in Higher Education. *Journal of Research in Higher Education*, *4*(2), 54–69. https://doi.org/10.24193/JRHE.2020.2.4

**Comment 7**

**Quote/Paraphrase:** “Given the relational aspect of the learning environment, emotions, and stress affect learning and information processing; therefore, instructors can help adult learners deal with emotions and stress in learning in higher education. According to Lawson (2009), design principles are necessary to develop an instructor’s planned activities and materials. Instructional principles required for exceptional design are providing an icebreaker to build group cohesiveness and assess group needs. Further, the utilization of a similar design for each class uses different purposes and published designs should be modified to adapt to the purpose of the course or training. Lawson indicated the instructor should think of lectures that can be stretched, compressed, or eliminated, instead of the time available and the expertise of the participants” pp 62-63

**Essential Element:** This comment is associated with the essential element, andragogy.

**Additive/Variant Analysis:** This comment is additive to my understanding of

Cognitive learning. This aligns with my understanding of humanizing learners and adapting curriculum to the student’s needs. Stress can impact the teaching and learning process. Instructors can use design principles to support the adult learner. Connecting students, helping them to feel comfortable with the group process and empathizing can be useful to useful to the learning process. The facilitator can adjust the material, expand and compress lectures to help adult learner.

**Contextualization:** As a social work educator, my approach to adult education is often relational and cognitive. In my classroom, where face-to-face or online I utilize a “check-in” approach at intervals in my facilitation of lectures. Though I can assess based on the facial expressions of comfort or discomfort, asking the question “how are we feeling or doing now?” helps by allowing dialogue in the cognitive process. This helps in my cognitive assessment of the student’s physical and emotional comfort but also comfort and understanding of the material. This is beyond asking if they understand the material but also assessing their emotional and cognitive needs as we move through the session and the semester. My students have come to know me for that check in- hunger, tiredness, engagement, excitement and other aspects can be checked and the lectures can be adjusted based on this information.

**Comment 8**

**Quote/Paraphrase:** “From a practical perspective, people learn best by doing, seeing, and researching. When instructors in higher education teach content, they should use not only texts, but other resources as well, such as the library, technology, and community resources, and activities to convey content areas. An instructor should be passionate about linking students to community-based organizations and projects, so they may experience how processes work. Collegiate courses are designed to introduce participants to significant issues, learning strategies, and career resources about their respective fields create beneficial learning outcomes. As a result, in higher education instructors must focus on fostering student learning through inquiry-based curriculum design” pp. 64.

**Essential Element:** This comment is associated with the essential element, andragogy.

**Additive/Variant Analysis:** This comment is additive to my understanding of practical learning andragogy. Students learn best through action- doing, seeing and researching. In higher education, instructors/lecturers ought to use practical learning tools and not only texts (lecture notes, PowerPoint). The andragogic approach in this way is similar to pedagogical approach and requires activities and action. The students should be engaged in activities such as primary and secondary (desk/library) research, community based learning, strategies and projects. As posited by the author, Abeni (2020) the instructor should “foster student learning through inquiry based curriculum design.” pp. 64

**Contextualization:** In social work, we are no strangers to practical learning. The practicum is a key part of our training and education. This is a requirement for completion of social work degrees as it is for other service professions such as nursing, dentistry and other medical degrees. I have done over 5 social work practicums of approximately 1,500 hours in order to fulfil the requirements of the social work qualifications. This type of learning by doing is key throughout social work education, our action research projects, community visits and intervention are all testament to the social work practical andragogic approach.

**Source Five:** Das, Farrell, I., Vashisht, K., Gantt-Howrey, A., Simpson, E., & Johnson, A.

(2023). How Do We Teach Social Justice? A Cross-Disciplinary Synthesis of Social Justice Andragogy. *International Journal of Multicultural Education*, *25*(2), 66–88. <https://doi.org/10.18251/ijme.v25i2.3551>

**Comment 9**

**Quote/Paraphrase:** “Social justice as a curricular priority is ingrained into the competencies of the social work field (NASW, 2022). The Council on Social Work Education (CSWE) mandates programs to include content on social, environmental, and economic justice in social work curriculum (CSWE, 2015) and the National Association of Social Workers (NASW) promotes social justice value and practice among social workers (NASW, 2017). Social work programs are foundationally rights-based, justice-based frameworks which train students to practice social work in the real and dynamic world. However, there is no common understanding of social justice in the social work profession (Kiesel & Abdill, 2017). Scholars, educators, and practitioners emphasize diverse definitions of social justice in the field of social work. They often associate social justice with diversity and multiculturalism, as well as promoting equity produced by normative power structure (Reisch, 2002). Others define social justice as empowerment (Cox, 2001). Some viewed it through a human rights lens, redistribution of resources, social change, or global perspective (Beck & Eichler, 2008; Witkin, 2000). This definitional disagreement complicates how social work educators can effectively design curricula to teach the primary aspect of social work (Morgaine, 2014). Despite the struggles in defining social justice and its macro-level application, a few graduate programs engage social work students in macro-level social justice work” pp. 74.

**Essential Element:** This comment is associated with the essential element, andragogy.

**Additive/Variant Analysis:** This comment is additive to my understanding of social justice education. Social justice is a priority for social work education and practice. Social work programmes are offer real world practice from a rights/justice based perspective. However, there is a lack of consensus on the definition of social justice in the profession. This lack of consensus can impact how the curriculum is designed around multiculturalism, diversity or other approaches. In spite of this disagreement, there is consensus around inclusion in the curriculum in particular in graduate social work programmes.

**Contextualization:** Social justice is an important part of social work education in the Caribbean as well. In teaching from a rights based perspective, my University has taken the approach to infuse the concept throughout the curriculum across the years, however we have been increasingly been asked by our students to include more practical exercises to enhance the macro level experience of social justice andragogy.

**Comment 10**

**Quote/Paraphrase:** “The most common method for teaching the applications of human rights and social justice to social work practice includes integration of materials like readings or discussions into courses, followed by talks and seminars. Conferences supplement this learning of content as well (Answering the Challenge of Social and Economic Justice, n.d.). Social work programs also develop opportunities for experiential learning (CSWE, 2015; Deepak et al., 2015; Wiener & Rosenwald, 2008). Students can be encouraged to engage in micro-practice in which they create or join active coalitions, design campaigns, and use media outlets to promote change at the community level (Rocha, 2000). They also are encouraged to involve themselves in empirical research around issues of social justice in which they promote awareness and utilize an interdisciplinary approach (Bexell et al., 2019; Raworth, 2012). The promotion of awareness is also reflected in the clinical experiences of social work trainees within their fieldwork, internship, and the applied project components of their education (McBeath, 2016). Many programs are supplemented with foci on human rights and international development (Cornell Institute for Public Affairs, n.d.; Social Justice and Human Rights, MA, n.d.)” pp. 75.

**Essential Element:** This comment is associated with the essential element, andragogy.

**Additive/Variant Analysis:** This comment is additive to my understanding of social justice andragogy. The most common andragogic method of teaching social justice is through reading, discussion, seminars and conferences. Social work programmes use experiential learning through advocacy campaigns, coalitions, rallies, community intervention and others to effect change. This level of social justice and human rights learning is also infused in the fieldwork practicum.

**Contextualization:** Social justice curriculum at my university is often seen in practical march and rallies on world social work day. This is day that students and faculty alike enhance social justice agenda of the profession. Similarly, as highlighted in the article, the learning is often emphasized in the social work practicum.

**Source Six:** Henschke, J. A. (Ed.). (2020). *Facilitating Adult and Organizational Learning*

*Through Andragogy: A History, Philosophy, and Major Themes: A History, Philosophy, and Major Themes*. IGI Global. Mews. (2020). Leading through Andragogy. *College and University*, *95*(1).

**Comment 11**

**Quote/Paraphrase:** “Andragogy has been posited as a theory of adult learning that provides a unifying concept for the practice of adult education. The assumption of andragogy only indirectly adduce the needs of society. They do not purport to accommodate the proprietary interests of institutions at all, so it would seem that andragogy would not be appropriate as a unifying theory for adult education in corrections. Deboe’s (1982) research provided answers as first of all, the purposes and aims of correctional programs do not reflect the existential goals of self-actualization. Furthermore, as a program design model, andragogy is dysfunctional in the prison milieu because the model requires that curricula relate to the developmental tasks of inmates’ social roles and addresses their here-and-now needs. Finally, it is paradoxical that andragogy appears to run counter to the objectives of correctional education because the theory may have tremendous potential to effect social change by helping inmates to look critically at the world around them, to realize responsibility for their existence, to utilize past experience for future growth, to anticipate life challenges and find creative solutions to them, and to perceive themselves as the source of acts rather than reactive volatile products of an ominous world. pp. 25.

**Essential Element:** This comment is associated with the essential element, andragogy.

**Additive/Variant Analysis:** This comment is additive and variant to my understanding of correctional service adult education. Andragogy offers an individualized approach to adult education and does not promote the interests of institutions. Therefore it would not seem appropriate for use in adult correctional programs. One scholar purports that since correctional programs do not reflect goals for self-actualization but more about reform and current needs it might not be useful in adult correctional programme design. The passage ends by alluding to the unfortunate incongruence with andragogy and correctional education because the andragogic principle of social change would be useful for reform of inmates. This view is counterproductive as a means of analysis and is variant to my views around congruence of both principles- andragogy and correctional education. Given that andragogy is built around self-actualization should not take away from its ability to be used within the context of correctional services given that the focus is social change. Though the inmates would not be self-actualizing, or using their experience to decide what they want to learn it is still a good starting point for adult education methods.

**Contextualization:** This ideology of correctional service and andragogy was new to me but as a social worker and social work educator is useful in expanding my views and understanding around andragogy in correctional services. This would be a great topic of discussion for a social work class and will expand thinking in approaches to education in correctional institutions.

**Source Seven:** Luitel, B. C., & Taylor, P. C. (2019). Introduction: Research as transformative

Learning for sustainable futures. In *Research as transformative learning for sustainable futures* (pp. 1-16). Brill.

**Comment 12**

**Quote/Paraphrase:** “ We instinctively know, with no need for explanation, that maintaining a connection with the unique character of our historic and natural environment, with the language, the music, the arts and the literature, which accompanied us throughout our life, is fundamental for our spiritual wellbeing and for providing a sense of who we are. There is an intrinsic value of culture to a society, irrespective of its place in the human development index, which is apparent to everyone and which makes it a development outcome in itself. (UNESCO, n.d.a). Internal transformation requires an integration of those thought-currents of the East and West that are now heading for the rise of planetary worldview, a world centric consciousness, and a global conscience for taking side with life, with righteousness, with compassion, with human dignity. (Beg, 2000, p. 24). Welcome to the future of education, fueled by a transformative perspective on how research as transformative learning can help prepare future generations to resolve the global sustainability crises of our rapidly changing world!” pp. 1.

**Essential Element:** This comment is associated with the essential element, transformative learning theory.

**Additive/Variant Analysis:** This comment is additive and variant to my understanding of transformative learning. Transformation requires a connection with our culture (music, language, arts and literature), natural environment and history and spiritual connection. Internal transformation requires thinking around global perspectives. Education therefore should be transformative to enhance our shared futures.

**Contextualization:** My journey with Omega Graduate School has allowed me to look at the world through different lenses; to see my experience of education from a point of transformation, through spiritual formation and interconnected with research knowledge and reimagine social change from a different viewpoint.

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