Transformative Learning and Adult Education

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Omega Graduate School

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Professor

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Assignment #3 – Essay

1. Write a 5-page paper based on one (1) of the three (3) items below:

● List and discuss the fundamental principles of adult education theory. Identify

elements of the OGS degree program that correspond to each principle.

● Explain Jack Meirow's transformative learning theory. How does the OGS

approach to transformative learning promote critical reflection for transcending

barriers to personal growth and social impact?

● Assess Jane Vella's 12 Twelve Principles for Effective Adult Learning and the

application of quantum thinking. Discuss how OGS promotes quantum thinking

(holistic, integrated, spiritual, and energetic).

2. Paper Outline

a. Begin with an introductory paragraph that has a succinct thesis statement.

b. Address the topic of the paper with critical thought.

c. End with a conclusion that reaffirms your thesis.

d. Use a minimum of seven scholarly research sources (two books and the

remaining scholarly peer-reviewed journal articles).

The transformative learning theory, which indicates that people transform the meaning of any story, incident, or fact based on their reflection, experience, and interaction with the event, was founded in 1978 by Jack Mezirow (Hyo et al., 2023). As history has it, Mr. Mezirow began the theory of transformative learning when he conducted studies on adult women who returned to school. According to Mezirow, transformative learning is a conscious and deliberate process consisting of ten steps (although not all steps need to be completed for one to undergo a transformative learning experience). In synopsis, the ten phases are (1) experiencing a disorienting dilemma; (2) introspection of assumptions; (3) conducting a critical analysis of one’s assumptions; (4) recognition of dissatisfaction; (5) exploration of options; (6) designing a course of action; (7) acquisition of new skills and knowledge; (8) experimentation and assessment of new roles; (9) establishing self-confidence and proficiency in new roles; and (10) reintegration of new perspectives into one’s life (Agnew, 2022, p. 46).

The Transformative Learning Theory is about change (Backfish 2021, p.282). Transformative learning calls for the learner to have a transformational occurrence. A transformative event occurs when a person's belief and understanding of information is challenged. When the information is questioned, the learner usually goes through the self-exploratory process of examining his interpretation of it, comparing it to what he has learned before to see if it can and or will change/transform his thinking. Mezirow referred to this as critical reflection and review, which could lead to understanding transformation.

Transformative learning isn’t simply an add-on to what has been learned but an overhaul. It is a transformative process. Mezirow’s research suggests that adults don’t apply old understanding to new situations; instead, they get a new, updated perspective, which leads to a new, different understanding.

The aforementioned is spot on. I recently went through a transformative learning experience. While growing up, I spent ample time at the house of my friend, who had a dozen cats. One day, at the tender age of eleven, as I was playing with one of the furry animals, her claws appeared, and she quickly ripped through my long-sleeved shirt, taking a chunk of skin off my arm. I cannot ever recall being in so much pain or having such a terrible experience. For several years, to say I did not care for cats would have been an enormous understatement. However, six months ago, my son adopted a cat and brought her home. My initial response was that she had to go because I could not tolerate a cat in my home. After giving it a little time and doing some self-reflection on why, I would say I disliked all cats. I concluded that perhaps I should consider taking a different position. As time passed, I grew fond of Cleopatra and found a new tolerance, understanding, and appreciation for cats. This is transformative learning in action. Mezirow mentioned something to the effect that depending on a person’s response to an event (after going through a self-reflection process), his frame of reference may change, thus resulting in transformative learning, which is precisely what happened to me (Agnew 2022; Hyo et al., 2023; Katz 2019).

Adult learning and transformative learning are joined at the hip. The transformative learning theory articulated by Jack Mezirow suggests that adults learn differently than children. According to Mezirow, adults bring many life experiences, expectations, and meaningful perspectives to learning (Agnew 2022).

As Henschke also confirms, bringing life experiences to the table is essential to adult learning. Andragogy, used by some as a code word for identifying the education or use in teaching adults, is critical to modern graduate educational studies (Henschke 2021, p.3). Furthermore, “Adult educators have long-linked phases of adult development to the practice of adult education” (John Dirkx, 1998, p.6).

When considering modern graduate educational studies, Omega Graduate School (OGS) comes to mind. Adult education and adult development work hand in hand. One of the many appeals to attending Omega Graduate School is that the faculty understand, value, and embrace the practice and process of the adult education method of facilitating learning. “Adult students thrive in educational environments where they can engage in dialogue that examines their interests and perspectives against those of others and apply them to learning goals” (Mncube & Maphalala, 2023, p. 12). Omega Graduate School has embraced this method in several ways, three of which I will expand on. This is imperative because adult learning should be more than reciting information; it should be transformative, which makes the learning experience worthwhile and applicable. As an adult learner, gaining inapplicable knowledge is a waste of time, money, and other resources.

Adult development is an ongoing self-development process that is most successful in a learning environment with meaningful relationships and partner facilitation (Rodriguez et al., 2020, p.995); having said that, the first process I will expand upon that is featured at OGS is developmental readings. Omega Graduate School compels students to gain applicable knowledge through action research “developmental readings” that require additive and variant critical analysis regarding subject matters, promoting ongoing balanced critical thinking/reflection. Developmental readings are essential to the student's growth while acting as a gauge for the professor to monitor and assist with the development of each student individually and the student body collectively.

The second method offered at OGS is the Weekend Residency. During the laborious occurrence, the professor spends adequate time reviewing each subject while entertaining questions from the students. This experience is invaluable for a few reasons. To begin with, the Professors take time to unpack the subject matter and explain it in workable terms, which brings comfort and understanding of the expectations. Secondly, the environment is undoubtedly that of adult learners; therefore, knowledge from formal educational sources and knowledge gained through life experiences are shared freely with the group, making way for personal and collaborative/community growth.

Although several things can be identified as offered at OGS that equip the Christian Scholar Practitioner to transcend barriers to personal growth and impact, I will conclude with this one—the Forum Presentation (also referred to as the “reading of the Robe”). My understanding suggests that “the Robe,” the person presenting their paper, has done extensive research on a subject matter and is sharing their research with faculty and the other scholars attending OGS. According to what I can gather, the Robe has spent a year refining their research and thus becoming knowledgeable of the subject matter. Three things happen during the reading of the Robe. To begin with, the presenter is allowed to share their social action research. Social in the sense that the work can and probably will lead to positive social impact. Action in the sense that the work is approached with the idea that it has the means to be applicable in today’s society. Secondly, the Robe’s essay is critiqued by the professors utilizing a nonthreatening approach. When critiquing the research, the professors speak about the research instead of addressing the researcher. This excellent strategy gives way to acceptable constructive criticism of the research, which can improve it. Lastly, the presenter’s fellow research colleagues (other OGS scholars) can provide the Robe feedback regarding the research and, more importantly, ask questions, often leading to high-level educational discussion, which is an experience in and of themselves.

The three things mentioned above regarding OGS: developmental readings, weekend residency, and The Forum (reading of the Robe) are all essential to the makeup of the OGS adult learner's educational experience. The three methods working independently described above are good; having them work together harmoniously in a systematic fashion is great! Omega Graduates School's approach to the Transformative Learning Theory promotes critical reflection and personal growth via developmental readings, the weekend residency, and the work required of the Robe. This positions the student as an individual and OGS as an institution to move the needle regarding social change (Barth & Rodriguez 2020). To that end, one student’s applicable (action) research could be world-changing.

The transformative learning theory (consisting of ten steps), which indicates that people transform the meaning of any story, incident, or fact based on their reflection, experience, and interaction with the event, was founded in 1978 by Jack Mezirow (Hyo et al., 2023). The transformative learning theory and adult learning work together, which can be summarized as “let the teacher help the student learn” (Alabisi & Vucetic-Trifiro p. 4), are prominent in the inclusive, community-oriented learning environment, which is essential to the makeup of Omega Graduate School.

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