Transformative Learning Theory and Adult Education

Sherry Camp

Omega Graduate School

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Professor

Dr. Sara Reichard

**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 Mezirow’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).

1. Paper Outline
   * Begin with an introductory paragraph that has a succinct thesis statement.
   * Address the topic of the paper with critical thought.
   * End with a conclusion that reaffirms your thesis.
   * Use a minimum of seven scholarly research sources (two books and the remaining scholarly peer-reviewed journal articles).

Introduction

Life continues with more questions to come as society and culture changes. How will adults handle new challenges if they are not using logical reasoning and critical thinking? How will they model and teach other adults that continual transformation and mind renewal is an essential ingredient to a happy and fulfilled life and a necessary component to social change? It is especially important in the church and Christian school today. Romans 12: 1, 2 states, “Therefore I urge you, brothers and sisters, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies [dedicating all of yourselves, set apart] as a living sacrifice, holy and well-pleasing to God, *which is* your rational (logical, intelligent) act of worship. And do not be conformed to this world [any longer with its superficial values and customs], but be transformed *and* progressively changed [as you mature spiritually] by the renewing of your mind [focusing on godly values and ethical attitudes], so that you may prove [for yourselves] what the will of God is, that which is good and acceptable and perfect [in His plan and purpose for you],” (Amplified Bible, 1965). The adult life-long learner enjoys renewing of the mind by critical reflection, through believing and thinking that flows to behavior and transformation and overcomes challenges of personal growth to become an influential world changer.

Jack Mezirow TLT, Critical Reflection and Believing

**Jack Mezirow**, an American sociologist and Emeritus Professor of Adult and Continuing Education, taught at Teachers College, Columbia University. His Transformative Learning Theory (TLT) introduced an in-depth analysis of the ways in which adults learn, how they make meaning of the learning experience, and how their lives can be transformed by it (Mezirow 1991). He believed in critical reflection as a necessary component for adult learning. One should always reflect by asking deep questions: what they know, why they know it, how they know, and why it is important for them to know. Further, teaching what you are learning as you study, solidifies your knowledge. As a person reflects critically, renewal of the mind and transformation of the heart will take place over a process of time.

Believing comes from a person’s worldview. Everyone has a worldview. They examine what happens in the world by what they believe. Then, as they mature, beliefs can change. Culture changes and one is challenged to view their world differently. Does this change their beliefs system? For a Christian adult, this causes critical reflection of what they truly believe to be able to learn how they will respond and live in the changing world. Critical reflection begins with mind renewal and self-care as they must determine their responses to what is happening around them. For the adult learner, this is critical. What is necessary to change in themselves to be an influence to others?

“Transformative learning is voluntary, is critically self-reflective, and is a process by which uncritically assimilated assumptions, beliefs, values, and perspectives are questioned and thereby become more open permeable and better validated. Imagination, intuition, soul, and affect are part of the understanding process” (Cranton, 2016). Important values for a Christian scholar practioner can be appropriated over time. We learn a substantial amount of non-negotiable biblical truths, but we are constantly adding to our knowledge of scripture and meditate on them for mind renewal that permeates our souls through our will and emotions.

Adult learning is a process that produces much questioning of beliefs and values

that promote and influence correct behaviors. Since knowledge is key to understanding, adults use experiences to challenge their worldview when faced with questions that push them in their

mind, will and emotions. Therefore, critical reflection is a necessary component of adult

transformative learning. For the adult learner and scholar practioner to critically reflect, they must overcome barriers to their own personal growth and influence other adults to learn for their lifetime. Nonetheless, critical reflection is essential to right believing to renew the mind.

Critical Reflection and Thinking

Critical reflection is essential to right thinking. From a person’s believing and revelation of new beliefs, their thinking can be changed. For the adult learner, “approved ways of seeing and understanding are shaped by our language, culture, and personal experience to collaborate and set limits to our future learning,” (Mezirow, 1991). To learn to think differently is important to the learner. What are approved ways? According to our own cultures or are they approved only by the culture in which we live now? It is true these ways can set limits on our thinking. Will we continue to learn from others in other societies or do we think our influence can only be shared by one group of society?

Children of the Baby Boomer’s generation were taught to listen to parents and elders, obey them, and not ask questions. Many of these children as they were adults taught their children in the same way. Analyzing what is said is an important attribute to be taught to all children and adults for transformative learning to occur. “Social learning, the role of experience and the development of sustainability competencies are inherently part of transformative learning,” (Rodríguez Aboytes, J. G., & Barth, M., 2020). Culture and society contain substantiative learning commodities for children and adults to question and from which to make their own opinions. Critical reflection must be a part of this for scholar practioners. Asking questions is of upmost importance: What? So, What (why)? Now, what (how)?

Adults bring experiences which are integral to their learning. Not only socially, but emotionally spiritually, and mentally. They have learned skills, attitudes, and knowledge that can propel them into more knowledge and experiences. These attributes come from personal beliefs and thinking, which stem from critical reflection and help to overcome challenges of personal growth.

Critical Reflection and Behavior

Critical reflection is necessary for right behavior. As one makes choices from believing to thinking, they will behave by their actions that match. An example is understanding how fire can hurt. A child is taught do not touch the beautiful flame in the fireplace or you will get burned and the burn will cause much pain, the child can believe this is true, change their thinking and never touch the flame. When one's assumptions and experience do not match, or when one's prior understanding conflicts with new knowledge, the learner is forced to reevaluate the evidence to make sense of the subject,” (Backfish 2021). The flame is beautiful and the child wants to experience it. But when the child must touch the beautiful flame and experience it, they do get burned. The pain is now fully understood. Their behavior was attributed to their thinking they would not burn. However, not believing what they were told, their thinking and actions proved differently.

Adult scholar practioners have the privilege of studying through critical reflection and then learning from thinking and beliefs, what truth is. Because of knowledge and experience with challenges, adult learners gain more understanding by use of truth, emotions, and mental capabilities, through family, church, career, and community groups.

Understanding their personal cognitive skills and the way God made them unique enhances self-awareness and the ability to confidently appreciate their learning and behavior choices.

“Critical Reflection is understood as the fusion of personal experience with new

knowledge and study content, leading to a new understanding and a new sense of the meaning of oneself, one’s learning, studies, and phenomena in the wider environment,” (Many, et al., 2023). Fusion results in adding two or more things together to make one. New knowledge and new study lead to more understanding in learning about self and surrounding culture. Through study and learning new material, an adult learner is moved to deeper understanding of self and those around them. This can make positive changes in behavior toward God and others. These persons are self-directed professionals who understand the importance of knowledge and learning for themselves and others around them. Adults know that study helps them grow not only professionally, but personally, (Broughton, et al., 2023), enabling an adult learner to grow from their beliefs to their thinking and resulting in right behavior.

Conclusion

“Adults in society face an urgent need to keep from being overwhelmed by change. It is crucial that individuals learn to negotiate meanings, purposes and values, critically, reflectively, and rationally, instead of passively accepting the social realities defined by others,” (Mezirow, 1991). The adult life-long learning Christian enjoys renewing of the mind by critical reflection, through right believing and right thinking that flows to right behavior and transformation. These assist in overcoming challenges of personal growth and becoming an influential world changer. Therefore, it is a joy to read Mezirow’s TLT and hear of his beliefs, thinking, as he encouraged others through critical reflection behavior. Adult learners are challenged to understand and influence others to communicate truth, train the mind, and cultivate the hearts of themselves and the world. This is accomplished through critical reflection as they love learning, seek understanding, and practice wisdom. Acknowledging the Lord with all your heart leads Him to direct your paths of behavior, (Proverbs 3: 5, 6).

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