Transformative Learning and Adult Education

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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)

Transformative Learning and Omega Graduate School

A butterfly is not just a caterpillar who grows wings. Becoming a butterfly requires a

total transformation, dissolving and reforming.

~Anonymous

The OGS approach to Meirow's transformative learning principles strategically develops leaders through reflective transformation and inner personal growth. Mezirow's transformative learning theory focuses on transforming problematic frames of reference into more inclusive, discriminating, open, reflective, and emotionally able-to-change ones. This differs from informational learning, which increases skills or cognitive structures, giving more resources to an established frame of reference. Transformative learning suggests that established frames of reference can guide a structural shift in basic premises of thought, feelings, and actions (Schnepfleitner, and Ferreira, 2021). Today's educational policy and practices are rooted in modern ontological and epistemological traditions, which breaks up "the world into bits and pieces called disciplines and subdisciplines and "fails to teach students how to understand and address the complexity of today's interrelated social and ecological problems" (Walsh, et al, 2020). Transformative learning aims to improve our understanding of humanity, interrelationships, and wellbeing. It develops a holistic worldview and coherence of life's purpose, direction, values, choices, and actions. It fosters learning communities and ecosystems, promoting sustainable lifestyles and cultural transformations. This requires transforming our relationships with ourselves, others, the environment, and the future (Walsh, Z., et al, 2020, Schnepfleitner, F.M. & Ferreira, M.P., 2021; Kokkos, A., 2022; Fried, J., 2023; Sobania, N. W.

(Ed.), 2023)). The OGS approach to Meirow's transformative learning principles strategically develops leaders through transformative and reflective learning. OGS has developed transformative learning practices by developing a "faith-integrated approach to interdisciplinary social research" (Ward, D., 2014).

Mezirow's transformative learning theory focuses on transforming problematic frames of reference, such as mindsets and habits of mind, into more inclusive, discriminating, open, reflective, and emotionally able-to-change frames. Transformative learning, with constructivist underpinnings, suggests that a person's established frames of reference can be changed, leading to a deep, structural shift in basic premises of thought, feelings, and actions leading to a deep, structural shift in basic premises of thought, feelings, and actions (Schnepfleitner, and Ferreira, 2021; Sobania, 2023). The U.S. The Department of Education did a comprehensive national study in 1978 to explain the unprecedented expansion in the number of women returning to higher education in the United States based on Merzirow's transformative learning (Mezirow, 2009; Jarvis, 2014). Transformative learning has evolved from this. The study connoted that there are ten phrases in the transformative learning process, which are "1) A disorienting dilemma; 2) Self-examination; 3) A critical assessment of assumption; 4) Recognition of a connection between one's discontent and the process of transformation; 5) Exploration of options for new roles, relationships, and action; 6) Planning a course of action; 7) Acquiring knowledge and skills for implement one's plan; 8) Provisional trying of new roles; 9) Building competence and self-confidence in new roles and relationships; 10) A reintegration into one's life on the basis of conditions dictated by one's new perspective" (Mezirow, J., 2009).

In Jarvis' video, the ten processes were summed up by examining three meaning perspectives to gain a broader understanding of how transformative learning can change the world. The first is personal or psychological belief that learners have about themselves; such as belief they can or cannot do certain things. The next belief is social linguistic meaning perspective, which holds one's view on how they view the world or society based on their lived experiences, race, socioeconomic status and religion. Lastly, the epistemic meaning perspective is how knowledge is and how it is made. Jarvis points out that transformative learning can be painful. It chips at our core in bringing change to our thinking and even core beliefs (Jarvis, 2014). The knowledge in transformation theory of adult learning can also be identified by four distinct forms which are learning through existing meaning schemes, learning new meaning schemes, learning through the transformation of meaning schemes, and learning through the transformation of meaning perspectives. The meaning perspectives gives the adult learners the ability to think autonomously as an adult. Transformative learning helps adults to become critical of their own assumptions and the assumptions of others, and allow the imagination to redefine problems from a different perspective, and to participate effectively in discourse (Kurnia, R. P., 2021; Fried, J., 2023). Through the review of the literature, the OGS scholar identifies whether the research is an additive or variant to their knowledge, and interacts further with the literature through contextualization providing opportunity for critical thought and reflection (Ward, D., 2014).

Francis Schnepfleitner provides four elements of Transformative learning with suggesting a fourth element. The first is the role of critical reflection, which helps guard against superficial learning that stifles development. It can be an effective method for examining personal values

and beliefs, acting as a catalyst for transformative learning. Critical reflection can uncover

underlying reasons for value systems, and is more in line with "perspective reflection or

reframing" in transformative learning, which includes emotional and spiritual dimensions,

context, and relationships. The second element is the role of dialogue. This dialogue with others

is the "safety net for an individual's newfound or revised assumptions", because they are

reassured of their objectivity, and it becomes the medium to be able to put critical reflection into

action (Lewis, 2009, p.9; Taylor, 1998)" (Schnepfleitner & Ferreira, 2021). Transformative

learning involves dialogue between the conscious and unconscious, fostering critical reflection

and understanding of one's internal self. This dialogue reassures objectivity and allows for

critical reflection, making it an integral component of personal transformation. The meaning of

transformative concepts becomes significant through mutual, voluntary discourse with others,

facilitating personal growth and understanding (Schnepfleitner, F.M. & Ferreira, M.P., 2021;

Walsh, Z., et al, 2020).

Through the review of the literature, the OGS scholar identifies whether the research is

an additive or variant to their knowledge, and interacts further with the literature through

contextualization providing opportunity for critical thought and reflection; thus, promoting

personal growth.. Through OGS classes and community dialogues and the Scholar's porch, OGS

provides scholars with the opportunity to interact and expand their individual viewpoints (Ward,

D., 2014)

Schnepfleitner's third element is the role of individual experience. Human perspectives

are shaped by their cultural assimilation and interpretation of the world. Stereotypes, such as

gender, race, and racial group, are unintentionally learned, while specific stances may be intentionally learned. We are trapped within our meaning perspectives, making it impossible to make an interpretation free from bias. To uncover biases and reassure ourselves of objectivity, we must expose our ideas or experiences to critical reflection and dialogue, comparing them to others' experiences. Transformative learning involves exposing ourselves to new meaning perspectives, such as when traveling to foreign destinations, but not all travelers exhibit the same potential for transformation. The mindset of the traveler is crucial, as new perspectives are temporary novelty and may not change our frame of reference. Context also plays an integral role in the transformative learning experience (Schnepfleitner, F.M. & Ferreira, 2021; Sobania, N. W. (Ed.). (2023).

OGS scholars gain a wider and broader experience as a learner through their interactions with diverse learners from different parts of the United States and around the world. Schnepfleitner's suggest new fourth element is the context. Mezirow did acknowledge the importance of context in learning theories, but disagreed with post-Marxist and postmodern critics who believe learning theories are dictated by contextual interests. Mezirow stated that "the contextual culture enables, inhibits, and dictates who learns what, how and when" (Schnepfleitner & Ferreira, 2021). The work of transformative learning is to get adults to think for themselves and reassess the factors that support that contextual culture. Transformative learning aims to encourage adults to think independently and reassess factors supporting contextual culture (Fried, J., 2023); Sobania, 2023). However, there is a lack of studies on informal or non-formal educational settings. The lack of studies on informal or non-formal educational settings may understate the constraints of diverse social contexts and material

constraints on behavior. The experiences of research participants may be limited by their

historical and sociocultural context (Schnepfleitner, F.M. & Ferreira, 2021).

OGS uplifts the institution as a "safe place to think " which allows the scholars to explore

different points of views through research from scholars and graduate students around the world

to solve social problems (Ward, D., 2014). In reviewing Mezirow's book, Alexis Kuddos points

out that, "Another important contribution of Transformation Theory is the stance taken on the

role of adult educators contributing to transformative learning (Chapter 7). Educators do not by

any means impose their opinion on the participants. Their role lies in posing critical questions

and creating conditions for reflective discourse. "To help a learner become aware of and assess

alternative meaning perspectives for viewing a problem is not to tell the learner what to do but

only to present different sets of rules, and criteria for judging" (p. 203) (Kokkos, 2022). Through

this process, OGS aligns with Mezirow's framework, which suggests actions to encourage

critical reassessment of assumptions and reduce reliance on educators, promoting self-directed

learning and inner personal growth. These actions include helping learners understand learning

resources, defining needs, expanding options, fostering reflexive learning, reinforcing

self-concept, emphasizing experiential methods, and providing supportive feedback (Kokkos,

2022).

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