Transformative Learning and Adult Education

Vera Halezina

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 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).

 Since the times of Socrates and Plato we have known that the task of great importance for every generation is to preserve and transmit their accumulated knowledge, values, understanding, skills and rich experiences to the next generations, but the world and our life are constantly changing. New challenging tasks and problems arise every day, and at times there are discoveries and scientific breakthroughs that drive technological change. How could we best preserve our faith and our valuable experience in the modern, rapidly changing world? One answer to this question is following God's guidance to live out one's calling and keeping our faith and the true values in our hearts, and regarding developing and improving our reason and mindset, an effective solution could be quantum thinking that enhances adult learning and is encouraged and created through the dialogue approach, which, as Dr.Jane Vella suggests, "is one answer to current problems in education at every level" (Vella, 2002), where practical dialogue is an essential part of transformative learning, which I have now experienced for myself as a student at OGS.

With regard to adult learning, there has been a lot of research on a learning environment that would be effective for adults. According to Dr. Knowles, effective learning environment should include the following factors: firstly, it is important for adult learners to be respected for their experience to be acknowledged, secondly, adult learners need to feel safe, and their learning should be immediately applicable and relevant for them to be actively engaged in the process of learning, so that they could integrate their learning effectively in their context (Wisconsin Union, 2023). Dr. Jane Vella, expanding on Dr. Knowles' research, and drawing upon her work with the famous educator Dr. Paulo Freire and her broad experience in adult teaching, has developed the following twelve principles of effective teaching design and practice: "needs assessment, safety, sound relationship, sequence and reinforcement, praxis - action with reflection, respect, cognitive, affective, psychomotor, immediacy, roles, teamwork, engagement, accountability" (Vella cited in Wisconsin Union, 2023). Adhering to these principles in designing learning activities and tasks will create effective learning environment based on dialogue about learning facilitated by the teacher, as well as reflection and integration of the learning in the life experience.

In addition to the twelve principles Vella has devised other important principles and practices that assure the dialogue teaching approach, including dialogue, immediacy, relevance, sequence, the use of physical, affective and cognitive means to learning, time, titles, learning tasks, open questions, lavish affirmation, case studies, stories, warm ups, feedback, closure, consultative and deliberative voices, small groups, visuals and charts, the use of video clips, music, art and poetry, learners as Subjects of their own learning, the Seven Steps of Planning: Who, Why, When, Where, What, What for, How, Inclusion, inductive and deductive approaches, safety, humor, autonomy, congruence, documentation (Vella, 2002). All of the principles and practices suggested are essential to ensure effective application of the approach to enhance adult learning. Engaging, creative and safe atmosphere of active practical discussion in groups with focus on the process of learning, that is relevant and immediately applicable in their context, increases learners intrinsic motivation and encourages their autonomy, when they feel their experiences are respected and they are in control and accountable for their learning, which is in keeping with the principles of Andragogy.

With regard to my practice of language teaching, I find the dialogue approach particularly valuable in terms of increasing students engagement, their confidence, autonomy and accountability of learning. While teaching the Professional Communication course, for role-play activities and assignments, I encourage students to come up with their ideas and suggestions of issues or problems from the area of their professional specialization to resolve in group discussions, which students then reflect on and analyze for what they have learned, what skills they have developed and what should be improved.

There have been attempts to explore transferability of Dialogue Education principles across cultures, when the practicality of the six core principles of the dialogue approach was assessed regarding the context of cross-cultural adult training. It is argued that these principles cannot be effectively applied by simply transferring the learning activities to another context (Susan C, 2019). But, the learning tasks and teaching practices of teaching as dialogue developed by Jane Vella should not be simply transferred to any context, as it is essential to assess and take into account the learners' needs to design appropriate and effective learning activities and make learning relevant to the learners' context. "A learning task is for the learner!" (Vella, 2002).

Applying the method of Teaching as Dialogue effectively requires careful preparation and planning following the Seven Steps of planning, as well as adaptation of the learning activities for the learners' context, their cultural background, professional area, interests, learning needs, taking account of their learning experiences. Designing effective learning activities is very time-consuming. Creating true change takes a lot of time, effort, hard work and patience.

Effective application of the practical dialogue approach encourages quantum thinking and quantum learning, which is manifested in adult learners active engagement in their learning, their critical thinking and creative response to an important, open question in the process of learning and discussion that moves the content into their context and lives, and changes their thinking (Vella, 2002). Jane Vella's quantum learning is based on Zohar's new-paradigm quantum thinking, where dialogue represents the central communication tool for understanding and transformation of thinking and learning, which is integrated, holistic, spiritual and energetic (Vella, 2002). Using dialogue as a tool for communication and understanding, where students question their ideas and assumptions, share and reflect on their experiences mutually enriching their knowledge, helps them feel empowered strengthening their desire to understand, learn and raise important and relevant for them ideas, which changes their way of thinking and informs their actions. It also provides opportunities for reflecting critically on our inner self to encourage learner spiritual development embracing respect, humility, compassion and gentleness.

This type of facilitated dialogue involving social interaction, discourse, personal dialogue, group discussions and reflection is an essential part of transformative learning that results in personal transformation and then through the right choice of action leads to social change (Saulsberry, 2016). Through reflections and discussions of their assumptions and their world view, learners are encouraged to consider and challenge different perspectives to transform their thinking or frames of reference (Mezirow cited in Corley, 2011).

 The mission of Omega Graduate School is transformative in its essence. The OGS mission is "to equip scholar-practitioners from a Christian perspective with research skills to integrate religion and society for constructive social change." The core values of OGS are "professional scholar-practitioners who change the world, safe places to think within a diverse global community of adult learners, tutorial methods for individualized, self-directed, lifelong learning, faith-integrated interdisciplinary social science research, research-based problem solving for Christian social change", which are in line with the principles of adult learning and transformative learning promoting new-paradigm quantum thinking. OGS also promotes quantum thinking through the relevant curricular sequence, engaging discussions during seminars, tutorials and workshops, professors' support, guidance and timely feedback, peers support, safe, encouraging and inspiring atmosphere for learning and research, and challenging practical assignments, that effectively contribute to developing and increasing the essential skills for Christian worldview integration and interdisciplinary social research to make constructive social change.

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