PHI 800 Transformative Learning and Adult Education

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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 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).
2. 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).

Mezirow’s transformative learning theory is a key concept in Omega Graduate School’s educational model using critical reflection to help students transcend barriers to personal growth and social impact. This paper will explain transformative learning theory and how to implement it for social problem solving and personal growth through critical reflection.

For the past several generations, with advances in nutrition and medical science, man’s life span has been getting longer. Another societal change has been people changing jobs and careers at older ages and more frequently. This has sparked interest in adult and continuing education to prepare people for their new careers where transformative learning theory is being utilized extensively (Schnepfleitner, F.M. & Ferreira, M.P., 2021, p. 42).

Transformative learning is an educational theory outlined by Professor Jack Mezirow in the mid-70’s. His theory has been studied, debated, and revised over time. This theory combines constructive learning with the importance of reflection and communication. “The idea that meaning is constructed from experience and internal understanding – with the importance of communication and reflection” (What Is Transformative Learning & How Can I Apply It?, 2020). Mezirow was convicted that meaning does come so much from external means like books but is from within us. He also believed that meaning comes from our experiences through human interaction (Mezirow, 1991). Transformative learning refers to the process where people critically reflect upon their assumptions and frame of reference to be emotionally capable of change, so they are more inclusive and discriminating (Romano, A., n.d.).

Omega Graduate School helps students to take an honest, critical look at their current worldview to find new ways and ideas for seeing their community and how to solve the problems they face. In the western culture people want to know how things work, and they want to put names to the processes that they use. Students come Omega Graduate School because they see a problem in society and desire to fix the problem. They are looking for ways to make significant changes in society and thus change the culture that caused the problem. Transformative learning theory helps the student find new ways for transformation and development. When working with children it is easy to measure development both physically and mentally. However, in adult learners it is more difficult to measure their development. Development is seen as adults add to their knowledge and experience which causes a transformation within society as they slowly shift their worldview when they are confronted with new insights that challenges their preconceived ideas and assumption of things are in the world (Thayer, Jane, n.d.).

Omega Graduate School gives students chances to learn about new ideas and ways of seeing the world around them. The diversity within the school’s faculty and student body each student can interact with worldviews different from their own. Using pre-assignment meet ups, chapel services, forum presentations, scholar’s porch, and quest speakers the school exposes students to new ideas and causes them to challenge what they think and why they think it. Omega Graduate School is a safe place for students to learn new things and solidify their worldview based on Biblical truth.

Transformative learning theory helps students identify and question their assumptions. In the classroom it’s important for students to critically analyze their assumptions. Teachers can model this behavior by sharing stories of how their own understanding and perspectives have shifted, how they have been able to analyze their own beliefs, and more (What Is Transformative Learning Theory, n.d.).  Teachers must create opportunities for critical discourse.In a classroom that is focused on transformative learning, there must be opportunity for critical discussions.  Small group discussions and activities can help students with this critical understanding. This kind of classroom work can help students really embrace other thoughts and experiences different from their own (What Is Transformative Learning Theory, n.d.).

One of the distinctions of Omega Graduate School is the use of distant learning both synchronous and asynchronous. Distance learning has been proved to be a great success in adult education, as it provides tools and supervisory training tools such as online learning platforms. Distance Learning takes place using asynchronous tele-learning systems, commonly known as "platforms", and includes a variety of course management tools, access to educational material resources, and synchronous and asynchronous communication tools (Kalachanis, LK, Pavalakou, J., Tsiouni, E., 2009, p. 21). All of this helps the student to be more effective in solving the problems they are working on.

One of the problems people encounter in problem solving is limiting the possibilities of a solution to their personal perspective of what the solution needs to look like. Whether solving a problem as an individual or as a group it is a great opportunity to employ transformative learning theory (“What Is Transformative Learning & How Can I Apply It?,” 2020). Using transformative learning theory to solve a problem a person must understand the theory and must put the theory into practice (What Is Transformative Learning & How Can I Apply It?, 2020). The process of problem solving using transformative learning takes more than presenting facts and memorizing them. Those trying to solve the problem must think about how their biases, experiences, and relationships impact their understanding of the problem (Transformative Learning Theory: How to Learn Through Challenging Assumptions, n.d.). During the transformative learning process, reflection refers to looking at assumptions and past experiences to see if they stay relevant in the face of new information. Mezirow argues that reflection often happens during problem-solving (What Is Transformative Learning Theory, n.d.). Transformative learning theory not only helps in solving problems, but it is necessary for personal growth.

Personal growth is important for the adult learner to learn new skills, processes and procedures to be on the cutting edge of their profession. Those who have a natural passion for life-long learning and continuing their education, transformative learning will come naturally. Others may struggle as they confront and critically reflect on their own preconceived notions as an adult learner. Since transformative learning is inherently an individual process with support from others, it lends itself well to personal development (What Is Transformative Learning & How Can I Apply It?, 2020). Here is one example of the need for personal growth. Transformative learning is needed for the personal growth of missionaries.in 21st century missions as they are trying to solve unique problems encountered on the mission field. Paul Hiebert states, “If behavioral change was the focus of the mission movement in the nineteenth century, and changed beliefs its focus in the twentieth century, then transforming worldviews must be its central task in the twenty-first century.” The need to transform worldviews is well-recognized by missiology (Gimble, R., Wan E., 2021., p. 3). To truly accomplish personal grow there must be a full understanding of critical reflection.

Critical reflection promotes transformative learning. Critically reflecting on a situation means questioning the integrity of deeply held assumptions and beliefs based on prior experience. “Instructional aids that promoted critical refection include journal writing as this method encourages individuals to record and reflect on experiences” (Baumgartner, L. M., 2019, p. 70). The course learning journal is an important ingredient in promoting transformative learning at Omega Graduate School. This course learning journal helps the student keep track of their personal growth through critical reflection and contextualizing what they have learned to their own situation in solving the problems they are working on.

An important difficulty that arises in the process of transforming learning is the inability of adults to respond to the learning process and the resulting failure of educational goals. The reason is that adults already have established beliefs that are difficult to change. “Every person has different perceptions and abilities, so the learning process must be personalized and tailored to the needs of each learner” (Kalachanis, LK, Pavalakou, J., Tsioumi, E., 2009, p. 21). One of things that draws students to Omega Graduate School is allowing the student to personalize and tailor the research during their course work toward finding a solution to the problem they are working on.

Mezirow’s transformative learning theory is a key concept in Omega Graduate School’s educational model using critical reflection to help students transcend barriers to personal growth and social impact. This paper has attempted to explain transformative learning theory and how to implement it for social problem solving and personal growth through critical reflection. Omega Graduate School’s use of the Oxford tutorial model of educations is the perfect platform for transformative learning in the adult learner.

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