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Instructor Assigned Essay or Project

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PHI 800 Transformative Learning and Adult Education

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Assignment #3 – Instructor Assigned Essay or Project

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 Meirrow'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).

Introduction

In our world increasingly defined by rapid change and complex societal issues, how do individuals navigate the overwhelming challenge of personal growth and transformation? Can education play a role in re-shaping how we think, act, and our purpose in the world? These questions are more than theoretical, they speak to the core of who we are as learners and innovators of social change. Jack Mezirow's *Transformative Learning Theory* offers a compelling framework for understanding how adults reshape their perspectives in response to new experiences. This essay explores Mezirow's foundational theory, its core components like disorienting dilemmas and critical reflection, as well as the unique approach OGS incorporates in fostering transformative learning. By analyzing the interplay between personal growth and social impact, we will see how OGS creates an environment for students to transcend their barriers and engage with pressing societal challenges.

Jack Mezirow's Transformative Learning Theory, was first articulated in his seminal work *Transformative Dimensions of Adult Learning* (1991), it is grounded in the idea that learning is not just about acquiring knowledge; it's about radically altering one's frame of reference. Mezirow's theory is built upon the premise that adults learn by critically reflecting on their assumptions, beliefs, and experiences. This reflective process leads to a perspective transformation, a shift in how one understands the world, themselves, and their place in it. The theory outlines several key concepts that are central to this transformation.

A critical starting point in Mezirow's framework is the disorienting dilemma, an experience or situation that disrupts an individual's familiar worldview. These dilemmas often

arise unexpectedly, challenging deeply held beliefs and assumptions. For example, a personal crisis, a societal injustice, or even an intellectual encounter with conflicting ideas can create cognitive dissonance, forcing individuals to reassess their perspectives. *Mezirow* (1991) argues that such dilemmas are essential for triggering the transformative learning process, as they jolt the learner out of complacency and demand critical introspection.

Once a disorienting dilemma occurs, individuals must engage in critical reflection to move toward transformation. Reflection is not merely a passive thinking process; it is an active evaluation of one's existing beliefs, values, and assumptions. There are two distinct types of reflection: content reflection, which focuses on what is being learned, and process reflection, which examines how the learning is being experienced *Cranton* (2016). This reflective practice can help individuals recognize contradictions between their current frame of reference and the new information or experience. By reflecting deeply, learners can begin to question whether their past assumptions are still valid or need to be reevaluated, a critical step toward transforming their perspectives.

Ultimately, transformative learning leads to perspective transformation, a fundamental shift in how learners view themselves, others, and the world. *Mezirow's* theory suggests that this transformation is not just cognitive but also emotional and social. As learners reframe their experiences, they develop a more inclusive, open-minded, and flexible view of the world. This shift often empowers individuals to engage more critically and responsibly with social issues, deepening their capacity for empathy and social responsibility. *Cranton* (2016) expands on this idea, emphasizing that transformative learning leads to greater autonomy and self-directed learning, which are essential for becoming lifelong learners and active contributors to society.

At Omega Graduate School, transformative learning is not just a theoretical concept but a guiding principle embedded in its educational approach. OGS's interdisciplinary model integrates a wide range of disciplines, fostering the development of well-rounded individuals who can tackle complex global issues. Students are encouraged to explore diverse perspectives, making connections between various fields of study such as theology, social sciences, and ethics. Allowing for deeper insights and richer learning experiences.

The interdisciplinary nature of OGS's curriculum directly supports Mezirow's theory by encouraging students to view problems from multiple viewpoints. This holistic approach not only enriches their intellectual capacity but it also encourages the learners to engage with diverse perspectives, often challenging their assumptions. For instance, a student studying poverty may explore the topic from economic, theological, and social justice perspectives, enabling them to develop a multifaceted understanding of the issue. *Boonphadung and Seubsang (2021)* emphasizes that such interdisciplinary learning allows for the integration of new knowledge into existing frameworks, thereby fostering the transformative process.

Another key aspect of OGS's approach is its emphasis on reflective writing and personal journaling. Students are regularly encouraged to reflect on their experiences, readings, and personal growth throughout their studies. This practice of meta-cognition, thinking about one's own thinking, helps deepen self-awareness and clarity, making it easier for students to identify moments of transformation. This reflective practice is a key feature of Mezirow's framework, as it allows learners to engage in critical reflection on their assumptions and beliefs *Mezirow (1991)*. For instance, students may write about how their perspectives on issues such as

inequality or environmental sustainability have evolved over time, thus actively engaging in the transformative process.

OGS also promotes collaborative learning through group projects and community engagement. By working together on socially relevant issues, students are not only challenged to think critically but also to interact with their peers who may offer different perspectives and worldviews. These collaborative experiences encourage dialogue, help students examine their own beliefs in light of others' experiences, and foster a deeper understanding of societal issues. According to *Hossain, Kong, and Malik (2023)*, collaborative projects enhance transformative learning by providing real-world contexts where students can practice their skills and ideas in a dynamic and interactive environment.

The transformative learning approach at OGS is not simply about intellectual growth; it is about shaping individuals who can make meaningful contributions to society. By cultivating critical thinking, reflection, and empathy, OGS helps students transcend personal barriers, enabling them to become agents of positive social change.

Through the process of transformative learning, students at OGS are encouraged to examine their beliefs, values, and assumptions in profound ways. The reflective practices foster emotional intelligence, resilience, and a deeper sense of self-awareness. As *Cranton (2016)* notes, transformative learning leads to greater autonomy and self-confidence, as learners become more attuned to their own goals and values. For example, a student may begin their journey at OGS with limited understanding of global poverty but, through critical reflection and interdisciplinary study, emerge as a passionate advocate for systemic change.

The ultimate goal of transformative learning at OGS is to equip students with the tools and mindset to tackle pressing societal challenges. By gaining a broader understanding of issues such as inequality, poverty, and environmental sustainability, students are prepared to take concrete actions to address these problems. This commitment to social impact is deeply embedded in OGS's curriculum, where students work on projects that provide innovative solutions to contemporary problems. For instance, a student may develop a community-based program to support underprivileged populations or create a sustainable development initiative aimed at mitigating the effects of climate change. According to *Eschenbacher and Fleming* (2022), transformative learning prepares students to engage with the world in an empathetic, solution-oriented way, equipping them with the skills to make a real-world impact.

Conclusion

Jack Mezirow's Transformative Learning Theory provides a powerful framework for understanding how individuals can change their perspectives and engage more fully with the world around them. At Omega Graduate School, this theory is brought to life through an interdisciplinary, reflective, and collaborative approach that empowers students to grow both personally and socially. By fostering critical reflection and engaging students in real-world issues, OGS helps learners transcend their barriers and become change agents, prepared to address the world's most pressing challenges. As society continues to face unprecedented global challenges, transformative learning will remain an essential tool for fostering both personal growth and social responsibility.

Work Cited

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