Transformative Learning and Adult Education

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I started my self-directed learning journey in 2012 during an intensive Doctor of Ministry program. The program experience not only reshaped my academic understanding of using creative metaphors to link content with context but also transformed my learner identity while revealing my leadership qualities. My way of learning changed from just receiving information to actively thinking about what I was learning, making choices for myself, and growing both personally and mentally. This change became essential to my developing comprehension of transformative learning which shows how adults progress through both personal, contextual, cultural and environmental transformations.

The significance of self-directed learning becomes clear when we examine its relationship with Transformative Learning Theory. The transformative adult learning theory proposed by Jack Mezirow states that learning becomes transformative when learners face a disorienting dilemma that triggers critical reflection on their beliefs. (Mezirow, 1991). Adult learners reconstruct their systems of meaning while going through this learning process which leads to a new perspective on the world. Self-directed learning becomes essential within this framework. Adult learners independently determine their learning paths by utilizing their personal life experiences alongside their values and objectives to guide their educational journey

Building on Jack Mezirow’s foundation of transformative learning theories, Patricia Cranton, a leading voice in adult education, affirms that transformation is shaped by both individual psychological processes and social context. (Cranton, 2016). Cranton asserts, we see the world through a lens constructed in our interaction with our social context. (Cranton 2016). In other words, while social factors influence perception, I believe it is ultimately the individual who must initiate the process of reflection and growth. On the other hand, after 45 years, the concept of transformative learning, with all its attendant theories and approaches, is now advanced, and broadly yet it is still unclear defined area of scholarship and practice. (Hoggan & Finnegan, 2023).

Furthermore, Cranton emphasized the importance of authenticity and individual differences. (Cranton 2016). She maintained that transformative learning is most effective when learners are supported in expressing their inner truths and engaging in learning that resonates with their lived experiences. Hence, self-directed learning through the transformative learning theory creates a context for one’s authentic voice and creativity to confront an individual’s limitations, reframe meaning, and grow into her or his own space of self-awareness.

WORKS CITED

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