

Transformative learning in formal schools

Georgios Kuriakou

Secondary School

Greece

kuriakou@sch.gr

Abstract

Transformative learning is a learning theory that emphasizes the transformative potential of education. It was developed by Jack Mezirow in the 1970s and focuses on the ways in which learners can transform their perspectives, beliefs, and assumptions through the process of learning. According to this theory, transformative learning involves critical reflection and self-examination, leading to a change in the learner's worldview.

Key-Words: - Transformative learning, social change, typical schools, Andragogy

1 Introduction

Transformative learning is often used in adult education programs, as it emphasizes the role of experience and critical reflection in the learning process. This approach is particularly valuable for learners who are seeking to make significant changes in their personal or professional lives, as it can help them to develop new ways of thinking and to overcome existing obstacles.

2 Adult education theories

There are several adult education theories that have emerged over the years, each with its own focus on how adults learn and the best practices for teaching them. Here are some of the key adult education theories:

- **Andragogy:** Andragogy is an approach to teaching and learning that emphasizes the unique characteristics and needs of adult learners. Andragogy emphasizes self-directed learning, relevance, and practical application.
- **Transformative learning:** Transformative learning theory focuses on the process of personal transformation that can occur through adult learning. This theory emphasizes the importance of critical reflection and the role of dialogue and discourse in shaping individual perspectives.
- **Experiential learning:** Experiential learning theory emphasizes the importance of hands-on experience in the learning process. This theory emphasizes the role of experience in shaping understanding, and the importance of reflection and feedback in reinforcing learning.
- **Self-directed learning:** Self-directed learning theory emphasizes the importance of learner autonomy and control over the learning process. This theory recognizes that adult learners are motivated by their

own personal goals and interests, and emphasizes the role of self-reflection and self-evaluation in the learning process.

- Social learning theory: Social learning theory emphasizes the importance of social interaction and collaboration in the learning process. This theory recognizes that adult learners can benefit from group work, discussion, and collaboration, and emphasizes the role of feedback and support in the learning process.

Overall, these adult education theories provide a framework for understanding how adults learn, and for developing effective teaching strategies and learning activities that meet the needs and interests of adult learners. By understanding the unique characteristics and needs of adult learners, educators and trainers can help to create a learning environment that is engaging, relevant, and transformative for adult learners.

3 Transformative learning

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Transformative learning involves the following stages:

- A disorienting dilemma: The learner experiences a situation that challenges their existing beliefs and assumptions, creating a sense of disorientation.
- Self-examination: The learner critically examines their assumptions and beliefs, seeking to understand the cause of the disorienting dilemma.
- Critical reflection: The learner engages in critical reflection on their experiences, seeking to identify new perspectives and ways of understanding the situation.
- Exploration of new options: The learner explores new options and ways of thinking, seeking to integrate new perspectives into their worldview.
- Reintegration: The learner re-examines their worldview in light of the new perspectives they have gained, seeking to integrate these perspectives into their beliefs and assumptions.

4 Andragogy

Andragogy is a learning theory that focuses on the unique characteristics and needs of adult learners. It was first developed by Malcolm Knowles in the 1970s as a contrast to pedagogy, which is the study of teaching children. Andragogy is based on the idea that adult learners are self-directed and have a wealth of life experiences that can be used as a basis for learning.

The principles of andragogy include:

- Self-directed learning: Adults are motivated to learn when they have control over their learning process and can choose what, how, and when they want to learn.
- Experience-based learning: Adults learn best when they can apply new knowledge and skills to real-life situations.

- **Relevance:** Adult learners need to see how new learning is relevant to their personal and professional goals.
- **Collaboration:** Adult learners benefit from sharing experiences and learning from one another.
- **Problem-solving:** Adult learners are motivated by the opportunity to solve problems and apply new learning to practical situations.
- **Immediate application:** Adult learners benefit when they can immediately apply new knowledge and skills to their work and personal life.

Andragogy principles have been used to design adult education programs in a variety of contexts, including vocational training, professional development, and continuing education. The principles of andragogy emphasize the importance of tailoring learning experiences to the unique needs and characteristics of adult learners.

5 The role of an educator

The role of an educator in adult education is to facilitate the learning process and support the growth and development of adult learners. Educators should create a positive and supportive learning environment that encourages learners to explore new ideas and perspectives, take risks, and engage in critical reflection.

The role of an educator in adult education includes the following:

- **Facilitator:** An adult educator should facilitate the learning process by providing guidance and support to learners. They should help learners to identify their learning needs and goals, and provide appropriate resources and activities to support these goals.
- **Motivator:** Adult learners may have different motivations for learning. An educator should be able to motivate learners to engage in the learning process and stay on track with their learning goals. This may involve providing encouragement, feedback, and recognition of progress.
- **Resource provider:** Adult educators should provide learners with access to a range of resources, including textbooks, online resources, and hands-on experiences. They should also help learners to develop critical thinking skills and problem-solving skills.
- **Facilitator of collaboration:** Adult learners benefit from collaboration with others. An educator should encourage learners to share their experiences and knowledge with one another, and facilitate group discussions and collaborative activities.
- **Mentor:** Adult learners may benefit from the guidance and support of a mentor. An educator should be available to provide mentorship and guidance to learners who need additional support.

In summary, the role of an educator in adult education is to support the learning process, provide resources and guidance, foster motivation, encourage collaboration, and provide mentorship and support as needed.

6 Social change

Social change in education refers to the ways in which education can be used as a tool to promote social justice, equity, and inclusivity. Education has the power to shape society by influencing the values, beliefs, and attitudes of individuals. Therefore, education can be used as a means to promote social change by challenging

existing power structures and promoting social justice.

Here are a few examples of how social change can be promoted in education:

- **Curriculum development:** Developing curricula that is inclusive, diverse, and culturally responsive can help promote social change in education. This involves incorporating perspectives and experiences from diverse groups into the curriculum, and challenging dominant narratives and perspectives.
- **Pedagogy:** Using pedagogical approaches that promote critical thinking, problem-solving, and active learning can help to promote social change. This involves engaging students in discussions and debates on social issues, encouraging them to challenge their own assumptions and biases, and promoting empathy and understanding of diverse perspectives.
- **Inclusivity and equity:** Creating an inclusive learning environment that values and respects diversity can help promote social change. This involves ensuring that all students have access to education regardless of their background, and creating safe and welcoming spaces for students from marginalized groups.
- **Community engagement:** Engaging with the community and promoting civic engagement can help students to understand social issues and take action to promote social change. This involves creating opportunities for students to engage in community projects, service learning, and other forms of civic engagement.

Overall, social change in education involves using education as a means to promote social justice, equity, and inclusivity. By developing inclusive curricula, using pedagogical approaches that promote critical thinking and active learning, creating inclusive and equitable learning environments, and promoting community engagement, educators can help to create a more just and equitable society.

7 Transformative learning in formal schools

Transformative learning theory can be applied in formal schools to promote personal transformation and growth in students of all ages. Here are some ways that transformative learning can be incorporated into typical schools:

- **Encouraging critical thinking:** Encouraging critical thinking is a key aspect of transformative learning. Teachers can encourage their students to think critically by asking open-ended questions, promoting dialogue and discussion, and encouraging students to question their own assumptions and biases.
- **Incorporating reflection:** Reflection is an important component of transformative learning. Teachers can encourage students to reflect on their learning by asking them to write journal entries, engage in group discussions, or complete self-evaluations.
- **Fostering a safe and supportive learning environment:** A safe and supportive learning environment is essential for transformative learning to occur. Teachers can foster a safe and supportive learning environment by building positive relationships with their students, encouraging collaboration and teamwork, and providing opportunities for feedback and support.

- Emphasizing relevance: Transformative learning emphasizes the importance of relevance and practical application. Teachers can make learning more relevant to their students by connecting new concepts to real-world situations and encouraging students to apply what they have learned in practical ways.
- Promoting self-direction: Self-direction is an important aspect of transformative learning. Teachers can promote self-direction by encouraging students to take ownership of their own learning, setting personal goals, and engaging in self-evaluation.

Overall, transformative learning can be incorporated into formal schools in a variety of ways. By encouraging critical thinking, incorporating reflection, fostering a safe and supportive learning environment, emphasizing relevance, and promoting self-direction, teachers can help their students grow and develop in transformative ways.

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