Transformative learning

- A process of going beyond the simple gain of factual knowledge alone to instead become changed by what one learns in some meaningful way.

- It involves questioning assumptions, beliefs and values, and considering multiple points of view, while always seeking to verify reasoning.

Perspective Transformation

- Transformative learning theory came out of Jack Mezirow’s earlier theory of perspective transformation.

- Perspective transformation is the process of becoming critically aware of how and why our assumptions have come to constrain the way we perceive, understand, and feel about our world;

- And then changing these structures of habitual expectation to make possible a more inclusive, discriminating, and integrating perspective;

- And, finally, making choices or otherwise acting upon these new understandings.
Transformational Theory

- Suggests that for learners to change their beliefs, attitudes, and emotional reactions - they must engage in critical reflection on their experiences, which in turn leads to a development of transformation of perspective.

- We can say it requires:
  - Experience
  - Critical Reflection
  - Development

Unresolved Issues

- Context affects the transformative learning process.

- An overreliance on rationality as the means of effecting a perspective transformation

- Some reach transformation without critical reflection.

O'Sullivan's definition:

- Transformative learning involves experiencing a deep, structural shift in the basic premises of thought, feelings, and actions. It is a shift of consciousness that dramatically and irreversibly alters our way of being in the world.

- Such a shift involves:
  - our understanding of ourselves and our self-locations
  - our relationships with other humans and with the natural world
  - our understanding of relations of power in interlocking structures of class, race and gender
  - our body awarenesses, our visions of alternative approaches to living
  - our sense of possibilities for social justice and peace and personal joy.
Transformative learning in practice

- The role of the teacher.
  - The teacher’s role in establishing an environment that builds trust and care and facilitates the development of sensitive relationships among learners is a fundamental principle of fostering transformative learning.
  - The goal is to create a community of individuals who are “united in a shared experience of trying to make meaning of their life experience”.
  - The teacher also serves as a role model by himself demonstrating a willingness to learn and change.

- The role of the learner.
  - Although it is difficult for transformative learning to occur without the teacher playing a key role, participants also have a responsibility for creating the learning environment.

- The role of the rational and the affective.
  - Transformative learning has two layers that at times seem to be in conflict: the cognitive, rational, and objective and the intuitive, imaginative, and subjective.
  - Both the rational and the affective play a role in transformative learning. Although the emphasis has been on transformative learning as a rational process, teachers need to consider how they can help students use feelings and emotions both in critical reflection and as a means of reflection.
Experience and Learning

Chapter 7

September 26, 2007

Experience and Learning

- Experiences of adults have always been considered a critical component of learning in adulthood.

- The idea is to involve learners in practice because learning is intertwined with doing.

Different aspects of Experiential Learning

- Constructivist perspective highlights reflecting on the concrete experience and making meaning of it.

- Situative approach focuses on getting learners involved in a community of practice because in this view learning is intertwined with doing.

- Psychoanalytic lens emphasizes the learner’s need to get in touch with his or her unconscious desires and fears.

- Critical approach focuses on the need to resist dominant social norms. Last, the complexity theory of experiential learning emphasizes the relationships among experiences.
Central to all Writers of Experiential Learning

- The notion that learning from experience involves adults’ connecting what they have learned from current experiences to those in the past as well as to possible future situations.

Common Methods Used in Experiential Learning

- Reflective practice focuses on helping learners make judgments based on experience related to primarily complex and murky problems.
- Situated cognition acknowledges the importance of the social and cultural context of learning. The physical and social experiences and situations in which learners find themselves and the tools they use are integral to the learning process.
- Cognitive apprenticeships -- modeling, scaffolding, self-directing, use in new situation
- Anchored instruction -- Gaining expertise through long-term problem solving

The role of teachers

- Active learning often occurs outside the classroom walls.
- Teachers generally cannot plan a curriculum unit as a neat, predictable package because action precedes attempts to synthesize knowledge.
- Teachers become active learners, too, experimenting together with their students, reflecting upon the learning activities they have designed, and responding to their students’ reactions to the activities.
- In this way, teachers themselves become more active; they come to view themselves as more than just recipients of school policy and curriculum decisions.
Assignment

- October 8 -- No Class (Fall Break)
- October 15
  - Read Chapter 8
  - Do Annotation for Chapter 8
- You should be working on Learning Activities 2 and 3