TRANSFORMATIVE LEARNING

*Research Regarding a Faculty TL Readiness Scale*

Researcher Colleen Halupa, Associate Professor in the Doctor of Health Education program at A. T. Still University in Missouri, authored “Are Students and Faculty Ready for Transformative Learning?” (Halupa, 2017) to consider, among other things, how faculty could know whether they are personally ready (or perhaps inclined) to make the move to instructional strategies and the philosophy supporting Transformative Learning (TL). University of Central Oklahoma faculty may be interested to learn what Halupa says about reasons why faculty hold back from taking the TL plunge and may like to consider her “Transformative Learning Readiness Scale.”

*View entire Transformative Learning article*

Halupa says that both faculty and students must be ready to change to TL in order for the move to be most successful. UCO faculty, and probably faculty at any institution considering how to inculcate TL in their classes, have undoubtedly thought about and discussed some or all of the reasons identified in the article that easing into TL could be resisted by students: 1) enhanced critical thinking focus and student-centeredness requires more of students, and they won’t like the extra work, 2) students don’t know how to reflect on their learning and will resist because they just want to know what will be on the test, 3) active learning, peer-to-peer learning, and group work demand more of students, so they will rebel — and you can fill in your own continuing list, and you’ll probably include other of the reasons Halupa enumerates.

So worrying about potential student resistance becomes one reason why faculty can resist. Other reasons for faculty resistance, according to Halupa, are that changing one’s way of doing anything is disruptive and requires adjustment (in other words, it’s just plain irritating). On this point, Halupa refers to John Tagg’s (2012) statement that faculty resist change because they are human. (Faculty who attended John’s keynote and/or workshop at the 2018 Transformative Learning Conference can probably hear John’s voice speaking these words.)

Other reasons for faculty resistance are summarized from Lane’s (2007) writing and include department or disciplinary protection of curricular time, skepticism of educational theory or alternate pedagogies, not able to devote the needed time to designing and implementing the change, preference for an authoritarian teaching environment, and concerns that the switch will negatively affect student grades (with all the negative trickle-down from that, such as lower student end-of-term ratings).

As UCO has implemented the Student Transformative Learning Record (STLR) as its means of operationalizing TL, our own faculty have had to consider the issues raised above. The excellence of our faculty has resulted in strong, beneficial results when TL is made a part of the class, however, as shown in the double-digit increases in retention among students who do STLR-tagged assignments or activities and reflect on their
learning. From a proof-in-the-pudding standpoint, faculty who have implemented STLR have overcome both student resistance and any hesitancies of their own as students have benefitted both in terms of being more likely to remain in school as well as in terms of academic performance, as UCO’s large-N, p < .001 analyses show.

Rogers’ theory of adoption and diffusion (1962, with the book now in its 5th edition, 2003) posits a tipping point within populations for an innovation to take hold. When enough faculty and students overcome resistance to the TL-focused educational processes and strategies, Rogers’ tipping point is exceeded, and the innovation moves from being improbable to probable in terms of its acceptance. Halupa’s article provides some insights into the issues and conditions along the adoption-diffusion curve for TL in higher education.

Shown below is Halupa’s Transformative Learning Readiness Scale (2017, p. 19). Her citations refer to well-known references in TL --- entering the name and date into an Internet search engine will quickly locate the resource.

Appendix B: Transformative Learning Readiness Scale

Faculty Personal Factors

Please answer the questions using the following Likert-type scale (which corresponds to the points allotted to the answer to each question).

1. I reflect on how I impart knowledge to others as an educator (Freire, 1973; Mezirow, 1990).
2. I reflect on what I know (Freire, 1973; Mezirow, 1990).
4. I find I often do not know what I thought I knew (my beliefs have been challenged) (Freire, 1973; Mezirow, 1990).
5. It is my job as an educator to deliver the information (Kitchenham, 2008).
6. I know each of my student’s strengths (both academic and personal) (Kitchenham, 2008).
7. I know each of my student’s weaknesses (both academic and personal) (Kitchenham, 2008).
8. After I teach a course, I alter my curriculum based on what worked and did not work with that section of the class (Kitchenham, 2008).
9. Student learning is of great concern to me (Kitchenham, 2008).
10. I teach the way I do primarily for (Kitchenham, 2008):
   a. Myself; I am the subject matter expert (5 points)
   b. The most intelligent students in the room (4 points)
   c. The struggling students (3 points)
      d. The students in the middle who are not excelling nor struggling (2 points)
   e. All students (1 point)
Score Interpretation

0–25 Transformative
26–40 Somewhat transformative
41+ Traditional

References


