Forword

Transformative Learning at the University of Central Oklahoma (UCO) is more than simply a value. We intend it as a way of being. We trace TL as a construct at UCO back to around 2007 with the formalization of our Central Six Tenets: Health and Wellness; Research, Creative and Scholarly Activity; Service Learning and Civic Engagement; Global and Cultural Competencies; and Discipline Knowledge. Our Tenets align in many ways with High-Impact Practices as described by George Kuh and the Association of American Colleges and Universities (AAC&U) in 2008. More importantly, we consider the Tenets to be pedagogies we use to help create, both inside and outside the classroom, activities, assignments, and environments more likely to prompt transformative realizations in our students than merely leaving this important aspect of a college education to chance.
Preface

This collection of Articles and Conversations documents UCO faculty, staff, and students’ path toward becoming a university where curricular and co-curricular transformative learning (TL) is the norm. We hope the ideas, questions, comments, and statements found here will advance the dialogue about TL in the 21st Century at a metropolitan university such as the University of Central Oklahoma as well as across all of higher education.

We are at the next phase of authenticating TL with a move to an international peer-reviewed journal, which will begin with Volume 3 of the Journal of Transformative Learning. Please consider joining the conversation by submitting a manuscript. The Call for Proposals will be announced at the March 2014 UCO Transformative Learning Conference in Edmond, Oklahoma.
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A way out of defining Transformative Learning

Dennis Dunham, Ph.D.1

The 2013 Transformative Learning Conference generated many Conversations2 about the integration of transformative learning. These Conference Proceedings include most of those Conversations, as well as some Scholarship of Teaching and Learning (SoTL) papers. We believe these Conversations and papers move the dialogue about curricular and co-curricular transformative learning to a deeper level where all the stakeholders can begin to appreciate the benefits of the UCO transformative learning initiative.

Many have asked the UCO Steering Committee for Transformative Learning to come up with a better and more practical definition. The call for assessment made this a critical step. However, as one can imagine, there was much discussion and some disagreement on what we mean when we say transformative learning. One term we like to use is “high impact practice.” Though that is widely accepted, it may not guide us towards traditional assessment practices.

However, we brought in feature/benefit/analysis expert Casey Short who guided us away from the definitions and into the features and benefits of transformative learning. During several workshops, we decided that the features might include Problem-based learning, Integrative Learning, peer-to-peer learning, collaborative learning, flipped classroom, and so on. The basis of all of these is an atmosphere of discovery, which puts the burden and the joy of learning on the student.

Benefits are a little different for every kind of feature. One group examined the benefits of Problem-Based learning and determined that the following were the most probable benefits: relationship building, taking ownership, building confidence, improved communication skills, and development of prioritization skills. Furthermore, these features have different benefits for different feature sets. For example, the benefits for faculty might include deep learning and greater retention of knowledge. In these Proceedings, James’ Conversation further examines the benefits for all stakeholders to understand transformative learning. The benefits for students would be confidence building and developing skill sets which create better employment opportunities (teamwork, creativity, problem solving). In the Conversation held by Johnson and Ravikumar, they demonstrate how, for students, real world experiences that result in transformative learning far outweigh any possible risks. For example, in the paper by Austin, Nichols, and Lowry, we see that the process itself of being a scientist, not just studying science, transforms the learning of students.

The external sources, such as a potential employer’s benefit, could include better leadership skills, adaptability, and ability to connect ideas. Spurlin’s paper points this out in his connecting transformative learning to one’s consciousness resulting in a wholistic

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1 Exec. Dir. UCO International Services, Co-Chair Transformative Learning Steering Comm.
2 Conversations were sessions for discussions and innovative concepts to be captured to advance the idea of transformative learning.
shift. Jobe and Hayt further confirmed this transformation in their SoTL project, which found a course, “Lessons in Leadership,” an important personal transformative practice.

Interestingly enough, we found there was a great deal more agreement when examining the benefits of transformative learning than when trying to define it. Now further assessment is a little closer to focusing on something a little less abstract: the intended benefits. This does not lessen the challenge, but perhaps it will help us move it along. Horton, Santana, and Meachum’s Conversation presents some benefits and disadvantages of assessing transformative learning. Moreover, Jobe and Scott’s Conversation highlights that assessing the integration of transformative learning is the next area of work at the university. The researchers can now work towards asking the question about whether high impact practices result in the kinds of benefits we hope they produce.
How do you “do” Transformative Learning?

Jeff King, Ed.D.³

Colleges and universities play multiple roles in how they engage students and what they seek to accomplish as a result of that engagement. Graduates with a firm grasp of the disciplinary content in their majors are a key goal. However, a college education should result in far more than just content knowledge and skills.

Students who leave campus with more expansive and appreciative viewpoints about themselves, others, and their environment are indications that an institution has been successful with the “transformative” in “Transformative Learning” (TL). Descriptions and discussions in other pages of this journal expand on the idea of what TL is.

These comments are directed at how you do TL.

The simple answer is that there is no simple answer. One faculty member teaches chemistry one way and another instructor teaches with a completely different technique, yet both can produce transformative student learning and engagement. As we see in the Conversation by Petroff and Frush, trust in professor-student relationships can be critical for learning. They suggest the need for further research to determine how this concept is operationalized in classrooms and whether it may be a factor in student persistence. On another front, Vessier’s paper explores the benefits of students developing reflective writing as habits of the mind.

However, there is a mindful intentionality at the heart of what instructors, no matter the wide divergence in their instructional strategies and/or assignments, aim toward: creating learning activities and environments that are more likely to prompt student transformative experiences than merely leaving it to chance this will happen. Cavanaugh and Hargis illustrate the effects of intentionality in course design with their research on Learn By Doing. Campbell’s paper demonstrates the transformative nature of a real life example at the National Credit Union Foundation. Frias reviews several non-traditional pedagogies to encourage transformative learning in philosophy courses.

When you realize that a changed, expanded perception or understanding is the hallmark of Transformative Learning, then you understand you can plan into the assignments and events you design and manage the ways to prompt for such change or expansion, whether you are a student affairs professional or a faculty member. Franz, Cunliff, and Romano report their findings from a session conducted at the 2013 TL Conference, which found faculty and staff themselves needed to practice personal transformation and critical reflection. (Yes, it’s very definitely the case that as much — if not more — student transformation takes place outside the classroom as in it.) This can be done with no sacrifice of course or event content. It is the process that must be willfully and artfully managed. Thoughts on how to accomplish these were presented in another 2013 TL Conference session, as described by Carver, Cowan, Franz, Hollrah, and Shahbazi when they speak of using TL as a “vehicle to enhance the liberal educational ideals of social responsibility, communication, problem solving, and analytic skills.”

Can a student have a transformative learning experience in a math class? Some do when they grasp key conceptual understands about math itself, and such students are well

³ Exec. Dir. UCO Center for Excellence in Transformative Teaching and Learning, Co-Chair Transformative Learning Steering Comm.
served when they pursue further learning and vocations requiring mathematical skills and knowledge. However, even a “non-math” student can have a TL experience. A math class where the professor helped students solve a problem coming from two different culturally based viewpoints is a case in point.

The fact that time, place, and culture can affect people to such a degree that they think about math differently has had a transformative effect on many students in this particular university math class. When students realize people who use a different process to derive the correct answer solely because those people think about the problem differently as a result of their culture . . . well, that can be mind-bending, as Kim emphasizes in his paper about the significance of globalized transformative learning: “Maybe there are other things that are “right” in other cultures in spite of the fact that those things are different from how we do things in my own culture!”

But here’s the first key. The math instructor had to plan this into his curriculum.

You can teach just about anything in different ways. Begin asking yourself, “How can I teach X in a manner that not only helps students learn the content X but in addition helps students understand Y as well?” In such an equation, X = discipline knowledge and Y = potentially transformative realizations. Yes, the math instructor was teaching with a goal of helping students understand how to solve an equation, but he was doing it in a way that also made it more likely for at least some students to experience a transformative perspective change.

Here’s the second key as illustrated in this cultural-math example: Students usually need to process explicitly what they’re thinking before they come to many perspective-changing realizations. This means you often have to build in reflective-activity assignments. In this math professor’s case, he included a test question asking students to consider the implications of two different cultures using two different — but both successful — methods of solving mathematical problems.

Seek out and/or devise the tools, content, and methods that allow you to teach both content and prompt student self-discovery. Then provide your learners a guided opportunity to reflect on what they’ve learned.

Transformative learning can’t be forced,

but it can be coaxed.

Lead the horse to water, then salt the oats.
Teaching leadership: A holistic approach to student leadership development at the University of Central Oklahoma

Jarrett Jobe, Ph.D., and Melissa Hayt

The practice of teaching leadership varies immensely across universities with respect to approaches, conceptions, and processes. Universities are constantly challenged to create worthwhile programs and courses that address personal leadership growth, team building, community and a commitment to academic principles. The blending of the components that are needed to address these topics in the classroom, while also creating opportunities to practice leadership in the collegiate setting, is a difficult endeavor that calls for innovation in teaching methods and use of current technology. Leadership is one of the Central Six Tenets that comprise transformative learning at the University of Central Oklahoma. Transformative learning at the University of Central Oklahoma is the “holistic process that places the student at the center of their own active and reflective learning experience.” The remaining tenets of discipline knowledge; research, creative and scholarly activities; service learning and civic engagement; global and cultural competencies; and health and wellness provide transformative opportunities to engage students across multiple subjects, creating well rounded students who can adapt and think creatively in their professional and personal pursuits.

Recognizing this need for advanced leadership study as a greater part of student development, Lessons in Leadership (LEAD 1320) was created at the University of Central Oklahoma to address the many facets of leadership training that are not only relevant to the college student of today, but the course also provides meaningful challenges for each student to develop their leadership, interpersonal, and academic skills. This research will explore the student’s perceptions concerning the Lessons in Leadership course and how the requirements and structure of the course have provided significant and lasting impact in the students that have completed the course. The results could help administrators and faculty to develop leadership courses that develop students in several key areas relevant to leadership growth and personal development.

Introduction and relevant literature

James Macgregor Burns (1978), a founding father in the field of leadership education, describes leadership as “one of the most observed and least understood phenomena on earth” (p. 2.). The included research will examine student’s perceptions concerning the Lessons in Leadership Course, LEAD 1320, offered at the University of Central Oklahoma. It is theorized that the course components of LEAD 1320 are significantly related to students’ perceptions concerning their leadership growth, ability to lead, ability to work on a team, and communicate.

The Council for the Advancement of Standards in Higher Education (CAS) has been instrumental in setting the standards for leadership at the university level with both co-curricular (outside of the classroom) leadership programs and curricular (academic coursework) leadership programs (CAS, 2006, p. 12). Leadership education programs, along with co-curricular experiences such as involvement in student organizations and service, have a positive effect on student leadership development (Haber, 2006, p. 100). Their programs seek to make students an active part of learning by putting their skills into action. Komives, Dugan, Owen, Slack, & Wagner (2006) articulate that the goal for

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4 Exec. Dir. Of OCU Leadership and Coordinator of Academic Programs, respectively.
leadership programs “is for students to become active practitioners of leadership, not just passive consumers” (p. 55).

It is a combination of efforts to educate a student in leadership and a combination of factors that contribute to a student’s overall leadership growth and development. Wielkiewicz, Prom, and Loos (2005) state that a “wide range of student development activities including those with a more academic orientation, such as service learning, the development of critical thinking, and learning communities may have an impact upon students’ leadership development” (p. 7).

Developing an experience in LEAD 1320 that related to the key components recognized in the literature as contributing factors in personal leadership development required innovation and creativity. The course consisted of the following components:

1. Speakers from local, state and national organizations, businesses. (students were required to blog on a key point provided by the speaker that was mined from his/her presentation each week).

2. Team service project (students were tasked with developing a service project and creating a video synopsis of the project to present to the class).

3. Team presentation (students were required to take a leadership characteristic and create a 5-7 minute presentation on this characteristic to the class).

4. A 5-page paper summarizing a leadership characteristic assigned in the course.

These four components related to the following learning outcomes desired for the course: Developing writing, presentation and communication skills; working on a team; completing an assigned project; and discovering the different methods and skills associated with current individuals in leadership roles.

Methodology

A non-random sample of students that had enrolled and completed the LEAD 1320 course participated in the research. Participation was voluntary, and 79 students completed the survey, which was administered prior to the monthly leadership council meetings. The survey consisted of questions that were developed by the researchers and covered topics such as overall satisfaction, increase in leadership capacity/ability and overall impact on the student’s leadership potential.

Results

The self-reported results provided significant, positive data concerning the level of growth and development students perceived occurred in the course. Ninety-two point for percent of students reported that they were somewhat or very satisfied with the speaker component of the course, with no students reporting they were somewhat or very dissatisfied. Seventy-two point one percent of students reported they were somewhat or very satisfied with the team service project. Four respondents, or 5.1%, reported being somewhat dissatisfied with the team service projects. Eighty-nine point nine percent of students were somewhat/very satisfied with the course requirements and 95% reported a somewhat/very satisfied opinion of the course overall.

Students reported significant increases in their individual leadership capacities related to their personal leadership abilities. Eighty-seven point three percent of students reported
a moderate or significant increase in their ability to work in a team. Eighty-seven point three percent of students reported a moderate or significant increase in their ability to complete a project. Ninety-one point one percent of students reported a moderate to significant increase in their ability to communicate. Ninety-four point one percent of students reported a moderate or significant increase in their own personal leadership growth.

Thirty-one point six percent of student reported that LEAD 1320 has maintained the highest impact on their ability to lead in the future and 53.2% reported LEAD 1320 had a significant impact on their ability to lead in the future. A total of 84.8% reported the course had the highest or significant impact on their ability to lead in the future.

Two open-ended questions provided additional results from students and their perceptions of their abilities:

1. In what area do you feel you grew personally the most during this course?
2. In what area do you feel you experienced the greatest challenge during the course?

A strong majority (approximately 60% of the open-ended responses) of the student responses to the first question included comments centered on their ability to work on a team. Students reported feeling much more confident when put on a team in the future and what abilities were needed to complete a team-related task/project. Additional themes from this question included recognizing the breadth of leadership styles, developing deeper understanding of their personal leadership style, and time management.

Responses for the second question related to the challenge of completing the team presentations and service projects. Students listed schedule conflicts, unmotivated team members, and organizing their projects as challenges that they had to consistently deal with concerning the course and the requirements related to the team projects and presentations. Students also reported the writing component and lectures were informative, but did not provide near the academic and personal challenges that the group projects and presentations maintained.

These results support the initial expectations and learning outcomes for the course. LEAD 1320 was created to provide students multiple avenues to learn fundamental leadership knowledge, to practice writing and presenting foundational leadership principles, and developing individual skills to be successful in a team environment. Students reported high levels of satisfaction concerning the requirements of the course while also reporting significant growth in their personal leadership capacity and ability to lead in the future.

These findings help to support future development of leadership courses at the University of Central Oklahoma and other colleges and universities. An appropriate goal for leadership courses should be to create a dynamic environment in the classroom that develops multiple facets of a student’s leadership capacity. This model serves students who are interested in developing their leadership understanding and knowledge further, providing a challenging and rewarding opportunity.
References


Credit Union development educator training program:
A transformational experience

Cynthia Campbell, M.B.A.

Abstract

This paper highlights the Credit Union Development Educator (CUDE) training program offered by the National Credit Union Foundation (NCUF) and shows that it is a transformational learning experience aligned with andragogical principles. The CUDE program honors the assumptions about the adult learner made by Eduard Lindeman, who laid the foundation for adult learning theory (andragogy), while moving the learner through the transformational phases described by Dr. Mezirow, the founder of the transformational learning theory.

Introduction

The Credit Union Development Educator (CUDE) Training Program offered by The National Credit Union Foundation (NCUF) is 30 years old and currently offers programs in the United States, Australia, Asia, Philippines, UK, Europe, and the Caribbean. The mission of the program is to “Promote credit unions' uniqueness and social responsibility through interactive adult education and networking” (DE Training Manual 2012). Throughout the credit union industry the program is referred to, in a kidding way, as having a “special sauce” since the participants often return from training a bit different. Others joke and say, the participants “drank the Kool-Aid” when they were away because they can’t stop talking about their new global professional network. So what is it that makes this program so powerful?

What makes the CUDE program unique is how it impacts each participant in a personal way. It uses andragogical (adult) teaching methods that respect the prior experiences of the learner and active training techniques that are engaging. The program is transformational. It is designed to foster critical reflection, which often results in a paradigm shift, creating a new or, in some cases, a renewed perspective. This intensive program is six days long and takes place in a social environment where participants spend most of their time together. The program runs about 10-12 hours a day and is held at a conference center with “dorm like” accommodations including shared meals. The program progressively moves towards higher-ordered thinking, spending the majority of the course time in analyzing, evaluating, and creating activities. These factors make for meaningful learning with a high likelihood for transformation. That is what makes this program so powerful.

Lindeman's assumption: Experience is the richest resource for adult learning.

In adult education, the learner’s experience, when shared with their peers, can impart just as much knowledge as a teacher’s instruction. Classroom discussions invite the learner to consider alternative points of view as they build new relationships.

Small groups of aspiring adults who desire to keep their minds fresh and vigorous; who begin to learn by confronting pertinent situations; who dig down into the reservoirs of their secondary acts; who are led in the discussion by teachers who are also seekers after wisdom and not oracles: this constitutes the setting for adult education the modern quest for life's meaning.

(Lindeman, 1926)

5 The author of this paper is a CUDE program graduate who links the program's educational priorities to the highly respected academic tenets of andragogy and transformational learning.
Eduard C. Lindeman (1885-1953), a pioneer in adult education, was a man ahead of time since what he said in 1926 still rings true for adult learners in 2012. The attributes of adult learning described by Lindeman are found throughout the CUDE program. The curriculum introduces the learner to current issues facing the credit union movement. It challenges the learner to think critically about the problems and then engage in dialogue with others to create solutions. Solutions are created from the combined knowledge and experience of the group, not from a textbook or Google, because the experience of the adult learner is honored in the CUDE program as a critical resource.

Patrick Livingston, a 2011 program graduate said, “Sometimes the experiences we have from listening to others and sharing our ideas are so powerful that they inspire us to do more” (NCUF website). Melvin Edwards, a 2009 program graduate from the World Council of Credit Unions said, “The exchange of ideas and perspectives with other development planners and educators enriched knowledge transfers . . . ultimately, we will change more lives for the better through credit unions” (NCUF website). Being inspired to “do more” for others and the credit union movement is a common outcome of the CUDE program.

Lindeman's Assumption: Adults are motivated to learn as they experience needs and interests that learning will satisfy.

The CUDE program is a voluntary, weeklong, immersion program with a project assignment that the participants have one year to complete. This is a significant commitment. What motivates people to apply for the program? According to Lindeman, learning is need based, “Adults are motivated to learn as they experience needs and interests that learning will satisfy” (Knowles, Holton, & Swanson, 2005). This holds true for recent CUDE graduates as well. Jim Pack, a 2012 program graduate, said, “I decided to attend the CUDE program because I wanted a better understanding of our industry, especially in regards to our history, and our principles and philosophy” (Interview, 2012). Sometimes it isn’t just new knowledge that the adult learner seeks but rather a renewed spirit. Steve Wilder, who graduated from the program in 2012 said, “I decided to attend CUDE because it seems every time I work with someone at the league or foundation level that I find particularly engaged in making lives better, it turns out they are a CUDE program graduate” (Interview, 2012). Both were experiencing professional development needs that the CUDE program satisfied. When you have a room full of adult learners who are intrinsically motivated to improve themselves, powerful outcomes are likely.

Lindeman's Assumption: Adult’s orientation to learning is life-centered.

Adult learners are busy people who are often working and caring for a family in addition to continuing their education. Because of this, adults are quite practical in their orientation to learning. “Adults are life-centered (task-centered, problem-centered) in their orientation to learning. They are motivated to learn to the extent that they perceive that learning will help them perform tasks or deal with problems that they confront in their life situations” (Knowles, Holton, Swanson, 2005). The CUDE program recognizes the need for adult learning to be practical.

One of the most powerful lessons in the CUDE program is the real-life poverty simulation. Each participant is given a new identity and life situation. They are part of a low-income family and have all the real-life challenges that come with that, such as transportation issues, employment issues, child-care issues, and financial stress. The task is to manage their life in the new identity, which includes getting your kids to school, getting to work, paying bills, working with social services and sometimes being treated unfairly. The exercise allows the participant to “walk a mile in the shoes” of another. It
is powerful because it is a learning experience that includes all three learning domains: cognitive (knowledge), affective (attitude), and psychomotor (physical).

After the exercise, the participants reflect on their experience in a large group setting. The learning outcomes are impressive. Another participant reports, “In the simulation I was a mother of two kids, my husband was unemployed, our car just broke down, and I was making $9 an hour. Just living was exhausting — I never had any time or money for recreation or relaxing, I was so stressed out” (Interview, 2012). All the CUDE participants work in the credit union industry and many serve low-to-moderate income members. This exercise simulation provides an understanding of low-income members in a way a textbook never could. The participants will remember the emotions they felt and the struggles they faced as a low-income person during the simulation, and it should help them serve low-to-moderate income members in a more empathetic way. The poverty simulation is an excellent example of how the CUDE program design is created with the adult learner’s “life-centered” orientation in mind.

Lindeman’s Assumption: Individual differences among people increase with age, therefore adult education must make optimal provision for differences in style, time, pace, and place of learning.

Lindeman was not bound by classrooms; rather, he was a proponent of the educational possibilities of everyday life experiences. “Education is a method for giving situations a setting, for analyzing complex wholes into manageable, understandable parts, and a method which points out the path of action” (Lindeman, 1926). The CUDE program design embraces this assumption by offering various ways to learn such as lectures, small group discussions, real-life simulations, videos, case studies, hands-on activities, field trips, skits, teamwork, brainstorming, and presentations.

The diversity of learning activities keeps the program engaging for all learning styles. The field trips seem to be a favorite among participants. One of the field trips allows the participants to visit a local engineering cooperative where they experience the cooperative principles in a setting other than a credit union (a financial cooperative). The questions the participants ask the coop members show they are engaged in the higher order learning, generally comparing and contrasting the engineering co-op to the credit union. When the participants see an engineering cooperative owned and managed by its members, they expand on knowledge they already had about the credit union being a financial cooperative by seeing operating principles applied in a new situation. This new application may even cause them to think about the credit union in new ways.

Mary Cunningham, CUDE graduate from 1997 said, “Even after 23 years of loving credit unions, I was forced to step outside of my comfort zone and explore a whole new world of cooperatives. Through doing so, I’m recommitted to be sure I never compromise the credit union ideals in my organization” (NCUF Website). A three-hour field trip engaged the participants in ways a lecture never could.

Lindeman’s Assumption: Adults have a deep need to be self-directing, therefore the role of the teacher is to engage in mutual inquiry.

It is not surprising that the CUDE program would be in step with Lindeman’s self-directing assumption since credit unions are democratic institutions where members actively participate in setting the direction. Self-direction is part of the credit union culture. The participants have the opportunity to make choices in their own learning throughout the program. The parameters for the assignments are purposely loose so that the small groups can be creative in their approach.

The resulting skits, debates, case studies, and presentations show evidence of critical
thinking and humor, both of which can easily be squelched when the teacher too narrowly defines the assignment. In addition, each CUDE graduate is required to complete a self-directed learning project within one year of graduation. There are no restrictive parameters so the learner has freedom to pursue any topic related to credit union development education.

One of the projects submitted by development educators, Christopher Morris (CUDE class of 2005) and Chad Helminak (CUDE class of 2009) was a newly formed “acoustic thrift rock duo from credit union land” called, “The Disclosures.” They perform songs about the credit union and banking industry while playing guitars. They have played at many credit union conferences and they have a CD and a website, http://thedisclosuremusic.com.

“Inspired after the CUDE training, Patrick Livingston (CUDE class of 2011) and Brian McAdams (CUDE class of 2011) co-founded a group for local [North Carolina] credit union staff to network informally and learn more about credit union values. ‘CU Aware’ meets monthly and continues to grow in attendees and content” (NCUF website). They also have a website: http://www.cuaware.org.

Self-directed learning is important to the adult learner and it is evident by the depth and breadth of the two CUDE projects highlighted, as well as the learning choices available throughout the training week, that the CUDE program design is aligned with Lindeman’s self-directed learning assumption.

The first time adult learners have an educational experience that is designed with Lindeman’s assumptions about the adult learner integrated into program they will feel the difference. They will be more engaged and the learning outcomes will be greater. The Credit Union Development Educator (CUDE) training program is effective because it is designed with the adult learner in mind.

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<td>Adults have a deep need to be self-directing.</td>
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**Transformational Learning and the CUBE program: An overview**

Jack Mezirow, born in 1927, founder of transformational learning theory, explains transformational learning as a meaning making process:

*Transformative learning offers a theory of learning that is uniquely adult, abstract and idealized, grounded in the nature of human communication. It is a theory that is partly developmental, but*
even more it is about where learning is understood as the process of using prior interpretation to construe a new or revised interpretation of the meaning of one's experience in order to guide future action.

(Mezirow, 1996)

The words “developmental,” “new interpretation,” and “future action” are used in Mezirow’s definition of transformational learning, and the same concepts are present in the Credit Union Development Educator (CUDE) training program. Testimonials from graduates highlight the alignment of the CUDE program with transformational learning theory. Marion Kersnick (CUDE) from Southwest Airlines FCU said:

This experience has given new meaning to my professional life as well as my personal life. I will never see things in the same manner as I did before. This has reinforced all the reasons that I chose to make this [credit union movement] my career. Now, it’s not just a career — it’s a passion.” (NCUF website)

Sue Douglas, CUDE class of 2007, said, “Individuals who get to participate in this experience become a part of the credit union movement in a different way. This is not just another conference — this is a life changing event” (NCUF website). These testimonials show the Credit Union Development Educator (CUDE) training a program is a transformational learning experience for these participants.

While Mezirow’s Transformative Learning Theory identifies ten phases of learning that become clarified in the transformative process, for ease of discussion in this paper about the CUDE program, they are grouped together into three categories outlined by the author.

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<td>Exploration of options for new roles, relationships, and action</td>
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<td>Planning a course of action</td>
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<td>Acquiring knowledge and skills for implementing one’s plan</td>
<td>Taking action</td>
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<tr>
<td>Provisional trying of new roles</td>
<td>Taking action</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Building confidence and self-confidence in new roles and relationships</td>
<td>Taking action</td>
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Prior to enrolling in the CUDE program, potential participants may experience a “disorienting dilemma.” This will probably not be an epochal event, but rather, a subtle, incremental feeling, like that of a growing disconnect from their work. For example, many credit union employees didn’t necessarily plan to work in the credit union industry but they “ended up” there by circumstance. When they hear phrases like “the credit union difference” and hear the credit union industry called a “movement,” they may feel confused and disconnected. Other potential program participants may have come from the banking industry where the business model is completely different, and they have yet to internalize the credit union philosophy of “people over profits.” These feeling could be enough to cause critical reflection.

Reflection would eventually lead to self-examination and an assessment of assumptions. Self-examination may include subtle feelings of guilt or shame for not knowing more about the industry that employs them. As they reach out to inquire about how to learn more, they would probably call their credit union league or Google “credit union education”; in either case, they would most likely find the Credit Union Development Educator program. As they read testimonials from CUDE graduates, it would lead them to the realization that others have gone through a similar process of engaging more deeply in the credit union industry. Meghann Dawson, CUDE class of 2011, said, “The CUDE experience has reignited my passion for working in the credit union movement. It has provided a solid foundation with cooperative principles, credit union philosophy, and global development issues” (NCUF website). This sort of critical assessment of assumptions will lead them to explore CUDE as a possible learning option.

### Transformational Learning and the CUDE Program: Exploration

The exploration phase is marked by attendance in the CUDE program. The first step would be the potential participants recognizing their need to know more and taking personal responsibility for action, in this case enrolling in the CUDE program. Once the participants arrive at CUDE training they may actually experience another disorienting dilemma as they are allowed very limited interaction with the outside world for six days. The participants are involved in program activities for 10-12 hours a day and enjoy all meals, as a group, in a cafeteria. There is no time for checking-in with work, little time for talking on the phone with family, and nearly no alone time, except bedtime. For some, this much social time can be overwhelming. However, there is a reason for all the together time. In his work, *Nurturing Soul Work*, Dr. John Dirkx, said, “Ways of coming to know are intimately bound up with our deep relationship with ourselves, as well as one another, our social contexts, and the broader world” (Taylor & Cranton, 2012). The CUDE program fosters community in the design of the daily schedule as well as in the curriculum design. The active learning techniques used in the program call for group work and social interaction. The dialogue, case studies, skits, and group presentations require participants to open themselves up to others, as well as be open to others. Dirkx goes on to explain, the transformation process “involves and occurs in relationships that range from the relationship of the learner with unknown aspects of herself or himself to
relationships with other learners, teachers, groups, the organization, and broader society” (Taylor & Cranton, 2012). Since “dialogue is an essential medium through which transformation is promoted and developed” (Mezirow, 2009), it is in this social context that the participant will explore options for new roles, relationships, and actions.

The educational priorities of the Credit Union Development Educator training program build a foundation of knowledge about “credit union history and philosophy, credit union system resources, global credit union development issues, outreach to underserved groups, financial literacy, cooperatives, and advocacy” (DE Training Manual, 2012). This knowledge acts as a cornerstone for exploring ideas through study and discussion of credit union development issues. The final group presentation is done at the Credit Union National Association (CUNA) headquarters, in Madison, WI. This is a chance for the participants to show that they were able to “develop and practice methods of imparting understanding of credit union development to others” by being able to “effectively communicate messages in the context of the ‘issue of the day’” (DE Training Manual 2012). Working so closely with their small group of seven allowed the participants to practice teamwork, collaboration, negotiation, communication, and networking skills. As the participants sharpen these professional skills, they build their competence and self-confidence, attributes that will be appreciated by their sponsoring credit union and useful throughout their career.

Transformational Learning and the CUDE program: Taking action

The Credit Union Development Educator program provides the participants a solid understanding of the credit union movement and practice at communicating their ideas. At the end of the program the participant is tasked with a final project and given one year to complete it. A couple of projects were mentioned previously in this article and demonstrate the freedom given to the participants to explore whatever idea motivates them. It is likely that their DE project will call them to a deeper engagement in the credit union movement.

Stephen Pagenstecher, CUDE class of 2012, said,

CUDE training has been the single most enlightening experience I have had since joining the credit union movement . . . it provides exactly what you need to come home energized about the world of possibilities available to credit unions. It is a wake-up call, a recommitment to our founding principles, and a call to action.

(NCUF website)

As the participants return to their sponsoring credit union they are faced with reintegrating into their old work-life based on the conditions dictated by their new perspective. This can be challenging, but they are armed with a clearer picture of the credit union movement, and hopefully, their desired role in it, now and in the future.

Conclusion

According to Wikipedia, when Lindeman wrote The Meaning of Adult Education, in Michigan in 1926, he also had “concerns for social justice, a belief in the possibilities of education and human action, and a deep commitment to democracy” (Lindeman, n.d.). The early credit union movement had these same concerns and had already been organizing under these ideals since the first credit union was chartered in New Hampshire in 1909. By 1920, Edward Filene and Roy Bergengren, known in the credit union movement as the “dynamic duo,” had 19 credit unions up and running in Massachusetts, all operating on cooperative principles (People not Profit, 2005). It
makes sense that the Credit Union Development Educator training program is in alignment with Lindeman's assumptions about the adult learner since Lindeman was philosophically aligned with the early credit union movement. This paper esteems the CUDE program as a high quality training program based on learner-centered, activity-based, andragogical principles that are well known in academic circles to be the most effective methods of teaching adults.

The fact that the Credit Union Development Educator training program is also a transformational learning experience should have the credit union movement celebrating because we are living in ever-changing times and transformational learning involves becoming reflective, more open, less defensive, more questioning, and more creative in problem solving. The CUDE graduates come away with a new knowledge and a new perspective about handling global credit union development issues such as education, access to credit, employment, technology, democracy, housing, health, income generation, savings mobilization, and women in development. It is important to differentiate such unique and meaningful training programs in a world flooded with professional development programs that are neither professional nor developmental.

**Author's Note**
I write about the Credit Union Development Educator training program from a participant's point of view, as I am a graduate of the fall 2012 CUDE class (the best class ever!). I also write about this experience from an adult educator and facilitator's point of view. I have been teaching adults and facilitating education in the credit union movement since 2005. Lastly, I write about CUDE from a life-long learner's point of view. I have been attending classes most of my adult life. I have an Associate’s degree, a Bachelors degree, and an M.B.A. I am four classes away from a M.Ed. in Adult Education and also have also earned numerous industry specific-designations over the course of my career. I compare the Credit Union Development Educator training program experience with MANY other educational opportunities and trainings. On all accounts, it is an exceptional program. CynCampbell - Twitter

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Learning to swim outside the fishbowl: A perspective on Transformative Learning through reflective writing

Karen C. Vessier, M.Ed.⁶

Abstract

This paper is a discussion of key components of transformative learning that can be developed over time through reflective writing. The position presented is the intensity of thought, which can occur in reflective writing. This intensity of thought can be developed into a habit of the mind of the individual for the development of a shift of consciousness related to the self towards a worldview in the act of transformative learning. This shift in consciousness includes metaconsciousness of both the logical and affective approaches to changing perspectives within the individual. Through the engagement of reflective writing, the individual enters into a more enlightened environment of discovery about the self. This environment is likened to looking at the self and the self’s relationship within the world by viewing the self from the outside inward. Applications of reflective writing with the intent for transformative learning to occur are discussed within primary and secondary school and medical/nursing education.

The human being is complex in the many ways it develops over a life time. Through the intricate brain of the individual human being, the world environment is perceived and re-perceived constantly in a lifetime. The brain speeds information through its neurons at a speed of several hundred miles per hour (Ferrini & Ferrini, 2008). Through this perceiving ability, the human learns. Even though the human brain has such an enormous capacity to perceive information, there are multiple contributing factors that seem to influence the learning process. These factors may include the level of health, developmental age, social conditions, and past experiences of the individual to name a few. With the current world of increasing technology allowing instant communication between individuals and the immense perception ability of the individual’s mind, does the individual learn how to learn deeply? In other words, does the individual capitalize on resources to increase their perception of personal relationship and meanings of the self living within the world? Is the individual being ‘schooled’ to be more mindful of their worldviews and allow personal transformation to occur in the consciousness? Does the individual develop through deeply held learning or transformative learning?

Personal transformation involves the individual experiences that one may draw upon to examine critically one’s assumptions and values through individual experience, critical reflection and dialogue (Taylor, 2009). Similarly, Langer (1997) noted “A mindful approach to any activity has three characteristics: the continuous creation of new categories; openness to new information; and an implicit awareness of more than one perspective” (p. 4). Reflection and openness to new perspectives seem to be themes of the individual moving through transformative learning. This deep, value-laden reflection can be likened to one viewing the self by examining the self from the outside inward toward both the rational and the affective self to derive new meaningfulness in relation to the self and to the world. A picturesque symbol would be seeing a fish swimming outside its fishbowl to understand better its relationship within the fishbowl. This paper

⁶R.N., M.S., M.Ed., UCO Nursing Faculty. Transformative learning has been enhanced through deliberate reflective writing assignments done both in class and out of class. The intent of the questions asked of the students is to help the student achieve more in-depth awareness of the self as a nurse in relation to the patient in that selected moment and ‘capture’ the transformative learning consciously. The goal is for the student to bring an increased awareness of self to the nurse/patient relationship through seeking their own and patient perspectives of experiencing the concept of caring.
addresses the concept of transformative learning and the use of reflective writing to enhance the opportunity for the individual to examine their self from the outside looking inward and experiencing transformative learning.

**Transformative Learning**

One approach to understanding transformative learning is to view most learning as occurring in an outside awareness arena. However, transformational learning occurs in the individual’s internal awareness arena (Mezirow as cited in Dirkx & Mezirow, 2006). Though the ‘outside’ learning is important, it is the ‘inside’ learning that changes individuals’ perception of their worldview and their relationship to the world in a deeply felt manner. Elias (as cited in Dirkx & Mezirow, 2006) noted that transformative learning can be regarded as the expansion of consciousness. This inner learning can be described as spiritual endeavor (Hart as cited in Dencev & Collister, 2010). Dirkx (as cited in Dirkx & Mezirow, 2006) described further that transformative learning occurs with the discovery of the presence of the soul. This internal work process (and some would say spiritual process) of an individual is a process of steps identified by Mezirow (as cited in Dirkx & Mezirow, 2006):

1. recognition that an alternative way of understanding may provide new insights into a problem;
2. context awareness of the sources, nature, and consequences of an established belief;
3. critical reflection of the established belief’s supporting epistemic assumptions;
4. validating a new belief by an empirical test of the truth of its claims, when feasible. Or by a broad-based, continuing, discursive assessment of its justification to arrive at a tentative best judgment;
5. coping with anxiety over the consequences of taking action; and
6. taking reflective action on the validated belief. (p. 124).

Recognizing that transformative learning is a process seems to be a key point for educators and teachers to better enhance the potential for transformative learning to occur in their learners. One issue may be the perception of human development (Haswell, 1993). Academic disciplines tend to be more “…logical, system-bound, nonemotional, and foundational” (Haswell, 1993, p. 93). In this perception of human development, progress within the discipline is viewed as development. But, the development of expertise in a discipline is a narrow view of the whole person development. Rather, “[d]uring healthy development spanning a lifetime, one eventually reflects critically on his or her expertise, viewing that expertise from the perspective of other domains and life interests” (Haswell, 1993, p. 93). Supporting this view of development, Taylor (2009) noted that transformational learning included the elements of holistic orientation, awareness of context and an authentic practice. If the role of educators and teachers is to develop an individual, then the educator and teacher must give critical thought to how they understand the development of others.

As the educator or teacher leans towards transformative learning there is a discernment of approaching the learner as a holistic being. This discernment includes the emphasis
on personal transformation and growth or even the broader approach of development of the individual on both the personal and the social transformation such as seen in Paulo Freire’s work (Taylor, 2009). Ultimately, transformative learning requires the learner to critically reflect on various experiences. The critical reflection then becomes integrated with the experience to move the individual towards a new perspective – a transformative learning moment (Taylor, 2009). Educators and teachers sensitive to transformative learning and desiring transformative learning opportunities in their learners may use methods to increase the potential for transformative learning to occur. One method is reflective writing.

**Reflective writing**

Writing is a method of communication used by human beings from the time of writing with cave pictures of early humans through the centuries and many generations of development till the present time. Methods may have changed with the increasing use of new discoveries in technology, but the intent is still the same – to impart information to others or self. Over the centuries the world has been interpreted to make meaning of anything with the writing being so intimately associated with thinking and the thinking so intimately associated with reading (Silverman & Rader, 2003). One method of capturing intimate thinking is through reflective writing. During reflective writing one expresses their understanding of their learning and of things that happen. During this action, the learner begins “to construct the meaning of what they did” and “[t]hrough the writing, something is discovered that was not clearly seen before” (Waluconis, 1993, p. 15). Eaton and Pougiales (1993) note further that the intent of education, particularly college education, is not only learning the specific information within a discipline but also for the learner to understand their own relationship with its strengths and weaknesses within the selected discipline and life. Reflective writing can be viewed as the learner standing back and reflecting on their personal understanding and thoughts in a metaconsciousness manner (Haswell, 1993).

Metaconsciousness seems to be a parallel meaning to the phrase transformative learning or the deep internal learning felt on a personal level by the individual. It can be likened to the reading of the explanatory words placed in the parentheses in writings. These ‘extra’ explanatory or descriptive words add breadth to the understanding of the reader. The context of the writing can be better clarified with the words in the parentheses. Likewise, reflective writing skills can add breadth and clarified understanding to the learner of their personal shift in positions. Diaries, as an example, have provided immense insight to the thinking patterns of persons who lived in the present and past. Early school-aged children can even be taught to engage in reflective writing. One teacher, who learned the value of reflective writing while traveling, brought the concept into her second-grade classroom. This teacher initiated quiet writing time and asked the following simple questions for the children to better observe and think on things. The questions are listed as the following:

- What is important to you?
- What have you noticed lately?
- What are you wondering about?

A pattern noted by this teacher was the development of the student to reflect on values such as compassion, fairness and the more detailed observation of the things in the world. Silverman and Rader (2003) described writing as having both logical and emotional components, though the emotional component is often overlooked. These
authors identify writers such as Franz Kafka, Emily Dickinson, Pablo Neruda as writing from their varied styles because it made them feel good. Writing, therefore, “…can be rewarding, refreshing, rejuvenating” and “[w]e learn about others and ourselves through writing because writing is simultaneously self-exploration and self-examination. We see ourselves in a larger context” (Silverman & Rader, 2003, p. 9). Transformative learning through the development of reflective writing skills allows the learner to use the writing medium to expand the individual view of themselves within the world and reconstruct held views into deeper and more meaningful connections of the self to the world society.

Another teacher of secondary level learners initiated a writing program to engage students in reflecting on their own writing. The teacher implanted a mixed method during the first few weeks of school with three goals: “(1) to help students become writers who examined their writing more deeply; (2) to connect the students to their writing and create a sense of ownership through the process of reflection; and (3) to create a productive problem for students stemming from a surplus of high-quality pieces that would result from the process of reflection and from which students could choose for inclusion in their writing portfolios” (Greene, 2011, p. 90). The design of this program included the learner being placed in a position of self-reflection and decision-making on their own writings. Thus, the student may better expand their own understanding of what they are thinking and why.

In both of these lower schools (primary and secondary) the individual development of the frames of references of the individual are challenged while increasing the ability of the individual to develop better habits of thinking. These habits of thinking go beyond superficial thinking into more of the affective thinking process inclusion. By changing the habits of the mind, a more critical thinking and critical self-reflection approach can be developed (Epstein as cited in Wald & Reis, 2010; Kitchenham, 2008). Duhigg (2012) states “…unless you deliberately fight a habit – unless you find new routines – the pattern will unfold automatically” (p. 20). Therefore, the use of developing reflective writing by attentive educators and teachers in learners can enhance the ability of the learner to embrace reflective writing as a method to more deeply understand their self in reaching constructive transformative learning moments.

**Developing reflection in healthcare disciplines**

Though reflective writing can be developed in the early grades and secondary level grades as shown earlier, the gap of learners developing reflective writing skills can be initiated within the disciplines. One discipline is the collective roles that provide healthcare within our society. The various healthcare roles, such as physician, nurse, physical therapist, and others are steeped in scientific education, which leans toward the logical approach to understanding the human condition, yet performs care in an environment involving much of the cared-for persons’ physical, emotional, and spiritual responses to their health care needs. In a limited review of literature, a few examples of the inclusion of reflective writing (or reflective journaling) was found that attempted to strengthen a healthcare student’s habit of reflection on the self and their frames of reference for deconstruction or reconstruction of thinking patterns.

The conditions enabling transformative learning moments to occur can be facilitated. Though the presence of transformative moments cannot be guaranteed by facilitative actions, it is the possibility for it to happen that is important (Dencev & Collister, 2010). It involves a shift in consciousness in deep encounters that touch a person’s soul (Dencev & Collister, 2010). The medical education program at Brown University includes reflective writing as ‘interactive reflective writing’ with the medical student
receiving guided feedback from interdisciplinary faculty to “foster development of reflective capacity, extend empathy with deepened understanding of patients’ experience of illness, and promote practitioner well-being” (Wald & Reis, 2010, p. 746). Charon (as cited in Wald & Reis, 2010) calls reflective writing in medicine narrative medicine. In this approach the practitioner develops habits enabling “competence to recognize, absorb, interpret, and be moved by stories of illness…” (Charon as cited in Wald & Reis, 2010, p. 746). Out of this reflective writing intervention the BEGAN (The Brown Educational Guide to the Analysis of Narrative) was implemented (Wald & Reis, 2010; Reis, Wald, Monroe, & Borkan, 2010). One item of interest with the BEGAN method is the inclusion of ongoing faculty feedback. By developing the skill of reflective writing (or reflective capacity) a greater degree of expertise is developed beyond experience.

In addition, studies have shown reflective writing can help to prevent compassion fatigue, burnout and alienation (Shapiro as cited in Reis, Wald, Monroe, & Borkan, 2010). Another study demonstrated reflective writing increasing diagnostic accuracy and minimizing error (Mamade, Schmidt, & Rikers as cited in Reis, Wald, Monroe, & Borkan, 2010). A reflection rubric was developed as follows to assist in providing feedback to the medical student: “(1) Non-reflective: habitual action (unsatisfactory); (2) non-reflective: thoughtful action (needs improvement); (3) reflective (competent); (4) critically reflective (exceeds competence); and (5) transformative learning (exceptional)” (Wald, Reis, & Borkan, 2009, p. 1110). Thus, the development of self-reflection through reflective writing methods has far-reaching consequences for the betterment of both the individual’s perspective of self within the world and healthcare outcomes.

Nursing, another healthcare discipline, also is leaning more and more towards the utilization of reflective writing to assist the nursing student in deeper understandings and expanded perspectives towards patient care. Disappointingly, a literature review study found no identified factors to facilitate reflective thinking skills among nursing students. The same literature review study found undergraduate nursing students mainly wrote at lower levels of reflection but could write at higher levels (Epp, 2008). One note of encouragement is that nurse educators have found reflective writing improves over time (Epp, 2008). Also, Wong et al. (as cited in Epp, 2008) found nurse conversations and post-conference type discussions were instrumental in developing reflective thinking. However, Epp (2008) does identify a paucity of research in reflective writing in nursing. Even so, one must conclude, if reflective writing has merit in physician and nursing education, then other healthcare disciplines may benefit from this individual habit of thinking, if not already incorporating reflective writing in their curriculum. The goal may include the development of a more mindful person in the healthcare discipline and other disciplines.

Conclusion

In conclusion, transformative learning is a deep internal type of learning that moves the learner into new perspectives concerning their self in relation to the social world around them. One method available to encourage transformative learning is the use of reflective writing. Through reflective writing skill development, the individual creates a habit of thinking that goes much deeper than superficial issues. This habit of thinking can move the individual to a shift in consciousness. However, this shift in consciousness leading to transformative learning requires the individual to view their self by looking at the self from the outside inward to better discern the true interrelationship between their self and their world environment. Reflective writing can be used as a boat for the individual to navigate outside their normal environment and examine new perspectives of their world (including their discipline) like a fish learning to swim outside their fishbowl world and peer inside – a transformative learning moment for sure.
In a pencil
Noisy words yell for attention
And quiet words wait their turn.

Barbara Ebsensen, “Pencils” (as cited in Carr, 1999)

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Assessing the process of becoming a scientist

Chris Austin, Ph.D., Amanda Nichols, Ph.D., and David Lowry, Ph.D.

Abstract

Assessing the process of becoming a scientist can serve as a template to training future professionals in any area. The analysis of what it means to be a scientist, or any professional, can point educators and students to the appropriate direction of learning. Recognizing what our students know and building upon that knowledge is key. Students must be taught a way of independent thinking, not just the facts of their area. Redish calls this the “hidden curriculum” (2003). Assessment templates of this transformation are discussed in reference to the scientific method and student surveys, namely the Maryland Physics Expectations (MPEX) Survey.

(Maryland Physics Education Research Group, 2001)

What does it mean to be a scientist?

What does it mean to be a scientist? A scientist is not a smart person who stays locked up in a basement performing experiments, but being a scientist is a way of thinking about the physical world. A scientist has a method of analyzing or solving problems. It is important that we ask and answer the “what does it mean to be a” question no matter the area that we are teaching. If we do not know what it means to be a scientist, an English graduate, an accountant, then we will not train students that are ready for the challenges that await them post-graduation.

An easy demonstration of the scientific thinking process is to ask the audience to light a light bulb using only a light bulb, battery, and wire (McDermott, 1996). Most groups initially struggled, but they eventually were able to light the bulb using the scientific method. Participants observed that the bulb did not light. They developed an explanation (hypothesis) to explain this observation. They then made an unsaid prediction followed by an experiment. If the bulb did not light, they repeated the process until the bulb lit.

This demonstration shows students come in with some prior knowledge. This is true whether we are talking about a general education science class or a senior level science major class. If we can take what they already know and build on it, then we make instruction easier. We need to understand where students are in their formative educational journey and build on that.

Too often we as educators have focused upon summative measurements of students’ learning while ignoring the assessment of the processes associated with maturing and becoming a professional. When we look at Purdue’s Engineer of 2020 Target Attributes (McGlothlin), we do not see much assessment of student development. We notice the identifiable program learning outcomes. There is little or no indication of the developmental processes that takes place in learners’ minds. There is little indication if the students achieved what we want, what they knew when they entered the program, or what was learned along the path. Sadly, few if any assessment models actually include the assessment of the concurrent process by which a student is transformed from a naïve
learner to scholar. Assessments mostly focus on the finished product. We want to
discuss the assessment of the formative process.

Learning theories and models

Two models of learning would appear to be helpful to those who study transformative
learning. They are Malcolm Knowles’ Theory of Andragogy (1968; Knowles, Holton, &
Swanson, 2005) and James Marcia’s (1966) Identity Status Theory. Though both have been
topics of study and research for some time, each has qualities that make them uniquely
useful.

Andragogy is best thought of as a set of pedagogic practices designed to engage adult
learners. Knowles published his first article in 1968. These practices range from teacher-
directed classroom instructional practices to student-directed/interactive learning
activities. The theory posits six assumptions that relate to the motivation of adult
learners. Some of these include the important of experience, understanding the reasons
behind learning, focusing upon problem-centered activities, and the encouraging of self-
responsibility. All told, the assumptions represent the notion that adult learners are best
motivated to learn when they engage and interact with subject matter rather than
traditional methods of listening and reflecting upon instruction. As a theory of learning,
instructors are encouraged to appeal to the student’s affective domain to become a self-
directed learner.

Marcia’s Identity Status Theory is an extension of the self-identity work of the famous
psychologist Erik Erikson. Marcia’s studies of adolescent behavior and personality
development caused him to note the importance of a healthy self-identity in an
adolescent’s adjustment to adulthood. As an adapted theory of learning, it suggests that
students are best motivated to learn as their personalities self-identify with the subject
matter before them. For instance, as students in engineering begin to self-identify as
engineers, they begin to see more relevance to instructional materials they perceive as
necessary for their avocation. Using this model, the job of an instructor is to encourage
her students in this task of self-identity.

The hidden curriculum

The goal of any science program is to produce graduates that are able to think like a
scientist. Helping develop this line of thinking is part of the “hidden curriculum” of
science (Redish, 2003). No matter the subject there is a hidden curriculum. There are
facts that are taught from the textbook, but there is something deeper for the students to
learn. There is the process of turning the student from a naïve learner into the finished
product. It is important to understand that students in classes are at different stages of
development regarding the hidden curriculum. When a student takes a general science
class there is no illusions of turning these students into doctoral science candidates.
These students should leave the class with a deeper knowledge than general facts about
volcanoes or earthquakes, for example. Students should leave the class with an
understanding and hopefully an appreciation, of the way scientists think. Students often
come into these general education classes with negative attitudes towards science due to
prior experiences. Getting students to appreciate or understand the scientific process is
accomplished by giving the students active learning activities where they develop their
own scientific tests. The level of these scientific tests is certainly not at the level of a
freshman science major, but we as teachers need to understand that different students
are at different places of their formative development in this hidden curriculum.

A freshman level science major is different from a general science student. A freshmen
science major has chosen to do science as their career, so that means they have internal
motivation that general science students do not have. It is important to understand that these freshmen science students are early in their formative process. Activities need to focus on both the book knowledge and also to enhance the hidden curriculum of scientific thinking. Typically, students perform “cookbook labs” where they follow instructions from beginning to end to get a result. To enhance the hidden curriculum, we should ask thought-provoking questions at the end of the lab that cannot simply be answered by opening their textbook or using the Internet. These questions lay the scientific problem-solving foundation that students will later build upon with further scientific development. These questions eventually turn into the students developing their own experiment. The students take a lab practical at the end of the year where there is a problem for the students to solve, and very little help is given for how they should solve it. Therefore, there is a slow progression of building this hidden curriculum into the freshmen level physics class, and the students never consciously know this is happening. The students at the end of the two-semester sequence are now at a different level of their scientific growth than when they began.

As the student progresses in their major, we continue building on this hidden curriculum. The idea of how this is accomplished is the same whether we are talking about our freshmen general science students versus our senior majors. The difference comes in the complexity of what we ask of the students. The key to developing this hidden curriculum is knowing where students are in their formative process and not asking them to accomplish things that are beyond their ability. While we want to challenge the students to the edge of their ability, going beyond their ability leads to frustration and negatively impacts the learning ability.

This idea about a hidden curriculum is not unique to physics but will be true in other subjects. The instructor needs to determine what that hidden curriculum is, how to teach it, and how to assess it. How the hidden curriculum is assessed is the problem. Typically, students are assessed for “book knowledge,” but everyone would say that their curriculum goes beyond the book. Assessing the hidden curriculum will indicate where students are in their journey to the finished product.

Formative assessment

While it is important to accomplish the task of transforming students into scientists, a practical assessment needs to be developed. The standard assessment process might serve as a starting point in assessing this transformative process. First, the program mission and goals must be created. Each goal can be measured by identifying a student learning outcome that is specific in the program. An outcome/course alignment matrix can be created to measure these student learning outcomes. Finally, it is important to figure out what worked and alter future plans to improve student learning.

Participants suggested specific practical ways to assess the transformative process. Writing and discussions can reveal if students are transforming into professionals. Pre/post tests and surveys might also be used as tools to assess this process.

The stages of assessment might be based upon the scientific method when the goal is transforming naïve learners to a professional scientist. The four levels of a typical college student (freshmen, sophomores, juniors, and seniors) can be used as four stages of assessment. The first stage is what we hope freshmen can accomplish after a year of science classes: learning how to make good observations and form good hypotheses. Next, sophomores should not only build upon their skills of observation and hypothesizing, but they should also be able to design a simple experiment and collect data. Experimental design can be quite complex so this skill is further developed in the
third and fourth levels leading up to an advanced experimental design that is done independently. This final level prepares students for graduate or professional schools. The Maryland Physics Expectations (MPEX) Survey is an excellent example of a survey that assesses the thinking of naive learners transforming into physicists. This survey is centered on the attitudes, beliefs, and expectations of students in a physics course. The Maryland Physics Education Research Group “hypothesize[s] that students who become effective scientists and life-long learners either have or will develop these attitudes” (2001). The survey is administrated at the beginning and end of a course to see if there is a shift in thinking of students. Are students thinking more like a scientist at the end of the class? A similar survey for chemistry courses (CHEMX) has been developed, as well (Grove, 2007). Similar surveys could be developed for other fields. Measuring a shift in thinking is not the only way to assess the transformative process. Developing assignments and exams that have questions that reflect students’ understanding, as opposed to simply testing textbook answers, would help assess the transformative process. These assignments and exams can require students to solve a problem to see how they approach the problem. A transformed student will approach a problem independent of the instructor.

Conclusion

Training students in the science classroom, at any level, to think more like a scientist transforms the learning of these students. These students can think independently, not just blindly following instructions. John Platt was concerned about this transformation of science students when he described how we, as educators, want “problem-oriented” students that through various attempts can figure out the problem as opposed to students who follow a “method” and cannot always solve a problem (1964, p. 348). Training students with the hidden curriculum is the future of good professional scientists. As Platt wrote, “In every field and in every laboratory, we need to try to formulate multiple alternative hypotheses sharp enough to be capable of disproof” (1964, p. 351). Instructors guide students in this transformation by giving students opportunities to think independently on assignments, labs, exams, and the like. The assessment of this formative process can reveal if this transformation has taken place. The process of transforming students to think like a professional should be done in every subject. This is the only way to ensure our students are ready for their life after college.

References


http://www.physics.umd.edu/perg/expects/usempex.htm


Transformative Learning and consciousness

Jerome Delmar Spurlin III

In its essence, Transformative Learning is a theoretically-based educational method. For this reason, many different concepts of its practice or implementation are in existence, each with its own corresponding interpretation of the original theory. In the 1970s, Jack Mezirow formulated an innovative concept of adult learning with significant influences and groundings in cognitive and developmental psychology (Dirkx, 1998). His theory not only explains a type of learning on a more inclusive and meaningful level, but it also provides insight into an outcome of adult learning: development (Taylor, 1998). Development, within the theory of Transformative Learning, is evident in very specific abilities that are acquired by learners over time. These abilities enable and capacitate learners such that they are equipped with the tools necessary to (for example) fully participate in a democracy and meet performance goals in the modern day workforce (Mezirow 1997). Mezirow, speaking of a Department of Labor report outlining key attributes in a worker of the 21st century, said this:

The common presumption in these lists is that the essential learning required to prepare a productive and responsible worker for the twenty-first century must empower the individual to think as an autonomous agent in a collaborative context rather than to uncritically act on the received ideas and judgments of others. Workers will have to become autonomous, socially responsible thinkers. (Mezirow, 1997, p. 8)

The example of the workforce, is one of the ways development can take shape. One should also recognize that education or “learning,” as stated above, is more than traditional subject matter proficiency; it is also the development of a refined awareness of self and of others within a broad, flexible way of thinking. The theory of Transformative Learning outlines, in extensive detail, the mental, emotional and cognitive structures that are directly related to this kind of development. It also offers explanation into educational practices and processes that serve as triggers or as a catalyst for recognition, understanding and justification of these internal components within all learners. In consideration of the emphasis and focus of Transformative Learning theory on certain aspects of the human mind, it is my opinion that ‘development’ is the evolving transformation of one’s consciousness such that is reflectively aware.

Central to Mezirow’s theory of Transformative Learning is experience or the experiences that we encounter day to day. How we perceive and interpret our experiences determine the meaning we accept, if any, as knowledge for living through future experiences. Mezirow calls this process, making meaning (Mezirow, 1990). This process involves facets of the human psyche that are inherently mental, cognitive and emotional. These structures for making meaning constitute what Mezirow refers to as one’s frame of reference, which can also be labeled world-view, paradigm, or point of reference (Taylor, 1998). It is the change or transformation in how we as both students and humans grasp meaning from our experiences (in our frames of reference) that determines the level of development we obtain.

The frame of reference is formed at an early age “uncritically acquired in childhood through the process of socialization, often in the context of an emotionally charged relationship with parents, teachers, or other mentors” (Mezirow, 1990, p. 1). We unconsciously formulate generalized assumptions and presuppositions for how the
world works and develop (depending on the emotional potency of early relationships) deeply embedded expectations, both of which make up the foundation of the knowledge we use to interpret our experiences throughout the stages of development in life that lead us into adulthood and old age. Our frame of reference also consists of perceptual filters that determine conditioned responses and reactions to certain stimuli. It is where we establish our value judgments, belief systems, way of understanding, use of knowledge, goal orientations, and way of dealing with feelings about oneself. In the case of experiences that require a plan of future action, the frame of reference is where that plan is assimilated. Formulation of a plan of action is arguably the most critical component in frame of reference in that it directly reflects the development addressed earlier (reflective awareness will be discussed below). Mezirow’s theory of transformative learning focuses heavily on creating, in the learner, a greater awareness of the perspectives and premises we carry and how they form our frame of reference. Often times it is our unintentionally learned assumptions and perspectives that can contribute to the formation of a limited world-view that is counterproductive to true ‘development’ in any area of learning and in any type of relationship with others. “These assumptions constrain us, making our view of the world subjective, often distorting our thoughts and perceptions. They are like a double-edged sword whereby they give meaning (validation) to our experiences, but at the same time skew our reality” (Taylor 1998, p. 7).

Transformative Learning theory suggests that a new or renewed awareness of our frames of reference and of our internal structures for making meaning can help to create permeability and inclusiveness in these areas which in turn change how we perceive and interpret our experiences in a fashion “which guides subsequent understanding, appreciation and action” (Mezirow, 1990, p. 1). It is common to consciously and cognitively access prior knowledge that rests on the frames of reference we previously acquired when encountering an experience that leads us to formulate a plan of action. Mezirow asserts that without calling into question the knowledge itself by asking how it was learned, why it is valid, and upon what assumptions it rests, one can only assume a sole plan of action; while losing all opportunities of finding a different, broader perspective of the experience that can lead to an understanding of the experience in addition to the plan of action. Accessing prior knowledge, for the purposes of problem solving/avoidance or for gaining understanding, has two completely different outcomes in terms of what is gained from the experience. Real ‘learning’ according to Transformative Learning theory is inclusive of both outcomes.

Clarification and validation of this concept can be seen through the lens of the Hermeneutic perspective on learning in a formal educational environment. Peter Ashworth, in his review of Hermeneutics, outlines and expounds on the argument that learning is accomplished through and by the current knowledge already possessed by the student:

One immediate consequence of this fact is that the prior understanding of the learner is of prime importance. Thereafter, the interpretive activity of the learner involves an approach to the material from an already-structured standpoint – not only cognitively, but in every relevant respect. In effect, the meaning of the novelty of the new thing to be learned is to be seen in the context of the learner’s lifeworld.

(Ashworth 2004, p. 1)

Put another way:

Interpretation depends on standpoint, and the meaning ‘of something’ has to be in terms of the relevance of the thing to the interpreter (or learner). So the person approaching a new area of experience does not somehow abandon their presuppositions and understand the area in its own terms and from...
Going back to Mezirow’s idea of development being the outcome of Transformative Learning, it can now be clearly seen that learning in both a traditional and non-traditional educational environment should be inclusive of subject matter mastery, performance improvement as it relates to problem solving, and understanding which is “a grasp of the ‘principle’ of the thing being interpreted, the parts and the whole begin to relate to each other in meaning” (Ashworth, 2004). Also apparent is the direct link between understanding (the experience at hand) and the awareness of one’s own presuppositions that make-up their acquired frame of reference. This is where the involvement of consciousness is relevant. Perspective Transformation is what Mezirow labels the process of changing our frames of reference to those that lends themselves to gaining understanding and beneficial meaning-making through critical reflection and rational discourse (Taylor, 1998). The avenue of critical reflection, however, can be reconstructed as an idea by awarding more significance to the dimension of time as an essential element in the ‘development’ outcome addressed earlier.

An alternate explanation of critical reflection can be seen from the standpoint of a learned cognitive ability/skill which serves as a necessary element within the ‘developed’ mind (a requisite for developed perceiving and interpreting which, in theory, is developed consciousness); and less as a voluntary practice that is triggered from time to time. As we move through time from one moment to the next moment, consciousness functions as the “automatic, unprompted, undeduced sense of self as protagonist of the experience, no matter how subtle the self sense may be” (Damasio, 2010). It is the knowledge of a self which is oriented to an existence (situations, events, things) that surrounds the self. In short, it is a permanent awareness of self. The successful implementation of Perspective Transformation theory, however, can result in the development of a reflective, permanent awareness of self; a consciousness that is simply aware of self is transformed into a consciousness that is now reflectively aware of self. Critical Reflection in terms of how is defined in the theory of Transformative Learning as the process of “questioning the integrity of assumptions and beliefs based on prior experience” (Taylor, 1998). We devote attention to our world-view in examination where we may discover limitations or distortions of cultural and psychological content. Through the acknowledgement of these mainly subjective misconceptions, we can become sensitive or privy to alternate perspectives of a logical, ethical, ideological, social, economic, political, ecological, and spiritual nature (Taylor, 1998). This in turn can possibly lead to a change in perspective, world-view, or one’s frame of reference. Critical reflection is essential in that it would be most beneficial if integrated into consciousness, into conscious thinking or awareness day to day. A mind or consciousness that is reflectively aware through Transformative Learning and Perspective Transformation theory is better equipped to process inclusive and permeable meaning-making because the acceptance of the possibility that an experience could result in the adoption of a new perspective is permanently present. Reflective awareness constitutes the desired outcome of Transformative Learning (development) while establishing beneficial and positive results from experiences:

The big-scope kind I call extended or autobiographical consciousness, given that it manifests itself most powerfully when a substantial part of one’s life comes into play and both the lived past and the anticipated future dominate the proceedings. It is about both personhood and identity. It is presided over by an autobiographical self.

(Ashworth 2004, p. 3)

(Damasio 2010, p. 179)
Exposure to different world-views, perspectives, and frames of reference can occur through a number of circumstances. Mezirow argues that the effective learning necessary to guide development is largely accomplished through rational discourse, participatory learning through social interaction, or diplomatic and objective dialogue.

Rational discourse not only exposes one to other views with varying degrees of likeness and opposition to our own, it also “becomes the medium for critical reflection to be put into action, where experience is reflected upon and assumptions and beliefs are questioned, and where meaning schemes and meaning structures are ultimately transformed” (Taylor, 1998). Experience itself becomes the subject matter for the participants to engage in a socially interactive, unified pursuit of ‘understanding.’ It can also be viewed as an educational practice in adult learning whereby we practice collaborative learning in a formal environment. The hermeneutic perspective also supports the connection between good learning and the participation or contribution of others. Referring to dialogue and to a theory that each individual has their own perspective of the world (or in fact lives in their own), Ashworth suggests:

> In order to engage in ‘learning-laden’ interaction, then, certain presuppositions are necessary, which include the implicit, lived ‘belief’ that the participants in the learning exchange are competent human beings whose worlds of understanding are open to each other since they share at least certain baseline meanings with each other. In effect, the learning proffered by the other will arouse in us certain possibilities, so that we are able to see that our life-world could hold out meaning (and maybe does) that are similar to those which they describe.

(Ashworth 2004, p. 6)

The very act itself of engaging in objective dialogue is seen as evidence of ‘development’ by some due to the focus required for mutual understanding among participants rather than becoming distracted by arguing points of view. If conducted under the proper conditions that are solely guided for objectivity and understanding, dialogue serves as a platform where moral values are “legitimized” (Mezirow, 1997). An example is its use in very pivotal arenas such as political pursuits of diplomacy where the consensus of important moral values (conflict resolution, peace, justice) could have a far-reaching impact on whole societies. Discourse, as Mezirow explains, is where transformation can take place and where critical reflection can be practiced and developed into an irreversible reflective awareness or expanded consciousness.

Transformative Learning theory provides the foundation for a radical but necessary change in the adult educational realm. It prepares and develops individuals to embrace their individuality in terms of their psychological, cultural, and mental attributes, which in turn creates room for irreversible positive change in these areas. Transformation theory in this respect sets a new standard for learning and education in that learners obtain more than concrete associations with formal concepts. Students and learners embrace ‘understanding’ which is a more meaningful and efficient level of comprehension and familiarity with subject matter and/or their day-to-day experiences. The whole of a person is involved and participates in learning with this concentration and focus, and it is for this reason, alone, that I strongly assert the apparent connection of Transformation theory to the phenomenon of consciousness. The outcome truly is ‘development’ but can also evolve to a new standard of living (perceiving, interpreting, and thinking in general). That, undoubtedly, is true autonomy and social agency because one has validated critically assessed perspectives that are inherently responsible, permeable, and objective.
References


A college “Learn by Doing” ideas picnic: Faculty-led faculty development for authentic instruction

Cathy Cavanaugh, Ph.D., and Jace Hargis, Ph.D.9

Abstract

To expand experiential learning in career-preparation college degree programs, the college system in the United Arab Emirates launched a Learn by Doing (LbD) initiative to amplify experiential learning. This article describes a campus LbD faculty development program and outcomes at the start of the initiative. Faculty shared LbD approaches in a community event and documented integration of new approaches into course designs. Their LbD approaches were reviewed using Newmann’s rubrics for authentic instruction as an indicator of the levels of higher order thinking, connection to the world beyond the classroom, and depth of knowledge present in the newly adopted activities.

For graduates of career-preparation colleges to succeed as professionals and leaders, they need to develop specific expertise required in their fields as well as broad habits of mind for success in the workplace. In rapidly-developing countries, expanding economies, and evolving professions, colleges are expected to provide practical skills that serve current and future workforce needs. Thus, experiential learning in higher education has become a quest for many universities as they realize the necessity of creating ‘practice-ready’ graduates. The college system in the United Arab Emirates (UAE) that prepares professionals and leaders for the national workforce is the Higher Colleges of Technology (HCT), which recently renewed its commitment to these practical skills by emphasizing learning by doing and experiential learning. The HCT Chancellor at the time, His Excellency Sheikh Nahayan Mabarak Al Nahayan, Minister of Higher Education and Scientific Research, charged leaders and faculty as follows:

HCT’s future plans and programs will stress more than ever before the practical, applied nature of our institution. Those programs will highlight our traditional approach to educating our students, that is, ‘Learning by Doing’

(2012)

The Learning by Doing (LbD) initiative is an approach to education in which students acquire essential knowledge and skills through active, self-reflective engagement with the world inside the classroom and beyond. This paper outlines the efforts of one the

9 Dr. Cavanaugh is the Associate Director at the Higher Colleges of Technology Abu Dhabi Women’s College. Dr. Cavanaugh has published widely on e-learning and has received awards for this work. She served as Fulbright Senior Scholar to Nepal in 2011. She has a B.A. in education, a M.Ed. and a Ph.D. in curriculum and instruction specializing in distance education. Dr. Jace Hargis is the Director of the Abu Dhabi Women’s College in the Higher Colleges of Technology in the United Arab Emirates. Previously, he was an Assistant Provost and Director for the Center for Teaching and Learning at the University of the Pacific in California. He has authored a textbook, an anthology and has published over seventy academic articles as well as offered over one hundred national and international academic presentations. Our work in faculty development and new learning environments transforms learning by preparing educators to teach actively with innovative tools and techniques. We also lead expeditionary learning that transforms student conceptions of their capabilities by challenging them to learn far beyond the campus.
HCT’s largest campuses, located in the national capital city, to advance the LbD goal beginning with a college-wide faculty development event. The structure of the event, the LbD approaches shared, and the impacts of the event in the following semester are described as a case of college-wide peer-led faculty development focused on student-centered active teaching practices.

The main topics addressed are transforming college teaching to be more authentic and experiential and informal faculty development to reduce transactional distance and focus on ideas.

Related literature

Developing complex, higher-order professional skills depends on a more varied approach to teaching than has been used by many college faculty. Shifts in teaching philosophies, and practices result from professional learning that attends to job-embedded content, context, and design for improving teaching and learning (Darling-Hammond & Richardson, 2009). First, the content of professional learning experiences must emphasize the active pedagogical skills to teach college courses (Wenglinsky, 2000). Second, professional learning is most effective when it is facilitated as a whole-college initiative in a collaborative and collegial learning environment that develops communities of practice to promote change beyond individual classrooms (Hord, 1997). Finally, the design of professional learning should involve modeling of new strategies, opportunities to practice, and venues for sharing over time (Garet, et al., 2001).

The case presented in this article of faculty learning for LbD addressed these points. The semester focused on LbD advancement in the college began with the Learn by Doing Ideas Sharing Picnic, held between the two academic semesters in the year in which the LbD initiative was announced. Both the format and the focus of the picnic emphasized active pedagogy by stimulating 45-minute demonstrations and discussions of teaching approaches designed to increase student learning by doing. The entire 120-member college faculty participated in the picnic at a series of table discussions that mixed faculty from all departments. The picnic was a launch pad for discussions, peer teams, and collaborations that spanned the following semester. The selection of the outdoor, informal, roundtable sharing format was intended to reduce distance between the faculty who were sharing and discussing teaching ideas. Faculty come to their roles with varying education and experience as teachers, and therefore they have varying degrees of comfort in discussing their teaching practice. Small table groups with the goal of sharing ideas was chosen as a non-threatening format to encourage sharing at and after the event. Specifically, reducing the formality in this faculty development event was a strategy for reducing the transactional distance among discussion groups (Moore, 1993). The dialog among the sharing faculty with peers might be richer if physical distance between them was reduced from the distance normally found between teachers and learners in classrooms, and if structure imposed on the nature of sharing was minimized, as proposed in the Theory of Transactional Distance (Moore). A news story and photos from the event are located at http://news.hct.ac.ae/2013/02/adkcwc-faculty-practice-learning-by-doing-between-semesters/

The HCT Learn by Doing principles are teaching guidelines that align with Newmann’s standards of authentic instruction (1996) in several ways. Table 1 shows the alignment between our college LbD principles and authentic instruction.
Table 1. Learn by Doing principles and authentic instruction standards

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Learn by Doing principles</th>
<th>Authentic instruction standards</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Capstone experience; Research projects</td>
<td>Higher-Order Thinking</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Project-based learning</td>
<td>Depth of Knowledge</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Career orientation</td>
<td>Connectedness to the World Beyond the Classroom</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Field experience</td>
<td>Substantive Conversation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Faculty with professional experience</td>
<td>Social Support for Student Achievement</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

As we launched the LbD initiative in our campus, we used Newmann’s rubrics for authentic instruction to provide a baseline indication of the levels that the expanded active teaching approaches in the college reach in three key rubrics. For this study, we asked the following research question:

To what extent do the faculty ideas for learning by doing at the start of the initiative achieve standards of authentic instruction?

**Instruments and Data Collection**

The datasets for this study included:

1. Ideas. “Learn by doing” ideas that the faculty of the campus volunteered to share with colleagues on the faculty sharing day at the start of the college system’s Learn by Doing initiative, prior to any other faculty development in this area;

2. Plans. Immediate responses of the faculty to the sharing day regarding the ideas they expected to implement in their teaching during the semester following the day; and

3. Integration. Follow-up responses of the faculty at the semester mid-point regarding the ideas they integrated into their current course designs.

The faculty LbD ideas were solicited in January following the winter break in the academic year. A campus-wide call for ideas was emailed from the college Director’s office to all faculty and instructional staff. The text of the call is located in Appendix A. After faculty members submitted their ideas, the sharing event program was created. The program is shown in Appendix B.

In the week immediately following the event, an anonymous online survey was conducted to collect general participant feedback about the event. The survey questions are listed below.

**Timing and Scheduling**: Please share your thoughts about the length of the sessions and the event.
1. Was the 45 minutes allocated for each session adequate for the discussion of a learn by doing topic?*
   - Yes, it was the right amount of time
   - No, it was too short
   - No, it was too long
   - Other, please specify

2. Was the 3 hour period adequate for learning about learn by doing approaches?*
   - Yes, it was the right amount of time
   - No, it was too short
   - No, it was too long
   - Other, please specify

3. What suggestions do you have for improving the timing and scheduling of similar events?

Topics and Format: Please share your feedback about the content and format of the event.

4. Was the focus on specific learn by doing approaches valuable?*
   - Yes, the focus was valuable
   - No, the focus was too specific
   - No, the focus was too general
   - Other, please specify

5. Was the discussion table format effective for sharing and learning? *
   - Yes, the format was effective
   - No, the format was not effective
   - Other, please specify

6. Was the outdoor location for the event effective?*
   - Yes, the location was effective
   - No, the location was not effective
   - Other, please specify

7. Please provide your suggestions for future learn by doing events.

Sessions: Please provide feedback on the sessions you attended.

8. Please enter any specific comments about the sessions you attended.
   Enter the session topic or facilitator followed by comments.

Faculty plans to integrate LbD in their courses in the semester after the event were collected using two anonymous open-ended online questions, shown below.

I1. What was a valuable take-away perception or approach that you gained from the event?
I2. What is an example of an approach you discussed at the event that you plan to implement in your teaching?

In order to identify the LbD approaches that were integrated into courses, a mid-semester survey was used approximately 8 weeks after the sharing event. Faculty were surveyed using an anonymous online survey that included the following questions.
M1. What is an example of an approach you discussed at the idea sharing event that you have implemented in your teaching?

M2. What is an example of an additional learn by doing approach that you learned or developed and that you have implemented in your teaching?

Data analysis

Independent reviewers immediately following data collection analyzed the ideas and survey responses using separate procedures.

Learn by Doing ideas

An independent educator trained in the data coding process coded each idea submitted by a volunteer faculty member using Newmann’s rubrics for authentic pedagogy. The attributes of authentic instruction were based on Newmann’s standards of authentic pedagogy (1995) for Student Construction of Knowledge, and Value Beyond the Classroom. Rubrics and levels associated with these standards are shown below. The rubrics allow identification of levels of higher-order thinking as shown in Table 2, depth of knowledge as shown in Table 3, and connection to the world beyond the classroom as shown in Table 4.

Learn by Doing plans

The ideas stated by faculty for implementation are summarized using open coding to identify categories.

Learn by Doing integration

The ideas adopted by faculty are summarized and compared to the plans using open coding for relevant categories.

Rubrics for authentic instruction

Higher-order thinking (HOT), “Higher-order thinking (HOT) includes manipulating information and ideas by synthesizing, generalizing, explaining, hypothesizing, or arriving at conclusions that produce new meanings and understandings” (Newmann, Secada, & Wehlage 1995, p. 86). Lower-order thinking (LOT) involves receiving and reciting factual information, practicing rules and routines, and remembering pre-specified knowledge. This rubric was used to categorize the level of HOT that students would be likely to reach as a result of the application of each faculty member’s teaching idea in a class.

Table 2. Higher order thinking levels

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>The idea encourages student engagement in lower order thinking (LOT) operations. For example, reciting or routine</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>The idea encourages student engagement primarily in LOT, with minor indication of HOT.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>The idea is an example of significant HOT activity.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>The idea shows depth and range of HOT activity.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Higher order thinking (HOT) includes manipulating information and ideas by synthesizing, generalizing, explaining, hypothesizing, or arriving at conclusions that produce new meanings and understandings</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
**Depth of Knowledge.** Deep knowledge results from detailed exploration of ideas, systematic expression, integrated understanding, and discussion of relationships, problem solutions, and conclusions. Superficial knowledge does not address interconnections among concepts and appears fragmented. This rubric was used to categorize the depth of knowledge that students would be likely to reach as a result of the application of each faculty member’s teaching idea in a class.

**Table 3. Depth of knowledge levels**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Level</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>The idea encourages thin knowledge because it does address significant topics or ideas but remains at the level of covering simple information.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>The idea is an indication that knowledge remains superficial and fragmented; while some key concepts and ideas are addressed, only a superficial acquaintance or trivialized understanding of these complex ideas is evident.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>The idea is an indication that knowledge is treated unevenly; that is, deep understanding of something is countered by superficial understanding of other ideas. At least one significant idea may be presented in depth and its significance grasped, but in general the focus is not sustained.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>The idea encourages deep knowledge because information, arguments or reasoning demonstrate complexity of an important idea. Sustained focus on an idea, problem analysis, explanations, or conclusions are included.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>The idea encourages very deep knowledge through sustained focus on a significant topic, understating of a problem, complex understating, reasoned conclusion, and fullness of understanding.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Connectedness to the world beyond the classroom.** Connections between learning and the life beyond college are reflected by a focus on a real world public problem of significance, building on student personal experiences to learn important ideas, and communicating knowledge to others beyond the classroom. This rubric was used to categorize the level of connectedness that students would be likely to reach as a result of the application of each faculty member’s teaching idea in a class.
Table 4. Connectedness to the world beyond the classroom levels

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Level</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>The idea encourages no clear connection to issues or experience beyond the classroom.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>The idea encourages student attempts to connect to his/her own experience or to a public situation. However, the connection is unspecified.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>The idea encourages connections to personal experience or an actual public situation, including some connections that create personal meaning and significance for the learning. However, there is not effort to influence a larger audience, and implications are not addressed.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>The idea encourages work on a problem or topic that is connected to personal life or public situations. The connections are recognized and explored, but no effort is made to influence a larger audience.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>The idea encourages students to work on a problem or issue that is seen as connected to their personal experiences or public situations. They explored these connections in ways that create personal meaning. Students were involved in an effort to influence an audience beyond their classroom; for example, by communicating knowledge to others, advocating solutions to social problems, providing assistance to people, or creating performances or products with utilitarian or aesthetic value.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Results

Of the 120 teaching staff in the college, 31 volunteered to facilitate 25 idea sharing sessions of 45 minutes at the faculty development day.

General feedback survey

The response to the interprofessional learning event, the Learn by Doing Ideas Sharing Picnic, was generally positive, as shown in the charts below. Each chart summarizes the aggregate anonymous responses to the online survey given in the week following the event.
Table 5. Aggregate responses to time & length of sessions of LbD

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question</th>
<th>Yes</th>
<th>No, too short</th>
<th>No, too long</th>
<th>Other</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Was the 45 minutes allocated for each session adequate for the discussion of a learn by doing topic?</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Was the 3-hour period adequate for learning about learn by doing approaches?</td>
<td>4.3</td>
<td>2.4</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 6. Aggregate responses to focus of LbD

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question</th>
<th>Yes</th>
<th>No, too specific</th>
<th>No, too general</th>
<th>Other</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>3. Was the focus on specific learn by doing approaches valuable?</td>
<td>47</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 7. Aggregate responses to format & event effectiveness of LbD

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question</th>
<th>Yes</th>
<th>No</th>
<th>Other</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>4. Was the discussion table format effective for sharing and learning?</td>
<td>48</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Was the outdoor location for the event effective?</td>
<td>48</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

LbD plan survey

I1. (Immediately following the idea sharing day) What was a valuable take-away perception or approach that you gained from the event?

Of the 29 examples of valuable take-aways from the event, a third related to specific LbD approaches such as Socratic dialog or peer teaching, another third related to benefits of this approach to faculty development including learning from colleagues and coordinating projects throughout the curriculum, a fifth related to general impacts on teaching like ways to increase student-centered and collaborative approaches, and others related to integration of technologies like video and apps, recognition of expertise in colleagues, and benefits of LbD for developing higher order thinking.

I2. (Immediately following the idea sharing day) What is an example of an approach you discussed at the event that you plan to implement in your teaching?

Of 36 specific responses, half indicated plans to integrate general LbD approaches into teaching, a quarter specified media in a planned approach, and a sixth named specific practices. Others described general departmental or collaborative plans for integrating LbD in the college.

LbD integration survey

M1. (Mid-semester) What is an example of an approach you discussed at the idea sharing event that you have implemented in your teaching?
Twelve responses were submitted by faculty who had implemented an approach from the February event during the first half of the semester, February and March. Over half of respondents cited specific activities and approaches that they had adopted or increased in their courses, including projects and problem-based learning, student use of surveys and data analysis tools, and use of video to document learning. Smaller numbers of faculty mentioned specific technologies that they had integrated into their plans, such as interactive apps, simulations, and microblogging. A small group of faculty described general impacts on their teaching based on the event, such as adding a sustainability theme or replacing paper materials with digital materials.

M2. (Mid-semester) What is an example of an additional learn by doing approach that you learned or developed and that you have implemented in your teaching?

In addition to the approaches acquired at the events, eleven faculty members listed other approaches to LbD that they had adopted in the half of the semester following the event. Most mentioned specific approaches like student-created assessments of learning, challenge-based learning, task-based learning, and idea-generating. A small number detailed specific media tools that they had adopted, including cloud-based photo, presentation, and sharing applications.

**Authentic instruction rubrics**

Each faculty LbD idea was coded using three rubrics for authentic instruction (Newmann, 1995) by an independent coder who did not participate in the event and who is an educator trained in these rubrics. The coding was verified by a separate coder who also was an educator not involved in the event. Each rubric had five levels ranging from 1 for an idea that did not indicate the authentic learning attribute to 5 for an idea that indicated depth in the attribute. Specific codes for sessions in all rubrics are included in Appendix C.

Codes for the 25 sessions ranged from 1-5 in each rubric, as shown in Figure 1. For Higher order thinking, sessions were identified at each level. The group mean of 3 indicates ideas that encourage lower order thinking with aspects of higher order operations present. For Depth of knowledge, sessions spread among levels 1-4. The group mean of 2.78 indicates ideas that tended to treat knowledge unevenly, with both deep and superficial understanding encouraged but not sustained. For Connectedness, sessions were identified at each level with most falling into level 1. The group mean of 2.35 indicates ideas that encourage attempts at connections to personal experience and public situations.

These means show that volunteer faculty who shared LbD ideas as a group are using authentic instruction approaches, and the degree varies, as would be expected across a college with multiple disciplines, a wide range of teaching experience, and many cultures represented.
Discussion and implications

Results of analysis indicate that faculty saw the sharing event as valuable and effective for enhancing their awareness of Learning by Doing. The event succeeded as a catalyst for expanding faculty adoption of Learning by Doing in their courses as evidenced by growth in the proportion of specific LbD approaches reported by faculty in the semester following the sharing event. The LbD ideas shared by faculty at the outset of the national LbD initiative were rated high in indicators of higher order thinking, moderate in indicators of depth of thinking, and low in indicators of connection to the world beyond the classroom. While there is room for growth in all three indicators of authentic instruction, this outcome implies that students are likely to encounter opportunities in their degree programs to practice substantial higher order thinking and some depth of thinking, but limited connections between their coursework and the world. Because the mission of the Higher Colleges of Technology is to provide high-quality career programs that meet workforce needs, this finding could be taken as reason to examine the direct linkages and relevance of class experiences to the professional contexts.

Regarding the design of faculty development for disseminating new practices, we recommend informal events at the outset of campus-scale as a way to form peer collaboration and share a high volume of ideas widely among faculty. This format is low-threshold in terms of planning from the organizational and individual perspectives, and is a type of inclusive format that honors all levels of experience and perspectives. We emphasize the need for a tight and practical focus on effective teaching practice in order
to increase the application of new approaches in courses. A longer-term study is needed to further identify the specific effects on teaching and learning beyond faculty report.

References


Appendix A

Campus Learn by Doing Ideas Picnic request for ideas

What’s your favorite lesson or activity to teach? Does it engage students in learning with hands-on, minds-on strategies? If so, you are the ideal person to facilitate a Learn by Doing Ideas Picnic conversation!

The LbD Ideas Picnic brings together college faculty in small 45-minute roundtable sessions in which a facilitator begins with a mini-lesson or active demonstration of the LbD idea and then engages colleagues in an interactive discussion of the idea and LbD approach. The Picnic is a series of concurrent LbD Idea Tables for small groups and will be followed by a picnic lunch.

You may ask, what exactly is Learning by Doing, according to HCT?

It’s what you might expect of engaged learning: authentic, applied, meaningful, active, reflective, connected to others and the world beyond the classroom, experiential, problem-based, project-based, challenge-based, tool-based, collaborative, interactive, higher-order, creative, innovative… in short, it’s what works in realizing HCT Graduate Outcomes and national needs. For over 180 LbD strategies, see http://www.fctl.ucf.edu/teachingandlearningresources/coursedesign/assessment/content/101_tips.pdf

Partners, teams, and individual faculty are now invited to reserve your Idea Table. Table leaders may be faculty as well as instructors and qualified staff from all departments. Please give your department chair the following information for each table you would like to lead:

Idea Table Facilitator Name(s):
Idea Topic:
Sentence about the activity you will lead:
Example discussion prompts for the table:

To prepare for the Idea Table, be ready to lead the activity and discussion—that’s it! No slides or video or lengthy handouts. Just you, your idea, and a table of lifelong learners

Idea Topics and related materials will be collected for the college after the LbD Idea Picnic. Facilitators are encouraged to nominate a scribe for their table or to record the conversation using their iPads.
Appendix B

Campus LbD Ideas Picnic Program

Please join the Picnic by leaning, doing, and lunching together. Each session includes Ideas Tables where facilitators lead sharing and discussion of Learn by Doing topics. At Open Tables, groups may gather to share newly generated ideas. Picnic Lunch is furnished by the college.

Schedule
Session 1. Ideas Tables + Open Tables. 9-9:45 AM
Session 2. Ideas Tables + Open Tables. 10-10:45 AM
Session 3. Ideas Tables + Open Tables. 11-11:45 AM
Picnic Lunch. 12-1 PM

LbD Ideas Picnic Tables

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table Facilitator(s)</th>
<th>LbD Idea Topic</th>
<th>Activity</th>
<th>Sessions &amp; Tables</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Using Creative Book Builder (CBB) app for creative writing and iportfolio</td>
<td>Demonstration of how students have used Creative Book Builder (CBB) app to do process writing and the writing iportfolio created by foundation students</td>
<td>1-1 3-1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Haiku Deck</td>
<td>A new presentation app</td>
<td>1-2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Blended Delivery</td>
<td>Project-based learning in the Foundation Programme</td>
<td>1-3 3-2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Sharing Children’s Literature</td>
<td>Course content and strategies for engaging young learners in reading and reading activities</td>
<td>1-4 3-3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Line graphs, bar charts and pie charts</td>
<td>Conceptualizing the visual representation of data, as required in IELTS writing task</td>
<td>1-5 3-4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Extend course curricula with advanced practical technologies</td>
<td>Benefits of integrating advanced technologies into a static curriculum and the advantages for our student’s learning habits</td>
<td>1-6 3-5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Correlation and Regression Analysis</td>
<td>Exploring Correlation using the data collected by students.</td>
<td>1-7 3-6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Globetrotting Trivia</td>
<td>Participants will be shown pictures and asked to give the names of famous buildings and mountains and/or the country it is in.</td>
<td>1-8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Socratic Dialogue – discussion towards discovering the truth</td>
<td>Group dialogue that is governed by discovering truth through questions and not answers</td>
<td>1-9 2-2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| **Live projects**  
(simulations and projects vs. Tests) | Creating real world simulations as a means of assessing how students apply theory | 2-3  
3-10 |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **Embedding a sustainability project in your curriculum** | An example of how to integrate a sustainability project into an existing program framework: The water project, foundations department | 1-10  
2-4 |
| **Encouraging Student Digital Media Creation** | How can digital media be used to help engage students and foster their creativity? | 1-11  
2-5 |
| **A hands-on lesson on food waste** | Using a recent article that claims that 50% of the world’s food goes to waste as a springboard for the activity, participants will work in groups to collect first-hand information about food waste within the college (cafeteria and other outlets) and report back to the group for a follow-up discussion on possible solutions | 1-12  
2-6 |
| **iTunes U in conjunction with CBB** | During the first semester the Foundations Math team implemented a flipped classroom approach where students watched material outside of class time in a passive nature. | 1-13  
2-7 |
| **Print from your Ipad (Breezy)** | How to print for free and hassle free, too | 2-8 |
| **Inkflow-go with flow** | Using Inkflow: drawing, writing or/and brainstorming | 2-9  
3-7 |
| **Evaluating the LBD tools used against a Performance Observational Tool** | For each of the sessions that faculty deliver using LBD tools, a Performance Observational Record sheet is to be completed to gauge on the objectives met | 2-10  
3-8 |
| **CIS Curriculum Design** | How the CIS department can shift toward students applying content in novel situations, and toward inquiry and questioning as integral ways of achieving course learning goals | 2-11  
3-9 |
| **Video Share** | Video Share idea (autonomous learning), its procedures (selecting and understanding a video; preparing tasks to accompany the video; and presenting the video to the class with suitable introduction and follow up activities), and some of its current uses in our Gen Ed courses | 2-1 |
| **Learning by Doing: Real-life applications in Electronics Engineering** | Sharing of different ideas that can be implemented, and a discussion of the “map” of courses that would lead to the completion of the project | 2-12  
3-11 |
| courses                                      | During the first semester the Foundations Math team implemented a flipped classroom approach where students watched material outside of class time in a passive nature | 2-13  
|                                            |                                                                                                                               | 3-12 |
## Appendix C

Data and Coding on Neumann’s Authentic Learning Rubrics

[HOT=Higher Order Thinking; DoK= Depth of Knowledge; Conn=Connectedness]

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Topic</th>
<th>Description</th>
<th>HOT code 1-5</th>
<th>DoK code 1-5</th>
<th>Conn code 1-5</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Action Research</td>
<td>How to combine teaching and reflective practice through an Action Research approach</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
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<tr>
<td>Using Creative Book Builder (CBB) app for creative writing and iPortfolio</td>
<td>Demonstration of how students have used Creative Book Builder (CBB) app to do process writing and the writing iPortfolio created by foundation students</td>
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<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
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<tr>
<td>Haiku Deck</td>
<td>An app for creating shared presentations</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Blended Delivery</td>
<td>Project-based learning in Foundation Program</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sharing Children’s Literature</td>
<td>Course content and strategies for engaging young learners in reading and reading activities</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Using graphs, bar charts and pie charts</td>
<td>Conceptualizing the visual representation of data, as required in IELTS writing task</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Extend course curricula with advanced practical technologies</td>
<td>Benefits of integrating advanced technologies into a static curriculum and the advantages for our student’s learning habits</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Correlation and regression analysis</td>
<td>Exploring Correlation using the data collected by students.</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
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<tr>
<td>Globetrotting Trivia</td>
<td>Participants will be shown pictures and asked to give the names of famous buildings and mountains and/or the country it is in.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
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<td>Socratic Dialogue: discussion towards discovering the truth</td>
<td>Group dialogue that is governed by discovering truth through questions and not answers</td>
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<td>Live projects: simulations and projects vs.</td>
<td>Creating real world simulations as a means of assessing how students apply theory</td>
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<td>4</td>
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<td>Tests</td>
<td>Description</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
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<tr>
<td>Embedding a sustainability project in your curriculum</td>
<td>An example of how to integrate a sustainability project into an existing program framework: The water project, foundations department</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Encouraging Student Digital Media Creation</td>
<td>How can digital media be used to help engage students and foster their creativity?</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A hands-on lesson on food waste</td>
<td>Using a recent article that claims that 50% of the world’s food goes to waste as a springboard for the activity, participants will work in groups to collect first-hand information about food waste within the college (cafeteria and other outlets) and report back to the group for a follow-up discussion on possible solutions</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
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<tr>
<td>iTunes U in conjunction with CBB</td>
<td>During the first semester the Foundations Math team implemented a flipped classroom approach where students watched material outside of class time in a passive nature.</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Digestion review</td>
<td>Students will view pictures of different kinds of food and describe how it is digested</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Integrated Project – combining learning into 1 major project</td>
<td>Students work will be showcased demonstrating how 4 taught subjects can be combined into 1 final project</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Print with Breezy</td>
<td>How to print for free and hassle free, too</td>
<td>NA</td>
<td>NA</td>
<td>NA</td>
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<tr>
<td>Inkflow: Go with the flow</td>
<td>Using Inkflow: drawing, writing or/and brainstorming</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Evaluating the LBD tools used against a Performance Observational Tool</td>
<td>For each of the sessions that faculty deliver using LBD tools, a Performance Observational Record sheet is to be completed to gauge on the objectives met</td>
<td>NA</td>
<td>NA</td>
<td>NA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CIS Curriculum Design</td>
<td>How the CIS department can shift toward students applying content in novel situations, and toward inquiry and questioning as integral ways of achieving course learning goals</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Video share</td>
<td>Video Share idea (autonomous learning),</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>------------------------</td>
<td>-----------------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>---</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Learning by Doing: Real-life applications in Electronics Engineering courses</td>
<td>Sharing of different ideas that can be implemented, and discussion of the “map” of courses that would lead to completion.</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>iTunes U in conjunction with productivity apps</td>
<td>During the first semester the Foundations Math team implemented a flipped classroom approach where students watched material outside of class time in a passive nature</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Awareness through 25 challenges</td>
<td>Discussion of how to challenge and engage our students while increasing their awareness of local and global issues and encouraging them to make positive contributions to their community</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>25 sessions</td>
<td><strong>Average</strong></td>
<td>3.00</td>
<td>2.78</td>
<td>2.35</td>
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</table>
Promoting Transformative Learning: Using philosophy instructional methods in non-philosophy classrooms

Aaron Frias

Abstract

This article explores how instructors can promote transformative learning in their classrooms by instigating several non-traditional instructional methods used in philosophy classrooms. Philosophy teaching methods were specifically chosen because philosophy classes consistently move their students through several of Mezirow’s ten phases of transformative learning. For example, students in philosophy classes are constantly exposed to potentially disorienting dilemmas, which is Mezirow’s first phase. This article looks at several specific instructional methods that were taken from the Journal for Teaching Philosophy. These methods include fact/value problems, teaching without books, Wu Wei using modeling clay and Rawl’s Game. These methods can be used or integrated into non-philosophy classrooms as well as tools to create a learning environment conducive to Transformative Learning.

Introduction

Ask anyone to define the term Transformative Learning and you will get as many answers as you have participants who answer the question. The definition is ever elusive, evading a clear and concise classification by those who attempt to confine it. This is true even though most feel they understand what transformative learning is and when it occurs. But when you press a person to elaborate on the details, the once simple concept becomes more concealed in the shroud of its own complexity. The intention of this article is not to bring another definition to the seemingly endless plethora of explanations and descriptions that others have written about. The purpose of this article is to investigate the complementary concept of transformational instruction by exploring teaching methods used in philosophy classrooms.

In a learning environment, several instructional methods are deployed to increase the effectiveness of learning. These methods can be unleashed in hopes of bringing the learner to any of the multiple levels of Bloom’s taxonomy. That can be the simple aim of getting a student to remember something, or it may reach all the way up to the highest level of synthesis and creation (Bloom, 1956). If there are teaching methods for students to climb this cognitive ladder, than there may also be instructional methods to create a learning environment conducive to transformational learning. In his article, “Socratic teaching Under Postmodern Conditions,” H. R. Swardson (2005, p. 161) explains how:

Socratic questioning, famous in the tutorial chambers of Oxbridge, was well known after World War II in the classrooms of America, where it was most often referred to as a “method”—meaning little more to most of us than that you, through leading questions, tried to get students to tell you at the end of the hour what you wanted to tell them at the beginning.

In many of the definitions given, transformational learning is more than just remembering or regurgitating facts and figures. If this is assumed to be true, than the traditional pedagogical methods may work to encourage transformative learning, but they may not be the best methods to do so.
If traditional pedagogical methods are not the most effective for transformative learning to occur, than what methods would be? This article hopes to answer that question by exploring several teaching methods employed by teachers and professors of Philosophy.

**Philosophy teaching methods**

Based on Mezirow’s ten phases of transformative learning, the first phase is a disorientating dilemma (1995). When students enter an “Introduction to Philosophy” class, they are barraged consistently with disorientating dilemmas. Why are we here? What is good and what is evil? Why is there something rather than nothing? Is there a God? (Eternal Philosophical Questions, 2000). A philosophy classroom seems to be a petri dish of possibilities for the potential for transformative learning to occur. If this is the case, then we can learn a lot about the different instructional methods philosophy professors employ in their classrooms.

In an interview with Dr. Mark Silcox, assistant professor of Liberal Arts at the University of Oklahoma and a professor of Introduction to Philosophy classes, he talks about some of the traditional teaching methods (Silcox, 2012).

One of the primary methods Dr. Silcox uses in his Philosophy classes is to assign student reading assignments for selected readings. He assigns students readings from the textbook, from articles, and from online web sites. These selected readings are chosen by the instructor and relate to the topic being discussed for that week. Sometimes the selected readings can be selected by the student as long as they are related to the topic.

The selected readings and content are used in classroom discussions. The instructor, Dr. Silcox in this example, asks directed questions of the students to engage the students in classroom discussions about the topic and selected readings. Dr. Silcox explained in his interview that these classroom discussions usually involve the student and instructor and student-to-student interactions. He talked about how some of the topics spurred more discussion than other topics. For example, the topic of evil spurred a lot of classroom discussion, whereas the topic of love did not generate as much discussion amongst the students.

Along with classroom discussions, Dr. Silcox also has students write short reflections on the selected content and the classroom discussions. He also uses audio and video clips and has student write short reflections on those. These reflections are short papers that students turn in for a grade. These short reflections are usually done as homework outside of the classroom.

It should be noted that Dr. Silcox used the term “traditional methods” (2012) to explain these teaching methods. In the interview, he described his methods of teaching philosophy using very traditional pedagogical methods. He said that his teaching methods have not changed over the nine years that he has taught and that the only factor that has really changed over his teaching career as a professor is the increased use of cuss words. He said that over the years he finds that using this language creates more of a shock value with his students, helping to get their attention.

The teaching methods discussed in this section include selected readings, classroom discussions, and short reflections. When you evaluate these teaching methods in conjunction with Philosophy, there seems to be an opportunity for students to experience Mezirow’s first phase of transformative learning: a disorienting dilemma (1995). Each of these teaching methods not only fits with the first phase of Mezirow’s ten-phase model, but also fit along the continuum of all ten phases listed here:
A disorienting dilemma
- A self-examination with feelings of guilt or shame
- A critical assessment of epistemic, sociocultural, or psychic assumptions
- Recognition that one’s discontent and the process of transformation are shared and that others have negotiated a similar change
- Exploration of options for new roles, relationships, and actions
- Planning a course of action
- Acquisition of knowledge and skills for implementing one’s plan
- Provisional trying of new roles
- Building of competence and self-confidence in new roles and relationships
- A reintegration into one’s life on the basis of conditions dictated by one’s perspective (1995)

These particular instructional methods -- selected readings, classroom discussion, and written reflections touch each of these phases but not necessarily in a way that may be most conducive to transformative learning, but they can promote transformative learning. Another benefit to these three teaching methods is that they can be used in a whole host of different learning environments, not just Philosophy. If that is the case, some of the non-traditional teaching methods of Philosophy not included in that short list might also be used in other subjects as a means to increase the likelihood for a transformative learning experience to occur.

Exploring non-traditional philosophy teaching methods

The journal of Teaching Philosophy is a peer-reviewed journal that explores the challenges of teaching philosophy courses. On the Teaching Philosophy journal website, editors state that the journal contains information about “innovative teaching methods, classroom strategies, and new instructional materials” (Cholbi). The journals provide several examples of innovative teaching techniques that instructors can use when teaching philosophy classes. Some of those techniques are presented here so a case can be built that these teaching techniques can be used outside of philosophy class instruction and can be applied by instructors to promote a learning environment conducive to transformative learning in a variety of different topics and subjects.

Fact/value problem to teach ethical theories

In the volume 15 issue 3 of the Teaching Philosophy, Douglas Birsch talks about how to use the “fact/value problem to teach ethical theories” (1992). He states that “teaching ethical theories is one of the most difficult tasks in teaching ethics” (Birsch, 1992). He goes on to explain that there are two common ways of teaching ethical theories. One way is to “get students involved in the problem of how to justify ethical claims” and the other is to “offer ethical strategies as the means of resolving practical ethical problems” (Birsch, 1992). He concludes that neither method is effective and that students “are no better off than when they started” (Birsch, 1992). By the students not being better off than they started, it is a fair assumption that they did not have a transformative learning experience.

Birsch proposes using the “fact/value problem” method as a means to draw out students’ beliefs, help them to articulate and support these beliefs, and then show them important difficulties with their beliefs and alternatives to them (1992). If students are able to go through this process, then there may be an increased opportunity for a student to have a transformative learning experience.
The fact/value problem begins with the facilitator posing a question. In the article’s example (1992), the facilitator asks the question, “Why does one person value a car with a 5-speed transmission, while another person does not?” This question poses a question about a fact about the car, that it has a 5-speed transmission. An answer may be that the person values economy over convenience. This answer can generate a new question: “Why does the person value economy over convenience?” The question’s focus is no longer on the car, it is now on the person’s values. This is important for getting at the beliefs of an individual because “value is a product of the individual’s choices, and while facts influence these choices, the choices are made by the individual, not by the facts” (Birsch, 1992).

Using these fact/value questions in a classroom discussion or an online discussion board helps move students’ comments from facts into values. A discussion of values and beliefs can then begin to emerge and opportunities for disorientating dilemmas may arise for students. Since the disorienting dilemma is the first step in Mezirow’s ten phases (1995), the transformative learning process may be initiated.

This is not to say that using this method will force students to have a deep reflection of their values and beliefs; instead, it can be a tool that promotes opportunities for transformative learning. Specifically, it can mean the fact/value questions get into the exploration of values and not just facts.

Teaching without books/provocations

Another teaching technique proposed in the journal of Teaching Philosophy is the method of teaching without books. The author of the article, William Irvine, talks about his “experiment” with teaching an introductory level Philosophy class sans books (1993). He has taught ten bookless courses with an average of 50 to 70 students in each class. His defense of the bookless classes is that “the students appear to have enjoyed taking them, and most importantly the students have gained something quite valuable by taking them, something that they might not have gained had I taught the courses in the conventional way” (Irvine, 1993). When tying it to a method that may promote transformative learning, the author concludes that bookless teaching can be an “effective way to get students to take philosophical questions personally rather than dismissing them as historical curiosities. It can, in other words, produce students who are able and willing to philosophize, rather than students who are able, but not necessarily willing, to hold a conversation about what the great philosophers have said about thus-and-such issue” (Irvine, 1993). If that can occur in philosophy classes, then it is also possible that this technique could be deployed in other, similar learning environments.

The author describes what a typical bookless session looks like. The instructor does not need a detailed lecture prepared but instead must have a sense of the topics to be introduced and an idea of where the discussions might lead. From there the instructor begins the class by asking provocations, which Irvine defines as “vexatious questions” (Irvine, 1993). An example provocation would be the defense of cannibalism.

I ask students if they are interested in taking part in a business venture in which we raise babies till they are nice and fat, slaughter them, and sell the “carcasses” to a certain group for large profits. When the students react to my proposal, we encounter a number of interesting questions, including “Why is murder wrong?”, “Is it morally permissible to slaughter animals simply so we can have novel culinary experiences?”, “Are human beings “better” than other animals?” (Irvine, 1993)
The goal of the provocations is to “stimulate them to engage in philosophical reasoning” (Irvine, 1993). If students are provoked in this way, they will argue. These arguments allow students to better understand their beliefs and to hear the beliefs of others. This exposure of the deeper values and beliefs can help to promote deeper reflection and in turn encourage opportunities for transformative learning to occur.

This particular exercise seems to truly spark the beginning of the disorientating dilemma. As students are exposed to a disorienting dilemma through this provocation, they may also have to engage in the other nine steps of Mezirow’s phases (1995) to reconcile these provocations.

**Teaching Wu Wei using modeling clay**

In volume 19 Issue 2 of *Teaching Philosophy*, there is an article by Andy Young titled “Teaching Wu Wei Using Modeling Clay” (1996). The article discusses the challenge of teaching students the subject of Wu Wei, which means “effortless effort.” Wu Wei is a Taoist idea that work done without effort is more efficient, productive, and true to human nature than “aggressive purposeful work” (Young, 1996). The author of the article describes the difficulty of getting his students to truly grasp the nature of this concept. The author uses several traditional techniques such as telling students about a famous example by Cook Ting and talking through some real life examples. He states that students begin to understand the point intellectually but that they do not internalize it. Andy Young in his article states that “not only is Wu Wei not a particular kind of work, it is not a concept. It can only be understood through work” (Young, 1996). To drive this point home with his students, he uses a clay modeling exercise.

As the instructor, Andy tells the students they will be doing an activity and that it must be done in silence. The students begin by writing the name of an animal on a blank sheet of paper. He then hands out a lump of modeling clay to each student and tells them they have 10 minutes to make their animal. Andy states that “during this time it is helpful to observe and note their interactions, giggles and body language” (Young, 1996). After the time is up, the students are asked to write down all of the thoughts they had while creating their sculptures over the next ten minutes. The class members then share their thoughts as the instructor writes an abbreviated version on the board.

The board quickly fills up with wonderful things such as, “Why are we doing this?” “I haven’t worked with clay since second grade,” “Hers looks better than mine,” “Will this be graded?” “I’m a terrible artist,” “What am I going to have for dinner tonight?” and “Does this really look like a snake?” (Young, 1996).

The author goes on to talk about how the students begin to realize the chorus of distractions that are going on in their heads while they are performing a simple task. “Being able to recognize the distractions as well as their frequency and to realize that all one can do about them is to observe and let them pass, is the first step toward Wu Wei” (Young, 1996).

This is a great example of a teaching technique that allows students to connect with the content at a deeper level. The instructor in this example recognized that it wasn’t enough just to talk about Wu Wei; students had to experience it. Experiential learning is a key focus in a lot of the literature on Transformative Learning (Mezirow, 1997). It is a teaching technique that can creatively be applied to a lot of subjects and topics.
Another unique teaching technique that is used in Philosophy that could also be applied to other subjects is Rawl's Game. In Volume 22 Issue 3 of Teaching Philosophy, Gregg Lubritz uses a variation of Rawl's Game to teach his students about “morality as the product of rational self-interest and impartiality (Green, 58)” (Lubritz, 1999). He does this by having his students play a game with him.

Lubritz uses a variation of the original Rawl’s Game. The original game was created by William Soderberg in his book, “The Game of Philosophy” (2000). In that game there are three rounds. In the first round, each student is a representative of 1,000 people. Each student is given a card stating if they represent mountaineers or flatlanders. Then the students are given a political situation they must vote on, and the vote must be unanimous. The vote is usually not unanimous. In the next two rounds some of the rules change and new scenarios are given. After three rounds, the students should have experienced the following four theories:

Rawls addresses two forms of tyranny that can arise from the liberal traditions and two types of tyranny that can arise from communitarian traditions. In the traditions of moral liberalism, the tyranny of the majority can occur in socialist and utilitarian systems. A tyranny of the powerful minority can arise from a natural-rights version of liberalism, a version generally associated with capitalist or free market economies. In the communitarian traditions, a tyranny of orthodoxy can occur in the strict forms of communitarianism and a tyranny of perfectionism can occur in the moderate forms (Soderberg, 2000).

By the end of the game and the discussions that revolve around Rawl’s game the students will have experienced these complex ideas by experiencing these theories in a hypothetical environment.

In the article, Lutz uses an alternative version of this game. In that version, the instructor starts the game by giving each student two cards. Each card lists a characteristic or attribute that the student has. Some examples are 3rd eye, 2 feet tall, $1 million dollars, etc. Then the facilitator poses the questions, “Who wants to be president? Who wants to be an astronaut? A supermodel? An Artist? The students respond with statements like, “If you’re two feet tall you can’t be president.” When asked why, they say it is not because of any legal reasons, it’s just that the people wouldn’t accept it. As students talk through it more, they begin to reflect more on whether this game applies to real life, what is a level playing field, that nature isn’t fair and must society be unfair? (Soderberg, 2000). The game challenges students’ perspectives by putting themselves in unfamiliar situations and trying to understand why things are the way they are and why they think the way they do about these various physical and social aspects of individuals.

Like many of the other authors, Lubritz expresses that the traditional question and answer sessions do not have an impact as great as going through the game (2000). The game seems to trigger a deeper level of reflection in the students that tie together their assumptions and experiences into a hypothetical scenario that challenges through assumptions and experiences. This challenge can be that disorientating dilemma that triggers the transformative learning process. These same challenges discussed within the group of students can also engage the social dialogue that Dirkx refers to as a critical part of transformative learning is his article about nurturing soul work (2012).
Philosophy teaching techniques for Transformative Learning

Each of these examples demonstrates a unique teaching method that has been paired with teaching Philosophy classes and concepts. The common theme of these methods is that they connect the learner to the philosophical ideas. By connecting the ideas to the learner, the learner may be presented with a disorientating dilemma and may have to integrate this information and ideas into the current frames of reference. This collision of an idea with the learner’s current assumptions and understandings seems like an ideal opportunity for the possibility of transformative learning to occur.

Take the “Fact/Value Problem” example (Birsch, 1992). When a philosophy student is presented with a fact and then asked to expound on that fact by connecting it to a value, the learner has to connect the fact with their views of the values in question. This intimately involves the learner’s beliefs and values in a way that can strengthen or challenge those values. When contemplation or reflection of a value is brought to the surface, it becomes like a garden where other values and opinions from the instructor and students may blossom and spread.

In “Teaching without Books” (Irvine, 1993), students lose the comfort that they may have found in a textbook that contains all of the answers to the questions that are posed to them in Philosophy. Without the guiding text or the opinions of the experts, learners are forced to contemplate the provocations using their own beliefs and assumptions. It is this lack of guidance that may move the learner into new ways of thinking about previously held convictions.

With the modeling clay used in teaching Wu Wei, learners didn’t just read about or discuss what Wu Wei is; they experienced the concept in an activity. There are many examples of the importance of experiential learning as a means to promote transformative learning (Mezirow, 1997). The modeling clay activity helped to bridge the gap that may exist between the learner’s current cultural perspectives to the concept being presented.

The last example, “Another Rawl’s Game” (Lubritz, 1999), shows how games can be used as a teaching method to explore complex theories. In the article, the students were active participants in a game that unfolded based on their decisions. Again, this was a way of experiencing ideas in a controlled learning environment. The game purposely set up disorientating dilemmas and opened up discussions about assumptions, values and beliefs, all important elements of transformative learning.

Using these techniques in non-Philosophy learning environments

If these teaching methods can be employed by teachers of Philosophy, the question remains whether these methods can migrate to other subjects and promote transformative learning in similar ways. Here are few scenarios that combine the teaching methods presented earlier with some other popular subjects like math, science, languages, art, music and history.

Imagine the “Fact/Value Problem” (Birsch, 1992) method deployed in an art class. The Mona Lisa painting could be presented to the class. Once the class has a chance to view the painting, the instructor can ask the question, “What do you think was important to da Vinci when he captured this image?” This can instigate a conversation around
realism, aesthetics, and mastery. Asking learners about their perspective of the painter’s values allows the students to explore the painting in a new light.

As another example, imagine the “Teaching without Books” (Irvine, 1993) method in a math class. In his TED video “Math Class Needs a Makeover,” Dan Meyers talks about how math books are more like “paint by numbers” that presents all of the information in a nice and neat package for the students (2010). He goes on to say that math in the real world doesn’t fit this model. As a result, he teaches math by starting at the end instead of building up from the beginning. One example he provides is by presenting his students with a problem, but not as a math problem but as a picture. In the picture, there is a real water tank that is sitting in someone’s back yard. And then he poses the question, “How long will it take to fill it up?” He states that this instantly gets the students to hunt for the information that was previously provided to them in the books. Students ask questions like “How tall is the tank?,” “How wide is the tank?,” “How fast will the water come out of the hose?” (Meyer, 2010). The students begin to build the same content of the books themselves without it being spoon-fed to them.

For the Wu Wei clay example (Young, 1996), let’s use a history class. A history instructor could have his or her students recreate a historical event using clay. When tasked to do this, students use their mental images to build the event out of clay. The clay representation allows learners to reflect on their views of the historical event. It challenges them to fully construct the event and the details as they imagine it. By doing so, the students, their peers, and the instructor get a glimpse into the learner’s mind. This can be an extremely powerful tool for reflections and discussions and puts the history in the context of the learner instead of the instructor.

The final example is Rawl’s Game (Lubritz, 1999). Of all of the teaching methods discussed, the use of games is probably one that can most easily be applied to any subject. There are already several games for math, foreign language, science and history. The challenge with implementing games like Rawl’s Game is to explore the learner’s preconceived notions about certain topics. One example could be a card game that could be used in a foreign language such as French or Spanish. These languages have formal and informal vocabularies that vary depending on the person or the social situation. You could create cards with these variations and pictures of different individuals or situation. Then have students match up the correct term to the correct image. This is a simple example but it makes the learner have to connect the correct term with the correct situation. This will help the learner to make the connection in a simulated scenario as opposed to just matching it on it test. The game could also be expanded to have individuals dress up instead of using visual images on cards.

Several examples were presented showing how the unique Philosophy teaching methods can cross-pollinate across various subjects. It should be noted that making these connections and using non-traditional methods may be challenging and take a significant amount of contemplation to find the best combinations. When successful, the opportunity for transformative learning may be significantly increased. This is due to the chances of creating disorientating dilemmas, exploring learning assumptions, beliefs and values, and stretching frames of references. All of these are elements that are conducive for transformative learning to occur.

Conclusion

Several brilliant minds have given us clues to how and when transformative learning may occur. Mezirow gives us the ten phases of transformative learning (1995). Dirkx explores the social dialogue and nurturing soul work (2012). When you look at the elements that
may contribute to transformative learning, it may be possible to use specific teaching methods to create a learning environment that is conducive for transformative learning to occur. This article explored several non-traditional examples that could be used across a whole host of topics to help stimulate those possibilities. Included in those teaching methods are “Fact/Value Problems” (Birsch, 1992), “Teaching without Books” (Irvine, 1993), “Teaching Wu Wei using Modeling Clay” (Young, 1996), and “Rawl’s Game” (Lubritz, 1999).

These innovative teaching methods along with other traditional and non-traditional training methods can be used as means to promote transformative learning. Not all learning needs to be transformative, but effective learning or good learning may create a learning environment that promotes this type of transformation. A lot of instructors strive to move students up to the highest level of Bloom’s Taxonomy. They may also work towards psychomotor or cognitive mastery. In other educational scenarios instructors may try to appeal to a learner on an affective level. It is this connection between the learning outcome and the teaching method that generates a learning environment that can achieve these goals. Transformational learning may also be an outcome that is the combination of the teaching method and the content being presented to the learner. Some learning environments and teaching methods may promote transformational learning more than others. If this is the case, then exploring the effectiveness of transformational learning can be helpful to instructors.

There is still so much to learn from the variety of instructors that exist in the world: linguist, subject matter experts, corporate trainers, bloggers, college professors, K-12 teachers and the multitude of others. They all use effective and successful teaching methods specific to their areas of expertise. It is important to continue to evaluate and propagate these best practices and explore how they can be used in other disciplines.

References


Transformational and globalized foreign language classroom environment in higher education

Dohwon Kim

Abstract

Globalization has become a trendy word in the 21st century. A lot of new information and ideas come out every day, and people can see what is going on in the world through the Internet with a single click of the mouse. Despite different races, cultures, and nations, everyone or everything is interconnected and interdependent upon one another in modern times due to the development in technology. It has brought dramatic changes in many areas, such as business, politics, and education. In particular, the importance of higher education has come to the forefront in order to make learners ready for a complex, varied, and dynamically changing world. The purpose of this paper is to determine what factors should be considered and what kinds of skills should be taught and learned in adult second and foreign language classes in order for both educators and the learners to become global citizens. Transformational teaching and learning is the key to expand points of view and to increase global awareness through critical reflection. Learning new languages gives the educators and the learners a golden opportunity to experience various cultures, people, and other parts of the world. That is going to be the first step in understanding the differences and similarities among different people and perspectives.

Introduction

Lifelong learning has become indispensable in today’s world, and individuals are required to develop their knowledge and new skills continually due to the rapid changes and demands of society (Carter, 2005). The theory of transformational learning, which intertwines with adult and higher education, is one of the well-recognized theories among scholars for helping lifelong learners to develop their critical and higher order thinking and independent problem solving skills (Cranton & Taylor, 2012). Despite the importance of transformational learning, it is often overlooked and not effectively practiced in many foreign and second language classrooms in higher education institutions. This is due to the lack of instructors trained and educated about transformative instruction and program curricula. Instead, instructors and institutions focus heavily on linguistic elements of the target language, such as syntax, structure, and phonics because test and evaluation results are considered more important than the learners’ learning process and each individual’s cultural, self, and global awareness (Johnson & Nelson, 2010).

On the other hand, in transformational foreign language classes, educators are well aware of the fact that innovation starts with each individual’s imagination and new ideas. Therefore, educators use transformational classroom assessment techniques, curricula, and cultural activities that promote the learners’ critical reflection in order to expand their points of view. The instructors don’t teach what transformational learning is explicitly in class, but they teach the tenets of the theory implicitly in the lessons and with meaningful activities. This results in the cultivation of students’ self and global awareness through interacting with other people.

Learning different languages provides many benefits for adult learners—not only communication skills—including critical reflection about the relation between oneself and other people, deep cultural learning experiences (not only surface level culture),

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opportunities for various jobs, and interactions with a variety of interesting people in the world. This paper examines the global perspectives on transformational learning and international education models in adult and higher education. Also, it examines effective transformational teaching methods and materials in adult foreign and second language classrooms. This includes globally focused curriculum development, various education models and approaches, classroom assessment techniques, and useful facilitation and learning skills. The desired result is to create an effective and safe transformational teaching and learning environment.

Global perspectives on Transformational Learning in adult and higher education

The importance of adult education is growing throughout the world due to the dynamic global economy and new technology. Companies are looking for key people who have broad world-views, multi-tasking skills, and the ability to adapt quickly. Universities want to hire appropriate educators who are capable of developing outstanding individuals. Among many theories, philosophies, and education models, the transformational learning theory is the current center of attention in the adult education field. It requires that the learners examine themselves critically and connect with the world meaningfully. In Western countries, including North America, Jack Mezirow’s transformational learning theory is the most well-known theory in the adult education field. It is a conceptual framework of the adult learning process (Kitchenham, 2008; Dirkx, 1998).

According to Mezirow and Taylor (2009), the definition of transformational learning is reconstructing one’s frame of reference consciously, including one’s beliefs, perspectives, experiences, assumptions, knowledge, values, and biases through rational discourse and critical reflection.

Unlike Mezirow’s perspective, Boyd (1991) and Dirkx (1997) were interested in different dimensions of transformational learning and the importance of emotional, spiritual, and psychological aspects of adult learning. They both stressed the power of the unconscious aspects, including feelings, imagination, and emotional intelligence along with conscious awareness. Although Mezirow, Boyd, and Dirkx had different perspectives on transformational learning processes, they had certain things in common such as the belief that the transformational learning experience starts from an individual’s inner world either consciously or unconsciously. This occurs through self-reflection and interaction with other people; when learners have more life experiences, transformational learning occurs more effectively.

On the other hand, in the European and Asia continents, the theory of transformational learning has developed, been applied, and put into practice differently. For example, in Finland, transformative educators are practicing blended-learning which combines face-to-face (traditional classroom environment) with virtual (online) learning. Work-life related learning is directly linked to the learners’ real life situations in order to maximize their professional growth, creativity, and partnerships between teachers and students. The educators believe that these two methods foster transformational learning experiences in higher education because both of them are practical and developed based on authenticity. They create strong connections and trust among teachers, learners, and peers (Joutsenvirta & Myyry, 2010; Kallioinen, 2009).

Asian countries, such as China, Korea, and Japan, are greatly influenced by Confucius’ learning principles. Confucius emphasized the importance of critical reflection through learning and critical thinking. On this point, Mezirow’s transformation and Confucius’ learning principals have some beliefs in common; however, there are substantial differences between the two perspectives. Mezirow believes that when learners have more life and learning experiences, transformational learning occurs more often and in
higher stages of the personal transformation phases which include a disorienting dilemma; self-examination with feelings of guilt or shame; a critical assessment of assumption; recognition that one's discontent and process of transformation are shared that others have negotiated a similar change; exploration of options for new roles, relationships, actions, planning of a course of action; acquisition of knowledge and skills for implementing one's plans; provisionally trying out new roles; the building of competence and self-confidence in new roles and relationships; and a reintegration of new assumptions into one's life on the basis of conditions dictated by one's new perspectives (Tsao, Takahashi, Olusesi, & Jain, 2006). As Wang and King (2008) clearly stated, “In Mezirow’s model, similar to that of Bloom’s (1956) Taxonomy of learning, which goes from lower levels of learning (characterized by knowledge, comprehension, and application) to higher levels (characterized by analysis, synthesis, and evaluation), transformative learning progresses” (p. 143).

Contrarily, in Asia, the basics, which are the lower level stages in Bloom’s taxonomy and Mezirow’s 10 phases, are the essential parts of the transformational learning process because it is believed that true learning occurs after mastering basic knowledge. Then, the learners can move up to the next level of the learning process. Furthermore, in Asians’ belief systems, meaningful repetition (lower level of Bloom’s taxonomy) gives learners the opportunity to identify their strengths and weaknesses and to build self-identity through critical reflection with the ultimate goal of learning virtue (Wang & King, 2008). Although all these different regions have different beliefs, cultures, and perspectives, they believe that the transformational learning experience will bring a positive change in people’s lives, so that learners can become true lifelong learners. Most importantly, the theories, education models and practices, which have differences and similarities, are significantly linked to the creation of a safe, effective, and positive foreign and second language learning environment. This allows for adult learners to acquire more than mere factual knowledge during the learning of different languages.

Effective transformational classroom management

Teaching is neither just transferring information nor giving lectures about certain content knowledge to students. In higher education language classrooms, building trust between the instructor and the learners is crucial in order to create a safe and friendly learning environment through positive feedback and communication, intercultural learning, and understanding of language differences through meaningful interaction among the students and the instructor (Goulah, 2007). Creating a safe and friendly learning environment is a key factor for the learners to adjust to a new learning environment, which includes cultural differences, language barriers, different types of tests and assignments, rules and policies, and various learning styles and personalities (Brooks-Lewis, 2011).

According to Crose (2011), “Through the use of varying teaching methods, faculty members can assist international students in becoming acclimated to their new cultural environment while also assisting host students in adapting to new cultures being introduced into the classroom”(p. 388). Furthermore, adult learners (university students, in this article) have specific reasons, purposes, and goals for taking foreign language classes: linguistic interest in different languages, college requirement for graduation, interest in other cultures and people, or major and/or minor requirement (Hellermann & Vergun, 2007). Some students achieved language proficiencies such as factual knowledge, including syntax, morphology, phonology, and surface level culture (usually stereotypes) without understanding different cultures, beliefs, and perspectives.
On the contrary, other students did not achieve the same levels of language fluency, yet they experienced transformational learning through critical reflection. Furthermore, the transformational learning experience gave them an opportunity to reconstruct their frames of reference (Johnson & Nelson, 2009). Second or foreign language (SFL) instructors have to find ways to develop both the learners’ academic achievements (language skills) as well as cultural awareness while maintaining a balance between the two while simultaneously using the transformative approach (O’Sullivan, 1999). In the past decades, many educators, scholars, and education administrators have focused on the importance of the teacher’s role in class, while not emphasizing a learner focused style.

In transformational adult SFL classrooms, however, a teacher and the students have equally important roles and responsibilities which provide opportunities for them to see each other as learning partners. Transformational instructors need to create a cooperative, learner-autonomous, and collaborative learning environment. That allows the students to interact with one another in a positive manner and enables them to reflect on their learning processes on their own (Carter, 2005). According to Crose (2011), globalized, culturally diverse, and self-engaged SFL classroom environments maximize the transformational learning experience; it is beneficial not only for the native (host) and international students, but also for the instructor. Transformational instructions and SFL acquisition work well when they are practiced with cultural activities, authentic materials, and curricula which are designed based on a learner-centered approach.

**Transformational curricula with creative cultural activities and authentic materials**

Good curricula are well-organized in a rational sequence, and they include core factors: a clearly stated mission statement, goals, objectives, desirable outcomes, valid and reliable assessments, and an educational philosophy (Diamond, 2008). While the traditional curricula emphasized factual knowledge and learning outcomes, transformational curricula leave enough room for instructors and students to get involved, to collaborate, and to reflect on their progress through critical and creative thinking during the learning process (Au, 2012).

For adult SFL classes, globally-focused curricula integrate cultural awareness, individual’s emotional intelligence, and egalitarian principles from multicultural societies in order to foster transformational learning and to increase global awareness and higher order thinking skills for the learners (Aragao, 2011). Furthermore, meaningful activities and authentic materials are useful and beneficial for learners in that they simulate various situations based on the real world and are beneficial because learners don’t have plentiful opportunities to use the target language outside of the classroom.

There are many interesting and meaningful activities that encourage learners to interact and to get to know each other. Due to the nature of the adult foreign language classroom, students have different nationalities, learning styles, and goals (Gabb, 2003). In addition, their interests and first languages are varied, so the instructor should start with non-threatening activities such as small group discussions, ice breakers, and games. Certain informal activities reduce classroom anxiety and make the learners feel more cooperative and comfortable. Increasing opportunities for global collaboration in the 21st century education requires combining technology in class such as videotaping classroom performances, recording reading and speaking assignments, and using the Internet (Borland, and Pearce, 1999).
In order to foster transformational learning and develop language skills simultaneously, self-directed and self-reflective activities such as reflective journal writing, self-corrections, and drawing pictures are very effective. Peer-grouping, role-playing, and debating are excellent activities for building confidence, cultural awareness, and speaking skills (Cole, 2003). Using multimedia and authentic materials, including food, newspapers, books (reading for pleasure), movies, music, fashion, public transportation systems, and TV shows is a powerful tool to interest learners and to develop their language skills and cultural understanding. Inviting guest speakers (native speakers of the target languages) to a classroom is also a good way to motivate learners. These types of indirect learning experiences—not only focusing on academic textbooks—expand the learners’ points of view and allow them to view their frames of reference critically. Most importantly, the instructor should give enough time and clear instructions to students so that they can accomplish their work as a group (Gabb, 2006). The role of the instructor is crucial for all the in class activities in order to assist, guide, and motivate the students’ transformational learning experience culturally, naturally, and meaningfully in a safe and a positive learning environment. Furthermore, the teacher should be available both inside and outside of the classroom to provide proper help for the learners (De Vita, 2000). Using proper classroom assessment techniques is also one of the vital factors to maximize the learners’ learning experience.

Most university level foreign language classes are test-oriented. Although many instructors and schools try to practice the communicative approach, they have to evaluate their students’ performance in order to see progress (Caudery, 1999). The problem is the tests are too summative in nature, meaning they are conducted at the end of semester. Furthermore, the tests results are not necessarily accurate, and they may not assess the students’ performance effectively due to the limited question types and lack of understanding of certain groups of students who are not familiar with the tests’ formats (Crose, 2011). Particularly, in SFL classrooms, one summative test worth a majority of the student’s grade can lead them to focus only the test, and not on the importance of learning languages in order to use them later in authentic situations. In addition, learners do not have enough opportunities to experience the target language’s cultural values and aspects (Enderson, Plank, Johnson, 2007). Unlike summative assessments, formative classroom assessments, such as portfolio projects, discussions, and reflective journals are ongoing assessment techniques which help the students see their learning progress, and the instructor can provide immediate help for them and adjust the classroom schedule based on the students’ learning progress (Angelo & Cross, 1995). Transformational learning occurs when the learners feel safe, responsible for and proud of their learning.

**Conclusion**

Transformational learning is a mirror that shows one’s limitations, potential, and the direction of his or her future learning. On that point, transformational learning is an endless journey of self-discovery. The interrelationship between transformational learning and global education in adult foreign language classes is significant because they both start from one’s inner-world, including critical reflection, soulful thoughts, emotions, experience, and interactions with other people. Learning different languages in higher education is definitely beneficial and meaningful in order to be reborn as a global citizen who has been transformed and holds a vital role of leadership in the world. A foreign language classroom shows how different people can harmonize and unite, and how each person can contribute to achieving a common goal as a world citizen. Transformational learning and global education clearly convey the message that nobody or nothing is perfect in the world. In higher education, everyone is a learner and a teacher. No one is an extra, but on the contrary, they are all lead actors. When instructors and learners actively get involved in learning and teaching, the learning
environment becomes dynamic, and no hierarchy occurs between the two. It is not important how much someone knows, but it is important how much he or she can share. There are so many good qualities that the instructor needs to have, but the important thing is they can meet the learners’ needs, and lead them to the door to the world. As global learners and teachers, effective communication skills, problem solving skills, and active listening skills are prerequisites to manage a variety of different situations in life, including the best and the worst scenarios. The reason is that this world is being transformed and everything is changing dynamically at this moment. Embracing diversity is the first step for building a global society, and it will bring an innovative change in the world.

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Conversations
Are we actually integrating Transformative Learning? Is Transformative Learning actually working?

Jarrett Jobe, Ph.D. & Stephanie Scott, M.Ed.12

After many discussions at previous conferences and meetings defining the terms, creating initiatives, and championing this philosophy, conference participants were challenged to consider the next steps of TL which included the application and assessment of TL at UCO. Do we see transformation in our students, can we measure transformation in our students, and are we doing what we say we are doing?

One of the primary challenges that exist with transformative learning is consistency of understanding and delivery. There seems to be significant differences in an individual’s understanding of what is considered a transformative learning experience. Combine this with what we know and understand concerning the different methods and processes of student learning, and it is difficult to ascertain which methods are transformative, and for which students these methods are transformative. We learn in different ways, we experience instruction and events in different ways; consistency of transformative learning is a significant challenge. UCO, and other colleges and universities that are engaging in TL, have the task of attempting to create systemic TL experiences that attempt to cover a wide range of student backgrounds who maintain disparate experiences themselves. Agreement on these systemic experiences is an immense point for reflection.

An initial point that was considered for conversation related to the issue of recognizing that each student will experience their education and these transformative experiences differently. While we yearn for consistency, we must recognize that each student will give us varying results, varying degrees of absorption. We must provide the opportunities for students, in each of the areas we deem most appropriate, but opportunities must be seized by the student for transformation to take place. We cannot guarantee the student outcomes, but we can be informed of the correct opportunities to create and engage students that serve as the foundational tenants which help create students who are transformed in thought, deed, and action.

Integrating Transformative Learning

The first topic that was deliberated upon was the process of implementation of TL and how that has/has not affected the integration of TL. For the majority of our faculty and staff the perception of TL is that the process of developing TL and implementing it was very top down. While the principles of TL are principles that faculty and staff do support, the idea persists that there was little conversation that took place at the delivery level of the classroom, or in the individual academic departments. This has created some delay in the overall integration of transformative learning principles. While little contention exists to the importance of these transformative learning principles, integrating these principles seems to be the hurdle for a majority of classrooms, particularly for University core curriculum and lower-level courses. Academia should not wait until upper-division courses to create lab type and research opportunities in all academic areas – particularly general education courses. These intro courses can serve multiple areas of TL if we have buy-in from departments and develop consistent TL experiences for each course. For this process to be successful, significant engagement must be pursued within each academic department. Each discipline/department must

12 Exec. Dir. Of OCU Leadership and Coordinator of Internships, respectively.
take ownership of the best practices for delivering TL principles in their classrooms. Yet some classrooms and subjects seem to transition to these principles of learning more effectively than others, and this can create a challenge to the systemic delivery of TL. Creativity is paramount to the successful implementation of TL in these classrooms. Two overarching key points were shared concerning this topic:

1. **Intentionality with TL** - *We must be intentional in our efforts!* There will be outliers that choose to not consider the principles of TL. If we believe in TL then it must also be tied into course curriculum, promotion, and tenure. All colleges and universities will have to change the old guard that serve as barriers to new learning initiatives if systemic change is to occur.

2. **We must foster continued conversations and development between faculty, administration and student services.** Faculty should serve as the centers of information and teaching while the administration should continue to develop pieces of the TL experience that are better served outside of the classroom. Excellent examples of this at UCO are the Centre for Global Competency and the Volunteer and Service Learning Center. These two offices serve as excellent additions to classroom pursuits that provide opportunities for Global Competency, service, and leadership. More communication and program development between academic departments and these offices could provide tremendous transformative opportunities for our students.

An activity in one of the conversation rooms verified these thoughts. Creating a human visual display, participants were asked to form a line across the room with each wall representing a particular response to the questions. Depending on the question and your response, you would choose to be nearest to one wall or the other. The following questions were asked:

1. **Where are you where transformative learning is concerned?** (The right wall represented “TL is vital to our learning, cannot stay in the status quo” while the left wall represented “angst and concern, detracts from our mission of helping students learn.”)

   A strong majority of the people were closer to the right wall.

2. **Where are faculty and staff in embracing TL?** (The right wall represented TL being integrated in their daily functions and left wall represented hardly at all.)

   The majority of participants approached the hardly at all or immediate left of center.

What we can take from this piece of the conversation is that we have moved from debating the merits of transformative learning as an institution. Transformative learning and the principles espoused have been communicated and shared across the majority of the campus. Two challenges that still exist with integration seems to stem more from buy-in from departments and divisions and creatively adding TL experiences to classrooms that do not at first glance provide opportunity to do so. Creating an environment that fosters the delivery of TL in all corners of the campus and does so effectively will serve as one barometer to success on our campus with this initiative.

**Current methods of implementation**

After discussing the integration of TL across the campus, participants discussed ways they were individually delivering TL experiences to their classrooms and different offices
on campus. One of the principal themes that consistently emerged for faculty and staff that felt they were delivering TL activities was empowering students in their classrooms. For TL, when mastering foundational or key knowledge, students must display two important characteristics: an empirical understanding of the subject and critical thinking, or an understanding of the subject and the relevance it holds in greater knowledge acquisition. For students to truly be “transformed,” they must be able to present and teach the subject matter in a manner that is clear to other students that then leads to greater understanding as the student and the class moves into more difficult concepts and information. Three comments brought this point home for participants:

1. “You can’t make a better light bulb if you don’t know how the first one works.”
2. “Students must take ownership of their learning; if they can teach the subject and/or communicate the subject, transformational experiences are more likely to emerge.”
3. “Pursuing knowledge is paramount to becoming a well-informed citizen. A doctor must understand the political system, why it matters to his profession. An educator must understand science and mathematics pursuits that influence methods of teaching and delivery systems. They do not, and can’t be, experts of every field. Yet appreciation and understanding in these fields, even at their most rudimentary levels, creates students who excel at critical thinking and adaptability, which are two of the most important skills in the current work environment.”

Participants also shared specific examples concerning particular practices and themes that they believed to be effective to developing transformative experiences. These ranged from traditional poster presentations, group projects that focused on presenting information related to test material, faculty student musical duets, classroom research projects that examine a topic related to coursework, and ensuring that students pursue internships and other activities that relate to their professional field. A key distinction was made concerning activity for activity’s sake. If these “activities” are not intertwined with thoughtful and critical endpoints, then the activity is not transformative. Activities must be able to provide an in depth perspective concerning material or innovative thinking.

Yet the overarching theme for this portion of the conversation led to one particular facet of the faculty – student relationship that lies outside of the academic coursework – building trust. Several participants noted that in building trust, credibility is the foundational piece of teaching, mentoring, and challenging. Faculty members must develop the trust of the students – trust that the faculty member can lead them to greater knowledge acquisition, attainment of academic and professional goals. Faculty members must be able to trust students to learn material, come to class prepared and be engaged in learning. If this trust cannot be developed, then there is a serious fracture in the transformative learning experience. This relationship must be developed between faculty and students to ensure the learning process is perceived as valuable and appealing.

Assessment and outcomes

Participants agreed in concert that assessing our efforts with respect to TL is the most vital piece to moving these methods forward. If UCO, and other institutions, cannot report that these experiences move students forward professionally and personally, buy-
in from academia, accrediting agencies and public stakeholders will be negligible. The challenge that exists with assessment is related to consistent measurement and evaluation. Particular experience will need particular assessment tools. Participating in study abroad will most likely produce different perspectives than participating in a service learning project. What if the study abroad program had a substantive service learning component? What if transformative learning experiences only lend themselves to be anecdotal, qualitative assessments such as case studies – every student is a case study in transformative learning. Participants then noted there seems to be two paths to assessment for TL experience: longitudinal measurement and experiential measurement.

1. General assessments that can be used to measure the student’s overall experience during their time at UCO. This longitudinal analysis can be developed as a typical pre and posttest examination would be developed, measuring responses and growth over the student’s entire academic career or each year.

2. Specific assessments that would measure pre-determined experiences after students participated. This could measure the impact of each experience to help develop a better understanding of which activities, events and methods produced more consistent results related to transformative learning.

Creating assessments and processes that measure these items is no easy task. Measuring students that arrive on any campus with varying backgrounds with respect to transformative principles is a difficult endeavor. Selecting the events that individuals consider transformative would be a lengthy process that would take deliberation from every department and division on campus. Yet the difficult path must be pursued to move the idea of TL forward and to assess the impact it maintains on learning and education.

As the conversations ended, many comments returned to some of the initial themes that started previously – these pursuits must begin with collaborative intentions across the entire campus. We must engage each academic department, each administrative division to be successful. This component is paramount to the integration, implementation and assessment of TL. Without faculty and staff trusting each other and the vision of TL, then the fruits of our labor will not be harvested.
Change through practice: 
Client interaction as a tool for Transformative Learning

Amy Johnson, M.F.A., and Rukmini Ravikumar, M.F.A. 
Primary Writers: Julia Radke & Miranda Lloyd

Session provocation: Amy Johnson
This session invited conversation participants from all disciplines who are involved in real world practices in which students work with clients on real projects. The conversation addressed best practices for working with students in a client-based environment, pedagogical techniques that enhance transformative opportunities, and assessment methodologies.

Moderator: Rumi Ravikumar

Introduction
Riding a bike… Playing the piano… Singing the right note… Experiences turn into learning when we are able to recreate a behavior. When children are taught how to ride a bike, most likely they will be given a short explanation of how the bike works, but then theory is immediately put into practice when the child is plopped on the seat and encouraged to pedal. The rider may be given help balancing by the touch of a parent’s sturdy hand or perhaps by some shiny training wheels, but how many children are taught to ride a bike by reading about it or listening to someone talk about it? They could be told a thousand times how to ride, but once they have the experience of riding they will have truly learned. And once learned, they will never forget. It is experience that is the core principle of transformative learning.

It is the same with college students. While their “bikes” look all sorts of different ways, the concept is the same: application creates the most transformative experiences. Some schools are leading the way in this type of pedagogy and getting excellent results while encountering some expected obstacles. During the session “Change through Practice: Client Interaction as a Tool for Transformation,” educators from various institutions and disciplines shared accounts of teaching in “real world” situations. The conversation was focused on successes and challenges faced as students worked directly with clients.

Consequences, risk, and trust
The traditional college experience is made up of structured courses, where the consequences of poor performance in the form of a bad grade are easy to understand and obvious. In this traditional setting consequences are isolated and evaluations are kept to just the student in question. However, when students are doing real work for real clients consequences can be far reaching. If a project is set up incorrectly, something is left unfinished, or a situation is handled poorly, the client is directly affected. For many students, faculty, and clients this great risk/great reward ratio is exhilarating and invigorating. In this type of teaching both the willingness to risk and the willingness to trust is a vital part of what makes transformation possible.

“We try to let the clients know that the students might make mistakes, and to try to understand that,” explains Dr. Susan Scott, from UCO’s College of Education and Professional Studies Department. Preventative measures can also help with the mistakes.

“I give them a handout with dos and don’ts. One of the most powerful things I do is encourage them to get statistics on the client, make them do research about the school

13 Ms. Johnson if the Asst. Dept. Chair of UCO Design, Ms. Ravikumar is Dept. Chair of UCO Design, and Ms. Radke and Ms. Lloyd are Design students in UCO Clocktower and Inktank.
where they are teaching so they feel like they can do something to help if the school is not very good. And let them try to come up with a solution,” says Scott.

Many faculty reiterated the importance of encouraging students to solve problems on their own first but agreed that sometimes the teachers must step in to intervene or mediate. Even in these tough situations students are able to learn by seeing professionalism applied in a real-life situation.

**Pairing students with clients**

Keith Webb, Director of the Illustration Minor in the UCO Department of Design, pointed out that the pairing of students to clients or internships is critical to the success of the hands-on learning model. The criteria used to determine the matches are also crucial. John Ramsey, Director of Student Teaching at OSU, explains their criteria. “We talk to the employer,” he explains, “What does it mean to mentor? These are the forms to access the student. What is their motivation for the student? If they ‘just want help’ then the conversation ends. We want them to want to help someone learn.”

The matches made must then be assessed. Some faculty utilized mid-semester and final evaluations. Some institutions had coordinators devoted specifically to monitoring and evaluating these kinds of hands-on models. Others utilized student and employer surveys in which both groups provided information about the experience and the results were then compared. If the surveys do not match, then there is obviously a problem.

**Failure**

So what happens if they fail miserably? Mandy Horton, Assistant Professor of Design at UCO, explains, “It’s important to remember that if they fail while they are in school, there is still a safety net. We can still catch them. Better to fail here than in the real world—it could cost you a job or a recommendation. There’s a lot to be learned from the failures, too.” Keith Webb agreed, explaining that the school must catch the problem and fix it early, in order to protect the reputation of the school. Rukmini Ravikumar, Chair of the Department of Design at UCO, reminded us that many of these client experiences come at the end of the student’s college career when students have the technical skillsets necessary to be better prepared for success in these experiences.

Professor Horton noticed results that indicate a transformation occurs almost immediately. Students who are involved in client-based projects apply the skills learned to all environments and begin to interact and present themselves and their work more professionally. Other rewards are personal, such as learning the value of working hard on a project, taking ownership of their own work and timelines, and beginning to use phrases such as “my students,” “my clients,” “my projects.”

**Conclusion**

Ultimately, despite the potential risks, the experiences are rewarding. Dr. Scott says that she sees this in action when the students choose something they never would have before entering their experience—such as choosing to work in an urban or poverty-stricken school. Fred Schmidt, Principal at Frankfurt-Short-Bruza Associates, explains “Some students come back (after their internships) and you can see that ‘a-ha’ moment. I hire some of those students. I think those experiences in the professional world help them a lot and they don’t even realize it until later.” Webb agrees. “We had a student who used to bad-mouth the department for its rigor. Recently he sent us a gift basket and a note saying he realized he was being prepared.”
The professional world is becoming more and more a place for students. While obstacles are inevitable and failure is still possible, the benefits far outweigh the risks, for both the schools and students. This is a key part of transformative learning that pushes students further than a structured course, beyond theory, and into the world of practice and constructed knowledge.
How do we communicate the benefits of Transformative Learning?

Courtney James, M.S.14

Within our Transformative Learning Conference Session, we focused on four core points:

1. Identifying the stakeholders that need to understand the benefits of transformative learning
2. Why it’s important to communicate the benefits of transformative learning
3. How to collect information regarding the benefits of transformative learning
4. Action items to communicate the benefits of transformative learning benefits

Identifying stakeholders

To begin, our group discussed how varying groups may need the benefits of transformative learning communicated in different ways. In being in a higher education environment, we recognize that our stakeholders vary from students, staff, faculty, alumni, community members, donors, the Oklahoma Board of Regents, the Higher Learning Commission, and others. However, the way these groups receive information differs in a big way.

In a world where our students are constantly plugged into technology, they oftentimes receive information via Facebook or twitter and may see it as an acceptable way to communicate with their peers or even their institution. When they have a question or comment, they are less likely than a generation before to write a letter or even an email and are more likely to directly post on a wall or send a tweet to share their opinion. A clear difference exists, though, when considering if that is an acceptable way to share information with a donor or even the Oklahoma Regents. These entities often times prefer a hard copy of information and may also want to see measurable objectives and learning outcomes.

The variety in how information is preferred also brought up the question as to why these groups prefer such different methods. The generational difference and access to technology was an obvious answer, but when examining it further, our group discussed it as a matter of the stakeholders taking the information and being able to share it with their peers or other affiliates. For example, a student may take a short piece of information that they learn from an event centered around transformative learning and post it on Facebook or send it in a text to talk about how it benefited them. That same event when shared with the Board of Regents, though, may need to be interpreted and discussed as an immediate budget implication for the following year. As much as our stakeholders and their preferred way of receiving information matter, the reason they are collecting the information and who they are hoping to share it with are just as pertinent.

Why it’s important to communicate benefits

One of the most discussed concepts regarding why it is important to communicate the benefits of transformative learning was the idea that as we look forward to the future, we have to continuously convince people to invest their resources in UCO and in our

14 Asst. Dir., UCO Campus Activities. Ms. James assists in the co-curricular transformative experiences by engaging students in leadership development opportunities.
students. Most often the concept of resources is related to money, but to continue to advance this university, we need individuals and groups willing to invest their manpower, knowledge, time, and other resources to give the university the opportunity to continue to flourish.

In a year where our university is going through an accreditation process with the Higher Learning Commission, we also discussed the importance of communicating the benefits of transformative learning as a means to tell the story of how the university is truly living its mission and transforming students’ lives by helping them learn. Through this communication, our mission becomes more than simply words and becomes a means to hold our programs, initiatives, faculty, and staff accountable to something that will see to a better all-around educational opportunity for all of our students.

Collecting information

Before any information can be disseminated, our group believes we need to have a consistent way of collecting information. Before we can communicate the benefits of transformative learning, we have to understand them through our students’ eyes. A common means of collecting information that was discussed was utilizing focus groups, but we also think it is important to intentionally seek out other opportunities to collect information.

The first means to collect information that was discussed was to utilize the opportunities that exist within the classroom. We know that an intentional learning opportunity exists each and every time a student steps into a classroom, so if we can utilize professors to conduct assessment through survey or observation, we believe we could use that information to better understand what transformative learning experiences are happening within the classroom. Additionally, with faculty knowing that this is part of their classroom assessment experience, we thought it might lead to a more direct approach to teachers expressly stating what transformative learning outcomes students should be obtaining through their experiences in the classroom.

Additionally, our group discussed the idea that it is important to not only collect information from students in their time at UCO, but also in their professional career once they leave us. It’s one thing to say that we are doing something while our students are here and learning, but it’s another to actually see the Six Tenants as something that positively affected an individual to be a prepared, productive member of society. If we were able to collect information from a first employer or from the individual directly in the year following when they leave UCO, we would have additional information as to whether our transformative learning outcomes were beneficial and effective in a student’s time at UCO.

By collecting this information from employers and individuals as they leave the institution, we can also judge when the needs of our community and society begin to change. As time goes on, we would be ignorant to think our learning outcomes can remain static as our world’s needs change. By continuing to receive feedback from these constituents, we can continue to adapt for the future.
Action items

Throughout the session, the majority of our time was spent on creating ideas for how we can communicate the benefits of transformative learning. Prior to getting into that discussion, though, there was a general consensus that we needed to better market just what transformative learning is—specifically at UCO—and what it means on our campus. Faculty and staff have been conditioned to understand the Central Six, but when bringing these up in our session, one student in attendance had never heard of them. Before we can communicate the benefits of transformative learning, we need to teach the pillars of what is rooted at our institution. One initial idea presented was to market the Six Tenants through colors. Each time we focus a program or initiative around one of those Tenants, we could use a color so that students begin to be conditioned to understand what the colors mean and what they are rooted in.

Once we were able to get the branding of the Central Six and Transformative Learning down, our group believed that we need to focus on communicating the new initiative to students. Our students, after all, will one day become alumni and potentially donors and if they have an understanding now, it will continue into their life post-graduation. Before you can talk about graduation, though, our group recognizes that we need to focus on a student’s first day on campus as a chance to begin communicating what transformative learning is and what the benefits are. There was a general consensus that our students are coming into life at Central with the expectation that they are going to be transformed and many of them are in their time here both in classes and extracurricular activities, but we are not intentionally having that discussion with them. Professors scan over it in their syllabi as a required course topic and those planning extracurricular activities are not intentionally talking about the various Central Six tenants.

As discussed earlier, though, different stakeholders may need the benefits of transformative learning communicated to them in different ways. Some of the more traditional means of advertising were discussed, including newsletters, emails, and other means. With a focus on the individual student that UCO continually talks about, the idea of inviting individuals to participate in an advisory board arose. Giving individuals the chance to serve in their capacity would allow them to be seen as a transformative learning ambassador for the university and would give them a unique chance to share their perspective on transformative learning with others.

In terms of sharing perspectives, our group also believes that we need a direct way to collect students’ experiences, and to use them to share our story. If we can have our students actually show things they did to be transformed, they can use that information to show how it is going to help a future employer or can show a potential student a real life example of how a student was transformed at UCO. If we can create an opportunity for students to share their stories and can empower them to do so, we are also arming them with the ability to verbalize their experiences and communicate them with others.
Conclusion

Through discussing the stakeholders, the importance of communicating the benefits, how to collect information, and action items, our group at the 2012 Transformative Learning Conference was able to discuss and assess the current environment surrounding transformative learning at the University of Central Oklahoma and how it can be improved as we move towards the future. While our group noticed some challenges that may exist, the potential for the future and how our university communicates benefits to our stakeholders lies in utilizing our community to tell our story so we can consistently improve.
How do we assess Transformative Learning?: Ideas for evaluation and the pitfalls of assessment

Amanda Horton, M.F.A., with Melissa Santana, M.F.A., & Joanna Meachum

The University of Central Oklahoma has instituted the practice of Transformative Learning campus wide, and departments across campus are finding ways to incorporate the six tenets of Transformative Learning within their courses to better meet the educational needs of today’s students and to better prepare them to be productive, creative, ethical and engaged citizens. This raises the question, “How do we know we have achieved the goals we have set for ourselves?” Now that we have put theory into practice, how do we determine if it’s working or not? The goal of this session was to engage members of the panel in a conversation about their ideas on how to assess where we are in terms of reaching our goals with Transformative Learning.

In the article, Transformative learning: Theory to practice, Mezirow (1997), states that, “Transformative learning is the process of effecting change in a frame of reference.” He describes transformative learners as those who “move toward a frame of reference that is more inclusive, discriminating, self-reflective, and integrative of experience.” But how do we know if our efforts are truly effecting this change? At the 2012 UCO Transformative Learning Conference members of this conversation discussed ways to determine if our goals are being reached.

Dr. Sims set the tone for the session by encouraging all of the participants to take part in the conversation and to present their ideas for the assessment of Transformative Learning. What followed was spirited discussion on various methods that could potentially be used for evaluation. It was very evident by the participation in the conversation that everyone in the session was sincere in his or her contribution to this effort, but the difficulty lies in how you measure something that is intangible. A variety of methods were discussed including pretest and posttest, questionnaires with either multiple choice or essay questions, and personal testimonials; discussion also included involving assessment methods already in place. Every suggestion that was produced seemed to be accompanied by more questions and concerns about drawbacks and shortcomings of these methods.

Of the methods of evaluation discussed by the group for assessing transformative learning, the one that seemed to resonate with the group as having to have the most potential might be the pretest-posttest method. This method would be used to gauge students’ feelings about issues and areas of interest to see if their thoughts or opinions change during their college career. It was suggested that the pretest would be issued to incoming freshman to gauge sympathies on issues that affect the world on a larger scale. The group even made some suggestions of what types of issues this method should address, such as student views or perceptions on global warming and religion. The same test would also be given to students upon their graduation in order to determine if any shifts have happened in their viewpoints on these world issues.

But this method raised some very valid concerns. First off, how do we determine the questions for both of these tests? What is the best way to truly assess the attitudes of

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15 Ms. Horton is a UCO professor of design technology, design studio, and history of graphic design. Ms. Santana is a UCO graduate student, and Ms. Meachum is a UCO student. The Moderator for this Conversation was Dr. Jeanette Sims, Asst. Prof., UCO Dept. of Marketing.
students towards these issues? The challenge would be to determine a set of questions that could be used as a tool to measure the growth of students and to conclude if they are indeed on their way to becoming “productive, creative, ethical and engaged citizens and leaders serving our global community.” It was mentioned in the session that the questions on the pretest-posttest should be geared towards each of the six tenets.

Very early in the discussion it was pointed out that the test being proposed by the group was primarily relying on the measurement of students’ attitudes. This could prove to be challenging as attitudes are difficult to measure, and students may tell us only what they think that we want to hear. Mcleod (2009) states “In order to preserve a positive self-image, people’s responses may be affected by social desirability. They may not [well] tell about their true attitudes, but answer in a way that they feel socially acceptable.” Assessing attitudes alone would make it difficult to determine whether or not we are truly affecting a change with transformational learning. Additionally the measurement of attitudes through scales doesn’t allow us to predict behaviors, according to Osgood (1957). Dr. Jeff King, Executive Director of Center For Excellence in Transformative Teaching and Learning, made a clear point that it is very hard to measure something that you can’t see. It might therefore be better to measure behaviors than attitudes; he pointed out that it is so much easier to see those behavior changes than attitudes.

Also, what about timing? Transformative learning can be very personal, and we don’t really know how or when that moment will happen, or exactly in what way or possibly how deeply the individual will be affected. The moment of realization of personal growth may not be apparent to the students at the time it is happening, and they may have to reflect back on their past to really determine the moment when they were changed. The test as proposed would determine if the student’s ideas or feelings had changed from their first year to their last at the university, but what if they did not realize the shift until after graduation? That wouldn’t mean their education did not necessarily affect the change. What if the education does effect the change we wish to see but it doesn’t manifest in the student until after they graduate? Chris Snoddy, Director of Student Conduct at the University of Central Oklahoma, expressed his concern that students may not be able to express their transformation at the time of their graduation. In order to address this sort of delayed realization of transformation it would be necessary to perform a secondary posttest after graduation, but when? Four years after graduation? Or perhaps even longer? It may be a good idea to approach graduates sooner rather than later to reflect on the effects of their education.

As the discussion continued the group realized there were a lot of concerns that were being raised about this method of assessing Transformative Learning, and it was proposed that maybe we should consider two different ways of assessing. From the beginning the dialogue had mostly been centered on a quantitative method of assessment, but what about qualitative? It was suggested that personal testimonies from the students might be a superior method in order to ascertain the quality and breadth of their learning experiences at the university and, through this method, we might be better able to understand the impact that transformative learning has made in the lives of the individual students. After all, are we more concerned with the quality of the effects that transformative learning has on the lives of students or the quantity of students that are affected?

After much debate on student assessment, the conversation focused on assessing faculty members and individual programs. The session then looked to consider methods of evaluation already in place. Not only would it be more efficient but also more cost-
effective to integrate the proposed method of assessing transformative learning into methods that are already in place. The university already has assessment plans in place for all levels; there currently are assessments in place for the university as a whole, as well as each college, department, faculty and staff members. The panel questioned the ease of attaching the method for assessing transformative learning into these evaluation methods already in place. While there seems to be no need to reinvent the wheel, there were also some concerns raised that this method would need to allow for individual approaches to this assessment; if we assess everyone equally we may lose areas of specialty. Dr. Rudi Nollert, Chair of the Department of Modern Languages at the University of Central Oklahoma, foresees a problem if a department is assessed on all the aspects of Transformative Learning. His suggestion was that the institution should work as a whole instead of each department individually trying to achieve everything. No matter what format of evaluation is used we want to ensure that departments are allowed to maintain the areas that make them unique. So the question was raised, how do we assess the faculty? It was suggested that Transformative Learning be a part of the faculty assessment, similar to what is already in place regarding teaching, scholarship, and service. The response from the group was similar to what Dr. Nollert had previously stated; once again, the faculty should not try to attain all six tenets in everything they do, but rather contribute in their own special way.

Another way to utilize evaluation methods already in place would be to look at how transformative learning affects retention. The university already keeps extensive records of student enrollment numbers; this raises the question: would it be more effective to determine retention and how many students are actually graduating as a means of assessing transformative learning? This method, of course, may make the assumption that all students who are transformed necessarily graduate and that lack of transformation leads to lack of retention. But there are certainly other factors to consider when looking at numbers in retention, not the least of which is funds. It would be another study altogether to look at retention and to determine if transformative learning is having an effect on how many students are seeing their education to completion.

Conclusions

The session examined many ideas for evaluating the effectiveness of transformative learning; pretest and posttest methods were considered as well as qualitative versus quantitative methodologies. The group also considered the merits of essay questions against multiple-choice in determining the quality of students’ learning experiences. Contemplation was made of utilizing assessment measures that were already in place. And while no definitive choices were made the group carefully weighed each idea of assessment and took the time to discern the pros and cons of each evaluation method, which led to a better understanding of the difficulties that comes with these methods of evaluation.

The conclusion that the session members made about assessing transformative learning is that it may be necessary to re-evaluate the goals of transformative learning before an effective method of assessment can be put into place. Additionally, in order to better predict the right methodology or methodologies for assessing transformative learning it would be better to have a clearly defined research question. It seems that at this point the question may be too broad. Assessing transformative learning at the University of Central Oklahoma is a big undertaking, but if we keep our goals and vision in mind we will find an effective way to determine if we really are providing students with the tools that they need to be productive and engaged citizens in the communities that they serve.
References


Joining the conversation -- the transformative faculty-student relationship: Student perspectives and persistence

Kathy M. Petroff, M.Ed., & Kristi Archuleta Frush, Ed.D.16

Tinto (1993) wrote extensively about college and university freshman—that the relationship between the professor and the student matters. How much does it matter? Tinto suggested 30 years ago that it matters enough to keep students persisting. Following the immutable point would mean the literature about college and university learners, specifically freshman, must be filled with research, studies, and surveys delineating the pertinent aspects of the relationship that in fact keep the learners persisting. This is not the case as little information exists that examines the professor-student relationship. The discussion found herein drills deeply into the notion first espoused by Tinto, but with an important twist: what do learners perceive about the relationship, and does that relationship help them persist in higher education?

Background

The literature in the field of Freshman Year Seminar (FYS) and student success courses is dominated by quantitative studies. The modern FYS, established in the early 1970’s (Upcraft and Gardner, 1989) has grown and has become commonplace in colleges and universities. This body of work has morphed in the last twenty years to include student success courses (SSC) designed with an underprepared student population in mind. An extensive body of research has been published that demonstrates FYS and SSC courses yield students who persist longer and show other benefits (O’Gara, Karp and Hughes, 2009). The gap in the research or what is absent from the field is a qualitative understanding, particularly from the students’ perception, explaining their increased ability to persist; moreover, little research exists that provides even a limited view into the world of the relationship between learner and professor.

There are many aspects of relationship between professor and student present inside the classroom. An aspect of this relationship not often examined is trust. Knowles (1970) and Henschke (1989) understood the significance of trust and its valuable role in creating a classroom climate conducive for learning. Few others have examined, researched, or written about trust as a matter of good classroom practice.

The SoTL study

In a community college classroom in the fall 2012, in a freshman student success class (SSC), the SoTL (Scholarship of Teaching and Learning) study begun. The purpose of the study was to ask the learners, from their perspective, about the relationship between themselves and their professor. Several sets of data were collected through a written journal throughout a semester-long class.

One of the data sets was created by the professor/researcher and was called the professor-student interaction journal. Four questions were asked of the students regarding the relationship they perceived between themselves and the professor. Additionally, the students were asked to complete a questionnaire about trust between themselves and the professor. The professor-student interaction journal was given at

16 Ms. Petroff is completing her doctoral work at Lindenwood University in St. Charles, Missouri. Dr. Frush is Asst. Prof. in UCO Dept. of Adult Education and Safety Sciences.
two different points in the semester. The trust questionnaire was given as a pre/post survey at the beginning and at the end of the semester.

Findings

The learners in the SSC who participated in the SoTL study in the fall 2012 class shared their thoughts about their interactions with their professor. One of the four questions from the interaction journal read: *At what times during this month in your STR 050 class do you feel most engaged (active and interested) in what is happening in class?* The responses to that question began to describe what was happening in the professor-student relationship, “When she calls me out it kinda makes me feel important.”, “…we do a lot of talking about the topic.”, “She likes to hear a response from everyone..” and “Making or encouraging everyone in the class to participate in discussions.” Clearly, students wanted the professor to listen to them, and not just hear their comments. It was evident that meaningful discussion and dialogue are an important part of the relationship between learner and professor and are an important part of the reciprocal relationship that fosters a welcome classroom learning environment.

Another question asked of the students from the professor-student interaction journal was: *Were there any actions (or inter-actions) taken this month in class by the professor that were helpful or affirming?* Respondents all indicated, ‘Yes’. Learner feedback follows: “…if I need to talk to her she will make the time..”, “…[she] asked and listened to me speak about my goals…”, “Her beliefs in her students.” The students wanted to know that their professor cares about them, and that the professor will listen to learner concerns and feedback to such a degree that the learner better understand where they are in relationship to their own goals and to their own progress.

The conversation

As the presenters embarked on the Conversation, titled: The Transformative Faculty-Student Relationship: Student Perspectives and Persistence at the 2013 Transformative Learning Conference, the findings from data recently collected for the SoTL study were shared along with presenter experiences and information from Tinto’s keynote address. The room was filled with undergraduate and graduate learners, professors, and staff from various learning settings. The data from the interaction journal and trust questionnaire were explained and the group was asked to share their thoughts from their experiences. Small samples of the data from the SoTL study were provided and the group was asked to share their thoughts about what they were reading. A dynamic discussion developed.

The presenters opened the discussion with a brief overview of trust, and they explained the framework for trust that was created by Knowles and Henschke (1989). The presenters then briefly visited about a general lack of research about trust in classroom settings. The participants asked numerous questions, beginning with, “Why did you pick trust?” The researcher/presenter answered: “I scored very high on the MIPI” and I started asking my learners, “Do you think I trust you? I didn’t get it before.” The discussion continued with the respondent thinking out loud and stating, “So what does it matter if I score high in trust and my learners don’t trust me?”

Another participant asked, “Then you took it to persistence, how?” The researcher/presenter stated, “Well, I haven’t taken it to persistence. I’ve not taken it to persistence because there isn’t anything written about the relationship between them.” A
participant asked, “It is one thing to believe that you trust your students…it’s another thing if they perceive that you trust them?” The presenter, in unison with participant, answered, “It’s another thing to know whether or not they feel that trust.”

Another participant added, “Now I’m looking at it. You may have a great trust factor going for you, but trying to fish out the various levels at which persistence is meaningful, such as persistence of a student within a department.” The participants in this discussion began to understand trust and its many complexities. The conversation also helped the presenters by adding to the understanding of trust, by leaping into connecting trust to persistence, and then connecting persistence to the many levels where it may be visible.

So much of the feedback and conversation shared by the group occurred dynamically, as various individuals and constituencies played off of one another. For example, another participant jumped in and shared, “This is my Ph.D. area, student success, retention, and persistence. What I see when I look at this data from the SoTL data does not look to me like I am seeing trust as much as what I am seeing is students are getting emotional support. They are getting support and they like it and they’re glad.” Near the back of the room, there is a group of students who wanted to join the conversation. One of the student participants jumped into the dialogue and added, “From a student’s perspective, that is trust to us….because if we can count on the professor and we can talk to them and have that time, that one-on-one time. Trust may not even be defined the same way. Students may have a different view of trust than the professor or facilitator.”

As the conversation built and time wound down, another participant added, “Some of the comments that were made here, I see a lot in here,” referring to the written data shared. “It kind of reminded me of what Tinto said and what the students are saying. We don’t rise to low expectations, so if we place the expectation that you can teach and you can learn with me, but I don’t think that our teachers…I would like it if they had more training how to do that effectively. When you bring it into the classroom and just across the board, all of our faculty and teachers could use a little more empowerment in those opportunities and those teaching methodologies to flip the classroom, to trust their students more…”

Conclusion

The lively conversation was infused with participants’ experiences and perspectives of trust in professor-student relationships. The foundation of the discussion was presenter knowledge from practice and literature, data recently collected for a SoTL study, and the keynote address provided by Tinto at the 2013 Transformative Learning Conference. The conversation confirmed the presenters’ assertion that trust matters, but that it is imperative to further investigate how it is operationalized in learning settings. Additionally, further investigation is needed to understand why trust in the professor-student relationship matters and how it may contribute to student persistence.

References


Integrating Transformative Learning within the core curriculum

Mary Carver, Ph.D., J. Sunshine Cowan, Ph.D., Rachelle Franz, Ed.D.,
Matt Hollrah, Ph.D., Nicholas Shahbazi

Description

The core curriculum is a vital and vibrant part of the university curriculum. It provides a wealth of opportunity for students to embrace liberal education and for faculty to incorporate tenets of transformative learning. However, students often feel their education does not begin until they begin courses in their majors. This conversation addresses transformative learning as a vehicle to enhance the liberal educational ideals of social responsibility, communication, problem solving, and analytical skills. The following questions are addressed in this session: How is the incorporation of transformative learning different from traditional teaching in core courses? What are reasonable inquiry projects for first-year students? What do teachers who employ transformative learning in their classrooms do? Participants in this session discuss how to teach core courses in ways that prompt transformative learning in general education and seek to identify best practices of faculty teaching and apply these across the core.

Discussion

Mary Carver: What is transformative learning? Of course most of us believe our students are transformed when they complete the course. However, we have to be able to prove that students are transformed. In order to document this, I started having my students do reflections and describe how they have changed. It is amazing what you might find.

In one of my public speaking classes I had a student who was very quiet, and clearly didn’t like being there. She had had a really rough home life, was bullied, had friends who committed suicide, resorted to cutting, and really just was trying to keep it together. What I found out through these reflections was that she had a twitter account with a thousand followers because of knowing three friends who committed suicide. Through social media she had been asked to speak in front of people about her experiences. She never thought she could do this; however, after getting through Fundamentals of Speech she realized she could now. You realize that students have been transformed through just attending class, if you do it right. It doesn’t necessarily have to be that big. The handout we have given you is from Re-inventing Education (1998). We really want you all (audience) to participate and help with feedback and things we can do to better transform the learning experience with regard to general education in college.

Rachelle Franz: A lot of you teach classes in the core curriculum and also out of it. When we talk about the core, how do you see transformative learning differ from the normal coursework we encounter?

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17 Mary Carver, UCO Mass Communication, Fundamentals of Speech Core Curriculum Coordinator; J. Sunshine Cowan, MPH, MCHES, UCO Kinesiology & Health Studies, Core Curriculum Committee Chair; Rachelle Franz, UCO Kinesiology & Health Studies; Matt Hollrah, UCO English, Director of Composition; and Nicholas Shahbazi, English, Graduate Student in Composition and Rhetoric. As members of the UCO Core Curriculum Committee, the authors are committed to the integration of transformative learning into core courses. Dr. Carver, Dr. Franz, and Dr. Hollrah coordinate core courses, and in doing so provide a framework for the course for all full-time and adjunct faculty who teach in their area. Dr. Cowan serves as the Chair of the UCO Core Curriculum Committee and seeks to identify best practices of faculty teaching in and coordinating core courses and apply these across the core.
Guest1: I teach a core education class where I teach science for non-science majors, and half my class consists of seniors who have no experience in the field. And when you have half the class freshmen and half seniors it becomes problematic on how to balance this class.

Guest2: What does the class cap at?

Guest1: 30-40

Rachelle Franz: It is really about setting an environment. Having a reflective piece helps; that’s where I see transforming begin. Freshman through senior year hopefully are transformed. I want to see them make a transformation that impacts the rest of their lives. A simple assignment asking, “What did you learn? How does it change your thinking? French fries are not sweet potatoes.”

Guest3: I was wondering if you could have the students help one another.

Guest1: Seniors are so busy going off to Washington to do presentations it’s hard to get them to match up that way.

Guest4: Require them to work in a field they want to work in with professional colleagues. Have them discuss the topic of the class outside of the classroom and come back to class to discuss what they’ve learned.

Guest1: the more of this you do the more time it takes.

Guest4: true

Rachelle Franz: How many of you feel that with core classes you have a hard time getting students to transform because of time?

Guest5: I think the difference between transformative and non is about the participation you get out of the students. I get a lot of nonmotivated students. I see three problems:

1) faculty don’t want to adopt it;
2) ones that do want to don’t know how;
3) and students come out of high school systems where they’ve learned to memorize and would rather not be challenged. The challenge is not transforming the class but the students’ perceptions.

Matt Hollrah: We have to transform ourselves first. Second, there is a lot of initial resistance, however when they are put in a position where they have no choice but to participate. Then they will be receptive.

Rachelle: One of the challenges is most students have to work. So to ask them to go out and do more is hard. One student commented that when she got to her upper-level classes she reacted, “What! You’re asking me to do what?” Our goal is to introduce them early on and to tell them they are their own expert and they get to lead where it goes.

Sunshine Cowan: One of the things we looked at were what are reasonable inquiry projects. We ask students to take prior knowledge and create a project out of that. What’s an appropriate, behavior modification project? Students bring in experience with
their own knowledge on health. But I tell students not to worry, they don’t have to suddenly change, but build up information to learn more about health and hopefully eventually change.

Guest6: I teach MA first years in Lit. We have five subjects, one ethics and one leadership skills. Students get five weeks to ask and learn from one another then on their own.

Sunshine Cowan: Any students have anything to share? How you were in a core class where you were able to do a project.

Guest7: I teach Comp One; we spend the first month and half on writing. We discuss the benefits of writing and how it helps and not something they just do. We read and discuss Peter Elbow and discuss the writing process. I have my students writing about their own writing process. It’s an exercise to get past the barriers of students doubting themselves, “I can’t write,” and move them to be more confident. It’s a paradigm shift.

Sunshine Cowan: Yes, get the students to say I can do something through the class.

Guest7: I don’t give them any models and allow the students to figure it out.

Guest8: One of the challenges, I’m from Texas, one of the problems is mandates. We have seven outcomes to the core as well as ten to the course level. Each has to be reviewed by the board. So how do we make the transformation to transformative learning when we are barely getting what we are required to do within the sixteen weeks?

Sunshine Cowan: People who aren’t in education, transformative isn’t even in their vocabulary, and they are making mandates.

Guest9: Cover material vs. Transformative Learning? I haven’t had anyone answer succinctly. By not acknowledging this we do ourselves a disservice. The coverage is less; I have decided to take a look at my course and determine this course discusses one term and as a result focuses on this. There are terms that are in the margins of books that I tell students we will not be covering. The dichotomy is there, and we need to figure out how to get around it. Some teachers even change the grading scale.

Sunshine Cowan: (nods) Check and check plus.

Guest9: Yes extremely different.

Guest10: In Texas our funding is tied to this coverage. What I worry about is in the process of trying to learn new content it does so at the detriment of the other content.

Sunshine Cowan: We have a new director of assessment. She sees assessment as feedback and not for its own sake. We have assessed each core, but she said “no” you assess the capstone in the end and then reflect back on the core.

Guest8: One of the interesting things we’ve discovered is the board in Texas is requiring us to prove we’ve made our students transform.

Guest12: I’m not teaching in Texas, but the community college transformations are different, a different dynamic.
**Guest10:** Yes, in Texas it’s an exam and not a lived experience in which they gauge transformative learning. Our accrediting body says we have to have program accountability.

**Guest14:** You may have an opportunity to design a program that rethinks the way you assess students. All in Political Science decided they were going to design something together and became excited from that.

**Matt Hollrah:** I’m not going to pretend this is going to solve everything. If you get to decide your own concepts then this may help. In doing this research scholars tried to identify common characteristics in teaching and learning environments. Two economists came up with the threshold concept. Once the student learns this concept they walk through a threshold. It allows the students to do many things, to act as if they are the ones in the field. Thresholds are troublesome, irreversible, integrative, bounded (or boundaries), discursive (conversations), reconstitutive (comeback), and have liminality (describes a transmissive moment) (Cousin, 2010). Students would be given information intellectually absurd but once they get it they are like “oh.” Audience is something I teach my students; they know they have an audience. However, in writing you want students to do what they need to in order to learn about the more complex audience (not the teacher). Once they get this concept and see that they may be writing for others that may not know the information, then they learn to write beyond just the professor. If you embed threshold concepts in your classroom then you can assess whether or not they’ve learned it at the end of the class. It is difficult, though, because some of the content which you wanted to cover gets left out, but these concepts lead to being successful in other classes.

[Example on power point]. The following template sentences may help you ferret out some possibilities:

*When I understood _____, then I could _____.*
*When students understand _____, then they can _____.*

**Guest13:** I teach sociology; an important concept is theoretical perspectives. You would teach the major perspectives and try to get students to learn the level analysis that’s being used. She should be able to look at a phenomenon and frame it within those perspectives or be able to label each perspective through writing. However, I want to try something called first passes, where students aren’t graded but try to understand the general concepts without the worry of grading.

**Matt Hollrah:** Would you say that other teachers are doing what you are doing? What does that allow students to do?

**Guest13:** Yes, and they would be able to pick out what’s going on…

**Mary Carver:** Our goal today was that you would leave with new thoughts and ideas, and I know we just brushed the surface. I would love for you all in the next five minutes or five hours think about what you can do differently in the classroom. Maybe it’s an assignment or a quiz that you throw out so you can do more of a transformative learning approach where you can allow students more opportunity to get experience within class. I encourage you all to take a few minutes to write down ideas you have or may have heard that could help you to move in this direction. We appreciate all your feedback and
contributions you’ve made today. The core is the core and we appreciate everything you all do.\textsuperscript{18}

\textsuperscript{18} This is where a natural conclusion was found, thus the authors end at this point for the sake of length.
Transforming self to facilitate learning

Rachelle Franz, Ed.D., Ed Cunliff, Ph.D., & Tracey Romano

In 1978, Jack Mezirow introduced the first theory of transformative learning (Taylor, 1998). This type of learning provides experiences, both academically and personally, to students in order to assist them in becoming “ethical and engaged citizens” (UCO, 2012d, para. 1). Transformative learning is a process that involves cycles of cognitive dissonance, critical reflection, rational dialogue, and committed action that require the student to take an active role in his or her learning (Gliscozinski, 2011; Mezirow, 2000). At the center of transformative learning, which changes the way a learner understands and interacts with his or her world, is Mezirow’s theory of reflectivity (Wang & King, 2006). This reflective thinking is what leads to the perspective transformation and fundamental change experienced by the learner (Wang & King, 2006). Nearly all theorists in the area of transformative learning (Cranton, 2006; Dirkx, 1998; Freire, 1974; Mezirow, 1978) promote critical reflection as a key element of transformative learning. Cranton (2002) defined critical reflection as “the means by which we work through beliefs and assumptions, assessing our validity in the light of new experiences or knowledge, considering our sources, and examining underlying premises” (p. 65).

In order to deepen our personal understanding of the importance of critical reflection in the classroom and to encourage ourselves to engage in this technique, two faculty members and one staff member at the University of Central Oklahoma, facilitated a session entitled, “Transforming Self to Facilitate Learning” at the 2013 Transformative Learning Conference. While appreciating our own excitement for the topic of personal transformation, we were curious to discover if other faculty members, staff members, and students understood personal transformation and critical reflection and valued its place at the university.

Transformation is not an “add-on” (Mezirow, 1997, p. 11); rather, it is an experience of identifying preconceived ideas, beliefs, and attitudes. Once these are identified, the learner is able to critically reflect and engage in rational discourse with others. This process allows the learner the opportunity to realize a transformative learning experience. Efforts to find a single definition of transformative learning may be difficult, but there are certain principles such as critical self-reflection that guide the process. Our session encouraged critical self-reflection for all participants and in doing so led to rich conversations about creating more opportunities on our campus for this type of practice.

We facilitated a session to allow participants the opportunity to experience transformative learning. During the session, we encouraged active participation from all attendees, and the room was full of energy from the moment our discussion began. Our conversation explored the importance of receptiveness to personal transformative learning for the educator and others, and what follows is an overview of the questions we posed, and the responses from faculty members, staff, and students.

How important is it for the faculty – staff – student to practice and model self-reflection in order to encourage self-reflection in others? Explain.

19 Dr. Franz is professor of Kinesiology & Health Science. Dr. Cunliff is Professor of Adult and Higher Education. Both of these professors have been involved in UCO’s TL efforts since the beginning and teach a seminar in TL. Dr. Cunliff has presented on TL in a several national conferences as well as local venues. Ms. Romano is a UCO graduate student.
There was 100% agreement with the importance of self-reflection on the part of all participants. There were two faculty members that agreed with the majority, but were unsure of the modeling side of the self-reflection in that they experience self-reflection as a private process.

Staff: “I think it’s important to practice what we want students to buy into. If we want students to be transformed by their experiences, but we aren’t willing to be open to personal transformation ourselves, we are under the assumption we are perfect. And we’re NOT. No one is. As a staff member, my interactions with students … the transformation cannot be planned. It catches me by surprise”.

Faculty: “Essential--Knowing who you are and understanding the importance of growth better prepares students for embracing this expectation, growth, change”.

Faculty: “It’s critical. To encourage self-reflection in others, I need to have an understanding (ongoing) of the process--that it’s often uncomfortable and brings more questions than answers”.

Student: “We need to see these practices modeled. We need to see that they are valuable and effective so that we in turn can attach meaning to reflective practices. The telling model for this will not work”.

What are the conditions that encourage self-reflection in your life and profession?

Time was the one, overwhelming major theme. Responses from faculty, staff, and students indicated that time was an essential condition for self-reflection. In responses from nearly 40 participants, time was mentioned 11 times, while failure was mentioned five times and change was mentioned three times.

Faculty: “Looking outside of what is known through reading, visiting with others, writing, reflecting, quiet time, prayer”

Faculty: “Retreats-- Conversations with colleagues-- Exposure to new information”

Staff: “Time--Personal faith--Family life and goals--Conversations with students--Personal trials/failures”

Student: “The conditions are usually ripe when I am in a challenging situation. It may be professional, academic, or personal--Schedule time and place--Faced with something that doesn’t meet our existing paradigm”

How or what do you do to build self-reflection into your daily life and work?

Faculty: “Schedule downtime—Journal—Walks— Go to bed early or wake up early”

Faculty: “Time in a Labyrinth”

Faculty: “Quiet time” at the beginning of the day—Making time for colleagues--Build into classes

Faculty: “Schedule it! Close my door! Discourse with colleagues”

Staff: “Keep a planner-- that allows me to make time to reflect--Talk to others—co-workers, friends, family about their ideas and experiences”

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Staff: “Regular journaling - Conversation with trusted peers”

Staff: “Journaling, reading, listening to music-- Allowing myself to be disconnected— Talking to trusted friends

Staff: “Deliberately plan for reflection time, create space/atmosphere”

Student: “I meditate and journal--I listen to music and reflect on my day--I make lists”

Student: “After classes I take 15 minutes and then waiting for my son at school”

Student: “Being alone--Ask what did I get out of this unit in this class that I can apply?-- Set aside time--What did I get?”

**What are critical questions you need to ask yourself to encourage or support transformation?**

We noted two, large themes: questions related to *improvement* and those related to *purpose*. Items related to improvement dealt with examining strengths, gaps, personal and professional focus. The dominant thought was “how do I do (whatever it is) better? Items related to purpose questioned what is my purpose, am I doing this for me or others, do I have purpose or have I lost that sense? Within this we found questions also of passion/joy, risk-taking and relevance. As a whole, 20 participants commented on *improvement* and 19 commented on *purpose*.

The University of Central Oklahoma “exists to help students learn by providing transformative education experiences to students so that they may become productive, creative, ethical and engaged citizens and leaders serving our global community” (UCO, 2012d). As this mission drives the institution’s culture, faculty and students need to be educated about transformative learning and what is required of them to create this type of environment. Transformation is about change. While change is at the heart of the human experience, humans tend to resist change, as it often creates tension with currently held attitudes, beliefs, ideas, and perspectives. This can be unsettling for students, and critical reflection may be a new practice for many students. Faculty who value, model, and provide opportunities for critical reflection help facilitate a bridge for themselves and students to guide transformation. Self-reflection is a work in progress. With support and through sustained engagements within the learning community and throughout the community at large, each of us can continue to move closer toward progression of self-reflection and transformative learning. The cycle is ever-changing, the possibilities are endless, and the development is inevitable.

**References**


An aspect of assessment: Highlighting student voices on Transformative Learning

Christy Vincent, Ph.D., Danielle Dill, M.P.H., Danielle Hernandez, Kelli Hoyt

Description

This conference conversation highlighted student voices on Transformative Learning at the University of Central Oklahoma (UCO), a regional, metropolitan university in the United States with 17,000 students. UCO has for the past 10 years been in the process of developing a pathway to experiential education (Barthell, Cunliff, Gage, Radke, & Steele, 2010). The pathway or initiative is known as Transformative Learning (TL), the goal of which is to produce transformative learning experiences similar to the high-impact learning practices identified by Kuh (2008). The initiative has called for a convergence among major divisions in the university, including Academic Affairs, Student Affairs, and Leadership. Transformative Learning is defined at UCO as a holistic process that places students at the center of their own active and reflective learning experiences. In practical terms, faculty and staff are encouraged to emphasize core areas known as the Central Six: Discipline Knowledge; Leadership; Research, Creative and Scholarly Activities; Service Learning and Civic Engagement; Global and Cultural Competencies; and Health and Wellness.

Part of transformative education occurs when instructors and mentors provide assignments and activities that have the potential to transform students. Another part involves the meaning that students attach to their experiences when completing the assignments and activities. This conference conversation, highlighted student voices on Transformative Learning (TL). Drawing on Dr. Vincent’s collected data of student narratives and reflections on their transformative learning opportunities, the conversation leaders explored students’ perspectives about what constitutes a transformative learning experience.

To begin, the facilitators conducted nine instant (Poll Everywhere) poll questions to stimulate discussion and to ascertain the audience’s perceptions of transformative learning. Next, Dr. Vincent conducted a “fish bowl” conversation with the two students, Ms. Hernandez and Ms. Hoyt. Finally, the conversation leaders facilitated small group discussion on various transformative learning topics including service learning, teaching methods, assessment and others.

Introduction to Conversation

Higher education often makes claims that students are exposed to transformative learning experiences and that they are indeed transformed. One challenge of this claim lies in the assessment of transformative learning. “We make many claims in the world that our students are exposed to transformative learning experiences as they come through our university. But how do we know that they are transformed? And how can we let other people know that with some sense of data or objective recording?” asked Christy Vincent.

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20 Facilitated by Dr. Vincent, an Assoc. Prof. in Organizational Communication at UCO. Ms. Dill is Asst. Dir. of Fitness & Health Promotion. Ms. Danielle Hernandez and Ms. Kelli Hoyt are both UCO Organizational Communication majors.
A second challenge often exists in the assessment of individual student’s interpretation of the experience. University faculty and co-curricular staff members have the opportunity to create assignments and activities with the goal of transformative learning in mind. Questions to consider include: What do students think is a transformative learning experience? How do we know they were transformed? How do faculty and staff obtain that information and feedback from the student about the transformative learning experience?

Dr. Vincent’s fish bowl conversation with students Danielle Hernandez & Kelli Hoyt

The application of knowledge, being stretched or uncomfortable, and intentional reflection of the experience are key thoughts from students when defining a transformative learning experience. UCO student Kelli Hoyt stated, “I want to know how this assignment or activity is going to help me learn, to make the information stick and be able to apply it—to make it my own.” Kelli further states, “Classes are not easy, but in the end you come out with an experience that was very difficult and huge—a black cloud. When you piece things together for a project or portfolio, you still remember and understand the experience. You look back and you remember the stress, but you came through it, out of the tunnel and see the lights.”

Regarding transformative learning, UCO student Danielle Hernandez mentioned working in groups and the high expectations set by instructors. “Group work might be transformative—because it really makes me frustrated. What has made group work transformative for me has been the experience of faculty and staff guiding me through the facilitation of the group process.” Danielle further states, “Educators should set high expectations, critical thinking and higher level thinking. It is not just assigning a power point presentation or a group assignment. I want to walk away with a project that I made—my work. I want to take this project to an employer and show this is what sets me apart.”

Poll anywhere – audience survey questions

Seventy nine percent of audience members represented the University of Central Oklahoma; 18% of the audience represented another college or university; and 4% identified themselves as “other”. The majority of the audience consisted of students at 47%; staff at 30%; and professors/instructors at 17%. When asked about the identification of the University of Central Oklahoma’s “Central Six” tenets of Transformative Learning, 94% were able to identify the core tenets correctly.

Additional poll questions focused on teaching methods, co-curricular programs, and the audience’s perceptions of student reluctance to participate in Transformative Learning experiences. The questions and responses are listed below.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Statements</th>
<th>Strongly agree</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Neither agree or disagree</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Strongly disagree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>TL is more about the teaching method of the instructor in the classroom than it is about the course assignments</td>
<td>27%</td>
<td>27%</td>
<td>24%</td>
<td>18%</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TL is more about extra-curricular activities than about classroom experiences.</td>
<td>9%</td>
<td>9%</td>
<td>21%</td>
<td>59%</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Generally, students are reluctant to participate in course assignments labeled as TL assignments.</td>
<td>6%</td>
<td>29%</td>
<td>26%</td>
<td>31%</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Generally, students are reluctant to participate in Service Learning course assignments.</td>
<td>9%</td>
<td>41%</td>
<td>21%</td>
<td>26%</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Students believe that because of the emphasis on TL at UCO, the quality of their college education is better than what they would receive at other universities where TL is not emphasized.</td>
<td>21%</td>
<td>35%</td>
<td>24%</td>
<td>21%</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Students believe that they are more likely to appeal to future employers if they have participated in transformative classrooms, have engaged in extra-curricular transformative activities, and have completed transformative assignments.</td>
<td>29%</td>
<td>49%</td>
<td>17%</td>
<td>6%</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Small group discussion**

The small group discussion was designed to draw in audience members into the Transformative Learning conversation and to reflect upon a set of discussion questions, some of which were poll questions from earlier. Groups of five to six audience members selected one or more of the following questions to discuss briefly in their groups.

**General questions about Transformative Learning**

1. In what ways, if any, do we increase the positive outcomes of transformative learning experiences by developing a common language about TL that is used by students, academicians, and co-curricular staff members?

2. Are transformative learning experiences transformative just because we label them as such? What are the characteristics of a transformative learning experience?

3. Is transformative learning more about the method that teachers use in the classroom or about the experiences the students have outside of the classroom?
Student reflection as assessment data

4. How much of students’ perceptions that transformative learning has taken place is linked to a requirement that asks them to reflect in a certain way on a learning experience?

5. How important are the specific questions we utilize when we ask students to reflect on their experiences?

6. If students are able to articulate ways in which they have been transformed, can we use those articulations as assessment data? If so, how much do students’ initial perceptions of Transformative Learning assignments influence their ability to articulate the ways in which they have been transformed? In other words, if the professor labels the assignment as a transformative learning assignment and discusses the ways in which the assignment is designed to be transformative, do student perceptions of the assignment and their expectations about it influence their ability to articulate the ways in which they have been transformed?

Student perceptions of TL assignments

7. Do students have a reluctance to participate in assignments labeled as TL assignments? If so, what are the reasons? How can we overcome barriers that keep students from embracing these assignments?

8. Do students perceive that TL assignments require the students to rearrange their lives (e.g., work schedules or family obligations) in order to work on the assignment? If so, how can we point out the benefits of these assignments to the student’s overall education experience and preparation for a career?

Value students place on Transformative Learning

9. In what ways are students’ impressions of the quality of their courses and overall education influenced by their understanding of the transformative learning goals and objectives of the instructor or the university?

10. In what ways, if any, are students more satisfied with their educational experiences if they believe the university emphasizes transformative educational experiences?

11. Do students believe that they are more likely to appeal to future employers if they have participated in transformative classrooms, have engaged in extra-curricular activities, and have completed transformative assignments?

12. In what ways do these various beliefs influence the students’ reporting or reflection of their transformative learning?

13. What are the ways these factors influence our use of students’ reflections as assessment data?

The length of the conference conversations only allowed for a beginning discussion on these complex topics. The following information provides a summary of the small group discussion.
“Transformative Learning at UCO has not been defined well; as a result it is difficult to assess and as an institution we are not sure if we are effective in our efforts. Transformative Learning occurs on an individual level with a student — it is a personal experience. Asking the student what they want to get out of the class creates a challenge with assessment as well. Often times the more an organization attempts to define something, the narrower the definition and thus the less impactful it becomes.”

“Sometimes we don’t know that a learning experience has transformed a student until months or years later. How do we assess or capture the impact that an academic class or co-curricular program has on a student in the future — did the experience impact their career choice or how they live their lives?”

“Transformative Learning is about preparing students for the process of learning, not just about how to complete all the required assignments and get the grade. Students are often spoon-fed information and are told what to do step by step. They are often not given the opportunity to analyze the issue and problem solve.”

“UCO does a good job of framing the issue of Transformative Learning. It’s out there and people know it’s here. Students hear it and teachers talk about it, but people don’t understand how to use it or put it into action. Many professors are seeking creative ways to provide transformative learning experiences in the classroom.”

“Students in many majors do not know they are being transformed because it is not a term that is being used in the classroom. To many students Transformative Learning is a building on campus, but they do not know what goes on there or what is taught there.”

“Transformative Learning takes place both in and out of the classroom — both curricular and co-curricular efforts. Faculty and staff are equally responsible for developing programs that encourage transformative learning and for engaging students into the process.”

“Departments on campus vary in their implementation of Transformative Learning. For example, at UCO’s Academy of Contemporary Music, students report feeling more freedom with how they complete assignments. Student from ACM report that when they come back to the traditional classroom setting, there is less freedom. Transformative Learning should incorporate a balance of both freedom and structure.”

“Instruction in the United States classroom is more interactive and includes hands-on activities as compared to other countries where Power Point is the primary teaching method. International students go back to their home country very transformed.”

“Students see transformative learning as being able to apply what you are learning inside and outside of the classroom to real world experiences. Service learning projects are one way student can apply this information. Some academic departments are better than others at incorporating service learning projects into the curriculum or course work objectives. One of the biggest difficulties is with time. Students in this discussion group described the challenges with having the time to participate and actively engage in service learning projects because of other commitments, including work and family. Students often feel that service learning projects are just busy work and that the university has mandated service learning projects into academic classes without a clear purpose in providing the transformative learning experience.”

“Participating in professional conferences or organizations outside of the university setting helps students understand their field of study.”

“Hurdles exist for students because of university processes or other state and federal policies. For example, students who desire to study abroad cannot receive financial aid for the course work taken at another university, which inhibits participation.”
Final student perspective on Transformative Learning - Danielle Hernandez & Kelli Hoyt

To conclude the session, Dr. Vincent asked her students to indicate their perceptions of Transformative Learning. They did so by narrating a set of slides using the following script created by Ms. Hernandez, a Mass Communication student.

Transformative Learning. Wow, that sounds really cool, but what is it? A few guesses. Is it writing down everything the teacher says? An all-night cram session where coffee is your company? Is it getting a good grade in a class? Being on the honor roll? It’s got to be getting a diploma.

However, transformative learning is not a process of taking knowledge from the learned professor and depositing into the brains of students. That processes is transfer-mational learning, if it’s even learning at all. Transformative learning is something much different.

If you could, think about a time your life was changed. You moved away from home for the first time. You went on a mission trip to help others in need. You were mentored by someone. Or maybe you arrived at a house to babysit a kid and found out the “kid” was an actual baby. Yeah, that happened to me once; we both cried all night.

We see that transformative learning is something that alters the coarse of our lives, and our lives hint at what it could be. Is college like that for you? The sad truth is that for many of us, it isn’t. Education has become a series of hoops that we jump through. The good news is that our college years can be transformative, but everyone in higher education needs to embrace the change.

If education is going to be transformative, then it has to engage more than just the intellect. It has to engage mind, body, and soul. Learning has to engage the whole person, much like a marathon runner. Does someone running a marathon get there by reading the right books, eating healthy food, and buying the right shoes alone? No. Eat. Train. Strategize. Commit. Become. It is a life style.

As students we find that we know a lot, but our shoes are unused un-scuffed sitting in a box. We have to lace up and hit the ground running. We have to make a life style of transformative learning.

At UCO, we all have our part. Professors, maybe it means putting down the lecture notes and doing a class activity. Students, it means we don’t just go to class; we’re engaged. We don’t just know the facts, but the application. Administration, it means giving the departments freedom to be creative. Let us not talk about transformative learning but lets us empower people to get on board with it.

We see that if we’re honest with ourselves there are ways in which we sabotage it—apathy, texting during class, stubbornness, incessant lecturing, refusing to change, unwillingness to learn. Transformative learning is not happenstance. It is intentional action, intentional teaching, intentional learning. It is not about knowing only, but about knowing, doing and being.

Decide. Will you teach? Will you learn? Professor, are you willing to learn? Students, are we willing to teach? Will we be transformed?

And it all starts with discipline knowledge. How can one graduate with a mass communication degree and not know about ethos, pathos, and logos? You know, those principles of rhetoric proposed by Aristotle?

Next we find that there are solutions even to the hardest problems. We have scuffed our shoes a little bit in classes like Health Communication. It was problem solving at its finest—pinpointing a problem, researching solutions, and taking action in the Central community.
Global competency means expanding our scope beyond our borders, beyond ourselves. The easy thing to say would be to take a foreign language class, but this area is much more than that. It is about true understanding of the world in which we live, whether its people, its ever changing communication, its pressing issues of climate change, resource wars, economic uncertainty or human rights. Global competency means we are aware.

Leadership can be a great many things. Maybe you are an officer at a student organization or you led a team at the Big Event. You could even be getting a leadership minor. But we also can exhibit leadership in planning a study group, speaking up on a team project, or helping a classmate with coursework.

Service learning and Civic Engagement is simply all about getting people involved. It may be picking up trash. It may be raising awareness about distractive driving. It may be talking about health care, and connecting people with resources on how to get insured. It could also be registering to vote, and then actually voting.

Last but certainly not least, Health and Wellness addresses the entire person. It is physical, mental, and spiritual. Sometimes we limit health and wellness to exercise and eating right. Yes, it is those things, but it is also much more. You can learn how to manage stress. Are you stuck in a state of uncertainty? You can find balance and peace. Wellness addresses your mind, body, and soul.

And this changing world requires change from all of us. It requires immersion into this culture of transformative learning. Why, you may ask? You know, when employers hire graduates they don’t say, “Gosh that Sam over there doesn’t know enough about Nutrition. Sally over there just doesn’t know enough about Communication Theory.” The problems that arise are that Sally doesn’t know how to coordinate a project. Sam doesn’t know how to communicate with the boss. He can’t adapt. She doesn’t have initiative. Employers need workers with skills, not just knowledge. The goal of transformative learning is to help students be prepared for these challenges, making them responsible, prepared, productive, corporate, national, and global citizens.

What if we live our lives untransformed in a culture of stagnation? Imagine a world where people don’t think for themselves, whose definition of truth comes from TV. Imagine a world where innovation stops in its tracks because we refuse to be forward-looking, where we revert to old solutions and old ways to address new problems.

A more trans-fer-national approach to learning highlights a university’s ability to send out people who “know” a lot. A transformative approach encourages universities to send a type of person out into the world. Yes, a person who knows something, but more importantly, a person whose world view is expanded, who knows how to find and use information, who knows how to ask important questions, to think critically, and to learn new things. As Eric Hoffer warned us in his book, The True Believer: “In times of change, the learners will inherit the earth, while the knowers will find themselves beautifully equipped for a world that no longer exists.”

Let us therefore imagine a world where people are transformed and practice transformative learning in their everyday lives. Imagine a world emerging out of this chaos and uncertainty that plagues us. Imagine solutions to the hard problems. Let us imagine a world of learners.

References


Kuh, G. D. (2008). High-impact educational practices: What they are, who has access to them, and