

ADULTS AS DISTANCE LEARNERS: TRANSFORMATIVE LEARNING IN ADULT EDUCATION

A ROUNDTABLE PRESENTATION

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ABSTRACT

Mezirow (1991) identified that transformative learning captures a higher level of awareness in reference to the context of someone's feelings and beliefs. Bierema and Merriam (2014) discussed that transformative learning starts with the individual, but also includes environments such as online, the workplace, and the community. The online learning environment is truly one important area where learning occurs. Distance learning, using online learning, in adult education is essential in the changing world in which we live. Many considerations must be taken into account when designing, developing, and implementing distance learning. Adult learners have unique experiences and diverse educational backgrounds. By understanding specific characteristics of the adult learners, one may better integrate elements of transformative learning into the online learning process. Bierema and Merriam (2015) identified that, although there is a scarcity of research studies examining transformative learning and online learning, it can be concluded that pedagogical elements and technology can be merged to begin the development of transformative learning. Understanding and integrating transformative learning poses new challenges not only to the students, but also to the instructor. Knowledge about how instructors and students adapt to the transformative learning environment is crucial within the adult learning context. It is essential to possess an understanding of the challenges of transformative learning theories and especially theories about adults as distance learners.

SELECT REFERENCES

Bierema, L. L., & Merriam, S. B. (2014). *Adult learning: linking theory and practice*. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.

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