REFLECTION IS THE KEY TO TRANSFORMATION INCREASING VISIBILITY TO ENSURE THAT IT HAPPENS

A POSTER PRESENTATION

Deeann L. Bruno, Phd student Sofia University

EXTENDED ABSTRACT

Critical reflection is a key part of Transformative Learning (TL) so how do we ensure that it is included in curriculum and make it visible in order to aid transformation? My poster presentation reviewed several learning models that showed the importance of reflection as well as offered reflection methods that can help students critically reflect while also making their transformation visible.

I became aware of the importance of reflection while working as a Military Training Specialist with the U.S. Coast Guard (USCG). The USCG training system used performance based curriculum and Kolb's 1984 Experiential Learning cycle (which includes reflection) was taught to all instructors and curriculum developers. I discovered that in the USCG world of curriculum design reflection was often forgotten because it typically happens outside the classroom.

I reaffirmed the importance of reflection with articles like Kitchenham (2008) which described changes in Mezirow's 1978 ten phase Transformative Learning (TL) theory where reflection is a key component in phases II-IV. I found theories like Mezirow fit well with curriculum that I used to teach for the USCG. As one example, Moore (2005) compared the six stages of change that the USCG used in its wellness curriculum with Mezirow's theory. Moore found compatibility between the two in that they both needed contemplation or reflection for change or transformation to happen. One change Kitchenham (2008) discussed was in 1995 when Mezirow proposed three types of critical reflection: content, process, and premise. Mezirow believed the three types of reflection were better than straightforward reflection (which only looks at an individual's actions) because content, process, and premise reflection allowed for a critical review of where an individual's actions might have originated from thereby allowing for possible transformation.

So given the importance of critical reflection, how do we help our students use it while making it visible? Gray (2006) offered the following reflective tools:
- Storytelling
- Critical incidents
- Repertory grids
- Concept mapping
- Reflective & reflexive conversations and reflective dialogue
- Reflective metaphors
- Reflective journals

Gray (2006) asserted that critical reflection can be taught and also warned about the private nature of reflective journal writing. Other authors suggest reflective writing as a curriculum tool but caution that it needs to be structured in order to ensure that it assists in transformation (Carrington, & Selva, 2010; Fook, White, & Gardner, 2006). Fook, White, and Gardner (2006) describe critical reflection as a cognitive, emotional, and experiential process of examining the assumptions behind our actions in order

to find their origin to determine if they are still relevant and then if necessary to rework our future practices. To help create this critical reflection process Carrington and Selva (2010) suggest a journaling structure be provided to students. This structure should help students include a description of an event with reactions and feelings about the incident then integrate classroom content with these reactions and feelings with future study suggestions. As an example of a journaling structure Carrington and Selva (2010) described the five Rs: Reporting, Responding, Relating, Reasoning, and Reconstructing; however the authors combine the first two Rs when using it.

In completing my poster I reaffirmed the importance of reflection, discovering that critical reflection is a key component in transformation. I also reaffirmed the importance of reflective writing as a curriculum design tool to assist students in making their transformation possible and visible. I learned that providing a structure for reflective writing is important while also ensuring that students also know that their reflections are private. Ensuring that our students critically reflect is vital to many learning objectives and our future success as educators.

SELECT REFERENCES

Carrington, S., & Selva, G. (2010). Critical social theory and transformative learning: evidence in pre-service teachers' service-learning reflection logs. *Higher Education Research & Development, 29*(1), 45-57.

Fook, J., White, S., & Gardner, F. (2006). Critical reflection: a review of contemporary literature and understandings. In S. White, J. Fook, & F. Gardner (Eds.), *Critical reflection in health and social care* (pp. 3-20). Maidenhead, UK: Open University Press.

Gray, D. E. (2007). Facilitating management learning developing critical reflection through reflective tools. *Management Learning, 38*(5), 495-517.

Kitchenham, A. (2008). The evolution of John Mezirow's transformative learning theory. *Journal of Transformative Education, 6*(2), 104-123.

Kolb, D. (1984). *Experiential learning as the science of learning and development.* Englewood Cliffs NPH, editor1984.

Moore, M. J (2005). The transtheoretical model of the stages of change and the phases of transformative learning comparing two theories of transformational change. *Journal of Transformative Education, 3*(4), 394-415.

For further information, contact the lead presenter:
Deeann L. Bruno
Sofia University Phd student
1069 East Meadow Circle
Palo Alto, CA 94303
E-Mail: d.bruno@sofia.edu