An Exploration of Transformative Learning in the Online Environment

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Purpose of Presentation

• Share current literature about transformative learning and online pedagogy
• Suggest transformative learning pedagogy for online learning environment
• Enhance awareness among faculty, generate interest for conducting further research and enhancing practice
Transformative Learning Defined

• Learning using a prior interpretation to construe a new or revised interpretation of the meaning of one’s experience in order to guide future action (Mezirow, 2000)

• Core elements include:
  – Triggering event
  – Self reflection
  – Discourse
  – Action
Examples

• maturity/increased
• value of self enhanced
• ethics and social consciousness changed
• better understanding of what's necessary for success
• broadened views through diversity of opinion/talking with others
• zeroed in on major/career/learned more
• changed racial and gender role attitudes
• advanced expectations, ambitions
• broaden horizons
• changed career goals
Link to Precursors

• “The highest incidence of reporting transformative learning was associated with the precursor step of critical reflection, followed by the steps of disorienting dilemmas and trying on new roles.”

(Brock, 2010, p. 123 - 127)
Synthesis of Articles

• Two Topics
  – Transformative learning
  – Online pedagogy

• Four main themes:
  – Critical reflection
  – Relationships
  – Support
  – Discourse
Critical Reflection

• Tools such as Blogger, Twitter, discussion groups, wikis, Wimba, Second Life, and the use of iPod Touches allow students opportunities for reflection (Yaros, 2010)
Discourse

- Discussion threads, synchronous chat rooms, WIMBA live video and audio or texting can be utilized for the discussions
- Small group projects where students can relate in a more direct and personal manner while working collectively on a project, paper, or presentation
Relationships

• Initial personal introductions, posting of photographs, answering questions about interests & life experiences, short video or audio welcome messages from the professor

• Hearing the professor’s voice builds comfort, develops a sense of closeness and results in students being more willing to ask questions
Support

• Validating the contributions of students through frequent feedback or comments demonstrates that the faculty is available and assessable.

• Syllabi describing expectations for a supportive and civil classroom sets the stage for mutual respect, tolerance for differences, openness to new ideas and opinions.

• Fellow class members who share similar experiences, relate to the experience or share a similar value or belief on a topic.
Reflections for Educators

• Are we aware of cognitive transformative learning opportunities or teaching only content?
• What can educators do to foster climate conducive to transformative learning?
• Should we place boundaries around the use of technology – can it inhibit learning?
• Since there is an affective side to transformative learning experiences, do we place ourselves, the student, or our institution at risk when it occurs?
Reflections for Educators

• What if a student experiences transformative learning - should the experience be shared with the other students?

• How do educators develop awareness of students experiencing or are on the edge of transformative learning?

• How do we assist self awareness and provide support as students experience possible discomfort?
Discussion

• Do you see evidence of transformative learning in your classrooms?

• Have you heard anything in this discussion that you will give a try? If so what?
Conclusions

• Despite the growth in understanding transformative learning, there is still much to be discovered about the practice in the online classroom.

• Taylor (2008) reminds us that wearing the title of a transformative educator “should not be taken lightly or without considerable personal reflection” (p. 92).

• He also shares that while the rewards may be significant for the educator and the student, transformational learning demands a great deal of work, skill, and courage.

• Educators may, perhaps, require a transformative learning experience about the way we currently teach.
References


