نظرية التعلم التحولي وبرامج التدريب والتطوير"

إعداد

د. منيرة ابراهيم حمد الحربي

دكتوراة في القيادة

كلية الدراسات المهنية ــ جامعة قونزاقا الامريكية

الملخص:

تطور التعليم في الوقت الحالي واستخدام وسائل التكنولوجيا الحديثة في التعليم، زاد من حاجة المؤسسات التعليمية لبرامج تدريب وتطوير المعلمين. وتهدف هذه البرامج الى تدريب المعلمين وتطوير قدراتهم وذلك من اجل استخدام وسائل التعليم الحديثة بكفائة عالية. ومن اجل فهم عملية التعلم والتطور في هذه البرامج التدريبية، هذه المقالة تشرح نظرية التعلم التحولي لميزور. وذلك من خلال شرح تفصيلي للأفكار الرئيسة للنظرية، وانواع وطرق ومراحل التعلم التحولي. وذلك من اجل تصميم البرامج التدريبية بمايتوافق مع نظرية التعلم التحولي وتحقيق هدف التطوير والتحول من خلاص التدريب.

Transformational Learning Theory & Training and Development Programs

Introduction

Education has historically followed traditional methods such as rote learning or memorizing and failed to impart critical and analytical thinking (Alhareth, Al-Dighrir, 2015; AlKhazim, 2003). These kinds of methods manifested the banking system discussed by Freire (1970) of acquiring information with no dialogue engagement or critical discussion with the instructor. As part of educational development evolution around the world, educational institutions adopted modern educational technologies to teach the student, and training programs to develop teachers' skills to embrace these technologies (Alnahdi, 2014). Research has shown that adopting new pedagogy can widen learners' horizons and move them from the margin to the center of the learning process (Thanasoulas, 2001). It also prepares them to deal with the unforeseen difficulties of the new adopted educational technologies using unique and creative tools of innovative solutions.

The training and development programs become important components in any developing educational institution, to prepare the faculty with the best practices to use these new adopted technologies. The process of the faculty training involves a change and transformation. In order to understand how this transformation occurs, this article is going to investigate the transformational learning theory by Mezirow (1978). The theory explains the learning process, types, and phases, which promotes the needed transformation through learning.

Training and Development Programs

A growing concern with the quality of education and pedagogy emphasize the crucial importance of faculty development. Faculty development and training programs often consist of well planned educational, technological, leadership programs and activities that meet the goals of the institutions (Cook & Kaplan, 2011). The training programs are well-regarded component of any institution (Boles, Wood, & Johnson 2003). The programs range from a one-time enterprise to regularly scheduled seminars and workshops. Because these programs are contextual and different, there are no one-size-fits-all program models (Lancaster, Stein, MacLean, Amburgh, & Persky, 2014). Researches indicate that increasing faculty capabilities of new skills and learning new leadership roles and approaches increases their job satisfaction (Allen & Meyer, 1990). In addition to increasing faculty skills, the programs also promote a commitment to deliver more output with a more positive attitude (Tsai et al., 2007). The training programs also help to overcome anxiety toward one's job, increase confidence using new technology, and prepare people to be more competent, productive, devoted, focused, and leaders in their own domain (Shaheen et al., 2014).

Though the training and development programs have advantages on faculty and administrations, they also have advantages for the students. Students' numbers and diversity increases as the faculty and the institution become more involved and flexible in using advanced technology to improve communication and learning processes (Austin, & Sorcinelli, 2013). Students move from being passive receivers to active learners, as they become involved in the learning process by increasing their critical and analytical thinking (Mezirow, 2000). This act of involvement was part of Freire's (1970) argument against traditional education "banking," where the teachers deliver information without interaction with students (p. 60). His argument was based on the belief that "The more students work at storing the deposits entrusted to them, the less they develop the critical consciousness which would result from their intervention in the world as transformers of that world" (Freire, 1970, p. 60). Freire (1970) encouraged teachers to emphasize student involvement in critical thinking and discussion over merely storing what was being delivered to them.

Leadership Training and Development Programs

Leadership training implementation on faculty development programs shed its benefits on both faculty and students. Some institutions incorporate leadership programs within their development agenda in an attempt to connect the administrative roles with the faculty work and perspectives (Austin, & Sorcinelli, 2013). Leadership programs focuses on the engagement between a leader and the followers, which in this case the administrators, the faculty and the students in order to help them reach their full potential. Authentic leadership "is socialized leadership, which is concern with the collective good" (Northouse, 2013, p. 187); where the leader's best interest is for the sake of the followers. Burns (1978) stated that leadership could raise the lower level of followers' needs into a higher level of motivation and morality. It is a successful process of motivating followers to do more than they originally expected themselves capable of doing (Givens, 2008). Leadership helps to set the way to transform personal interest toward the ultimate good of the organization. The leader not only transforms knowledge, motivates, influences, stimulates, and performs individual consideration, but also delegates leadership responsibilities to the others. These leadership roles are exactly what the faculty needs to perform in order to become effective leaders who create a successful educational experience.

Transformational Learning Theory (TLT)

The importance of the training and development programs comes from the integration of new teaching and learning pedagogies in education. These programs involve a change and a transformation in perspective and practice. This transformation is known as the transformational learning theory (TLT) introduced by Mezirow (1978) 40 years ago in the context of learning that is defined as, "learning that transforms problematic frames of references to make them more inclusive, discriminating, reflective, open, and emotionally able to change" (Mezirow & Taylor, 2009, p. 22). Mezirow (1978) described it as, "the process by which adults come to recognize culturally induced dependency roles and relationships and take action to overcome them" (p. 17).

Mezirow first introduced the term transformation in the context of learning in 1978 as part of his study on women returning to school after an extended absence. This was the beginning of his work on the transformational aspect of learning. He described transformational learning as "a constructivist

theory of adult learning" (Mezirow, 1991, p. 31) that is "intended to be a comprehensive, idealized and universal model consisting of the generic structures, elements and processes of adult learning" (Mezirow, 1994, p. 222). It does not critique specific culture, but it "attempts to provide the model – construct, language, categories, and dynamic- to enable others to understand how adults learn in various cultural settings" (Mezirow &Taylor, 2009, p. 21). This theory encompasses many characteristics that mark it as a distinct learning theory. Below is a brief explanation of the theory's three themes, phases of learning, the four learning processes, and the three types of learning.

Influence

Three pioneer philosophers inspired Mezirow in his theory and formed the basis of his theory. The first of these three influences was Kuhn (1962) whose paradigm that he described as a "… universally recognized scientific achievement that for a time provided model problems and solutions to a community of practitioners" (p. viii). This paradigm provided two of the most important elements of the transformational theory: new meaning schemes or frames of references resulting from scientific discoveries and changes in meaning perspectives such that open-ended problems could be more adequately defined and resolved (Mezirow, 1985). Mezirow's transformational learning included frames of references that involved meaning perspective "… the structure of cultural and psychological assumptions within which our past experience assimilates and transforms new experiences" (Mezirow, 1985, p. 21) that leads to a perspective transformation.

The second influence, Freire (1970), influenced Mezirow's theory through his argument against the traditional education "banking" where the teachers deliver information without interaction with the students (p. 60). He described this act as the transformative leadership that extends from the teacher to the student, and from the student to society. Mezirow extended Freire's argument by identifying that "Transformative learning develops autonomous thinking" (Mezirow, 1997, p. 5) by practicing critical thinking as well as rational discourse.

Mezirow's third influence came from Habermas's (1971) work on adult learning and communicative action theory influenced Mezirow's theory regarding the importance of communication. Habermas's original three domains of learning: technical learning (rote and specific to task), practical learning

(involving social norms), and emancipatory learning (self-reflective and connected to self-knowledge) were later transformed into Mezirow's (1985) three types of learning: instrumental (how to learn), dialogic (when and where learning occurs), and self-reflective (purpose of learning). To be specific, Mezirow's theory of transformative learning consisted of three critical themes, all of which must be present in any learning situation in order to promote transformation.

Three themes of TLT

Mezirow's TLT consists of three major themes: individual experience, critical reflection, and rational discourse. They form the transformational aspect of any given learning experience. Mezirow (2000) defined learning as the "process of using a prior interpretation to construe a new or revised interpretation of the meaning of one's experience as a guide to future action" (p. 5). In transformative learning, individuals "reinterpret an old experience or a new one from a new set of expectations, thus giving a new meaning and perspective to an old experience" (Mezirow, 1991, p. 11). The processing of the individual experiences of transformational learning is directly connected to the other two themes of the TLT, critical reflection and rational discourse.

Critical reflection is the "deliberate attempt to uncover, and then investigate, the paradigmatic, prescriptive, and causal assumptions that inform how we practice" (Brookfield, 1995). Mezirow (1998) argued that, "Learning for oneself involves becoming critically reflective of assumptions and participating in discourse to validate beliefs, intentions, values, and feelings" (p. 197). He also argued that critical reflection is the central element to transformation in meaning perspective, which can be facilitated through discussion with other peers that can enrich the experience. It contributes to the transformation of later meaning schemes and perspectives.

Mezirow indicated that the purpose of transformative learning from a psychological point of view is "to develop a dialogical relationship with one's unconscious, so that its dynamic contents may have creative expression within our conscious lives" (Mezirow & Taylor, 2009, p. 59). This is related to Dean Elias's (1997) definition of transformative learning, which stated, "Transformative learning is facilitated through consciously directed process such as appreciatively accessing and receiving the symbolic content of the unconscious and critically analyzing underlying premises" (p. 12). Thus,

Mezirow's three components of individual experience, critical reflection, and rational discourse are considered the ideal vehicle for learning, which enables the learner to start interpreting new meaning perspectives and meaning schemes.

Meaning perspective is defined as "the structure of cultural and psychological assumptions within which our past experience assimilates and transforms new experiences" (Mezirow, 1985, p. 21), whereas, the meaning scheme is defined as the "constellation of concept, belief, judgment, and feeling which shapes a particular interpretation" (Mezirow, 1994, p. 223). This is directly connected to Mezirow's description of transformative learning as "A process of changing our taken-for-granted assumptions to make them more inclusive and truthful" (Mezirow &Taylor, 2009, p. 35). These three themes characterize the transformational aspect of the learning experience through four learning processing that Mezirow developed in his work of the TLT.

Four learning processes of TLT

Mezirow, in his work, developed four learning processes that occur during the transformational learning experiences. The first learning process consists of learning within a meaning scheme or elaborating existing frames of references. In this stage, the learner is in his or her comfort zone where the experiences that he/she encounters are related to previous ones. In this stage, the learner expands on previously acquired experiences through complementary learning and or revision of learning (Mezirow, 1985). The second learning process is learning new meaning schemes or frames of references. These new meaning schemes are related to and compatible with the learner's existing meaning perspective (Mezirow, 1985).

The third learning process is learning through meaning transformation or transforming habits of mind. This process requires the learner to be "aware of specific assumptions, schemata, criteria, rules, or repressions on which a distorted or incomplete meaning scheme is based and, through a reorganization of meaning, transforming it" (Mezirow, 1985, p. 23). In this stage of learning, the learner might face a situation or problem that needs to be resolved. The learner cannot resolve it referring to present meaning schemes or the new ones. Thus, the transformation occurs when the learner starts to practice critical self-reflection upon the assumption that supported the meaning schemes (Mezirow, 1981; 1994). After presenting the first three learning processes, Mezirow, through his research, felt the need to emphasize the transformational aspect of

the learning theory. As a result, he added later in his research the fourth learning process, which is the transforming points of view (Mezirow, 2000). These points of views include a variety of meaning schemes that are "sets of immediate specific expectations, believes, feelings, attitudes, and judgments" (p. 18) that are under constant shifting and change.

Three types of learning in TLT

The previous four learning processes occur through three types of learning that facilitate the transformational learning experience. According to Mezirow (1985), there are three types of learning: instrumental, dialogic, and self-reflective. These three types answer the questions of when, where, and how learning occurs. Mezirow demonstrated that instrumental learning is the best way to acquire new information. This is connected to the instruments and tools used by the teacher to deliver information that facilitates learning as well as the instruments or tools used by the learner to best search for needed information (Mezirow, 1985).

Mezirow's second type of learning is the dialogic learning that is related to when and where the learning takes place. Dialogue is "the essential medium through which transformation is promoted and developed" (Mezirow & Taylor, 2009, p. 9). This kind of dialogue is different from everyday conversation; it is a deeper and more detailed that is "when we have reason to question the comprehensibility, truth, appropriateness, in relation to norms, or authenticity, in relation to feelings, of what is being asserted or to question the credibility of the person making the statement" (Mezirow, 1991, p. 77). This type of learning that involves dialogue or conversation can reveal different aspects of the learning experience. According to Berger (2004), "Dialogue helps identify the learner's edge of mind, a transitional zone, of knowing and meaning making. It is the liminal space that we can come to terms with the limitations of our knowing and thus begin to stretch those limits" (p. 338).

The third type of learning is self-reflective. It is the stage of learning in which learners question what they are learning and why they are learning it. This kind of metacognition, as Mezirow (1981; 1994) argued, is critical to perspective transformation, which is the core of the TLT. Mezirow (1991) stated that, "Through reflection we see through the habitual way that we have interpreted the experience of everyday life in order to reassess rationally the implicit claim of validity made by previously unquestioned meaning scheme or

perspective" (p. 102). According to Mezirow, this transformation in perspective can take two dimensions. It can be incremental and occur painlessly through a series of accumulated changes in the meaning scheme, or it can occur painfully in a way that involves major dramatic changes through comprehension and re-evaluation of oneself and one's beliefs (Mezirow, 1985).

Three Types of Reflection

As a part of his analysis of the theme of critical reflection, Mezirow defined three different types of critical thinking including content reflection, process reflection, and premise reflection. To premise this analysis, Mezirow (1991) stated, "Meanings exists within ourselves rather than in external forms such as books, and the personal meanings that we attribute to our experience are acquired and validated through human interaction and communication" (p. xiv). This means that meanings are individualistic and distinguish each person form the other.

Additionally, Mezirow argued that critical reflection is the central element to transformation in meaning perspective, which can be facilitated through discussion with other peers that can enrich the experience. It contributes to the transformation of later meaning schemes and perspectives. Within this analysis of critical reflection, Mezirow (1995) identified three types. The first type is the content reflection, which involves thinking about past experience. The recalling of an action and what was done can also involve transformation of meaning schemes. The second type of reflection is the process reflection. This type motivates the learner to consider the causes of actions and their origins and whether there are other factors to be discovered. The premise reflection is the third type of reflection. It enables the learner to view the larger perspective of what is working in the value system that he/she lives in.

All three of these reflection types facilitate the transformation of meaning perspectives. The transformation of meaning perspective is important in personality transformation and uses the self-reflection of distorted premises, while the transformation of the meaning scheme is an everyday occurrence of reflection. Perspective transformation is the "… process of becoming critically aware of how and why our assumptions have come to constrain the way we perceive, understand, and feel about our world …" followed by a change in these structures of expectation to welcome more inclusive and integrative perspectives that guide our future choices (Mezirow, 1991, p. 167).

Phases of TLT

In 1975, Mezirow introduced the ten phases of transformative learning. Later in 1991, he extended the ten phases to include an eleventh phase. It is not necessary for the learner neither to experience all eleven phases nor to experience them in any set order before they can experience transformation in meaning perspective. The experience is different from one learner to another, depending on the nature of the situation. The transformative learning phases are as follows:

1- A disorienting dilemma.

2- A self-examination with feelings of guilt or shame.

3- A critical assessment of epistemic, sociocultural, or psychic assumption.

4- Recognition that one's discontent and the process of transformation are shared and that others have negotiated a similar change.

5- Exploration of options for new roles, relationships, and actions.

6- Planning of a course of action.

7- Acquisition of knowledge and skills for implementing one's plans.

8- Provisional trying of new roles.

9- Building of competence and self-confidence in new roles and relationships.

10- A reintegration into one's life on the basis of conditions dictated by one's perspective.

11- Renegotiating relationships and negotiating new relationships.

These phases of transformation involve a variety of feelings, attitudes, experiences, and actions. The encounter of all of these components in one transformational experience might be overwhelming and involve difficulties in the transformation of perspective. These difficulties might involve compromise, stalling, backsliding, self-deception, and failure (Mezirow, 1991).

There are two specific situations where the learner might face difficulties in his/her perspective transformation. The first situation is at the beginning when the learner is exposed to critical analysis of established ideas, feelings, and values and of feelings about these assumptions. The second situation is the "…

point at which a commitment to reflective action logically should follow insight but is so threatening or demanding that the learner is immobilized" (Mezirow, 1991, p. 171). The learner should understand that it is not enough to intellectually understand the need to change, as much have the emotional strength to change in order to move forward.

The Ideal Learning Conditions

As mentioned before, Mezirow's research was greatly influenced by the work of Habermas, especially by his work on the communicative learning domain. This research indicated, "The ideal set of conditions for participation in critical discourse is implicit in the very nature of human communication" (Mezirow, 1991, p. 198). Mezirow embraced this notion and further specified that these conditions are fundamental in the philosophy of adult learning. They are important to facilitate the rational discourse that motivates the transformation of meaning perspective during the adult learning experience. These conditions, therefor, are likewise applicable to the training and development programs where they are necessary in order to reach the desired goals of transformation for faculty and employees.

- The first condition that must be available to the participants in discourse is to "… have accurate and complete information" (Mezirow, 1991, p. 198). This will lessen the confusion or ambiguity that might accompany any new learned and received information.

- The second condition is to be "… free from coercion and self-deception" (p. 198). Coercion blocks the flow of the information to the participants and hinders the process of transformation. Having the freedom and the free will to participate and interact in a discourse positively affects the transformation of perspective.

- The third condition is to "… have the ability to weigh evidence and evaluate arguments" (p. 198). This is related to the development of the critical reflection upon the perceived information through proper education. "Knowledge as a stimulus to unblock minds and create new mind habits may be an increasingly relevant objective for 21st-century college curriculum" (Brock, 2010, p. 124). It is a skill that needs time and dedication to develop through practice and observation.

- The fourth condition is to "… have the ability to be critically reflective" (Mezirow, 1991, p. 198). This is where the participants employ their skills and efforts to acutely practice critical reflection by being aware

consciously and believing that they can and will be critically reflective. Under this condition the "… transformative education can be a powerful tool for generating survival strategies, critiquing the conditions that created the crisis and creating new, more life-giving approaches (O'Sullivan, 2002). Here, the participants ask questions that can stimulate their mind to dive more deeply into the subject, keeping in mind that "… there is no stupid question nor final answer" (Mezirow & Taylor, 2009, p. 80).

- The fifth condition is that the participants "… are open to alternative perspective" (Mezirow, 1991, p. 198). This condition elaborates their minds and broadens their experience to other perspectives. Furthermore, it enables them to choose what is applicable to them or to create their own perspective that suites their needs and follow their desires.

- The sixth condition is to "… have equality of opportunity to participate" (Mezirow, 1991, p. 198). This gives the participants a sense of dignity, independence, and freedom to participate in a certain discourse, which in return infuses the experience with a genuine feeling of willingness to interact with others for the sake of a better experience for all.

- The seventh and final condition is that the participants "… will accept an informed, objective, and rational consensus as a legitimate test of validity" (p. 198). This condition highlights the importance of being open to other inputs from other participants and treating them as a tool to test how applicable they are to our meaning schemes and perceptions.

The presence of these conditions, though introduced by Mezirow (1991) as being ideal, is certainly not a means for perfection or to reach an otherwise unattainable goal. Rather, it is presented as a "Judgment of value. The ideal is present in every action, as a judgment of better and worse" (p. 199). It is also not limited to educational encounters, but it also includes politics, economics, and any social practices. These conditions can be considered as a criterion to evaluate any educational program, such as the training and development programs, to see how effectively the transformational aspect of this learning experience is achieved.

Conclusion

Transformative learning theory suggests a deep, structural shift in basic assumptions of thought, feeling, and action. It is an individualistic experience that people endure during their interaction with others in a specific learning

environment. This interaction is facilitated by rational discourse that is powered by the critical reflection of these newly acquired experiences. The experience of any learning experience is delivered through different types of learning that start with the basics of informational inputs then moves to the next level through dialogue involving critical reflection and interpretation of the new knowledge. This flow of learning generates the transformation of meaning perspectives. These meaning perspectives are the general frames of reference that comprise the habits of mind, which in turn include different dimensions of beliefs, morals, and ethics that people adopt as their point of view. Thus, when transformation occurs in meaning perspective, it is essential and deeply related to the learner's deeply imbedded and previously learned experiences.

In the training and development programs, from the transformative learning theory perspective, the learner moves between four processes of learning. First, they elaborate existing frames of reference and meaning perspectives. After that, they move to the next stage where they acquire and learn new meaning perspectives. When they receive new experiences, they then begin to transform their habits of minds as a way to change and adapt their perspectives to suite what they believe to be right within the new experience. And finally, they transform their point of view as related to values, practices and actions that distinguish their teaching performance during their interaction with the students. Which eventually accomplish the goal of the training and development programs that aims to change the old teaching techniques to the new technological ones.

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