

Interrogating transformative processes in learning and education: an international dialogue: a new European Society for Research on the Education of Adults (ESREA) Network

2st Conference

Theme:

The Role, Nature and Difficulties of Dialogue in Transformative Learning

June 24th – 26th
Athens, Greece

PROCEEDINGS

Dimitra Andritsakou & Effrosyni Kostara, *Editors*

Reference

Andritsakou, D., & Kostara, E., (Eds). (2016). *The Role, Nature and Difficulties of Dialogue in Transformative Learning*. Proceedings of the 2nd Conference of ESREA's Network "Interrogating Transformative Processes in Learning and Education: An International Dialogue". Athens, Greece: ESREA & Hellenic Adult Education Association.

The copyright for the papers in the Proceedings is retained by the individual authors. Unauthorized use is not permitted. Content, editing, and proofreading were the responsibility of each author or group of authors.

The conference was hosted and organized by

Hellenic Adult Education Association



Conveners of the Network

Michel Alhadeff-Jones, *Teachers College, Columbia University, USA*

Dimitra Andritsakou, *Hellenic Adult Education Association, Greece*

Alexis Kokkos, *Hellenic Open University, Greece*

Anna Laros, *University for Applied Sciences and Arts, Northwestern Switzerland*

Linden West, *Canterbury Christ University, UK*

Scientific Committee of the Conference

Michel Alhadeff-Jones (University of Fribourg, Switzerland)

Jerome Eneau (University of Rennes, France)

Fergal Finnegan (National University of Ireland, Maynooth)

Ted Fleming (National University of Ireland, Maynooth)

Laura Formenti (University of Milan Bicocca, Italy)

Thanassis Karalis (University of Patras, Greece) Alexis Kokkos (Hellenic Open University, Greece)

Anna Laros (University for Applied Sciences and Arts Northwestern Switzerland)

Kaisu Malkki (University of Helsinki, Finland)

Dimitris Vergidis (University of Patras, Greece)

Linden West (Canterbury Christ University, UK)

Conference Organization Facilitators

Christina Kokkou

Efi Kostara

Katerina Paleologou

Contents

ON DIALOGUE.....	9
The Varieties of Transformative Experience: A Typology of Transforma Philosophies du dialogue et de la reconnaissance : quels éclairages pour penser le "Transformative Learning"	10
Se former par le récit de soi	19
narration et mise en dialogue de l'expérience.....	19
Challenging de-contextualised understanding of TL: a dialogue on psychosocial and ecological perspectives.....	29
Towards Transformative Learning by Enhancing the Group Dialogue and Introducing Action Learning in a Bulgarian University	40
The issue of linguistic capital within the dialogical process of transformative learning environments.....	49
Theorizing the Relationships between Time, Dialogue and Transformative Learning: A Rhythmanalytical Framework.....	67
The dynamics of a safe and accepting learning environment: Theorizing the conditions for dialogue in facilitating reflection and transformative learning	77
Rethinking the Critical Theory influences on Transformative Learning:	88
In Dialogue with Honneth.....	88
Dialogue in Freire's Educational Method, in Era of Crisis.....	97
ON TRANSFORMATIVE LEARNING THEORY	110
Dialogue and Communication in Transformation Theory: New Ideas from the Perspective of Systems Thinking	112
The inner dialogue and the transformation process	120
Xenophobia - Xenophilia:.....	126
Pictures from a transformative journey with the vehicle of dialogue	126
Promoting dialogue for transformative learning in local communities: the case of a Learning City in Greece.....	137
Modern Reflection Of Platonic Dialogues.....	146
ON ARTS AND TRANSFORMATIVE LEARNING	156
Dialogue in Plato's Symposium and in Transformative Learning Theory. Convergence, Divergence and Propositions	158
Transformative Learning and the Use, Role and Potential of the Arts	168
The Need of Art in Transformative Learning	169
The Method of Transformative Learning through the Aesthetic Experience Method via an illustrative example	170
Implementing Poetry, Music & ICT in unearthing Critical Thinking in KETHEA EXODOS Alternative Adult School.....	177

Discussing with “theoretical friends” on art-based learning.....	188
Theatre as a form of intercultural understanding and dialogue	196
DIALOGUE with the ARTWORKS: a TRANSFORMATIVE LEARNING PROCESS	206
Transforming stereotype perceptions through the emotional dimension of learning: A case study of the film “Entre les murs”	219
The Theatre of The Oppressed to promote Transformative Learning in a social- situated dialogue	229
TRANSFORMATIVE LEARNING AND EDUCATIONAL PRAXIS	240
Mindfulness Practices as discover of Inner Transformative Dialogue	241
“Classroom incident”. A stimulus to Dialogue for promoting Transformative Learning through Art.....	253
Launching a process of self-reflection through educational biography.....	260
(Experiential session).....	260
Dialogue and Transformation in ELF-Aware Teacher Education:.....	267
A Case Study.....	267
Dialogue and Transformation in ELF-Aware Teacher Education:.....	277
A Case Study.....	277
No Distractions!.....	285
The Possibility of Transformative Learning When We Engage Nature in Dialogue	285
In-between the Educator/Learner Role within the Context of Lifelong Learning: A qualitative study	294
Promoting transformative learning at the intersections between formal and informal learning: the case of the virtual Communities of Practices.....	304
Critical reflection and dialogue on student teachers’ practicum	316
Investigating Group Dynamics in adult education: A qualitative	326
study.....	326
A Museum Exhibition on Migration as a Framework for Developing	336
Intercultural Dialogue and Transformative Learning	336
Transformative Learning Processes in Practical Trainings?	348
A reconstructive study on Swiss students’ way to becoming primary teachers.....	348
Educational Relationship And Dialogue Through Autobiographical Methods	360
Action research as a dialogical context for critical reflection and continuous professional development	370
Stress and Attitude Change in Adult Education: Perceptions of post graduate students completing a course in Adult Education	382
Is dialogue enough to promote transformative learning? An example of “Electra” by Sophocles	392
Reflections on the impact of transformative learning: the need of designing a	

coherent and holistic evaluating approach	406
Transformative Learning through Dialogue and Collective Reflection with Peers. The case of Teachers’ In-Service Training	414
TRANSFORMATIVE LEARNING AND SOCIAL LIFE	424
A Site of Transformation: Community Sound-Off	426
From Ancient Greece to the Present Day; How the Development of the Modern Mind Distanced Us from Genuine Dialogue	437
Intercultural Dialogue as a means of <i>Reflective Discourse</i> and Collective Action	447
Adult Education As A Means Of Empowerment For Drug Offenders In Prison/Post Prison Treatment	458
Democracy matters: dialogue, the Islamist and the good TL group	469
EMOTIONAL- PSYCHIC	482
A Dialogue with Chronic Illness	484
Figurations of the OTHER - Self-other-world-relation	494
Dancing with pain: overcoming the damaging effects of corporal punishment through DIFFERING	505
‘Mind-to-mind meeting’: The potential of the online context as a space capable of fostering transformative learning	513
Transformative Learning Process: The Key to Patient - Rehabilitation Therapists Dialogue	Error! Bookmark not defined.

ON DIALOGUE

**The Varieties of Transformative Experience:
A Typology of Transformative Philosophies du dialogue et de la
reconnaissance : quels éclairages pour penser le "Transformative
Learning"**

Pierre Hébrard

LIRDEF Université de Montpellier

This paper presents the results of an analysis of all the articles published in the Journal of Transformative Education from 2011-2013 – with a focus on the ways that each article defined or implied transformative outcomes. From this analysis, a typology of transformative learning outcomes is presented.

Mon propos passera en revue les travaux de quelques auteurs dans le champ de la philosophie - notamment de la philosophie politique et de la philosophie du langage - qui ont abordé la question du dialogue, et plus largement de l'interlocution. Quels liens peut-on établir entre ces travaux et les questions de la formation et de l'apprentissage, de la construction de soi dans la rencontre et la confrontation à autrui, de la production des connaissances, de la transformation des perspectives et des cadres de références ? Autrement dit, la question qui me servira de fil conducteur consistera à me demander en quoi ces travaux peuvent nous aider à approfondir notre conception et notre pratique du TL (*Transformative Learning*).

Les conceptions du TL et la question du dialogue

Parmi les nombreux travaux appartenant au courant du TL, plusieurs approches ont été développées. Cranton et Taylor (2012) en distinguent trois principales :

" the psycho critical perspective that emphasizes rationality, critical reflection (...); the extra-rational perspective (...) that emphasizes the emotive, imaginal, spiritual and arts-based facets of learning; and the emancipatory approach (...) that emphasizes ideological critique, unveiling oppression, and social action in the context of transformative learning."

Ma propre conception du TL repose sur une vision intégrée de la première approche, celle initiée par Mezirow (1991) et de la troisième approche, caractérisée par une visée émancipatrice. Je considère en effet que la réflexion critique, à travers la discussion reposant sur des arguments rationnels, permet de prendre conscience de ce qui limite notre cadre de références et notre action : l'influence de modes de pensée hérités, de schèmes réducteurs, de convictions reposant sur des valeurs et des présupposés non interrogés. Et, par là, cette réflexion critique peut contribuer à la critique de l'idéologie dominante et l'émancipation intellectuelle. Je reprends ainsi à mon compte la définition du TL de Mezirow (1991) et l'essentiel des idées présentées dans son article "Transformative Learning as Discourse" (2003), idées qu'il développe aussi dans son dialogue avec John Dirkx (2006). A l'égard de l'approche extra-rationnelle, sans nier l'importance de l'imagination, des dimensions affectives, des

émotions, dans le processus de transformation, je pense qu'elles relèvent d'une pensée clinique, du type de celle développée par Cifali et Giust-Desprairies (2008). Celles-ci se réfèrent à l'approche freudienne des phénomènes psychiques, mais leur approche ne peut être qualifiée d'extra-rationnelle ou de spiritualiste. Elle est donc clairement distincte de l'approche jungienne et de l'"éducation de l'âme" proposée par Dirkx (2006, 128).

Mais j'en viens à la question du dialogue, de la discussion (*discourse*) qui est au centre du processus de TL. Dans son article de 2003, Mezirow insiste sur les capacités et les conditions requises pour une discussion "dialectique-critique", pour un dialogue portant sur l'évaluation des convictions, des sentiments et des valeurs (...) du point de vue d'un cadre de référence particulier ("*the assessment of beliefs, feelings and values ... from the point of view of a particular frame of reference*") (Mezirow 2003, 59). Il s'agit à la fois des capacités des interlocuteurs et des conditions économiques, politiques et sociales permettant d'accéder à une citoyenneté démocratique. Ce faisant il se réfère à Habermas concernant les conditions idéales de discussion dans un espace public, et à l'idée selon laquelle "*la rationalité est inhérente à l'usage du langage*" (p. 60). Sur ces points, deux critiques sont à prendre en compte, de mon point de vue, pour approfondir la théorie du TL telle que je la conçois : la première porte sur la notion d'espace public habermassien, la seconde sur les limites de la rationalité, telle qu'elles se manifestent dans les activités discursives.

La question de l'espace public comme arène de discussion

La première critique est celle qui est notamment formulée par Nancy Fraser (1992/2001), et reprise par Oskar Negt (2007) et, plus récemment, par Alexander Neumann (2015). Dans son article "*Repenser la sphère publique : une contribution à la critique de la démocratie telle qu'elle existe réellement*", Fraser réexamine les notions d'espace public et de "sphère publique", définie par Habermas comme "une arène de relations discursives". Elle soutient que la forme spécifique que lui a donnée Habermas n'est pas entièrement satisfaisante et elle reprend à son compte les critiques formulées par les courants féministes qui ont souligné que cette sphère publique bourgeoise reposait sur de nombreuses exclusions, notamment celles liées au genre. Elle ajoute que "*la relation entre la publicité et la position sociale est plus complexe que Habermas ne le laisse entendre, et qu'il ne suffit pas d'affirmer qu'une arène de discussion doit être un espace où les distinctions sociales existantes sont suspendues et neutralisées pour qu'il en soit ainsi*" (Fraser 2001, 132). Elle reproche donc à Habermas d'idéaliser la sphère publique libérale et "*d'oublier d'étudier d'autres sphères publiques concurrentes, non-libérales et non-bourgeoises*". Elle affirme enfin que les membres des groupes sociaux subordonnés - femmes, ouvriers, gens de couleur et homosexuel(le)s - qu'elle propose de nommer *contre-publics subalternes* - constituent des arènes discursives parallèles dans lesquelles ils élaborent et diffusent des contre-discours, afin de formuler leur propre interprétation de leurs identités, leurs intérêts et leurs besoins (p. 138).

Ces critiques sont réactualisées par Negt (2007) et formulées en termes d'espace public oppositionnel, notion reprise aussi par Neumann (2015). Cette pluralité des espaces publics et cette diversité des positions sociales, hétérogènes et inégales, doivent être prises en compte. Elles obligent à remettre en cause la vision idéalisée de

l'espace public et à reconnaître que les "conditions du dialogue" ne sont généralement pas remplies dans une société divisée, traversée par les différences, les tensions et les conflits de tous ordres. C'est aussi ce que le philosophe Jacques Rancière (1995) résume par la notion de "mésentente", qu'il définit comme un type déterminé de situation de parole dans lequel "la discussion d'un argument renvoie au litige sur l'objet de la discussion et sur la qualité de ceux qui en font un objet" ou encore sur "la situation même de ceux qui parlent" (p. 14-15).

Parmi les travaux se référant au TL de nombreux auteurs ont d'ailleurs reconnu l'importance des facteurs comme le genre, la classe sociale ou les différences ethno-raciales dans le processus de transformation des cadres de références, et les obstacles au dialogue qu'ils peuvent constituer s'ils ne sont pas conscientisés et interrogés. Le témoignage de Vanessa Sheard (Kokos 2015) en est un exemple récent (voir aussi Brookfield 2003).

La question de la rationalité dans les pratiques discursives

La deuxième question sur laquelle je voudrais revenir est l'idée selon laquelle "*la rationalité est inhérente à l'usage du langage*". Je m'appuierai ici sur certains travaux de philosophie du langage et de philosophie de la connaissance et tout d'abord ceux de Sylvain Auroux, en particulier dans son ouvrage "*La raison, le langage et les normes*" (1998). L'auteur présente son livre comme une critique du cognitivisme et du rationalisme et notamment de leurs fondements linguistiques (1998, p. 4). Parmi les thèses fondant le rationalisme, il y a une conception philosophique du sujet de la connaissance consistant à soutenir que "*le phénomène cognitif (son fonctionnement comme son explication) relève de l'individu*" (p. 5). Or Auroux affirme qu'on ne peut réduire la théorie de la connaissance à celle des activités d'un sujet, qu'il faut prendre en compte "*l'histoire culturelle, sociale et matérielle des procédures cognitives*", que "*le processus cognitif dépend de la structuration sociale, des structures sociales de production et de cumulation des connaissances*" (p.6).

D'où l'idée que non seulement un individu isolé ne saurait être intelligent, mais aussi que "*l'intelligence est originellement externe et artificielle*", au sens où elle repose sur des outils matériels, logiques ou symboliques produits historiquement. Cette idée est aussi formulée par Stiegler (2008) : "*La mémoire suppose toujours les techniques de mémorisation... Ni la mémoire sociale, ni la mémoire individuelle ne sont simplement dans les cerveaux des gens : elles sont dans les artefacts, et dans les relations que les corps et les esprits nouent entre ces artefacts, et à travers ceux-ci, entre eux-mêmes. (...) Les hypomnémata sont les objets engendrés par l'hypomnésis, c'est à dire par l'artificialisation et l'extériorisation technique de la mémoire*" (p.26). Comment prendre en compte cette conception "externaliste" de la connaissance dans les dispositifs du TL ? Ceux-ci ne sont-ils pas trop exclusivement centrés sur la discussion entre les individus, au détriment de la prise en compte de leur environnement social et des outils matériels, techniques et symboliques qui conditionnent pour une part leur processus de connaissance ?

Cette philosophie de la connaissance s'oppose aussi à l'idée qu'il y aurait, chez tout individu, des structures *a priori*, anhistoriques, comme celles de la subjectivité transcendantale kantienne, idée qu'on retrouve aussi chez Humboldt sous la forme

d'une conception du langage comme reposant sur un système de processus génératifs enracinés dans les propriétés innées de l'esprit humain, ou chez Chomsky, dans "*Un savoir qui ne s'apprend pas*" (1983/2010), sous la forme d'une "grammaire universelle", implantée génétiquement dans nos cerveaux.

Ces différentes versions du rationalisme ont en commun une conception du langage et de la raison, mais aussi de la liberté de l'individu (Chomsky 1970/2010). Comme le montre S. Auroux, ces conceptions ont un fondement idéaliste et sont liées à une vision libérale de l'individu libre et rationnel, d'une rationalité inscrite dans la nature humaine et/ou dans les structures *a priori* de l'esprit ou du langage (Chomsky se réfère à Rousseau et à Schelling). Auroux leur oppose une conception matérialiste et historique des phénomènes cognitifs et linguistiques dont une conséquence est de penser que l'usage du langage et la production des connaissances sont toujours situés dans un contexte social et donc influencés par la structure des rapports sociaux, en particulier des rapports de domination entre les genres, les classes, les groupes ethniques, etc.

Cette philosophie du langage et de la connaissance est finalement assez proche de certaines des idées développées par Habermas dans "*La pensée post-métaphysique*" (1988, traduction 1993). L'auteur y évoque le "tournant linguistique" de la philosophie en ces termes :

"les relations entre langage et monde ou entre proposition et état de choses prennent le relais des relations entre sujet et objet. Les opérations de constitution du monde, qui étaient l'apanage de la subjectivité transcendantale, sont prises en charge par les structures grammaticales." (p. 13). Il ajoute que *"les tentatives pour penser l'incarnation de la conscience transcendantale dans le langage, l'action et le corps, et pour situer la raison dans la société et dans l'histoire, ont accumulé en leur faveur un potentiel d'argumentation considérable"* (p. 28). Il reste que le rôle qu'il attribue aux structures linguistiques et à la pragmatique du langage tend parfois à faire oublier ces dimensions socio-historiques. En effet, lorsqu'il présente ensuite le paradigme de l'entente par opposition à celui de la conscience, Habermas ne fait-il pas trop confiance à une pragmatique du langage et n'oublie-t-il pas que les conditions réelles des échanges entre interlocuteurs ne sont que rarement les conditions idéales de l'agir communicationnel ?

D'une certaine façon, ces questions rejoignent les idées développées par M. Crawford dans son dernier ouvrage (2015) : sa critique de *"la conception résolument individualiste de la liberté et de la rationalité que nous avons hérité de la tradition libérale"* (2015, p. 31), tradition issue des Lumières et de la philosophie kantienne. A l'encontre de cette tradition libérale et de ses illusions, il propose de *"retrouver le réel, qu'il s'agisse de notre rapport à autrui ou de notre rapport aux choses"* (p. 338). Notre rapport à autrui a toujours lieu dans un contexte socio-historique et nous y sommes situés à une certaine place, qui n'est pas sans influence sur ce que nous pouvons dire, faire et penser et sur la façon dont cela sera perçu par autrui.

L'idée selon laquelle la rationalité serait inhérente à l'usage du langage doit donc être largement nuancée pour tenir compte des conditions sociales réelles et des positions occupées par les interlocuteurs. Dans les conditions idéales d'un espace de discussion qui ferait abstraction des contextes sociaux réels, des inégalités sociales entre les interlocuteurs, la rationalité du meilleur argument l'emporterait à tous les coups. Mais

ces conditions ne sont que très rarement remplies, y compris dans les situations de formation ou dans les controverses scientifiques, même si l'on essaie de s'en rapprocher dans l'espace public des débats entre scientifiques ou dans la manière d'animer et d'accompagner des processus de formation.

L'exemple des groupes d'analyse des pratiques

Faire régner la rationalité et le principe d'égalité (Rancière 2012) ne va pas de soi ; c'est un combat qui réclame une vigilance permanente. Je prendrai l'exemple d'un dispositif de formation : ce qu'on appelle les groupes d'analyse des pratiques professionnelles, inspirés des groupes Balint. Le cadre et les règles qui régissent le fonctionnement de ces groupes de discussion, d'échanges entre professionnels sur leur pratiques et sur les difficultés qu'ils peuvent y rencontrer incluent le respect de principes stricts de non jugement, d'écoute, de répartition de la parole, etc. Chaque séance doit respecter différentes étapes qui ont chacune leurs règles de prise de parole et de type d'interventions (récit d'une situation problème par un des participants, phase d'exploration par des questions posées par les autres participants, phase de formulation d'hypothèses pour une compréhension approfondie de la situation, réactions de l'exposant).

L'animateur est le garant du cadre et du respect des règles de fonctionnement de la séance ; il a aussi une fonction de facilitation et de régulation des échanges. L'expérience montre que ce rôle est loin d'être facile du fait des habitudes de pensée, des sentiments qui s'expriment, de la difficulté à prendre de la distance par rapport à ses convictions initiales, à accepter la confrontation et la déstabilisation dues aux différentes perceptions de la situation, à la tendance à chercher des solutions immédiates conformes à ses habitudes plutôt qu'à prendre le temps de l'analyse et de la réflexion critique. A cela s'ajoutent les phénomènes de projection, d'identification ou de distinction, de déni ou de rejet, pas toujours conscients, sans oublier les questions du pouvoir et les clivages qui traversent la société et ne manquent pas de se traduire à un moment ou à un autre dans la façon de prendre la parole ou le contenu des propos échangés.

Cet exemple pour montrer que la rationalité n'est en rien inhérente à l'usage courant du langage, mais qu'elle est plutôt un idéal vers lequel on doit tendre et dont il faut créer et maintenir les conditions de possibilité. C'est l'un des enjeux majeurs du TL, faute de quoi il risquerait de contribuer, même involontairement, à la reproduction des rapports sociaux et des idées dominantes et ne saurait constituer un espace d'émancipation.

Le dernier aspect que je voudrais aborder concerne non seulement les effets cognitifs d'une formation se référant au TL, mais aussi, et indissociablement, son impact en termes de construction ou de transformation identitaire.

Construction de soi et reconnaissance intersubjective : le principe dialogique

Le dernier aspect que je voudrais aborder concerne non seulement les effets cognitifs d'une formation se référant au TL, mais aussi, et indissociablement, son impact en termes de construction ou de transformation identitaire.

Je repartirai ici aussi d'un essai d'Habermas : *"L'individuation par la socialisation. La théorie de la subjectivité de G. H. Mead"* (1988/1993). Il y affirme que, chez Mead, l'individuation est conçue comme une auto-réalisation de l'individu, mais qu'elle ne se représente pas comme *"l'auto-réalisation solitaire et libre d'un sujet agissant de façon autonome, mais comme un processus médiatisé par le langage, accomplissant à la fois la socialisation et la constitution d'une biographie consciente d'elle-même."* (...) *L'individualité se constitue donc dans les conditions, à la fois d'une reconnaissance intersubjective et d'une entente avec soi médiatisée par l'intersubjectivité."* (p. 191). Celle-ci est pleinement réalisée dans l'agir communicationnel, du fait de ses "présuppositions pragmatiques universelles", le langage ouvrant *"des voies d'accès au monde, et ce en tant que medium d'entente possible, medium de coopération sociale et medium de processus d'apprentissage ..."* (p.191).

L'importance de la reconnaissance pour la construction de l'identité a aussi été développée par Axel Honneth, notamment dans son livre "La lutte pour la reconnaissance" (1992/2000).

L'auteur décrit les étapes de la reconnaissance inter-subjective par lesquelles passe le sujet et à travers lesquelles il construit son identité. Il a ainsi montré leur rôle dans la construction de la confiance en soi (reconnaissance affective), du respect de soi (reconnaissance juridique des droits de la personne) et de l'estime de soi (reconnaissance des capacités et qualités par une communauté solidaire autour de valeurs partagées, comme celle que l'on peut trouver dans l'exercice réussi d'une activité professionnelle). Il faut aussi évoquer sur ce point l'ouvrage de Paul Ricoeur, "Parcours de la reconnaissance". Dans la troisième partie l'auteur discute les thèses d'Axel Honneth et s'interroge notamment sur ce point : "la demande de reconnaissance affective, juridique et sociale, par son style militant et conflictuel, ne se résout-elle pas en une demande indéfinie, une quête insatiable" ?

On peut formuler une autre critique à la thèse d'Axel Honneth, c'est qu'elle passe sous silence une dimension qui me semble aussi fondamentale que les trois modes de reconnaissance qu'il développe et les trois formes de mépris ou de déni de reconnaissance qui y sont associées. Il s'agit de la reconnaissance qui s'adresse au sujet apprenant, qui est exprimée (ou non) dans les relations éducatives et qui porte sur sa capacité à apprendre, à développer ses connaissances et ses capacités dans les situations d'apprentissage. En effet, comme Bruner (1996) le montre, les réussites et les échecs, les jugements et les évaluations subis au cours de la scolarité ont un rôle important dans la construction de l'identité et de l'estime de soi. Ce mode de reconnaissance, selon qu'il est présent ou absent, permet de développer une assurance (ou une insécurité) cognitive, la confiance dans sa capacité à apprendre ou au contraire la crainte, voire la conviction de ne pas en être capable pour les sujets qui ont intériorisé le déni de cette capacité que le système éducatif, par la voix de leurs enseignants, leur a trop souvent renvoyé. Il faudrait donc ajouter une colonne au tableau résumant les modèles de reconnaissance intersubjective que propose Honneth (2000, p. 159), afin de prendre en compte cette dimension et cet enjeu des situations éducatives.

Mais là aussi, les conditions d'un échange intersubjectif constructif, c'est à dire permettant de constituer une image de soi positive, une identité valorisée, ne sont pas toujours présentes dans les interactions entre les enseignants ou les formateurs et les personnes en formation. Cela soulève la question de la responsabilité et de l'éthique

des enseignants et des formateurs quant à la constitution identitaire de ceux dont ils assurent la formation. Celles-ci ne portent pas seulement sur la réussite dans l'apprentissage des connaissances ou la transformation des perspectives ; elles concernent aussi la construction de l'individualité (l'individuation) dans toutes ses dimensions.

C'est un aspect qu'aborde le philosophe Francis Jacques (1982) à travers ce qu'il nomme son anthropologie d'un point de vue relationnel et son "approche communicationnelle de la subjectivité...". Celle-ci repose sur le primat de la relation, singulièrement de la relation interlocutive, selon laquelle "un locuteur ne se pose comme sujet qu'en relation originaire avec son interlocuteur" (p.18). C'est en effet "la situation dialogique qui les lie et les constitue en co-énonciateurs. (...) Cette mise en discours conjointe implique à son tour une mise en commun du sens des énoncés..." (p.26-27).

On retrouve cette idée chez Bakhtine, cité par Todorov (1981) : "*Aucun énoncé en général ne peut être attribué au seul locuteur : il est le produit de l'interaction des interlocuteurs et, plus largement, le produit de toute cette situation sociale complexe dans laquelle il a surgi*" (p. 50). Plus généralement, le principe dialogique consiste à poser l'intersubjectivité comme logiquement antérieure à la subjectivité et à considérer que l'être humain n'existe qu'en dialogue.

C'est aussi un thème central du livre de François Flahault "La parole intermédiaire" (2003). Dans une approche, influencée par le marxisme et la psychanalyse, il se propose d'examiner "*la question de la production sociale des individus comme sujets parlants, comme existences subjectives*" (p. 12). Il cite Benveniste (1974) : "*C'est dans et par le langage que l'homme se constitue comme sujet*". Il affirme que "*les places qu'une formation sociale attribue à ses membres dans le système des rapports de production sont déterminantes quant à l'identité et au destin même de ceux qui viennent les occuper*" (p. 56) et que "*chacun n'accède à son identité qu'à partir et à l'intérieur d'un système de places qui le dépasse*". (p. 58).

Pour conclure : quelles conséquences peut-on tirer de ces travaux pour une réflexion sur le TL ? Plus précisément quelles sont les conditions à remplir pour qu'une discussion "dialectique-critique" (Mezirow 2003) puisse s'instaurer entre les participants d'une formation se référant au TL ? Suffit-il de déclarer qu'on instaure un espace public de discussion ou "une arène de relations discursives" dans laquelle les "conditions pragmatiques universelles" vont permettre d'échanger des arguments rationnels ?

Ce serait oublier que les interlocuteurs sont situés à des places différentes dans le système des places instituées et que ceux qui sont en position dominée au sein des rapports sociaux n'auront pas la même légitimité à prendre la parole que ceux qui occupent une position dominante. Qu'il s'agisse des rapports de production ou des rapports entre les genres, ou les origines ethno- raciales. La question principale pour la pratique du TL est alors : quel dispositif et quelles règles instituer pour que les "contre-publics subalternes" (Fraser 2001) puissent s'exprimer, être entendus et reconnus dans une arène de relations discursives égalitaires ? Par ailleurs, comment prendre en compte et soumettre à la critique les supports et les outils matériels, techniques et symboliques qui contribuent à structurer et à figer les cadres de

références, empêchent l'émergence de nouvelles formes et la création de significations sociales produits de l'imaginaire social instituant (Castoriadis 1999 a, 97 ; 1999 b, 103).

Le cadre de travail à instaurer doit prendre acte du fait que l'égalité et la rationalité ne sont pas inhérentes à l'usage du langage, mais qu'elles ne peuvent résulter que d'un effort conscient et incessant de la part de tous les interlocuteurs. C'est à ces conditions seulement que pourra se produire une transformation réelle et profonde des cadres de références, des habitudes de pensée, en même temps qu'une transformation des identités personnelles et sociales, grâce à la reconnaissance intersubjective des capacités et de la dignité de chacune et de chacun. C'est sur cette base que les personnes concernées pourront mobiliser leur imagination radicale et contribuer au processus de transformation sociale.

Bibliographie :

- Auroux, S. (1998). *La raison, le langage et les normes*. Paris : Presses Universitaires de France.
- Benveniste, E. (1974). *Problèmes de linguistique générale 2*, Paris : Gallimard.
- Brookfield, S. (2003). The Praxis of Transformative Education : African American Feminist Conceptualizations. July 2003. 1 (3) : 212-226.
- Bruner, J. (1996). *The culture of education*, traduction française : *L'éducation, entrée dans la culture*, Paris : Retz.
- Castoriadis, C. (1999 a). *Figures du pensable. Les carrefours du labyrinthe VI*. Paris : Seuil.
- Castoriadis, C. (1999 b). *Dialogue*. La Tour d'Aigues : Éditions de l'Aube.
- Chomsky, N. (1970/2010). Langage et liberté, in *Raison et liberté. Sur la nature humaine, l'éducation et le rôle des intellectuels*. Marseille : Agone (3-30).
- Chomsky, N. (1983/2010). Un savoir qui ne s'apprend pas, in *Raison et liberté. Sur la nature humaine, l'éducation et le rôle des intellectuels*. Marseille : Agone. (31-53)
- Cranton, P. et Roy, M. (2003). Toward a Holistic Perspective of Transformative Learning. *Journal of transformative éducation*, April 2003.1 (2) : 86-98.
- Dirkx, J. M., Mezirow, J. et Cranton, P. (2006). Musings and Reflexions on the Meaning, Context and Process of Transformative Learning . *Journal of transformative éducation*, April 2006. 4 (2) : 123-139.
- Crawford, M. (2016). *Contact. Pourquoi nous avons perdu le monde et comment le retrouver*. Paris : La Découverte.
- Flahault, F. (2003). *La parole intermédiaire*. Paris : Seuil.
- Fraser, N. (2001). Repenser la sphère publique : une contribution à la critique de la démocratie telle qu'elle existe réellement. Extrait de *Habermas and the Public Sphere*, sous la direction de Craig Calhoun, Cambridge, MIT Press, 1992, p. 109-142 , traduction française : *Hermès, La Revue*, 2001/3, n° 31 (125-156).

- Habermas, J. (1988/1993). L'individuation par la socialisation, in : *La pensée post-métaphysique. Essais philosophiques*. Paris : Armand Colin.
- Honneth, A. (1992/2000). *La lutte pour la reconnaissance*. Paris Editions du Cerf
- Jacques, F. (1982). *Différence et subjectivité. Anthropologie d'un point de vue relationnel*.
Paris : Aubier Montaigne.
- Kokos, A. (2015). Celebrating 40 Years of Transformative Learning. *Journal of Transformative Education*, 2015, Vol. 13(4) 290-315
- Mezirow, J. (1991) *Transformative Dimensions of Adult Learning*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass (Traduction française : *Penser son expérience. Développer l'autoformation*. Lyon : Chronique Sociale 2001)
- Mezirow, J. (2003). Transformative Learning as Discourse. January 2003. 1 (1) : 58-63.
- Negt, O. (2007). *L'espace public oppositionnel*. Paris : Payot.
- Neymann, A. *Après Habermas. La théorie critique n'a pas dit son dernier mot*. Paris : Delga.
- Rancière, J. (1995). *La méésentente*. Paris : Galilée
- Rancière, J. (2012). *La méthode de l'égalité*. Entretien avec Laurent Jeanpierre et Dork Zabunyan. Paris : Bayard
- Ricoeur, P. (2004). *Parcours de la reconnaissance*. Paris : Stock.
- Stiegler, B. (2008). *Économie de l'hypermatériel et psychopouvoir* , Entretiens, Paris : Fayard, Mille et une nuits.
- Todorov, T. (1981). *Mikhaïl Bakhtine, le principe dialogique*, Paris : Seuil.

Se former par le récit de soi
narration et mise en dialogue de l'expérience

Hervé Breton

Université de Tours
« Education, Ethique, Santé »

Abstract

The goal of our article is to study the various kinds of dialogues one can observe through the act of narrating one's experience, in order to think the self-training process over. We do so by basing ourself upon the theories of the experience found in the works of the hermeneutical phenomenology, bringing the dialectical and dialogical processes that are elaborating the « telling of the self » into question.

The study of those processes during the course of the act of narrating is based on the different modes of gathering the data, coming under the willing observation in the course of training sessions of tutors in college. Analyzed here are some notes taken in a log book, during workshops aiming at the narrating of one's experience, put into the shape of a telling of memorable moments, phases, or the process of one's life.

Résumé

Notre objet, dans cette communication, est d'étudier les formes de dialogues à l'œuvre dans l'activité de narration de l'expérience pour en penser les processus de formation de soi. Nous le faisons à partir des théories de l'expérience issues des travaux de la phénoménologie herméneutique, en interrogeant les processus dialectiques et dialogiques à l'œuvre dans l'élaboration du « récit de soi ».

Cette étude des processus dialectiques et dialogiques au cours de l'activité narrative est conduite à partir de modes de recueil relevant de l'observation participante au cours de sessions de formations de formateurs à l'université. Sont reprises et analysées : les notes prises par carnet de bord lors de l'animation d'ateliers visant la narration de l'expérience, et prenant la forme du récit de moments marquants, de périodes ou du parcours de vie.

--

Les pratiques narratives comportent une dimension transformatrice, éprouvée dans les processus de configuration de l'expérience vécus par le sujet qui s'y exerce. Parler de

soi ou écrire sa vie suppose de conjuguer trois types d'activités : la temporalisation¹ du cours de la vie, la réflexivité sur les périodes et moments ainsi mis à jour, la configuration de ces moments dans un récit. Ce processus d'historicisation faisant advenir le sujet à lui-même ne se fait pas sans les autres. Advenir à soi par le travail d'historicisation procède d'une mise en dialogue de l'expérience, dans une alternance de prise de parole en première, seconde et troisième personne.

L'objet de cet article est de réfléchir ces processus de mise en dialogue de l'expérience située au cœur de l'activité narrative, pour en penser les dimensions transformatrices. Nous le faisons à partir d'une recherche conduite auprès de groupes d'adultes, engagés dans des sessions d'histoires de vie en formation. Nous nous focalisons pour cette étude sur l'une des premières phases de la démarche, celle de l'amorce du travail narratif à partir d'une matrice proposant aux étudiants de s'engager dans trois activités conjointes : la temporalisation de la vie adulte, le repérage et la description de moments marquants, puis la configuration de ces moments par l'écriture et l'expression du récit de soi. Cette première phase décrite, nous interrogeons les processus dialectiques et dialogiques de l'expérience au cours de cette démarche, en les pensant en lien avec l'activité narrative précédemment décrite, lorsqu'elle vient concourir aux apprentissages transformateurs et aux processus de formation de soi.

Les pratiques narratives en formation d'adulte

Réfléchir sa vie et, ce faisant, s'engager par le récit de soi dans un travail de relecture de l'expérience, constitue un processus de formation de soi. Cette activité de bio-réflexive s'accompagne et se compagne en formation d'adultes. C'est spécialement le cas lors des sessions d'histoires de vie qui se vivent au sein d'un collectif, et dont l'objet est d'avancer, au cours de différents ateliers, vers une mise en récit de l'existence. Pour étudier cette activité, nous présentons, ci-dessous, l'un des ateliers proposés au cours des premières sessions de formation visant l'accompagnement de groupes d'étudiants inscrits en master sous le régime de la formation continue, dans une démarche nommée « histoires de vie » (Pineau & Legrand, 2007), dont l'objet est de faire vivre et réfléchir les implications et conditions d'intégration des approches biographiques en formation d'adulte. Le retour réflexif sur le parcours de vie dans la formation décrite s'amorce donc à partir de différents type d'ateliers, dont celui construit à partir du modèle des lignes de vie (Lainé, 2004) que nous présentons modifié ci-dessous :

¹ Ricœur (1984, p 94) : « La temporalisation résulte d'une compétition entre la dimension séquentielle et la dimension configurante du récit ».

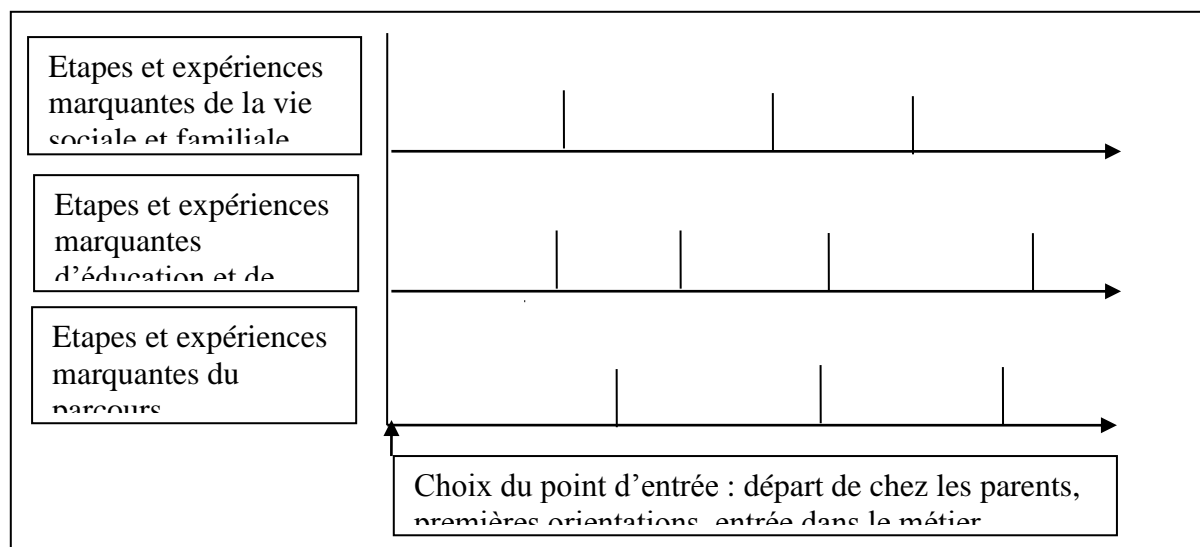


Schéma 1 : *Matrice pour l'accompagnement de l'activité narrative en formation d'adulte (à partir des lignes de vie d'Alex Lainé)*

Cette matrice a pour fonction principale de proposer une démarche en trois temps, afin d'accompagner les adultes inscrits dans la formation de master vers la mise en sens du parcours, à partir d'une activité en trois temps :

Une première activité de temporalisation

Elle consiste à mettre en perspective, dans la durée, des événements et des moments qui apparaissent, du point de vue des sujets, significatifs et marquants. Concrètement, il est proposé aux étudiants, via la présentation de la matrice ci-dessus, de s'engager dans un processus comprenant trois étapes : la première est appelée « temporalisation ». Ce terme désigne une démarche *via* laquelle le parcours professionnel, ou par extension le cours de la vie adulte, se trouve organisé temporellement selon des procédés de périodisation. Périodiser sa vie consiste ici à identifier des temps de la vie qui se concrétisent du point de vue du sujet en une unité temporelle ou thématique. Il peut s'agir d'une période d'emploi, de vie conjugale, d'études... Cette activité de temporalisation est accompagnée durant la formation par l'apport de textes provenant de différents auteurs (Erikson, 1972 ; Houde, 1999 ; Riverin-Siemard, 1984) qui, parmi d'autres, ont théorisé et produit des recherches sur les âges et phases de la vie adulte. Périodiser la vie adulte revient donc à organiser temporellement le cours de l'existence, en identifiant des unités à la fois temporelles et thématiques. Cette première étape suppose de délibérer sur les « empan » temporels des phases et périodes de vie, puis de les nommer. Une fois réalisée, une seconde activité peut s'engager : la réflexion des moments de transition et de passage entre ces différentes unités.

La description des moments repérés comme significatifs : passage, crise, transition, quête de sens...

La seconde étape de la démarche porte sur l'identification des moments particuliers et significatifs, se présentant pour le sujet, sur le mode du « marquant », du remarquable. Cette activité suppose d'accéder, d'identifier, puis de décrire des expériences qui font date dans le parcours de vie. Elles se présentent sur le mode de l'inhabituel, de

l'étrange, et augurent parfois à l'insu du sujet une transformation des modes d'existence, une remise en question des engagements professionnels, personnels, conjugaux... Il s'agit donc de moments de transition entre les périodes de vie, qui par leur examen attentif, dans le cadre de l'activité descriptive, se trouvent relus, reconnus dans leur fonction de passage et dans la force des transformations générées.

Les procédés mobilisés durant cette phase sont principalement ceux de l'explicitation (Vermersch, 2000) : évocation de la situation, description chronologique, focalisation sur des moments significatifs et déclencheurs, thématisation autour des facteurs ayant enclenché ou dénoué ce que Simmel (2002, p. 72) nomme une aventure : « Là où la participation à la continuité de la vie est déclinée, ou plutôt là où il n'est pas à proprement parler nécessaire de décliner cette participation, parce qu'il y a de prime abord un sentiment d'étrangeté, d'isolation, de détachement, nous disons qu'il nous arrive une aventure ».

Les moments explorés sont d'une durée variable et de thèmes très divers. Cette activité est accompagnée par la proposition de textes portant sur l'activité descriptive (Depraz, 2014) et d'autres axés sur les âges de la vie, la thématique du passage (Le Breton, 2005), la transition professionnelle.

L'activité narrative, qui conjugue les deux premières, et configure dans un récit périodes, étapes, moments et situations décrits pour les intégrer dans une histoire.

Les deux étapes précédemment décrites, la temporalisation et la description, peuvent être considérées dans l'atelier présenté aux étudiants comme préparatoires pour l'activité narrative aboutissant au récit de soi. La forme que prend le récit est dans cette formation assez variable : il peut s'agir d'un texte autobiographique, ou d'un récit d'une période de la vie comprenant ses différents moments. C'est donc à l'étudiant de définir à la fois l'étendue du récit (la durée sur laquelle il se déploie) et sa surface (soit les sphères de la vie adulte) qu'il inclut : vie professionnelle, mais potentiellement la vie sociale, familiale, personnelle... En d'autres termes, l'entrée dans l'écriture suppose de délibérer sur la dimension longitudinale du récit (son empan temporel) et sa dimension latérale (l'ouverture aux différentes sphères de la vie adulte). Cette activité de délibération sur la durée et l'étendue du récit définit le périmètre expérientiel de l'activité narrative, qui s'opère ensuite par mise en lien et mise en sens des moments marquants et événements significatifs, qui y ont été identifiés.

Apprentissages transformateurs et identité narrative

Nous avons dans la section précédente distingué trois procédés conjoints aboutissant au récit de soi et à l'historicisation de la vie, en les situant dans un dispositif de formation de formateurs à l'université. Notre propos n'est pas ici d'interroger les conditions et règles éthiques des approches narratives en formation d'adultes, mais d'en analyser les procédés, pour en distinguer les processus dialectiques et dialogiques. Nous le faisons donc à partir de trois activités : la temporalisation de l'expérience, sa description à partir de moments et de situations singuliers, et sa configuration par mise en lien des événements singuliers en une histoire.

Cette théorie narrative, qui s'appuie notamment sur les travaux d'une

phénoménologie herméneutique déployée par Paul Ricoeur, met au centre les liens entre « temps » et « récit » : « le caractère commun de l'expérience humaine, qui est marquée, articulée, clarifiée par l'acte de se raconter sous toutes ses formes, c'est son caractère temporel. Peut-être même tout processus temporel n'est-t-il reconnu comme tel que dans la mesure où il est racontable d'une manière ou d'une autre. Cette réciprocité supposée entre narrativité et temporalité est le thème de Temps et Récit. » (Ricoeur, 1986, p. 14). En d'autres termes, pour Ricoeur, la narration de soi suppose une opération de mise en ordre temporel. Cette unité fonctionnelle des opérations de temporalisation et de narration est décrite dans le processus de mise en intrigue qui : « combine dans des proportions variables deux dimensions temporelles : l'une chronologique, l'autre non chronologique. La première constitue la dimension épisodique du récit : elle caractérise l'histoire en tant que faite d'événements. La seconde est la dimension configurante proprement dite, grâce à laquelle l'intrigue transforme les événements en histoire ». (Ricoeur, 1983, p. 129).

L'activité narrative procède donc, dans une perspective herméneutique, d'une interprétation. Elle est conduite selon un processus de composition résultant de la mise en ordre chronologique d'événements apparaissant du point de vue du sujet comme importants et marquants, conjointement à celle de la « mise ensemble » de ces événements permettant de produire le récit et de faire advenir une histoire. Cette activité d'historicisation de l'expérience est un processus de formation de soi, puisque dans la perspective Ricoeurienne, le sujet devient sujet par le fait même qu'il se pense dans le temps. Cette ipséité du sujet, comme capacité à se penser en tant que sujet en devenir, et ainsi sujet d'une histoire, constitue un processus de formation par transformation des rapports à soi, aux autres et au monde. Cette mise en sens de l'expérience peut se constituer sur un mode passif, c'est-à-dire à l'insu du sujet. C'est peut-être l'une des caractéristiques de l'humain que se de se penser dans le temps, selon un processus continu. C'est par exemple la thèse avancée par (Delory-Momberger, 2010), notamment dans son chapitre intitulé : « Y a-t-il une vie sans récit ? ». Cependant, l'activité narrative dont il est question dans les ateliers biographiques exposés précédemment (et de manière plus large, dans les groupes de formation de type « histoires de vie en formation ») engage le sujet dans une activité de relecture de l'expérience, soit de mise en interrogation de ses dimensions configurées sur les modes sédimentés et passifs (Bégout, 2000).

Ces processus d'interrogation sont constitutifs de l'activité narrative. Ils ont pour effet d'engager vers des processus de relecture des structures narratives fondant le récit de soi, et définissant le rapport que le sujet entretient avec son ou ses expériences dans la durée. Les étudiants s'engageant dans ces ateliers sont donc conduits à interroger les modes de constitution de l'identité narrative sur les trois plans exposés précédemment :

Celui de la composition

L'identification des événements marquants sur les trois lignes correspondant à trois sphères de la vie adulte conduit à faire entrer dans la composition narrative des moments qui, pour des raisons que le sujet est conduit à s'expliquer, ne s'y trouvaient pas inclus. Le second champ d'interrogation porte sur l'élucidation de la trame temporelle des structures narratives. En d'autres termes, l'inventaire réalisé des moments marquants mène à interroger les mises en ordre implicites de ces

événements dans le temps. Ces deux niveaux de questionnements sont de nature à transformer le regard porté sur l'expérience vécue, et par voies de conséquence, à envisager de manière différente le devenir et les possibilités d'évolution.

Celui de la description :

Elle porte sur les expériences intenses (passage, reconnaissance, rupture...) et favorise un processus de clarification. Décrire de manière détaillée, c'est en partie élucider, soit voir de manière plus distincte les processus à l'œuvre dans la situation vécue comme significative. Ces opérations de clarification peuvent aboutir à une compréhension de ce qui, dans le cours de l'expérience, a été retenu aux dépens d'autres éléments. Cette prise en compte accompagnée d'un changement de regard sur les moments décrits a un effet transformateur. Le sujet constate, se rend compte, conscientise par la description des processus dont il avait été l'objet lors du vécu immédiat, immergé qu'il était dans le cours de sa vie.

Celui de la configuration :

Les processus de temporalisation et de clarification des vues sur l'expérience résultant de l'activité descriptive, viennent étayer un processus de transformation de regard, non pas sur l'expérience vécue, mais sur la manière dont cette expérience est mise en sens. La transformation dont il s'agit porte donc sur les structures narratives qui constituent le récit de soi et l'identité narrative. La transformation des structures narratives est simultanément une mutation du rapport à soi, entendue comme un apprentissage transformateur engageant un remaniement en profondeur des perspectives (Mezirow, 2001) pour le sujet en formation. Les étudiants s'engageant dans l'activité du récit de vie sont en effet conduits à se penser dans le temps, et donc à réfléchir individuellement et collectivement les modalités par lesquelles se sont constituées les perspectives de sens au cœur de l'identité narrative.

La formation proposée aux étudiants, intégrant les théories et pratiques de la phénoménologie herméneutique, est donc impliquante et éprouvante pour eux. Elle implique une dimension initiatique du fait qu'elle procède d'une modification du rapport à soi et au monde, qui s'initie par un changement de regard porté sur l'expérience, et donc sur la manière de se penser dans une continuité et un devenir. Ce processus de transformation porte sur ce que Mezirow nomme les perspectives de sens (2001, p. 110), et qui comprend une mise en question « des présuppositions spécifiques qui sont responsables de la distorsion ou de l'insuffisance de la perspective, [et] ensuite [modifie] cette perspective à travers une réorganisation du sens ». La transformation dont il s'agit dans le travail narratif étendu à l'échelle de la vie procède, par la relecture de l'expérience qu'il conduit à engager, à une conscientisation des liens entretenus et parfois maintenus à l'insu du sujet. Cet examen, durant la formation, ne se fait pas tout seul. Il s'agit d'un travail accompagné : d'un cheminement avec soi-même, via les processus dialogiques qui sont vécus, et avec autrui, par la mise en dialogue de l'expérience.

Explicitation et mise en dialogue de l'expérience

Ce travail de relecture est conduit dans la formation, selon une alternance d'ateliers, individuels et collectifs, favorisant les processus de mise en dialogue de l'expérience.

Cette alternance ouvre droit à deux types de processus dont nous proposons l'étude dans la section suivante, ceci en lien avec les trois activités précédemment définies de l'activité narrative : la temporalisation, la description et la configuration de l'expérience.

	Activité dialogique	Activité dialectique
Activité de temporalisation de l'expérience	<i>Ipséité</i> : conversion du regard par le sujet qui se réfléchit dans le temps selon un processus d'historicité	<i>Réciprocité</i> : processus de réceptivité et d'attention au récit d'autrui
Activité de description de l'expérience	<i>Récits par explicitation</i> de moments de vie en première personne	<i>Thématisation à partir de l'expérience</i> décrite mise en commun
Activité de configuration de l'expérience	<i>Interrogation de l'intrigue</i> : recomposition du récit de soi par transformation des structures narratives	<i>Socialisation des modes de configuration</i> et mise en dialogue des interprétations

Tableau 1 : *Analyse croisée des processus narratifs et dialogiques*

Le tableau ci-dessus propose de distinguer différents processus, en relation avec les processus dialogiques et dialectiques.

Nous le détaillons maintenant en commençant par l'activité de temporalisation

Temporalisation et ipséité : les processus dialogiques conduits par le sujet consistent en une opération de distanciation, ou plus exactement, de désincorporation de l'expérience. Les activités de temporalisation supposent pour le sujet de s'extraire du flux immédiat de l'expérience, soit de procéder dans une perspective phénoménologique à une forme de suspens, afin que s'ouvre un espace de disponibilité propice à l'activité réflexive. Les trois journées de sept heures, regroupant un collectif de formation travaillant ensemble à l'appropriation d'une démarche qui vise un retour réflexif sur les parcours, cherchent à préserver des espaces-temps favorables, pour que se conduisent ces gestes par lesquels les étudiants réfléchissent leur parcours dans le temps.

Accueil du récit d'autrui et réciprocité : ce premier mouvement, par lequel le regard du sujet se détourne du monde et de ses objets pour se saisir lui-même comme objet d'attention, procède d'un travail dialogique. Cette activité est favorisée et facilitée par les travaux de sous-groupes, durant lesquels la présentation réciproque des parcours vient accompagner et poursuivre l'analyse dialogique de l'expérience. Deux plans peuvent être ici distingués : le fait de s'adresser à autrui suppose de rendre intelligible, et par là même d'organiser, un discours adressé à autrui. Réciproquement, être réceptif et se maintenir attentif aux récits de vie d'autrui procède d'un élargissement des horizons de perception quant à la manière de concevoir l'étendue des possibles de la vie humaine, et par voie de conséquence, de repenser sa propre vie. Réfléchir celle-ci, et lors des ateliers, accueillir la relation que font les autres de la leur, cela produit des effets transformateurs sur les structures narratives du sujet. Cette transformation

résulte à la fois de l'activité dialogique produite par le sujet dans son effort de « dédoublement », ouvrant droit à la « saisie de soi » dans l'activité réflexive, et de la mise en dialogue venant poursuivre et étayer les processus par lesquels l'expérience vécue se pense dans le temps, en advenant à la communauté.

L'activité descriptive suppose, pour sa conduite, l'intégration et la structuration de repères par les étudiants. Ces repères de l'activité réflexive, descriptive et thématique dans la formation sont ceux de l'explicitation : évocation de l'expérience, description chronologique de son déroulement, focalisation sur les instants décisifs, thématique. Cette activité réflexive sur les moments, privilégiant le mode descriptif qui vise l'établissement des faits du point de vue du sujet, est conduite dans les sessions d'histoire de vie, selon une alternance entre le travail individuel réalisé par les étudiants chez eux durant l'intersession, et son prolongement dans le cadre d'ateliers en sous-groupes, puis d'une mise en commun des questions portant sur cette activité en plénière.

L'activité descriptive et ses processus dialogiques

L'activité descriptive conduite chez soi comporte des difficultés manifestées par les étudiants à partir des questions suivantes : combien de moments doivent être décrits ? Quel est le niveau de détail attendu dans la description de l'expérience ? Comment procéder pour dépasser le seul moment décrit et lui trouver un sens dans la continuité d'un parcours ? ... Ces trois exemples donnent un aperçu de l'épreuve que constitue le récit en première personne dans l'activité descriptive.

La mise en commun et thématique de l'expérience décrite : l'accompagnement des étudiants vise ici à favoriser l'intégration des repères liés à la conduite de l'activité réflexive : ces repères concernent l'accès à l'expérience (évocation), la description chronologique, la thématique de l'expérience (vie adulte). Cette activité thématique peut être considérée comme préparatoire à l'activité configurante. En effet, les moments choisis par les étudiants sont majoritairement des instants de passages : étapes de la vie au travail, crise, transition, démission, quête de soi... La conduite des actes d'évocation – description – thématique accompagne le travail de configuration de l'expérience, propice à la transformation des structures narratives

Troisième phase, l'entrée dans l'activité narrative, par l'écriture du récit de soi, qui sera socialisée au sein du collectif. De nouveau, l'activité alterne entre des temps individuels et les temps de socialisation.

L'activité narrative en première personne : l'écriture de soi, nous l'avons dit, engage le sujet vers un travail de relecture de l'expérience, soit, selon les termes de Ricœur, de « préfiguration-configuration-refiguration ». En d'autres termes, avant d'aboutir au récit de soi régi par le principe de concordance (Ricœur, 1983, p. 80) selon les critères de complétude, de totalité, et d'étendue appropriée, le sujet fait l'expérience de la déconstruction des mises en sens précédemment établies, interrogées qu'elles sont par les processus de temporalisation et de description de l'expérience initiés dans l'atelier. Cette épreuve, faisant vivre des perceptions de perte de sens et de désorientation, comporte une dimension initiatique. Elle procède par l'interrogation des dimensions temporelles et constituées de l'expérience, d'un processus de transformation des structures narratives qui configure le rapport à l'existence. L'apprentissage

transformateur dont il est ici question procède donc de l'élargissement des horizons de perception, d'un changement de regard porté sur soi, son histoire et ses possibilités d'évolution, d'une émancipation des croyances ou des présupposés provoquant des formes déterminismes dans les processus de décision ou d'orientation.

La socialisation des récits au sein du collectif : ces processus de transformation, vécus par le sujet lors des moments d'écriture souvent solitaires, sont peu observables pour autrui. Ils sont latents, manifestes et pour partie exprimés lors de la session de clôture de la formation durant laquelle sont racontées, par les étudiants, les histoires résultant de la mise en récit de période ou du cours de la vie professionnelle et/ou adulte. Cette mise en commun des récits les fait advenir à la communauté. Leur socialisation ouvre la possibilité d'une mise en dialogue des interprétations, du fait de la présentation des récits dans le cadre des ateliers, et la présentation du récit en plénière, sur un format d'une heure. Durant ces ateliers, l'expression de soi alterne avec la réception du récit d'autrui. Les interlocutions entre les étudiants ouvrent la possibilité d'un partage des vécus, qui se formalise par des questions visant l'approfondissement de la description des moments par le narrateur, la proposition de témoignages en première personne par les narrataires, une thématization collective en lien avec des ouvrages d'auteurs et de chercheurs. La mise en dialogue procède également de la réciprocité générée par l'expression successive des récits, lors de la mise en commun. En d'autres termes, dire sa vie dans un groupe forme et transforme le collectif, en créant une unité de sens dépassant la somme des individualités, et participant d'une reconnaissance de l'expérience comme de son accueil au sein de la communauté humaine.

En synthèse

Cet article propose ainsi d'interroger, dans les groupes de formation qui intègrent la pratique narrative, les passages de l'expérience au langage à partir des situations de dialogue comme de l'activité dialogique. Pendant les sessions d'histoires de vie en formation, l'activité réflexive procède d'un co-investissement dialogique (Pineau, 2005) qui alterne, dans la temporalité de l'activité narrative elle-même, « expression de soi » en première personne, « interrogation réciproque de l'expérience » au cours des interlocutions, et « élaboration conjointe » de l'activité thématization. Ces processus complexes se développent dans la durée, et portent sur des expériences sédimentées qui relèvent d'un temps passé. Cet enchevêtrement temporel – entre l'expérience sédimentée, datée et révolue, et l'activité réflexive qui vient interroger ses modes de constitution, qui elle se déroule au présent – rend complexe les recherches sur les processus de transformation résultant de l'activité narrative. Ce point est renforcé par le fait que ces processus relèvent d'une transformation des cadres de perception, avec pour effet de redéfinir les perspectives de sens et les structures d'anticipation du sujet. Pour avancer dans la compréhension de ces différents mouvements, l'analyse des processus dialogiques par observation, au cours des sessions accompagnant l'activité narrative en formation d'adultes, nous semble un terrain propice et prometteur, tant pour la recherche que pour la reconnaissance des processus de co-implication et coopération.

Bibliographie courte :

Bégout, B. (2000). La généalogie de la logique. Paris : Vrin.

Breton, H. (2015). Co-explicitation, attention conjointe et fonctions d'accompagnement en formation. Education Permanente, n°205, 87-98.

- Breton, H. (2015). L'accueil de l'expérience dans les pratiques d'accompagnement à l'École de la deuxième chance. *Education Permanente*, Hors Série avec l'AFPA, 117-127.
- Breton, H. (2013). Les démarches de portfolio entre pratiques d'inventaire et pratiques réflexives. *Education Permanente*, n° 196, 99-110.
- Delory-Momberger, C. (2010). *La condition biographique. Essai sur le récit de soi dans la modernité avancée*. Paris : Téraèdre.
- Depraz, N. (2011). L'éloquence « de » la première personne. *Alter* n°19, 57-64.
- Depraz, N (éd). (2014). *Première, deuxième, troisième personne*. Bucarest : Zeta Books.
- Erikson, E. (1972). *Adolescence et crise : la quête d'identité*. Paris : Flammarion.
- Houde, R. (1999). *Les temps de la vie*. Montréal : Gaëtan Morin.
- Lainé, A. (2004). *Faire de sa vie une histoire*. Paris : Desclée de Brouwer.
- Le Breton, D. (2005). *Rites personnels de passage*. Hermes : Paris.
- Mezirow, J. (2001). *Penser son expérience*. Lyon : Chronique sociale.
- Pineau, G. (2008). *Dialogue dialectique dialogie en Histoire de vie*. Université de Tours.
- Pineau, G. Le Grand, J-L. (2007). *Les histoires de vie*. Paris : PUF.
- Pineau, G. (2005). La vie à orienter, quelle histoire ! ?. *Revue OSP*, n°34/1, 5-18.
- Pineau, G. (1986). Histoire de vie et reconnaissance des acquis : éléments d'une méthodologie progressive et collective. *Education Permanente*, n° 83-84, 139-146.
- Mezirow, J. (2001). *Penser son expérience. Développer l'autoformation*. Lyon : Chronique sociale.
- Ricœur, P. (1996). *Soi-même comme un autre*. Paris : Seuil.
- Ricœur, P. (1986). *Du texte à l'action*. Paris : Seuil.
- Ricœur, P. (1984). *Temps et récit. 2. La configuration dans le récit de fiction*. Paris : Seuil.
- Ricœur, P. (1983). *Temps et récit. 1. L'intrigue et le récit historique*. Paris : Seuil.
- Simmel, G. (2002). *La Philosophie de l'aventure*. Paris : L'Arche.
- Riverin-Siemard, D. (1984). *Etapes de vie au travail*. Montréal : St Martin.
- Vermersch, P. (2012). *Explicitation et phénoménologie*. Paris : PUF.
- Vermersch, P. (2000). *L'entretien d'explicitation*. Paris : ESF.

**Challenging de-contextualised understanding of TL: a dialogue on
psychosocial and ecological perspectives**

Laura Formenti
Milano Bicocca

Linden West
Canterbury Christ Church University

Transformative learning has been defined by Jack Mezirow as the specific adult capacity to challenge and change one's own meaning perspectives or mind sets. This notion has provoked debate in Europe about its potential limitations, not least the risk of trivialization, reification, and narrowing of adult learning to an individual and cognitive event, lacking a biographical and contextual sensitivity (West, 2014). In Europe, as well as North America, there are different traditions that imagine learning and educational processes as ways to build critical perspectives and favour social justice (as in Paulo Freire's 'conscientisation' principle), in creating a democratic citizenry, giving emphasis to the social rather than individual transformation (Brookfield and Holt, 2012).

To be fair, Mezirow can be read or developed in this direction too. Besides, as a learner himself, he was always open to dialogue and to build a comprehensive and integrated theory. However, he could not escape, as all of us, his own cultural backcloth. This is a main point for our research, and this paper: it is not possible to avoid referring to presuppositions and perspectives of meaning, we need methods and contexts where a truly dialogic, open, and developing theory is collaboratively built. Dialogue is not meant to achieve a master story, to convince each other, blurring our differences, but is a relational endeavour that celebrates difference, challenge each of us and keeps the conversation open, eventually involving the readers in the process too.

We want to bring into our analysis the recognition of unconscious, relational, deeply embodied, socio-cultural and ecological processes. Our aim is to illuminate the interdependence of learners and their contexts, in intimate life, in wider social experience and with reference to the 'natural' world. We suggest the complexity, non-linearity, and emergent quality of consciousness, in which change and transformation are constant. We also draw attention to the power of language and discourse and other social determinants in inhibiting processes of profounder learning, including how cultures shape individual lives and narrow educational space. When these aspects are neglected, adult learning is impoverished, alongside understanding of what facilitates or inhibits it. A satisfyingly complex theory of transformation is required in education, social care, and in diverse interventions, and even in politics, so as to provide a better foundation for more effective, ecologically sensitive, ethical and imaginative practice.

We decided to investigate our own diversity (in terms of gender, culture, language, theoretical background, etc.) to build a reflexive dialogue through writing, also drawing on trans-cultural (Anglo-Saxon, Italian, German and French, among others) academic literature. This paper represents a theoretical and reflexive introduction to a major project, where we will use case studies, autoethnographic writing, and emblematic stories from our own experience and auto/biographical research (West,

1996; 2001; Formenti, 2014; West, 2016) to gain a deeper, embodied, experience-based, and critical understanding of our own theories, and underlying assumptions. Dialogic, collaborative writing provides ‘multiple understanding of the world’ (Norris, Sawyer, 2012) enacting the principle of ‘double or multiple description’ (Bateson, 1979) to explore, for instance, the interdisciplinary psychosocial concept of self-recognition, as a new way of understanding the dynamics of transformation in the context of intimate relationships, in groups and with reference to wider social dynamics (Honneth, 2007; 2009; West, 2014).

Linden

I presented a paper in a symposium on transformative learning, a short while ago, at a European conference in Berlin. We were asked to interrogate ideas of transformative learning, which I did through the frame of what I call auto/biographical narrative research using interdisciplinary psychosocial theoretical perspectives. We were asked to consider the relevance of transformative learning to contemporary debates about adult learning and education in difficult, stressful times, where their purpose is too often reduced to highly instrumental labour market and consumerist ends. Was there something new and helpful in the transformative literature to enable Europeans to think more deeply and comprehensively about learning and education in late-modernity?

It was and still is an important challenge given how educational systems, as Bourdieu so starkly illuminated, remain stubbornly reproductive of the existing social order. Yes, of course, there are students who progress to and can prosper in the highest echelons of the university system, but their very success seems to reinforce the reactionary idea that the system is open to all the talents *if only people work hard enough*. The argument is sustained in the face of pervasive, crippling social inequalities across countries and continents. So if we are to use words like transformative, especially for the majority of peoples, we need very serious conversations *inter alia* about diverse structural as well as psychological constraints.

Laura

I remember the conference in Berlin. The air was electric with challenges, curiosity and some tensions: North Americans and Europeans from different countries, all in the same room, trying to make a conversation about learning, trying not to be ‘colonialists’, however bringing with them all their presuppositions, past history, language gaps, and maybe some clichés. By the way, I was struck by the gender composition of the symposium: one woman, many men. After the conference, a special issue of the Journal of Transformative Education was published (Formenti, Dirkx, 2014). For me, it was the beginning of this journey into TL. I see it as a possibility for intercultural dialogue. But dialogue needs efforts.

Linden

Going back to Berlin, I remember a distinguished colleague who was far from impressed with my interest in transformative learning. ‘Changes in mind set’, ‘Mezirow’, he mused; ‘is there anything conceptually distinctive here in relation to European conversations about good education or really significant learning,

individually or collectively?’

There were many questions from the audience: ‘Changes in mind-set? Is that sufficiently embodied or biographical?’ ‘How does TL relate to the traditions of the Frankfurt School and questions as to why serious, critical thinking is difficult and constrained?’ ‘What does ‘transformative learning’ have to say about education in a neo-liberal world of growing inequalities, xenophobia, racism and fundamentalism?’ ‘What might Mezirow’s writing add to the rich historical traditions of popular education, in both North America and Europe, with authors like Raymond Williams or Edward Lindeman? They illuminated where resources of hope might lie as part of a broader project to reinvigorate democracy itself, especially its participative dimensions.’

‘Maybe we need a new emphasis on collective struggle, over generations, to transform the social order, rather than worrying about individual mind-sets’, a colleague continued.

‘Moreover, what of our work, Linden, on lifewide and lifelong learning, including a concept like ‘biographicity’ as the fundamental challenge we all face in late modernity? Biographicity as the struggle to compose a life, and some agency, on more of our own terms, in the company of others, if never in conditions of our own choosing. Don’t these ideas take us into deeper relational, embodied and embedded territory?’ ‘All the talk about transformation can appear very individualistic, neo-liberal even, in a characteristically North American way’.

The conversations troubled me. I thought of how transformative learning has gained popularity in educational rhetoric. Even becoming a kind of consumerist fetish: ‘change and transform’ or you will be left behind as a dinosaur or Luddite, bringing echoes of social Darwinism and educational commodification. Transformative learning can degenerate into little more than a marketing slogan to enable educational institutions to sell their products. We are all transformative institutions now, proclaim colleges, schools, universities, or the corporate world of management training. The idea becomes all things to all people and evacuated of meaning.

The conversation with the specific colleague touched on other challenges to the term in the educational literature (Newman, 2010). At the time I responded by saying that I join in conversations when they seem interesting with many people, in diverse academic communities, including psychoanalysis, critical theory, and even spirituality as well as transformative learning. Conversations about the prerequisites of profounder human and educational experience, which may encompass wrestling with deeply disorientating dilemmas and hard fought changes in mind-set. All informed by an auto/biographical sensibility (see West, 2014 and 2016). In the transformative learning ‘community’ I found similar concerns to my own, about for instance understanding more of the human condition and how education can appeal to and draw on our better angels. There are a number of colleagues who challenge the evacuation and the reification of the term, but continue to insist it has utility (see Brookfield, 2000, for instance). In North America as well as Europe, there are ways of framing transformative learning as a critical element in struggles for social justice and for creating a democratic citizenry; framings giving emphasis to the social rather than the individual, or at least to the interdependence of both.

Scholars like Stephen Brookfield have taken Jack Mezirow’s work very firmly into

the political and critical domain. Disorientating dilemmas can encompass, as Brookfield and Holt (2011) argue, collective, cooperative and democratic changes but of course they can also evoke deeply reactionary thoughts and extreme xenophobic, even fascistic tendencies. We need to think, with others, about how and why this happens; maybe to challenge the too frequent separation of mind and body, thoughts and feelings, in accounts of significant learning. They are a unit in which feeling is central to thinking, and creative responses to change are deeply dependent on our relationships and how these enable us to manage the emotional dissonance disorientation brings (West, 2016).

There are feminist scholars too, like Belenky and Stanton (2000), who challenge the neglect of gendered inequities, oppression, and power in writing about transformative processes. They note how communication contexts are too often understood in overly masculinist ways, with separate, competing ‘rational’ people in search of the most valid idea in the ideal speech community. They present, as an alternative, a more feminist idea of connected, empathic and co-operative learners searching to make sense of why individuals may think and feel as they do.

A breaking of collective mind sets is urgently required to appreciate the consequences of our actions – in building cities, holiday resorts or changes to landscapes, in ways that have calamitous consequences for many species, including ours. Transformative learning can involve a deepening, heart-felt, engaged, imaginative as well as critical change in mind-set, which includes appreciation of complex systems of interdependence and of our capacity for solipsistic, mind-less destruction.

Processes of authentic transformation are, in these terms, elements in a larger struggle for new ways of thinking, being, seeing and interacting, encompassing body, spirit, mind and soul. This can be a profoundly political project of learning to be and act in courageous, imaginative, interconnected and agentic ways. If our present world groans for more inclusive, relational, socially just, and even spiritually aware and sustainable understandings of transformative learning, there are many and diverse people who write in such terms in the transformative communities of North America and Europe.

Laura

I also have a story that illuminates my idea of transformation:

1999, January or February. University, my office.

She is very young, clean-cut. Red blotches on her skin and neck reveal bridled emotions. She hands out her test to me, while asking with a broken voice: “How is it possible that I ONLY got a 19/30?!?”

She looks offended. I examine the paper. Ah yes. I remember this test. I had warned students to answer all questions. In this case, one out of three was left blank.

“Nevertheless I studied so much, I always got the highest grades at school. The two answered questions are really good”.

True, but why didn't she answer this one? “Give your own definition of education and discuss it”: it is a beautiful question! My favourite among the three, I confide to her.

“I know all the theories of education, I could give you any definition, from Plato to Rousseau and Paulo Freire, but not mine. I do not have MY OWN definition”. I am amazed. How is it possible to know so many definitions and not be able to squeeze out any idea? After all it’s easy – I suggest – all you have to do is to think.

“No way! You do not have the right to ask me to think!”

I wonder if that student changed her mind, afterwards, if she learned “to think like an adult” (Mezirow, 2000). Would she dare, as an educator, to ask people whom she meets to travel the whole journey of learning, difficult and yet simple, where mature adults *take a position* in the process of knowing, then *move* within it, as well as *change their rhythm and modality* of movement, and lastly are able to *go beyond*? Maybe that incident, at the start of her academic career, announced a disorienting dilemma (Mezirow, 1991), one of those critical and blessed moments that propitiate transformative learning. It was for me, undoubtedly. It shook beliefs, premises and values that I had given for granted until that moment. I asked myself, many times, if that dialogue was favourable to transformation, or, on the contrary, only confirming the ambitious student vs. demanding teacher clichés. These attributes, Bateson warns us (1972), are built and confirmed in relationships, emerging features of our conversations. My aim, in our dialogue, is to focus conversations on what constitutes the power to transform us.

Linden

Your story brings us back to the ‘banking concept’ of education, the neglect of the experiences and struggles of learners and the difficulty of learning *from* experience, rather than *about* it, in overly abstract ways, in Bion’s telling formulation (Youell, 2006). ‘Knowledge’, in other words - pre-ordained and pre-arranged – is to be deposited into the empty heads of students rather than drawing on what they know, and their experience and associated questions. An equally serious matter, as noted above, is the pervasiveness of meritocratic assumptions, even among radical educators. The point is to get more people into degree programmes, or their equivalent, but in ways that continue to leave many outside the walls. Historical concerns, as in popular education, to do with drawing all the people into educational spaces, as part of a project to build an informed, active, questioning citizenry, have been marginalised. Of course there are educators who combine a critique of meritocratic assumptions with that of the banking model. Freire, among the others, is at the heart of some of the discussions about TL, which augurs well for those who want to construct more collective understanding of transformation.

Laura

You are stressing the macro-social and structural constraints that partially explain what happened in that interaction. My story can be read in another way yet, to focus the meso level and *transformativity*, a concept that I use to celebrate TL as well as to go beyond it. After all, what matters in a (trans) formative process is the possibility to go beyond, to transcend. To learn “like an adult” means to position oneself, then to move, and learn how to change the rhythm and modality of our own movement within our previous knowing, and ultimately to go beyond all this. Transformativity may be a way to transcend Mezirow’s theory, now that he is gone, and a solid community of

research and practice has been established.

Mezirow's research was certainly fertile: he connected different perspectives on learning, research traditions, trends and needs, composing them in a conceptual and practical system; he gave inspiration to many academics and professionals to search a more dynamic, integrated approach to adult learning and education; he started a lively community. In the US, the annual conference, the *Journal of Transformative Education*, the quality of publications witness the credibility and versatility of this theory, notwithstanding controversial. In Europe, the process has been slow and more restrained as you imply (Formenti, Dirkx, 2014).

Linden

I sort of agree, but there is a danger of neglecting history and a loss of meaning and sense in the trivial import of ideas: European traditions have much to offer; not least that of popular education, where space existed to think for oneself in the company of friends, as my own recent work illuminates.

Laura

I agree. And I wonder if diversity at large shouldn't be regarded as the real thing that needs to be celebrated, about Europe. We are suspicious of the rhetoric of "new" since the past teaches that nothing is really new. Let's try to interrogate what is transformative in such processes. The construction of a dialogic and complex model of transformative conversations could be among the future developments of the TL theory. There is a need to overcome the dominating perspective on learning, overly individualistic, anthropocentric and dualistic, based on separation of the learner from the environmental, social and relational context, even from her own body. These presuppositions can be questioned to favour a complex view of learning as a trans-individual and conversational process, not confined to the head or brain of isolated subjects.

An understanding of complexity (Alhadeff Jones, 2012) also invites us to broaden our sight, and shift from individual transformative learning to *transformativity*, as I said above, as an emergent feature of a system of relationships. If we are ready to acknowledge that adult learning always entails different subjects who necessarily learn in relation to the other, then they will need to learn together, and not separately, how to interrogate their mind sets. Learning happens in reciprocity and coordination: we need satisfying theories and practices to understand the "proximal system of learning", that is located at an intermediate (meso) level – between the micro (individual) and the macro (social) (Formenti, 2014). An ongoing conversation always is there, before, during and after any learning. This meso level accompanies us with everyday interactions that can propitiate or hinder learning. A family dinner, an exam at university, a research interview, even data analysis or writing for publication entail conversations that enact a network of inter-dependent relationships. What is the pattern connecting them? What patterns connect all of us, as learning adults?

The story I told says how the perspectives of meaning are built in an educational system based on measurement of performance. School experience is crucial in building the learner, it structures and constrains us; at school, we learnt much more

than the *what* - contents, skills and competences fixed by the explicit curriculum. Learning *about* rather than *from* experience, in your terms Linden. Unconsciously, through day by day repetition of gestures, rituals and formulae, we learnt the context, i.e. the *how* of learning. At this *embodied* and *enacted* level, each generation internalizes the perspectives and frameworks of meaning, the hidden metaphors that are used to *make sense* of learning. Today, this means to learn commodification, i.e. the hegemonic sense of learning: education is about receiving credits, to be spent in the labour market. Economic metaphors dominate. In the Greek *skolé* there were no grades, no credits; learning was strictly linked to life style, to making a good life. But this was, obviously, only for a narrow élite.

This *context* learning, regarding the way we learn to punctuate the sequences of experience (Bateson, 1972), is very near to *transformative learning*. A person who is raised in a Pavlovian context (conditioning), or instrumental learning (reward/punishment), or mechanic context, will anticipate similar contexts in the future:

“[...] experience of one or more contexts of the Pavlovian type results in the animal's acting in some later context as though this, too, had the Pavlovian contingency pattern. Similarly, if past experience of instrumental sequences leads an animal to act in some later context as though expecting this also to be an instrumental context, we shall again say that Learning II has occurred” (Bateson, 1972, p. 294)..

Bateson's theory of the logical levels of learning highlights the entrenchment of positions (states of dynamic equilibrium, level 0), movements (shift of the equilibrium point, level 1) and rhythms/modalities of shift (class/configuration/category change, level 2) that are featured by any learning, all the way to the most amazing and difficult transformation (level 3), that is going beyond, transcending (previous) learning, identity, and the here-and-now context. In this hierarchy, Learning 0 is the prerequisite of any learning. At each moment, we are the living demonstration of our capacity to get by in this world, to know and answer, without losing our auto-organization. As living organisms, we are part of “co-evolutionary units”, from which we depend, from birth to death. This constitutive dependence has to be strongly stated, to contrast a foolish dominant narrative, ready to convince us of a delusionary and dangerous idea of us as autonomous and self-sufficient adults.

Learning 1, the prevailing object of education, can happen by imitation, conditioning, memory, rewards and punishments, answer extinction, play, projects... the whole taming-and-teaching paraphernalia that teachers, educators, psychiatrist and parents must know very well (Bateson, 1972, p. 297). It is time-bound: living organisms, differently from machines, give a different answer in a different time. Be it copiously drooling, nicely writing and reading, or riding a bike and using a computer.

Every Learning 1 entails a context, i.e. inter-actions with objects, people, places, hence relationships that shape our “character” (misleadingly attributed to an individual per se, such as the “ambitious student” or the “demanding teacher”), “punctuations” (ways to segment an interaction, e.g. “since the student did not answer one question, she failed” vs. “the teacher asked an illegitimate question, so the student did not answer) and “relational patterns” (transference/countertransference: for the

student, this episode could confirm previous experiences with “demanding” parents and teachers; the teacher can act coherently with her “gifted child” past experience, (see Miller, 1979). Character, punctuations and relational patterns are an outcome of Learning 2.

Linden

I think I go along with this, not least the importance and necessity of adaptation or Level 0 learning in human experience. That provides the basis for movement to the next levels. Notwithstanding, I am mindful, in very early experience of different qualities of interaction between humans, between prime care givers, say, and infants; agency, and the capacity for play, as Winnicott argued, can be there in very early experience as the world. If this is experienced as safe enough, secure, enabling the infant (and adult) to take risks and imaginatively to create whole worlds, in play, without worrying what others might think. So your different levels may be in play from the outset, but we are not good at articulating the complex experiences involved.

Laura

To learn how to “think like an adult” (Mezirow, 2000) we need for a certain kind of experience, i.e. a reframing of previous learning. The perspectives that are built through Learning 2 are difficult to eradicate, not least because we very rarely become aware of their existence and even then we tend to protect them (and ourselves) from dis-equilibrium; besides, we do not remember *how* we learnt them.

“Subjectively we are aware of [them] but unable to say clearly *how* this pattern was constructed nor what cues were used in our creation of it” (Bateson, 1972, p. 301).

Researching our own learning biography (Dominicé, 2000) is thus a reasonable thing to do, when it is aimed to re- and de-construct the paths of construction of our relationship to knowing. I am not saying, however, that it is necessary, or even possible, to gain total awareness. We are not able to word it all. The contact with our radical memory (Heron, 1996) and embodied mind (Varela, Thompson, Rosch, 1991), e.g. in autobiographic, sensorial, creative writing, and all aesthetic languages, nurturing our ability to “think in stories” (Bateson, 1979), opens space for *reflexivity* (Hunt, Sampson, 2006; Hunt, 2013), that differ from *reflection* in being rooted in the unconscious, mystery, wisdom (see also Tisdell, 2014). Among the critiques of Mezirow there is his early insistence on reflection, as the most aware, rational and cognitive dimension of adult learning, hence lessening the value of “soul work”, (Dirkx, Mezirow, 2006; Dirkx, 2012). To go beyond Mezirow means to integrate in our theories and practices the notion that an adult subject will at best be able to represent always and only a little part, if a complex one, of her learning path.

Learning 3 is a deep transformation of the character, of our way of punctuating, of our relational patterns, and the way we inhabit the world. It brings

“a greater flexibility in the premises acquired by the process of Learning II – a *freedom* from their bondage. [...] But any freedom from the bondage of habit must also denote a profound redefinition of the self”. (Bateson, 1972, p. 304).

Linden

I think profound experiences of self can be there from the outset and patterns in our relationships become embodied in our neurological system; the word, or feeling made flesh, for instance. I suppose I want to question how much this may be simply an adult quality.

Laura

Maybe you are right, and we are too adult- and anthropo-centred. We need to think thoroughly about this. The hubris of mankind was one of Bateson's preoccupations. But let me go back to my story, to focus a further point: the student took a position in the context as if it was instrumental and I interpreted it in a "Batesonian" way. Our meeting enacted a dilemma, generated by a clash of opposing frameworks (Sclavi, 2003). Isn't it a surprise, for many students in HE, to realize that they can think? However, the surprise is also on the other side: some teachers neutralize it, by labelling the student as inadequate. But I was obliged, being a pedagogist, and with complexity as my credo, to question the context. So: who was the one, in this conversation, to go into a crisis, long and deep enough to produce transformative learning? Were the two of us able to understand each other, and to foster reciprocal learning by dialoguing, by going beyond the impasse, not to say conflict? What kind of conversations do we need, to sustain transformation? Not all conversations are generative.

A transformative conversation should entail the possibility to criticize the learning contexts, to take a distance from roles and rituals, and to challenge fixed rules. This is not economic at all, it poses problems, it requires cognitive and emotional energies, it puts us at risk. Why should we want it, what is the "reward"?

The hegemonic, empiricist, anglo-centric tradition, overly individualistic and event-based, nurtures Ego-ism and reification of learning, while eco-systemic and complexity theories celebrate learning as emerging from inter-actions in contexts. As Bateson (1972, 1979) stated, learning is not dualistic: on one side a teaching unit (be it a person, an object, or the world out there), on the other side a learning unit (the individual, separated from interactions). Learning is not in the head, or behaviours, but in the circularity of constraints and possibilities, actions and reactions, different organisms bringing different perspectives. In this ongoing dialogue, stories are told, shared, interpreted by the human actors, and they play a crucial role.

To conclude and to begin

Laura is suggesting that dialogic understanding (more appropriate than the abused term "co-construction") of lived experience makes it possible to think in stories and aesthetic presentation. It nurtures a terrain where deliberate actions and shared processes can flourish. Transformativity grows, at a system level, if different forms of knowing are welcome, celebrated, and cultivated: biographic, experience-based, embodied knowing, together with symbolic, presentational, performative knowing, as well as the more academic, propositional, and theoretical, up to the practical forms of knowing, to be enacted in the "real world". New, critical and creative scenarios of

research, where all participants are researchers and researchers view themselves as adult learners, seem to be able to nurture transformativity. They aim to produce awareness and active participation also in readers, as parts of the systemic process of research and learning. This is going beyond, too. Beyond printed paper, outside there, in the world, looking for clues of transformativity, opening doors to new dialogic learning experiences. Searching into adult learning, we are involved and responsible, as adult apprentices, to go beyond what was already told and to open possibilities (maybe) toward a better living.

Linden, on the other hand, does not want to confine such processes to adult learning; and he is also troubled by a reality of growing inequality, xenophobia, fundamentalism, and armed conflict; of anti-learning and retreat into infantilism/fundamentalisms in our contemporary world, and the deep-seated insecurities underlying this. The lack of a solid core of selfhood, to put it slightly differently, which has to be viewed, as Laura states, relationally and systemically. What we are wrestling with is not so much the development of transformativity, but of its marginalisation for most of the people, for most of the time. TL needs to encompass a more explicit lifelong but also political dimension, sensitive to the play of globalisation, finance capital, and the instabilities this entails, working at a very primitive, emotional level too. But this is not a melancholic yearning for a lost world, or progressive narrative; rather to consider how theories of transformative learning can encompass the interdependence of micro-level, meso and the macro in facilitating cohesive, agentic, questioning and moral citizens, from earliest experience; with both political but also ecological as well as relational sensibilities; the task is enormous. But we need to start with us, with our biographies, with our own primitive experience, and with what has constrained as well as inspired us.

References

- Alhadeff-Jones, M. (2012). Transformative Learning and the Challenges of Complexity. In Taylor, E., Cranton, P. and Ass. (2012). *The Handbook of Transformative Learning. Theory, Research, and Practice*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, pp. 178-194.
- Bateson, G. (1972). *Steps to an ecology of mind*. New York: Ballantine Books.
- Bateson, G. (1979). *Mind and Nature. A necessary Unit* New York, Dutton.
- Belenky, M and Stanton M (2000), Inequality, Development, and Connected Knowing. In J. Mezirow and Associates, *Learning as Transformation; critical perspectives on a theory in progress*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 71-102.
- Brookfield, S. (2000) Transformative Learning as Ideology Critique. In J. Mezirow and Associates, *Learning as Transformation; critical perspectives on a theory in progress*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 125-150.
- Brookfield, S and Holst, J. (2011) *Radicalising Learning; adult education for a just world*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass
- Denzin, N.K., Giardina, M.D. (2016) (a cura di). *Qualitative Inquiry Through a Critical Lens*. New York, London: Routledge.
- Dirkx, J. (2012). Nurturing Soul Work. A Jungian Approach to Transformative Learning. In Taylor, EW., Cranton, P. and ass. *The Handbook of Transformative Learning*, 116-130.
- Dirkx, J. Mezirow, J. and Cranton, P. (2006) Musings and reflections on the meaning,

- context and processes of transformative learning. *Journal of Transformative Education*, 4, 123-139.
- Dominici, P. (2000). *Learning from our lives. Using educational biographies with adults*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.
- Field
- Foerster, H. von (1981), *Sistemi che osservano*. Astrolabio, Roma, tr. it. 1987.
- Formenti, L. (2014). The myth of birth. In Formenti, L., West, L., Horsdal, M. (eds.), *Embodied narratives. Connecting stories, bodies, cultures ad ecologies*. University Press of Southern Denmark, Odense (DK), pp. 129-148.
- Formenti, L., Dirkx, J. (2014). *A Dialogical Reframing*. *Journal of Transformative Education*, pp. 1-11.
- Formenti, L., West, L., and Horsdal, M. (eds.) (2014). *Embodied narratives. Connecting stories, bodies, cultures and ecologies*. Odense: University Press of Southern Denmark.
- Gergen, M.M., Gergen, K. (2012) *Playing with purpose. Adventures in performative social science*. Walnut Creek, Ca: Left Coast Press.
- Heron, J. (1996). *Co-operative inquiry: Research into the human condition*. London: Sage.
- Hunt, C. (2013). *Transformative learning through creative life writing. Exploring the self in the learning process*. London: Routledge.
- Hunt, C., Sampson, F. (2006). *Writing: Self and Reflexivity*. London: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Kokkos, A. (2012). Transformative learning in Europe: An overview of the theoretical perspectives. In E. W. Taylor & P. Cranton (Eds.), *Handbook of transformative learning: Theory, research, and practice*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, pp. 289-303.
- Miller, A. (1979) *The Drama of the Gifted Child. The Search for the True Self*. New York: Basic Books, new edition, revised and updated, 1997.
- Newman, M. (2012) Calling transformative learning into question: Some mutinous thoughts. *Adult Education Quarterly*, 62, 36-65.
- Sawyer, R., & Norris, J. (2013). *Duoethnography. Understanding Qualitative Research*. New York: Oxford University Press.
- Taylor, E., Cranton, P. and Ass. (2012). *The Handbook of Transformative Learning. Theory, Research, and Practice*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.
- Tisdell, E. (2014). Themes and Variations of Transformational Learning. Interdisciplinary Perspectives on Forms that Transform. In Taylor, E., Cranton, P. and Ass. (2012). *The Handbook of Transformative Learning. Theory, Research, and Practice*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, pp. 21-36.
- Varela, F., Thompson E., Rosch E. (1991). *The embodied mind: cognitive science and human experience*. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press.
- West, L (2016) *Distress in the city; racism, fundamentalism and a democratic education*. London: Trentham Books.
- Wilson E. (2016), *Half-Earth: Our Planet's Fight for Life*. London: Liveright.
- Youell, B., (2006) *The Learning Relationship: Psychoanalytic thinking in education*. London: Karnac.

Towards Transformative Learning by Enhancing the Group Dialogue and Introducing Action Learning in a Bulgarian University

Alexander Ventzislavov POJARLIEV

NBU, Department Administration and Management

Abstract: The paper presents an empirical study on the attempt of applying an action learning approach in formal graduate and professional programs in management at the New Bulgarian University (NBU). The benefits, feedback and main outcomes of the pilot application of the approach are summarized. Some examples of work issues and reflections of the participants are presented together with difficulties related to the process and its traditional academic environment.

Keywords: Action learning, action learning sets, management training, reflection, transformative learning.

Introduction

Current work and learning environment is characterized with increasing dynamics, complexity, unpredictability and uncertainty. It creates pressure for continuous changes and for considerable shortening of development cycles, as it demands both people and organizations to act and learn in one and the same time. A problem in Bulgaria that has gathered head for quite some time now is the incompatibility between the learning processes in traditional educational institutions and the business needs, especially in managers and leaders training. The culture of relatively passive and dependent learning is still characteristic for a considerable part of the learning process, especially as regards universities. In contrast with it, leading organizations in the field of business attempt to build organizational culture that encourages initiativeness and creative work, empowerment and a maximum degree of people's engagement through increasingly wide application of specific forms of group work and learning.

In Bulgaria are relatively well known the approaches for training adults within constructivist paradigm, such as experiential learning, project based learning, transformative learning, action learning, etc. Nevertheless, the use of the group and its inter-member dialogue as considerable resources in the training process remains the "white spot" in the academic practice. Often group experience does not go beyond mutual work on a certain task, discussion of cases or discussion of experiences via a specific interactive method or game. However, what are the other ways for its use so that value is added to the training and development process? Is it possible at all that this takes place in the conservative environment of formal academic training?

The Action Learning Approach

The term "action learning" was introduced by Reginald Revans in his books from the 80's of the XX century (Revans, 1980, 1982). He did not create a specific model or technique by leaving behind just an idea that is plain in its essence. This idea, however, is connected with a necessity of deep self-knowledge and deep knowledge of the world around, as it provides an opportunity for the integration of various group work approaches. Pedler presents action learning as "first and foremost an idea or

philosophy and not simply an alternative educational or training method” (Pedler, 2008, p.72). Action learning is defined as a “continuous process of learning and reflection, supported by colleagues, with an intention of getting things done” (McGill and Beaty, 2001). A newer concept perceives it as “a powerful problem-solving tool that has the amazing capacity to simultaneously build successful leaders, teams, and organizations”. This is “a process that involves a small group working on real problems, taking action, and learning as individuals, as a team, and as an organization while doing so” (Marquardt, 2011, p.2).

The development of the ideas for “learning organization” is closely connected with action learning as a transformation process towards cooperation, where the members of the social system transform both it and themselves by taking part in the reflection into action (Passfield, 2002).

The modeling of the approach characteristics has been implemented by Revans’ followers (Pedler, 2008; Marquardt, 2011), as one of the most widely adopted models of the six components of action learning is the one of Michael Marquardt created in the middle of the 1990’s (Marquardt, 2011, p.3).

The main components of action learning include as follows: group gathering (the so-called “action learning set”); each participant places an actual question, problem or project to be developed in the group; everybody works on the respective problem in favour of its owner; the purpose of the person representing the problem is to be able to undertake actions towards a given aspect of the problem, to implement reflection and to learn from his/her own actions throughout the progress in the situation; the typical duration of meetings is 3-4 hours; the group establishes clear conditions and basic rules for ensuring efficient work (Brockbank and McGill, 1998, p.218).

Groups consist of 4 to 8 persons and the best case is that there are as heterogeneous as possible with respect to the participants’ experience. The keen asking of questions and reflective listening are the core of the process of clarifying the essence of problems and finding working solutions. Participants are required to have the capacity and strength to undertake actions that result from the reconsideration of problems, setting of goals and strategies for their achievement. Engagement in learning furthers creative solving of complex issues, intensifies the capacity of the individual and the group, and results in long-term and steady results. The facilitator (coach) is required, so that he/she focuses on problem solution and on learning, thus supporting the reflection on the process and the results through keen questions and careful interventions.

The typical structure of the meeting of the action learning group includes as follows:

1. Presenting a problem being a challenge to the group and described from the point of view of the person having it.
2. Receiving contribution by the others in the form of questions provoking the points of view, perceptions, views, and beliefs. The participants may share their experience and knowledge at the invitation of the person having the problem in question.
3. Reflection on the discussion, learning process and solutions for undertaking actions.

The action learning process continues in the practice, where actions are undertaken and ideas are tested. The next meeting continues with:

4. Sharing everything taken place upon fulfillment of the planned actions.
5. Reflection on everything learnt from the experience and its integration into the practice.

Wider distribution of action learning took place in the 90’s of the XX century in UK, mostly in postgraduate management courses (Frank, 1996). In the USA researches of

the American Society for Training and Development (ASTD) show that two thirds of manager leadership programs used action learning, and a research from 2009 concludes that 77% of all learning executive managers determine action learning as a leading force behind their own development (Marquardt, 2011, p. 1).

An interesting question is about the applicability of the approach efficient upon training of experienced managers in training of people without any management experience whatsoever. The empirical observations considered below attempt to seek for an answer to this question.

Pilot Realization of Action Learning Sets in NBU

In 2013-2015 action learning meetings took place for the first time within two post-diploma programs for professional qualification for practicing managers and NBU Master's management Program, where some of the participants had no management experience. Meetings were organized as a practical part of courses for leadership skills and management learning and development skills. The common goals were to create conditions for more efficient learning and training of participants in management and work in dynamic business environment, as well as the complex and practical development of the necessary "soft" and "hard" skills for developing strategies for problem solving and development of individual leadership competences. Participation in the meetings was at the participants' desire, but not mandatory. All three programs required to make reflection on the gained experience via an individual written assignment, which also served the purpose of formative assessment.

There were 24 meetings that took place with a total of approximately 42 participants within 8 groups. The duration of the meetings in the professional programs was 4 study hours (12 meetings), and in the Master's – 2 hours (12 meetings). The interval between the meetings of some groups was approximately one month, and of others – one week. The participants taking part in one meeting were 4-8 persons. During the meetings there were a total of 26 problems considered.

The meetings were held according to the general structure described above. The main directions for work of the groups were as follows: time-sharing, so that each person had his/her turn to present a problem he/she wished to work on; the group helped the respective participant to examine the problem through open questions; giving unwanted advices was avoided; the group then made sure that the person representing the respective problem had an action plan; after each turn and at the end of the meeting special time was spent for discussion about everything learnt.

The productive work culture was built owing to the introduction of an extremely powerful norm in the very beginning of the work within the group: statements were made only as a reply to questions. The second introduced significant norm concerned the facilitator's role and regulated his/her power to intervene in order to improve the learning process of the group (Marquardt, 2011, p.8-9). And even those two norms alone were enough to ensure the holding off of the group's work function. However, the groups also approved an additional norm connected with keeping confidentiality. It was only in one group where more additional norms occurred in connection with the regulation of the number of questions consecutively asked by one participant, and with the making of a sign expressing one's willingness to participate.

Initial Results

Below there is a summary of some initial results obtained during the work with the groups in the period under review. Firstly, an analysis was made of the types of discussed problems with an expectation for presence of differences between the

participants having management experience and the participants having no management experience. The review of the contents of the group work showed that the problems shared by practicing managers mostly concerned organizational issues. Examples of the above include as follows:

- Disturbed relations with a key foreign supplier due to the inappropriate reaction of an employee.
- Hesitation on the part of trade representatives that frequently address the executive director with a request for a change in the criteria for work with trade partners.
- Necessity of prompt unification of the competences of two departments – maintenance department and service department, which have merged.
- Resignation of people holding key positions.
- Support for a recently appointed head having no experience in problem solving with his teams, and improvement of teamwork.
- Taking a decision for the choice of a profile of a key position in a recruitment and selection process.
- Exerting influence on a senior head.
- Finding an approach towards a subordinate characterized with his/her difficult behavior.

As for the participants not holding a management position shared problems were mostly connected with more personal matters, such as:

- Poor work relations with an older and authoritative colleague.
- Working under great pressure and coping with the owner's manipulative attitude towards the personnel.
- Taking a decision for passing onto a permanent employment agreement under conditions of intense work environment, conflicts between head, and lack of clarity as regards development.
- Willingness for exerting influence and changing inappropriate behavior by a head.
- Willingness for development as a manager and coping with the competition and with confrontation on the part of the current head that is a hindrance.
- Coping with micromanagement on top and softening the sense of autonomy and inclusion into decision making.
- Coping in a situation of unclear relations between two parties as an interested third party.

A common leading topic was about the relations with people in difference situations, as in a relatively limited number of cases such problems were considered from a management point of view, a helicopter view and association with organizational processes and systems. This was possible mainly in groups with participants holding higher management positions or managers in corporations. In the other cases problems were mostly connected with relations with people, on which the participants depended, most often heads or more experienced and influential colleagues, as well as direct subordinates.

The discussions, actions and the reflection on presented problems created some great possibilities for self-knowledge and consolidation of the capabilities for exerting influence and focusing on the own circle of influence. The general impression, which was also confirmed by the assessments below, was that the meetings of the action learning groups contributed to the development of both practicing managers and

participants without any management experience whatsoever. In the second case the discussed problems were more personal and mostly connected with self-management and self-development.

Assessment of Benefits

The participants from two different groups from a professional program and Master’s program were requested to make their assessments by using a survey consisting of closed and opened questions. The questions of Burgess in a research for assessment of action learning groups into a program for development of managers were used as a model for making the survey (Burgess, 1999). Closed questions were 20, grouped into two main fields: 1) assessment of the impact from the participation into the group on the management performance and development; 2) assessment of the extent, to which 10 various factors contribute to the action learning process. The possible answers were presented in a five-level Likert scale (1 – strongly disagree, 2 – disagree, 3 – neither agree nor disagree, 4 – agree, 5 – strongly agree).

The average values of the received answers connected with the assessment of impact were within the range of 3,64 – 4,55, with an average of all 10 questions - 4,24. The average values of the assessments of the factors contributing to the action learning process were within the range of 4,09 – 4,91, with an average of all 10 questions - 4,50.

The separate review of the assessments for each group revealed some differences, which due to the small number of respondents would not have any statistical significance whatsoever, but could direct to the outlining of some specifics (Table 1).

Table 1: Differences in assessments among groups.

	Professional program	Master’s program
Average values - assessment of the effect of the participation	within the scope of: 3,6 - 4,4 an average of: 4,1	within the scope of: 3,7 – 5 an average of: 4,4
Descending arrangement of the ones with highest assessments	- development as a manager - development of new ways for consideration of problems as learning opportunities - more trust in one’s intuition as an addition to the rational approach - usefulness for the management practice - increase of the level of positivity at work	- less dependancy and higher proactivity
Average values – factors contributing to the action learning process	within the scope of: 4 - 4,8 an average of: 4,4	within the scope of: 4,1 – 5 an average of: 4,6
Descending arrangement of the ones with highest assessments	- group members are from different businesses, thus providing an opportunity for richer and more creative solutions - leaving participants to distance themselves from their own problems opens up new perspectives	- the facilitator is important for keeping to the structure - the facilitator’s comments and questions - opened questions as more worth than advices

As a whole, the assessments of the student group are slightly higher, which may be due to the comprehended novelty in the interactive experience in contrast to the traditional learning process at the university. Unlike the other group, the main

influence having the highest value of 5 is the unanimously assessed decrease of dependency and increase of proactivity of participants. The next forms of impact connected with the management development and its aspects are shared by both groups. The assessment of the heterogeneous nature of the group as a leading factor that contributes to the process of learning is shown in both groups, but the difference in the case of the students is that they place the facilitator and his/her comments respectively on the second and third places. It seems like those differences are related to one another and may be united into one cautious interpretation of the relatively more strongly expressed emancipating role of action learning in the student group.

The answers to the open-ended questions show that the participants like the following in the action learning process:

- The “Group members”, the “energy and feeling of mutuality and involvement achieved within the group”, “the participants’ engagement”, “the personality of the facilitator and his/her preparedness”, “the improvement of the process every time”.
- “The benefit of sharing experience with people holding various positions and representing various businesses”, “the other’s and varying opinion, which absolutely upturns the personal perspective via appropriate questions and results in learning new things and developing”.
- “The discussed various (including complex) problems and achieved results”, including “high self-improvement”.

The following turn out to be the most efficient for them:

- Various problems and personalities, and a way of thinking, expressing different points of view, and the reflection on them.
- The practice of opened questions and their power as regards seeing things from another point of view, as regards turning the conversation “out of the blue” into another direction.

As least efficient participants have determined delving into one and the same direction. Participants don’t like the delays of the group’s members, when the discussion is interrupted; the difficulties in directing via open questions and the duration of discussion of a given problem without having a break. The recommendations towards improvements include willingness for more practice that is also more regular, organization of more meetings of the group; coming to the group as most open-minded as possible, without any prejudice, and taking more breaks in order not to “get stuck in a circle”.

The most important things learnt are connected by participants with: the significant of the discovered and sharing approach towards the others as regards the efficiency of leadership; the significance of asking well-selected questions upon directing peers into one common direction; the worth of “non-experts” and of getting away from the specific problem; the secure environment with behavioral norms, which makes people express freely their opinions; the applicability of everything discussed in the practice; the improvement of the personal skills for work with people. The participants share that thinking over and answering questions connected with a given problem contributes in a very efficient and interesting way to their own personal development and learning. Another important moment pointed out is also that sometimes discovered problems are believed to be such only by the very participant concerned, who learns how to benefit the maximum from the situations and how to see things from different points of view.

The following quotes from the students’ assignments are typical examples that illustrate various benefits, which may be grouped into several topics,

namely:

- *Expansion or overturn of the point of view, reaching one's own findings and insights*

“I've learnt how many different points of view may be within a group and how the same may be united by means of discussion until reaching a solution ...”

“The fact that two persons out of six never succeeded in understanding what the actual problem was, and a third person kept insisting on the thing could not be a problem, made me ask myself why in my opinion the thing was not just a problem, but even a serious problem. This made me seriously think of the eventual consequences this problem could have when it comes to me, about what I was afraid of if not solved, and subsequently about my priorities. This, to a great extent, expanded my own perspective and directed me towards its solving.”

- *Improvement of interpersonal skills: development of skills, such as active listening, patience, tolerance, empathy, teamwork*

“Action learning contributed to the development of my active listening and empathy skills, as well as to self-discipline and teamwork.”; “For the first time I managed to listen to all points of view, without interrupting anyone, as well as to analyze all statements expressed. I learnt how to be patient, critical and analyzing.”

- *Experimenting and application of findings*

“I organized training having an indirect impact on the formation of a feeling of getting close to and identity with the company. The level of loyalty was increased.”

“I started applying in practice the findings I had made during the exercise in other problematic situations at my workplace.”

“This had a very important role for my own development. The results at my workplace improved and the ideas I had pass onto my department manager were received very well by him.”

- *Self-knowledge*

“I've learnt to learn at two levels at the same time: from the reflection of others, but I've started and succeed in capturing my own self from a distant perspective, thus my own reflection as well, to consider the situation multidimensionally – not only through my perspective, but also through the perspective of others.”

“I finally saw, understood and felt the importance of the things I was learning demonstrated, but not only as something written, read and eventually forgotten or not understood to its full extent. I understood that working with other people might give me the ability to understand and assess the level of my own efficiency in such environment.”

“...I've been working on my proactivity, as well as on my initiativeness and self-expression. I've managed to find in myself qualities I had never even thought having.”

- *Development of group learning and coaching skills*

“Action learning helps you from point of view of the fact that group dynamics presses you, you need to think fast and adequately, as well as when you are at a deadlock, you have a problem that requires an immediate solution.”

“I've learnt that there is no way for you to impose your views on the participants in such groups, because this does not help in any way for solving the problem. It is necessary to ask open questions, through which the participant is given the initiative to reach the decision himself and to be satisfied with the action plan in the future.”

“It is just now that I've learnt the meaning and purpose of coaching. During out group coaching, regardless of the fact that all of us were working with the same information, each of us was looking to it from a different point of view, which was nothing but

pure advantage.”

“During the several sessions held the change in question asking in the beginning and in the end could be seen.”

- *Self-management, coping with stress and increasing the level of self-confidence*

“All this helped me to better organize my work, my time and to prioritize my relations with the people at my workplace, to built trust and a better team.”

“I’ve learnt the true benefit of such a group for the reduction of stress and in the case of a need of new ideas as regards the way of solving problems and eventual actions to be undertaken.”

“Action learning contributes to building confidence. I’ve been left with the impression that my way of thinking and the methods I apply in my work are in the right direction. However, I’ve been still missing some important details on my way, thus preventing me from reaching the desired result.”

“One becomes more self-confident, starts giving new ideas and turns into an example to others.”

The results show that the group process of action learning creates interest in the participants, as well as predisposition to and courage for active learning. The time spent and the place for their reflection helps learning from the experience of others and reaching one’s own findings and insights. The group serves as a resonator for testing the ideas of participants, provides help, encourages, requires follow-up and motivation for progress in the activities implemented by them.

Difficulties in Using Action Learning

Despite the undisputed benefits, the efficient application of action learning is connected with overcoming a number of difficulties. One of those difficulties is connected with the level of development and maturity of participants. It has become evident from the meetings held that participants without any management experience may work on their own personal problems and this can be of great benefit for them. In rare cases some of the students have had difficulties with generating a problem. In one of the programs characterized with more students and a necessity of dividing them into subgroups, separate students have not taken part in or have stated the lack of any problems. These students have been also the ones going to classes from time to time and have remained poorly or not engaged to the group’s life.

Action learning can be perceived as not typical for the academic environment and even as endangering the approaches recognized within it. The participants in the action learning groups work on their own actual problems and flexibly modify the learning process towards their needs, which may be in serious contradiction with the requirements of a standard program. Its practical purpose may be interpreted as superficial, as one having no conceptual base, and as one depreciating the accumulation of many years of theoretical knowledge in given subject fields. Its approach focused on the problems of the individual participant may be non-conforming to the desired study results, often only brought to theoretical knowledge and critical understanding of the studied discipline. A key factor is the necessity of specific competence on the part of the facilitator, which may be too great of a challenge before the academic lecturer as regards his/her going beyond his/her directive role of an expert and taking the role of a group coach.

Furthermore, another barrier to the use of action learning is also the fact that it is connected with a serious resource of time, possibilities and engagement on the part of the participants. In practice, it may turn out that within a specified program scheme

and certain traditional stimuli for lecturing activity such a process is very slightly possible to be realized

Conclusion

The application of action learning reviewed above shows some promising evidence that it may serve for the intensification of the reflection dialogue and the critical-reflection learning, which is one of the significant objectives of higher education. The method has great potential for realization of transforming learning and for contribution to improvement of learning at a university level via its tighter connection to practice. It is well-perceived and results in clearly expressed benefits, regardless of the past experience of participants. With its help it is possible to realize a wider scope of the responsibility of the higher education for building not only the knowledge, skills and abilities of students, but also to form appropriate mind sets that allow them to find new approaches towards the organizational challenges and to develop innovatory solutions of tomorrow's problems.

Initial observations confirm the efficiency of the approach when used in programs for development of leaders and managers, as they also encourage thinking towards expanding the scope of object fields in higher education, which could benefit from its application.

References:

- Brockbank, A., McGill, I. (1998). *Facilitating Reflective Learning in Higher Education*, Open University Press, London.
- Burgess, R. (1999). *Reflective Practice: Action Learning Sets for Managers in Social Work*. *Social Work Education*, Vol. 18, No. 3, (257-270).
- Frank, H. (1996). *The Use of Action Learning in British Higher Education*, *Education and Training*, 38, 8, (17–15).
- Marquardt, M. (2011). *Optimizing the Power of Action Learning: Real-time Strategies for Developing Leaders, Building Teams, and Transforming Organizations*. Nicholas Brealey Publishing.
- McGill, I., Beaty, L. (2001). *Action Learning: A Guide for Professional, Management and Educational Development* (2nd Edn). London: Kogan Page.
- Passfield, R. (2002). *Creating Innovation and Synergy through a Parallel Action Learning Structure*. *The Learning Organisation*, Vol. 9, No. 4, (150-158).
- Pedler, M. (2008). *Action Learning For Managers*. Gower.
- Revans, R. (1980). *Action Learning: New Techniques for Management*. London: Blond & Briggs, Ltd.
- Revans, R. (1982). *The Origins and Growth of Action Learning*. Brickley, UK: Chartwell-Bratt.

The issue of linguistic capital within the dialogical process of transformative learning environments

George A. Koulaouzides & Zacharias Palios

Hellenic Open University

Abstract

This paper discusses the issue of linguistic capital in relation to dialogue which is considered to greatly contribute to the learning process that fosters perspective transformation. The authors examine the notion of dialogue as well as its relationship to language and society and they inquiry the realization of a transformative dialogical learning process.

Introduction

Dialogue is the bedrock in most, if not all, adult learning theories and educational methodologies that claim to be learner oriented or learner-centred. From Freire's emphasis on the liberating dialogical process to Mezirow's reflective discourse, dialogue is assumed to play a protagonist role in emancipatory adult learning processes. But dialogue is not one-dimensional. Dialogical processes involve one self, other people and eventually the perceived divine. A dialogue may be external or internal, loud or silent, intellectual or emotional. However, to our understanding any form of dialogue, to and from any direction is implemented mainly through the means offered by the host society, namely language and its constituent elements that may be perceived as one's linguistic capital. Linguistic capital is a form of Bourdieu's cultural capital which includes accumulated cognitive and social skills, exemplified by educational credentials. It is argued to be linked to the social origin of the individual and the homologous subculture of the space and time in which she/he exists.

In this paper, we shall attempt to demonstrate the role of linguistic capital in the dialogical process that may facilitate both individual and social transformation. We argue that linguistic capital affects, if not governs any dialogical learning process. In this light we are posing the question of whether it is pragmatic to aim at creating a dialogical environment within an adult educational setting and whether a transformative learning process may be implemented through a dialogical process, where the linguistic capital of the educator and that of the adult learners interact erratically in a symbolic or non-symbolic manner.

Dialogue: a complex human activity

Dialogue is a complex human activity. It is not just a vehicle, a medium, through which people communicate and interact with each other. Dialogue is the main organizational means of experience and perception of the self and the world, the underlying layer of consciousness. Everyday life experience and the generated knowledge are embodied through dialogue and human identity is constructed and re-

negotiated mainly through dialogue, where we act as active listeners of ourselves and those around us. The importance of dialogue as a human development activity is widely recognised and this recognition is verified by the fact that many eminent thinkers set out to explore its meaning and the conditions for its implementation. In order to lay the foundations of our argument toward the function of dialogue in promoting transformative learning in educational settings, we will refer to the seminal works of David Bohm, Martin Buber and Jiddu Krishnamurti

The distinguished physicist David Bohm (1997) felt that dialogue is a developmental process that goes beyond the simple understanding of the meaning of something. It goes beyond any instrumental learning process. It is more of a spiritual path that may lead to wisdom. As Gunnlaugson suggests:

“...Bohm’s conception for dialogue attempts to illuminate the deeper tacit assumptions underlying our thoughts, feelings and the psychological pressures behind these assumptions for the purposes of realising greater insight and change”

(2006, p. 4)

The core of Bohm’s idea is that dialogue is a significant process through which men and women may overcome their divisions and disputes and establish a genuine and creative collective awareness which may become the first step for any kind of transformation, individual or social. Smith (2001) notes that Bohm’s dialogical concept is very close to the ideas of Martin Buber who offered us the idea of “*genuine dialogue*”, a situation where the aim is more the creation of a relationship rather than the objective understanding of a concept:

“There is genuine dialogue – no matter whether spoken or silent—where each of the participants really has in mind the other or others in their present and particular being and turns to them with the intention of establishing a living mutual relation between himself and them.”

(Buber, 1965, p.19)

This dialogical condition offered by Buber has many common features with the dialogical state of mind discussed by Krishnamurti. In his speeches Jiddu Krishnamurti made a clear distinction between conversation and dialogue. He differentiated these two processes, assigning to the first the knowledge of truth and to the second the realization of it. The dialogical mode of the mind is a mental condition where the aim is not the accumulation of knowledge (new or changed) but the coercion-free attentiveness of what is true from what is false (Krishna, 1998). For the Indian philosopher, dialogue is a spiritual condition that allows a different kind of communion between two persons:

A dialogue is very important. It is a form of communication in which question and answer continue till a question is left without an answer. Thus the question is suspended between the two persons involved in this answer and question. It is like a bud with untouched blossoms . . . If the question is left totally untouched by thought, it then has its own answer because the questioner and answerer, as persons, have disappeared. This is a form of dialogue in which investigation reaches a certain point of intensity and depth, which then has a quality that thought can never reach.

(Krishnamurti, 1984)

In all of the aforementioned approaches it is clear that the notion of dialogue has a meaning and a function beyond any technical, practical or instrumental process. The kind of dialogue that these thinkers call for, may be understood as a critical function of the mind by which human existence gains meaning through the paths of recognition and awareness. Both these paths lead to a profound change of the individual meaning perspectives, a learning outcome that is in the heart of the transformational educational schemes defined by Paulo Freire and Jack Mezirow. In the next section we will examine the notion of dialogue within these approaches.

The notion of dialogue in the most prevalent transformational educational approaches

The word “transformation” was part of the educational discourse long before Jack Mezirow, introduced his ideas about the adulthood learning processes. The same is true for the notion of “dialogue”. Most, if not all, of the educational approaches that place emphasis on the learner, recognize dialogue as an important or central didactic technique.

Naturally, these two notions are interwoven in the two most prevalent educational approaches in the field of adult education that may have as a learning outcome the individual and under favourable circumstances the social transformation, those of Freire and Mezirow. For the sake of our discussion, we will present briefly, the nature of dialogue within the aforementioned approaches starting with the Freirean educational path.

For Paulo Freire dialogue is a fundamental item in the construction of knowledge (Shor & Freire, 1987). In his approach dialogue is not a simple education technique leading to the accomplishment of specific learning outcomes set by the educator. In the Freirean approach, dialogue is not a mere exchange of views and arguments but a sharing condition where mutual critical learning about the social reality is developed through a communication relationship:

Dialogue presupposes, the existence of known subjects and of an identifiable object, dialectically united and placed (historico-culturally speaking) into a determined socio-economical and political structure. In other words – dialogue is an epistemological setting in which subjects, confronted with a certain identifiable object, try to learn critically their social reality so as to be able to change it through the insight gained in the analysis.

(Escobar & Escobar, 1981, p.19)

It is quite obvious that in such a relational dialogical process which aims at the transformation of social reality, the function of dialogue cannot be restricted only in the understanding of the object which is analyzed during the learning process. Since the subsequent step of the Freireian dialogical process is “praxis” or the condemnation of the oppressive structures through collective social action, it is very essential for the participants to have a minimum of reciprocal understanding among them. In order for people to act together they have to fully understand each other (Mayo, 1999). This condition of reciprocal understanding requires a set of comprehension and expression competencies that are directly related to the individual linguistic capital (Bourdieu &

Thompson, 1991).

Based on the Freirean line of thought, Jack Mezirow argued that the participation in a learning process starts when an adult becomes conscious of a disharmony between his/her reality and his/her biographical experience (Mezirow, 1991). The disorienting experience that leads to the realization of this disharmony prompts the adult to find the means to alleviate the consequences of this situation through learning. However, for Mezirow this learning process, which he named *perspective transformation*, is different from any other kind of learning since it involves the identification of problematic meaning schemes and their confrontation through critical reflection. The aim of this particular process is for the disoriented adult to develop a more inclusive, stochastic and emotional capable of change, frame of reference (Mezirow, 2000).

For Mezirow, the critical reflection process which is essential for transformation is facilitated by a dialogical process that he defined as “discursive dialogue” or “critical discourse” (Mezirow, 1991, p. 162). The dialogue that Mezirow suggests is a developmental process where a person’s frame of reference is evaluated. In his theoretical approach discourse is:

...that specialized use of dialogue devoted to searching for a common understanding and assessment of the justification of an interpretation or belief. This involves assessing reasons advanced by weighing the supportive evidence and arguments and by examining alternative perspectives.

(Mezirow 2000, pp.10-11)

This particular form of dialogue is not unconditional. Mezirow (2000, pp.13-15) identified a series of such conditions relating mainly to concepts that are related to the interpersonal relations (e.g. respect for the other, willingness to accept differences and change, awareness) as well as social conditions (e.g. lack of external coercion, class differences, etc.). Additionally, he recognised that these conditions that create the “perfect” dialogical environment for transformation are rarely “*fully realized*” (Mezirow 2000, p. 14). In one of the few comprehensive studies on the role and the evolution of the concept of dialogue in transformative learning theory, Paraskevas Lintzeris a Greek critical thinker and practitioner summarizes the conditions set by Mezirow:

Mezirow relates the occurrence of the appropriate conditions for communication and dialogue with a series of respective human competencies such as: emotional responsiveness, open disposal to alternative approaches, perseverance in quest of agreement points, control of impulses, empathy, internal motivation for change and e ability to handle interpersonal and social relations.

(Lintzeris, 2007, p. 154)

Once again all of these competencies and especially those which are related with interpersonal and social relations, require the verbal and non-verbal communicative understanding among the participants, in order to engage in a dialogical process that could assess the validity of their thought and expressed ideas. But, both speaking and thinking are *social activities*. As Norbert Elias (2010) has put it, the essential processes of a language that of *thinking* and *speaking* are based on socially standardised aural symbols.

Thus, from our point of understanding, this means that the participants in a transformative dialogical process have to share, among others, a common social communication code, or in other words, to have a reference to the same linguistic capital, since language and society are interconnected.

Language and Society

Arguments on the significance of language can be traced back to classical era. Sophists supported that language alone serves as a means of experiencing the physical world. Others from Plato to St Augustine felt that there were autonomous universal, eternal ideas, and concepts reflected by words and languages. There was underlined the autonomy of cognitive and other psychological functions vis a vis the social; that there were biological – neurological structures and functions, such as homeostatic elements common to all humans that are affected only superficially by external, ethnographic, climatic, cultural, religious as well as economic conditions.

If this is the case, then thinking is likely to unfold in a nonverbal domain, while people need words in order to communicate, or to perform formal reasoning with the aid of writing. In the same line of thought, mental capacities could be free from social-material structures. Language may thus be a simple tool for representing and referring to objects in the world, or a system used to communicate pre-fabricated mental representations.

Cognitive scientists such as Noam Chomsky adopted a Universalist theory of language that basically accepted that all languages share the same underlying structure (Chomsky, 1995). From the 1960s through the 1980s, this was underpinned by theories mentioned above, *id est* linguistic structures had little impact on humans innate mental capacities and that differences between specific languages were surface phenomena that did not really affect the brain's biological cognitive processes. Finally, philosophical analyses underlined subjectivity and arbitrariness of human mental faculties affected only superficially by linguistic behavior, as appeared in the writings of Wittgenstein and Quine, while others like Hillary Putnam stressed the significance of mental categorizations ensuing from the objective surrounding world. Languages played only peripheral role as far as cognition and cognitive schemes were concerned. Certain cognitive processes were argued not to use or rely on language to a substantial extent and therefore should be evaluated across cultures and languages.

The late 80s and 90s saw the Universalistic Paradigm challenged by Relativist linguists and socio-linguists, who criticized theoretical stances such as the above, stressing the significance of language categorizations in the formation of mental/cognitive categories. Language relativists underlined that the role of language in our lives could not be appreciated unless its significance was understood, not simply as a means of everyday life communication and social interaction, but mainly as a means of understanding and interpreting the «inside» and «outside» world (Gumperz & Levinson, 1991).

According to Relativists, language might indeed be considered as the prevalent – if there are others – tool, medium and organ to «see» the world, interpret and assimilate experience. Should it be true that we see and hear what we are trained to see and hear by our nervous system, language provides the scaffolding of the main questions that we place about the world and our existence. We thus conceive, acknowledge and classify all stimuli, form concepts and ideas about everything inside and outside us,

by means of our language system. Dialogue is possible for we are partners of a contract that is signed by all community members by force or by choice. In this respect spoken language is of greatest significance regarding the society, for it builds on the foundations that are created and reproduced by the language system itself (Barthes 1980, Wardhaugh 1986).

Language is thus, held to be the bridge / interface that connects the microcosm of the newly born humans with the social macrocosm. It moreover subjectifies, codifies and organizes the continuous transformation of human experience. It justifies and legitimizes reality and coordinates symbols and ethical concepts (Vygotsky 1962, Gigliotti 1985). Empirical evidence has pointed out that language can emphasize and augment certain types of thinking. Although the literature on linguistic relativity remains contentious, there is growing support for the view that language has a profound effect on thought (Wolff & Holmes, 2010).

Language is very pervasive in the contemporary socio-economic reality where we are called to make cognitive decisions while in dialogue with others. Thus, no one could deny that language and thought are intertwined and answers about its transformation potential should be sought in the spectrum between language influencing and language determining thought, cognition and any form of dialogue regardless of its nature (spiritual or non-spiritual).

Linguistic capital and code

Pierre Bourdieu argued that young individuals are exposed and/or inherit most of their family characteristics that are implanted into them through “habitus”. The latter is a process of embodying, mainly during early stages of socialization, ways of seeing and thinking, as well as world views, emotions and tastes (Bourdieu, 1984). These are inculcated in the young by means of open or symbolic violence in accordance with main social taxonomies such as class, gender and race. This family dowry is a form of capital, a cultural capital that accumulates, reproduces and transforms itself in combination with others such as the political, religious, and so forth.

Linguistic capital may be examined within cultural capital that concerns mastering the advanced form and elaborated use of one’s language including vocabulary, grammar and syntax, together with accents and body language, that allows them to enjoy literature and reading per se, to be exposed to new ideas, cultures and ethics, as well as master the legitimate language that is associated with high ranking individuals such as officials, scientists, entrepreneurs and politicians. Both the ability of art appreciation and eloquence earn individuals respect and access to other benefits, or forms of capital (e.g. to persuade to be believed, to be obeyed, to bring about a decision), aiming at power, wealth or its management and control (Bourdieu, 1993). It seems that the above mentioned legitimate language, this linguistic capital, may well enhance communicative competence and effectiveness and is likely to produce more powerful dialogical tools, should we wish to explore the outside or inside world and transform it. This should in turn increase one’s cultural capital. In this respect, questions on whether various language structures constitute a form of capital of their own or rather serve as a vehicle to conserve, consolidate and transmit cultural hierarchies, simply demonstrates the crucial role of language in the dialogical process

Additionally, Basil Bernstein (1971) argued that language socialization put to a large extent the foundations for the person’s future development, regarding inter alia, their

communicative competence, as well as academic and occupational achievement. Bernstein accepting the linguistic capital theoretical framework introduces the concept of code. Codes were language structures with particular organizing grammatical and syntactic principles. Bernstein referred to two main codes, the elaborated – or elaborating and the restricted. The first was the language of the educated people (sic) and was characterized by proper syntax, frequent use of passive voice and indirect speech, subordinate clauses, linkers and logical connectives, explicit reference points and clear accent free of idiomatic sounds. The second had the opposite characteristics and were found/assumed to be adopted by young people of lower social origins, with poorer cultural capital and its manifestations. *Restricted* code was assumed to be conveying attitude and feeling, while the *elaborated*, facts and abstract ideas. (Littlejohn, 2002, p. 278).

From the social angle the codes basically differ with regards to the degree of autonomy of the speakers vis a vis the context, meanings and thus any dialogical process: elaborated/ing codes are codes of speech that are grammatically, lexically and syntactically relatively complete, the meaning is clear and demands no particular or previous ethnographic or other, information in order to be fully understood. It is thus accessible to all. And while educated people used both *Elaborate* and *Restricted* Codes in their everyday life and perceptions, people with low educational and/or cultural arsenal were limited to using only the restricted one.

Despite intensive theoretical clashes and debates, as well as several modifications of the codes notion by Bernstein himself, there appeared that people's everyday language reflects and shapes modes of thinking and social stances. More or less, one could safely argue that each language code may be symptom and result of socio-economic structures and norms and relationships within a political, ethnic, gender or religious group which affect their conduct within any dialogical process including those that are organized aiming at individual of social transformation..

Epilogue: dialogue, linguistic capital, learning and transformation

The above inquiry raises a number of stimulating issues. To begin with, dialogue in the frame of either philosophical or other intellectual activities, or learning activities in an educational setting, refers to a demanding meeting/interaction of individuals who wish to question their own set of ethical values and/or central assumptions. In such an interaction the participants express their opinions and comprehend the views and dispositions of each other, acknowledge prevalent assumptions and grand narratives that support and uphold the corpus of people's viewpoints and deepen and widen their perceptions. This interaction presupposes a number of communicative skills that directly relate to linguistic capital.

Knowledge is mostly the result of thoughts and emotions that may well be expressed silently (body language) or openly through the symbolic system of language (verbal or written language). This system, or our language, interacts with society, decodes and perceives the social itself. Thus our perception of the world is restricted in accordance with the conditions and elements that comprise this world. The combination of the above elements and conditions with our personality create a unique for each person, way of extracting meaning from experience. Transformative learning theory anticipates the involvement of educators, learners, colleagues, co-workers, and the self in critical dialogue in order to reset and/or renegotiate perceptions of reality.

Based on all of the above, we wonder whether this dialogue can be mutually advantageous and beneficial and lead to this badly wanted transformation, if the participants do not share or appreciate each others linguistic form. Can this dialogue be effective among unequal linguistic capital holders?

The same also applies to the enrichment of a person's frame of reference. Our frame of reference is understood, represented and reproduced through dialogical processes that rely on the linguistic tools (e.g. syntax, grammar, spelling, vocabulary and even body language) provided by society and its institutions. Transformation of the perspectives that constitute a frame of reference may be achieved by exposing each by means of an unbiased and sincere dialogue. Is this not a serious cause of concern as regards interaction in a mixed linguistic ability group? On the other hand a dialogical process occurring in an educational setting of a homogenous group (such as a group of doctoral students or a group of degree students or a group of professionals like doctors or engineers or lawyers, etc.) is highly likely to share common socio-cultural as well as linguistic codes. The transformative dialogical process relies on the exposure to the heterogeneity of the individual cultural codes. Thus we wonder how such homogeneity may favour the needed enrichment towards transformative learning.

This paper is mainly an attempt to force adult educators to come face to face with a problem that seems to be swept under the carpet or eagerly avoided: the issue of the influence of linguistic capital in the transformative dialogical process. We feel that facilitators, educators and course designers must take into account the above points that underline the necessity for innovative interventions to create a dialogical environment where the issues created by the linguistic capital differences may be relatively diminished. Art and sports may be areas that may allow people to interact relatively independently from the socio-economic determinants. It is our stance that we cannot wish problems and complexities away, simply because are very complex or time consuming to confront. It is high time to re-visit established principles and methods of learning and transforming and contrive new ones, in order to respond to new facts, challenges and hopes.

References

- Barthes, R.(1980). *Elements of Semiology*. New York: Hill & Wang.
- Bernstein, B. (1971). *Class, Codes and Control. The Edinburgh Course of Applied Linguistics* (Volume 1). London: Routledge & Kegan Paul.
- Bohm, D. (1997). *On dialogue*. London: Routledge.
- Bourdieu, P. (1984). *Distinction: A social critique of the judgement of taste*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.
- Bourdieu, P. (1993). *The field of cultural production*. New York: Columbia Univ. Press.,
- Bourdieu, P., & Thompson, J. B. (1991). *Language and symbolic power*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.
- Buber, M. (1965). *Between Man and Man*. New York: Collier Books.
- Chomsky, N. (1995). *The Minimalist Program*. Cambridge, Mass.: M.I.T. Press.
- Elias, N. (2010). *The Symbol Theory*. [In Greek]. Athens: Metaichmio

- Escobar, H., & Escobar, M. (1981). Dialogue in the pedagogical praxis of Paulo Freire. *Produção de terceiros sobre Paulo Freire; Série Folhetos*. (retrieved from <https://www.transcend.org/galtung/papers/HSDR-GPID64.PDF>)
- Giglioli, P.(ed)(1985). *Language And Social Context*. Hamondsworth: Penguin.
- Gunnlaugson, O. (2006). Generative dialogue as a transformative learning practice in adult and higher education settings. *Journal of Adult and Continuing Education*, 12 (1), 2-19.
- Gumperz, J. & Levinson, S. (1991). Rethinking Linguistic Relativity. *Current Anthropology*, 32 (5), 613-623.
- Krishna, P. (1998). Learning Through Dialogue. *Journal of the Krishnamurti Schools*. [<http://www.journal.kfionline.org/issue-2/learning-through-dialogue/>. Retrieved: 17/5/2016]
- Krishnamurti, J. (1984). From the statement dictated by Krishnamurti at Vasanta Vihar on 26-27 January 1984 [<http://www.kfa.org/enews/2014-10>. Retrieved: 20/5/2016]
- Littlejohn, S. (2002). *Theories of Human Communication*. Albuquerque: Wadsworth.
- Lintzeris, P. (2007). *The significance of critical reflection and rational discourse in Mezirow's theory of transformative learning*. [In Greek]. Athens: Hellenic Adult Education Association
- Mayo, P. (1999). *Gramsci, Freire and adult education: Possibilities for transformative action*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Mezirow, J. (1991). *Transformative Dimensions of Adult Learning*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.
- Mezirow, J. (2000). *Learning as Transformation: Critical Perspectives on a Theory in Progress*. San Francisco: Jossey Bass
- Shor, I., & Freire, P. (1987). What is the "dialogical method" of teaching? *Journal of Education*, 169 (3), 11-31.
- Smith, M. K. (2001) 'Dialogue and conversation', *the encyclopaedia of informal education*. [<http://infed.org/mobi/dialogue-and-conversation/>. Retrieved: 01/06/2016]
- Vygotsky, L.S.(1962). *Thought & Language*. New York: Wiley.
- Wardhaugh, R. (1986). *An Introduction to Sociolinguistics*. Oxford: Blackwell.
- Wolff P. & Holmes K.J. (2010). Linguistic Relativity. *Willey Interdisciplinary Reviews: Cognitive Science*, 2 (3)

The Dialogue as a Constructive Way to Tackle Inequalities in Adult Education

Paraskevi - Viviane Galata

Hellenic Open University

Abstract

Taking into consideration the dynamic of the dialogue in addressing major social problems, this article aims to explore the different dimensions and potential contributions of the dialogue to stimulate awareness and social action for tackling inequalities in adult education, one of the critical weaknesses of current EU learning policies.

Introduction

The role of the dialogue in tackling major social problems, such as reducing inequality in European education systems, is particularly challenging. Habermas' theory of communicative action provides the necessary framework and normative foundations. In his theory of communicative action, there are three interrelated concerns referring to (a) the development of a concept of rationality away from the premises of modern social theory, (b) the construction of a two level concept of society integrating real world and systems and (c) the adoption of a critical theory of modernity that analyses the pathologies and suggests redirection (Habermas, 1984: preface). According to Habermas, communicative learning involves at least two persons trying to reach an understanding of the meaning of an interpretation or the justification for purposes, values, beliefs and feelings, which presupposes a discourse, a devoted dialogue in assessing the reasons presented for different interpretations and in critically examining evidence, arguments and alternative points of view (Mezirow, 1997: 6). In this case, dialogue is more than an instrument that unifies reflection and action and should incorporate creativity, absence of domination, respect for the world and the people, faith in the power of humankind to create and re-create, critical thinking in order to reach a dialectical commitment (Freire, 2005: 87-97). So, dialogue serves mutual understanding of different participants, which facilitates their consensus on norms and values, the coordination of their actions and, further, the coordination of the social action (Habermas, 1984: 101). There is no doubt that dialogue is in the core of learning societies that facilitate the development of a more critically aware people who can play their part as active citizens in formulating policy and creating the more democratic world (Jarvis, 2000: 354).

In this context, this article aims to explore the different dimensions and potential contributions of the dialogue to stimulate the social action for tackling inequalities in adult education and ensuring equitable access, which remain the critical weaknesses of current adult learning policies in EU Member States (European Commission, 2015a: 3). Based on the theoretical framework that explains dimensions and effects of the dialogue in addressing social problems, it employs an extensive inventory and analysis of documents and related procedures referring to inequalities in EU adult education policies in order to identify any existing dialogue and ways of expression, issues covered and main dimensions. The central research question is as follows:

What are the conditions for an effective and constructive dialogue in view of major social problems? At its core, this paper discusses the different types and factors that determine the nature and the degree of dialogue contribution in tackling major social problems, such as the problem of inequalities in adult education.

The dialogue as an engine for social action

The existing literature in adult education offers a number of theoretical foundations that help to conceptualize the role of the dialogue in adult education and in stimulating social action to deal with major social problems. To begin with, Bourdieu's approach on a scientific field provides the main theoretical foundation about the influence of adult education not only by the internal structures of the field but also by the changes to the social context of the field, which explains the broadening of the conceptualization of learning in adult education following the general drift of social sciences (Rubenson & Elfert, 2015: 2-4).

However, the main assumptions for social action are found in *Habermas theory of communicative action*, which is based on a two-level social theory that includes an analysis of communicative rationality built into everyday speech and a theory of modern society and modernization (Bohman & Rehg, 2014). In particular, Habermas provides a theoretical basis for public participation, sharing of information and reaching consensus through public dialogue, while he distinguishes four kinds of actions by individuals in the society: (i) teleological and strategic action, (ii) normatively regulated action, (iii) dramaturgical action and (iv) communicative action (Bolton, 2005). For Habermas, though, rationality consists not so much in the possession of knowledge, but rather in how communicating and using knowledge. The fundamental form of coordination through language, according to Habermas, requires speakers to reach understanding and, thus, to engage in the communicative action. Through this process, speakers coordinate their action and pursuit of their individual or common goals on the basis of a shared understanding that the goals are reasonable. This mutual understanding and engagement makes communicative action an inherently consensual form of social coordination, which is distinguished from strategic forms of social action where actors are mostly interested in achieving their individual goals than reaching mutual understanding (Bohman & Rehg, 2014). In other words, according to Habermas theory of communicative action, actors in society seek to reach common understanding and to coordinate actions by reasoned argument, consensus, and cooperation rather than strategic action strictly in pursuit of their own goals (Bolton, 2005). Therefore, social cooperation should be both deeply consensual and reasonable, in the sense that actors sincerely agree that their modes of cooperation can be justified as good and right. Moreover, social cooperation depends on the capacity of actors to recognize the intersubjective validity of the different claims, which refers to the theory of argumentation or discourse, or according to Habermas to the "reflective form" of communicative action and the required multi-dimensional conception of reason and cognitive validity (Bohman & Rehg, 2014).

Another important framework can be found in the discourse presenting in *Mezirow theory of transformative learning*, according which the discourse is the dialogue devoted to assessing assumptions and reasons presented in support of competing interpretations, as well as to transforming our assumptions on which our interpretations are based. An effective discourse may be better developed if participants are well informed, secure and free from pressure, good listeners and open to other perspectives, have equal opportunity to participate in the discourse and adopt a critical reflective position towards assumptions and already established views

(Mezirow, 1997: 6-7, 10). This cooperative process of assessment and reframing of basic assumptions help to develop concise, documented and integrated ways of understanding of the world. As a result, discourse and critically reflective thought allow participants to address the challenges of a complex and evolving society with a constructive way. However, it is worth mentioning that Mezirow theory of transformative learning presupposes equal relations between participants in the discourse, although in real world most human relationships are unequal. The misrecognition of the problem of unequal relationships has serious consequences. For instance, people from vulnerable social groups have less opportunities to participate successfully in the discourse; thus, a lot of people are not supported in developing the full range of their possibilities in order to participate in the society under equal conditions. However, the participation of marginalized people in the discourse is necessary not only for enhancing their development, but also for helping the other participants in better understanding the meaning of their experiences and, at the same time, for promoting a more equal and democratic society (Belenky & Stanton, 2000: 107-110). For this purpose, the cognitive process provides the necessary means to facilitate the participation in the discourse, while the connected knowing in contrast to the separate knowing allow completely different people to participate in the discourse as equal through a conscious process of trying to understand. This kind of understanding entails an acceptance and an appreciation for the thing, event, person, or concept on its own terms, within its own framework. On the contrary, separate knowing is oriented towards objectivity, rigor, impersonal rules or standards and mastery of the information to be learned, which excludes the immature and marginalized people. Nevertheless, it cultivates the ability of critical thinking and questioning pundits, which is particularly important for those who suffer from discrimination. So, both connected and separate knowing can be significant for the excluded and the people who cannot express themselves (Belenky & Stanton, 2000: 120-133).

Furthermore, according to Freire, “*dialogue is an existential necessity this dialogue cannot be reduced in an act of one person’s deposing ideas to another, nor can it become a simple exchange of ideas to be “consumed” by the discussants*” (Freire, 2005: 88-89). Freire considers the dialogue as an act of creation, which requires absence of domination, humility and not considering oneself as the owner of truth and knowledge, intense faith in humankind and faith in their power to make and remake, to create and re-create. These are the fundamental conditions in order to establish a close relationship of mutual trust between the dialoguers. Critical thinking is also essential as it enables dialoguers to perceive reality as a process and as transformation rather than a static entity. In any case, dialogue is a prerequisite to have communication and, therefore, true education (Freire, 2005: 90-94). But, above all the praxis is the source of knowledge and creation, according to Freire, as the reflection and action truly transform reality. The praxis as an expression of transformation and creation produces not only material goods but also social institutions, ideas, and concepts, thus, creating history and historical human social beings (Freire, 2005: 100-101).

As Jarvis highlights, thinking people are more capable to play a role in the broad social life, as democracies need people that are not only able to think but also have knowledge of specific fields of social and political life (Jarvis, 1995: 33). However, it may be claimed that no policies about the provision of the education of adults within society will achieve universal support, as this issue depends upon the policies of the governing elite. Therefore, the provision of education of adults becomes an

expression of interest in a pluralistic society, to which the government may respond pragmatically either for legitimating or for satisfying the demands of people (Jarvis, 1993: 50).

In view of the above consideration and taking into account that both social and educational capitals are unevenly distributed, there is a clear need for a new political and moral commitment against tendencies towards segregation and inequalities (Alheit, 2010). There is no doubt that much can be achieved through political and civil action, which may lead to a redistribution of resources even if this will take long time to produce outcomes. In this action, the transformative power of education can be significant in integrating the vulnerable members of the society, while the major issues of democracy, injustice, inequality and oppression are crucial tasks in adult learning and critical theory that can enable learners to identify and change the status quo based on unexamined beliefs and assumptions (Nizińska, 2016: 99, 101).

Dimensions of the current dialogue to address inequalities in adult education

A key aspect to consider is the distribution of adult education, which depends on a variety of sociodemographic characteristics and specific socio-economic and cultural contexts that reflect broader structural social inequalities in income, educational attainment and more generally the distribution of qualifications (Desjardins et al., 2013: 273-275).

Recent studies confirm the persistence of strong inequalities in participation in job-related non-formal adult education and training in Europe. The inequalities found affect mainly the unemployed people, the workers with low-level qualifications performing manual and skilled manual jobs, as well as employed adults depending their age, migrant background, economic sector of activity and part time work (Cedefop, 2015: 7-8). As participation in adult education is determined particularly by educational attainment, employment status, occupational category, age and skills, it appears that adults with low level or no qualifications, those in low-skilled occupations, the unemployed and economically inactive, older people and the least skilled, are less likely to participate in lifelong learning. The Survey of Adult Skills (PIAAC) reveals that adults with low level basic skills are less likely to take part in education and training compared to those who have higher skill levels (Eurydice, 2015: 8, 26-27).

Indeed, EU data on estimated average participation in adult education according to educational attainment indicate that while 61.3 % of the adults who have completed tertiary education participate in lifelong learning, the participation rate of those who have reached lower secondary level does not exceed 21.8 %. Similarly, the employed are much more likely to participate in education and training (48.6 %) than the unemployed (26.9 %) or the economically inactive (19.6 %). In addition, workers at “higher skills occupations” are much more likely to participate in education and training (64.1 %) than those in elementary occupations (28.3 %) and skilled manual workers (32.7 %). The participation in learning activities is also higher for those in the 25-34 age group (48.5 %) and significantly reduced for those aged 55-64 (26.6 %). On the contrary, it seems that the migrant background affects participation in education and training only to a limited degree, as the average participation rate of the native born population is 40.6 % compared to 39.1 % for foreign-born residents from the EU and 35.2 % for those born outside the EU (Eurydice, 2015: 25).

Finally, participation in adult education is closely linked to skill levels, as well as skills intensity of jobs. For instance, when comparing adult workers with low-level

qualifications (ISCED 0-2) to adult workers with high-level qualifications (ISCED 5-6), an aggregate average disadvantage for the low qualified is found, which is statistically significant and it is estimated at 15 percentage points, i.e. twice the aggregate average disadvantage for the mid-qualified at 8 percentage points. Furthermore, chances of participation for technicians and associate professionals (ISCO 3) and for clerical, service and support workers (ISCO 4-5) are estimated to be 4 and 12 percentage points lower than managers and professionals (ISCO 1-2) respectively. Inequalities are even bigger for skilled manual workers (ISCO 6-8) and workers in elementary occupations (ISCO 9), for whom the probability of participation is estimated to be 16 and 25 percentage points lower than that for managers and professionals respectively (Cedefop, 2015: 10-11).

In Greece, adult participation in lifelong learning remains very low at a rate of 3.0% in 2014, compared to an EU average of 10.7%. The lower skilled (ISCED level 0-2) with a participation rate of barely 0.4% in 2014, compared to an EU average of 4.4%, have less access to training (European Commission, 2015b: 8). Even with these exceptionally low participation rates in non-formal adult education, the probabilities of participation in job-related training are lower, by 3 percentage points, for unemployed adults (and lower by 8 percentage points for the inactive) than for employed adults. Moreover, there is a considerable disadvantage in participation for those employed in small establishments, formally low qualified and manual skilled workers (Cedefop, 2015: 69-70).

In view of the identified inequalities in participation in adult education in Europe, current national policy agendas across Europe provide explicit commitments to improve access to adult education for the adults with low basic skills or low level qualifications. Different strategic national policy documents issued in the past five years demonstrate these commitments with different areas of focus on education and training, literacy and basic skills strategies, lifelong learning strategies and strategies on adult education (Eurydice 2015: 30, 41). For instance, in Greece the law 3879/2010 on the development of Lifelong Learning, the National Lifelong Learning Programme 2013-15 and the 2015 National Reform Programme clearly recognises adult education and improved access to lifelong learning of the most vulnerable groups as a policy priority (European Commission, 2015b: 9 • Eurydice, 2015: 137-144).

Based on evidence about the relationships between policy actions and their results, a recent study of the European Commission identifies six key factors for successful adult learning policies including, among others, equity of access for all (European Commission, 2015a: 149-150). In particular, the study suggests at European level to significantly increase overall rates of adult participation in learning, as well as to increase the rate at which economically inactive, unemployed, older and less skilled adults take part in education and training to the level achieved by younger and more qualified people. At Member State level, the study suggests that improving equity and investing in adult learning of underrepresented groups would help not only reduce inequalities in accessing learning, but also increase overall participation and address workforce skills gaps (European Commission, 2015a: 155). To achieve equity of access to learning for all, the study presents some solutions that concern funding the learning for disadvantaged and difficult-to-engage groups, providing targeted guidance and support services to learners in under-represented groups, adopting scheme to recognise prior learning, using intermediary organisations in outreach to difficult-to-engage groups and embedding basic skills development in adult learning programmes (European Commission, 2015: 156).

Despite the policy progress at both European and national levels in the issue of participation inequalities in adult education, there is no any mention to the necessary dialogue processes. It seems that the public debate on inequalities in adult education is exhausted at the level of the European and national studies, reports and strategic policy documents. Actually, the only existing structure, which promotes rather the exchange of views than the dialogue, is the European Platform for Adult Learning in Europe. EPAL is the new multilingual community of adult learning professionals, which is committed to provide accurate and original content with the aim to improve the quality and provision of adult learning in Europe, establish a strong pan European adult learning sector, and enable adult education professionals and multipliers to reach out to all adults (<http://ec.europa.eu/epale/en/about>).

Proceeding even further to the analysis of the Renewed European Agenda for adult learning (Council of the European Union, 2011), which has adopted specific priorities for the period 2015 - 2020 in relation to governance, supply and take up, flexibility, access and quality in adult education, we observe that the preparatory dialogue has taken place at the level of the Working Group on Adult Learning operated from 2014 to 2015 in order to produce policy guidance. The primary purpose of the Working Group on Adult Learning was to benefit the participating countries in further developing their adult learning policies, through mutual learning and identification of good practices. Its activities were focused on the examination of national case studies, the group discussion on the factors of policy coherence and the discussion on the main policy messages. The representative character of the Working Group on Adult Learning was ensured through the nomination of institutional partners of European Countries, Candidate countries, EFTA countries and European Social Partners, as well as the participation of 400 experts from Members States administrations and other stakeholders (European Commission, 2016). Yet, despite the highlighted necessity for better outreach and collaboration to promote the participation of adults in learning, no specific provisions have been made to ensure wide dialogue processes with particular concern for the participation of vulnerable and marginalized people in the dialogue.

In addition, to this, it seems that the public debate often makes reference to adults with low skill levels, but less prominence is given to other inequalities, such as for instance those relating to employment status, occupational group or enterprise size, which reveals once more the necessity and the importance of a comprehensive dialogue on all aspects of inequalities that deserve to be taken into serious consideration (Cedefop, 2015: 13).

Overall, it becomes obvious that the dialogue at the institutional level, as it has been expressed in the framework of the European and national policies on adult education, is limited either to the “*simple exchange of ideas to be consumed by the discussants*” according to Freire (2005: 88-89) or to the legitimation of the policy options of the governing elite according to Jarvis (1993: 50).

Discussion: The conditions for an effective dialogue to tackle social problems

The tendency in European thinking and political initiatives to equate adult education with education for employability underplays adult education’s potential for moral, political and social development, which is much more important in the current times of worsening of living conditions (Milana & Holford, 2014: 166). Social concerns, movement and community development generate significant interest in adult learning with its broader sense of social purpose, giving priority to human and social development, promotion of citizenship and active contribution to equity and democracy (Nesbit, 2015: 248-249).

There is no doubt that adult education, with its democratic and dialogical forms, can foster the exploration of thinking and can make the difference through innovative strategies to motivate and engage learners and alliances with government and other social actors (Tuckett, 2015: 246-248). Adult education can play a constructive and dynamic role along with external social forces by offering second chances to individual learners and securing the public space for the debate of alternatives to the neo-liberal consensus that increases inequality and reinforces marginalization (Tuckett, 2015: 248).

It is also supported that sustaining high and widely distributed levels of investment in skills is to a large extent interconnected with a high-level of non-market coordination via institutional arrangements and/or specific public policy measures (Desjardins et al., 2013: 262). Indeed, major public policy frameworks related to labour market or welfare institutions and practices can play a particularly important role in influencing participation through identifying workers with low levels of proficiency, inciting employees and employers to invest in skill development and coordinating with employers and other stakeholders' efforts to develop and implement basic skills programmes (Desjardins et al., 2013: 263-265, 270). Apart from specific policy measures, coordinated stakeholder approaches and non-market based solutions through negotiations between the major partners can also have significant role in the distribution of adult education (Desjardins et al., 2013: 278).

Focal point and crucial prerequisite for the success of institutional arrangements, public policy measures, stakeholders' coordinated approaches and wide engagement of social forces to address inequalities and ensure equity in adult education is the effective and constructive dialogue. A simple exchange of views or a legitimizing dialogue does not seem enough to respond adequately to the complexity of social problems, such as the problem of inequalities in adult education. Therefore, a dialogue that facilitates critical examination of evidence, arguments and alternative points of view, mutual understanding, reaching consensus on norms and values, cooperation and coordination of actions, allows participants to address the challenges of a complex and evolving society with a constructive way. Last but not least, dialogue should be based on equal opportunities to participate, ensuring the right of all including vulnerable and marginalized people to have their word in a more equal and democratic society.

References

- Alheit, P. (2010). Lifelong learning and social capital. In R. Evans (Ed.), *Local development, community and adult learning – Learning landscapes between the mainstream and the margins* (Vol. 2, pp. 27–49). Duisburg, Germany: Nisaba Verlag.
- Belenky, M. & Stanton, A. (2000). Inequality, Development and Connected Knowing. In J. Mezirow and Associates, *Learning as Transformation. Critical perspectives on a theory in progress*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass. Ελληνική έκδοση: *Η Μετασχηματίζουσα Μάθηση* (2007), μτφρ. Γ. Κουλαουζίδης, Αθήνα: Μεταίχμιο.
- Bohman, J. & Rehg, W. (2014). Jürgen Habermas, *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy, Stanford*: Edward N. Zalta.
- Bolton, R. (2005). *Habermas theory for communicative action and the theory of social capital*. Paper read at the meeting of the Association of American

- Geographers, Denver, Colorado, April 2005.
- Cedefop (2015). *Unequal access to job-related learning: evidence from the adult education survey*. Luxembourg: Publications Office of the European Union.
- Council of the European Union (2011), *Council Resolution on a renewed European agenda for adult learning*. Official Journal of the European Union, C372, 20.12.2011.
- Desjardins, R.& Kjell R. (2013). Participation Patterns in Adult Education: the role of institutions and public policy frameworks in resolving coordination problems. *European Journal of Education* 48 (2), 262-280.
- European Commission (2015a). *An in-depth analysis of adult learning policies and their effectiveness in Europe*. Luxembourg: Publications Office of the European Union.
- European Commission (2015b). *Education and Training Monitor 2015 – Greece*, Luxembourg: Publications Office of the European Union.
- European Commission (2016). *Education and Training 2020. Highlights from the Working Groups 2014-2015*. Luxembourg: Publications Office of the European Union.
- Eurydice (2015). *Adult Education and Training in Europe: Widening Access to Learning Opportunities*. Eurydice Report. Luxembourg: Publications Office of the European Union.
- Freire, P. (2005). *Pedagogy of the oppressed*. Translated by M. Ramos. 30th Anniversary Edition. New York – London: The Continuum International Publishing Group Inc.
- Jarvis, P. (2000). Globalisation, the Learning Society and Comparative Education. *Comparative Education*, 36 (3), 343– 355.
- Jarvis, P. (1995). *Adult and Continuing Education. Theory and Practice*. London: Routledge. Ελληνική έκδοση: *Συνεχιζόμενη εκπαίδευση και κατάρτιση. Θεωρία και Πράξη* (2004), μτφρ. Α. Μανιάτη, Αθήνα: Μεταίχμιο.
- Jarvis, P. (1993). *Adult education and the state. Towards a politics of adult education*. London and New York: Routledge.
- Habermas, J. (1984). *The Theory of Communicative Action*. Vol. 1: Reason and the Realization of Society. Boston: Beacon Press.
- Mezirow, J. (1997). Transformative learning: Theory to practice. In P. Cranton (Ed.), *Transformative learning in action: Insights from practice – New directions for adult and continuing education*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.
- Milana, M. & Holford, J. (Eds.) (2014). *Adult Education Policy and the European Union. Theoretical and Methodological Perspectives*. Rotterdam: Sense Publishers.
- Nesbit, T. (2015). Conclusion: Global developments in Adult Education Policy. In M. Milana & T. Nesbit (eds.), *Global Perspectives in adult education and learning policy*. Palgrave Studies in Global Citizenship Education and Democracy. London: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Nizińska, A. (2016). Social Capital, Adult Learning and Equity. In R. Evans, E.

Kurantowicz and E. Lucio-Villegas (Eds.), *Researching and Transforming Adult Learning and Communities. The Local/Global Context*. Rotterdam: Sense Publishers.

Rubenson, K. & Elfert, M. (2015). Adult education research: exploring an increasingly fragmented map. *European Journal for Research on the Education and Learning of Adults*, Pre-published, 1-14.

Tuckett, A. (2015). Adult Education, Social Transformation and the Pursuit of Social Justice. *European Journal of Education*, 50 (3), 245-249.

Theorizing the Relationships between Time, Dialogue and Transformative Learning: A Rhythmanalytical Framework

Michel Alhadeff-Jones
Columbia University
Sunkhronos Institute (Switzerland)

Based on current research focusing on the rhythmic dimensions of education, this paper explores the temporality of dialogue through three lenses: the rhythms of dialogical activity (discursive, embodied, social); the duality of the moment of dialogue (between continuity and discontinuity); and the kairos of dialogue (between flow and opportune action).

Nurturing and sustaining dialogue through time

In adult education as in school, dialogue is usually considered as a key component of the learning process. However, not every dialogical situation triggers significant insights or changes. How to determine whether an opportunity to establish or practice dialogue may carry transformative effects? How to interpret what could make it relevant or not? How should educators nurture dialogue? The aim of this communication is to discuss from a theoretical perspective, the temporality involved in dialogic situations that may carry transformative effects. To proceed, we will build on Burbules' (1993) theoretical contribution around the characteristics of dialogue in education, as it introduces a model stressing relational and developmental features, that are coherent with both a transformational perspective (Mezirow, 1991) and a rhythmanalytical one (Alhadeff-Jones, in press; Lefebvre, 1992/2004). The argument developed in this paper is framed by three main assumptions.

First, it is assumed that, independently of the content of a dialogue, what may explain its transformative effects relies on the quality of the relationships between the subjects involved. As formulated by Burbules (1993, pp.7-8):

« ... dialogue involves two or more interlocutors. It is marked by a climate of open participation by any of its partners, who put forth a series of alternating statements of variable duration (including questions, responses, redirections, and building statements) ... Dialogue is guided by a spirit of discovery, so that the typical tone of a dialogue is exploratory and interrogative. It involves a commitment to the process of communicative interchange itself, a willingness to 'see things through' to some meaningful understandings or agreements among the participants. Furthermore, it manifests an attitude of reciprocity among the participants: an interest, respect, and concern that they share for one another, even in the face of disagreements. »

The second assumption is that in order to carry formative or even transformative effects (Mezirow, 1991), dialogue requires situations of interlocution that unfold through specific rhythms at specific times. As stated by Burbules (1993, pp.8-9): « Dialogue represents a continuous, developmental communicative interchange through which we stand to gain a fuller apprehension of the world, ourselves, and one another... »

Furthermore, considering dialogue through its temporal dimension may also appear as a critical initiative. Indeed, the recent evolution of Western society at large, and education in particular (e.g., Alhadeff-Jones, in press; Plumb, 1999; Vostal, 2015), expresses signs that translate a cultural shift toward the hegemony of new rhythms and temporalities, often associated with ‘speed’ (e.g., Virilio, 1977), ‘acceleration’ (e.g., Rosa, 2005/2013) or a feeling of ‘urgency’ (e.g., Bouton, 2013); a shift that may appear as antagonistic to the slower pace traditionally conceived as inherent to the effort of building mutual understanding. If dialogue may not require slowness *per se*, the establishment of meaningful conversation requires nevertheless some forms of duration and continuity. It is therefore assumed that fostering such a temporality may constitute by itself an act of resistance, or a form of transgression, in regard to the hegemony of the communicational formats that tend to dominate nowadays (e.g., instant messaging or other forms of exchanges characterized by brevity, immediateness, or disruption). Reflecting on the rhythms of dialogue could therefore contribute to the experience of disorienting dilemmas, as people involved may question further the way they relate to social time (Alhadeff-Jones, Lesourd, Roquet & Le Grand, 2011).

Based on current research focusing on the rhythmic dimensions of education (Alhadeff-Jones, 2014, in press), this paper explores three aspects of the temporality of dialogue. Its aim is to enrich the reflection around the conditions required in order for educators to foster transformation through their dialogic practices, and explore further how they may connect with the institutional and social environment that surround them.

The rhythms of dialogue: discursivity, embodiment and sociality

As pointed by Burbules (1993, pp.xi-xiii), dialogue is both a spontaneous and a structured practice: « Dialogue is continually created in the act of engaging in it, and every time we create it, it is different. » At the same time, dialogue is shaped by standards and rules that suggest some form of structure, i.e., constitutive principles that help define and govern this activity (ibid.) (e.g., taking turns, listening, questioning, etc.) For Burbules, inspired by Gadamer, the essence of the ‘dialogue game’ is a ‘to and fro’ movement, where the process is more important than the outcome (ibid., p.xiii). Such a ‘to and fro’ movement can be conceived as a rhythmic phenomenon (Sauvanet, 2000), as it meets three fundamental criteria: It is constituted around patterns of interaction (structure) that are repeated (periodicity) and constitute an evolving process (movement) (Alhadeff-Jones, in press).

According to Burbules, there are different forms of patterns and therefore different kinds of dialogical practices. This author suggests thus to distinguish four ideal types: dialogue as conversation, dialogue as inquiry, dialogue as debate, and dialogue as instruction. Those four categories are characterized indeed by different ‘patterns of moves’ (ibid., p.xiv), i.e., different kind of questions that shape and define the tone of dialogue and its advance (ibid., p.86), depending on the level of consensus and inclusivity expected. Conceiving dialogue as a rhythmic phenomenon also suggests that it involves people interacting verbally and non-verbally according to their own specific rhythms (e.g., flow of thought, discursive pace, body movement), depending on the temporal constraints imposed by the context (e.g., topics of discussion, schedule, setting), and the structure of the conversation itself. Inspired by Michon (2005), we can distinguish at least three rhythmic aspects that determine the nature of

dialogue.

First, there is discursivity itself. In education, language and texts provide the praxis with a first layer imposing its own rhythmic organization onto people learning experience. The rhythms of discourses are shaped by many variables affecting the flow of speech (e.g., the nature of the language used, the fluency of the interlocutors). To some extent, listen to each other requires one to adjust to the discursive flow of others, whether it may be experienced as appropriate, too fast or too slow. Educational settings are also typically organized around contents (e.g., texts, videos) which have their own discursive organization. Hence, the rhythms of dialogue are shaped by the way the topic discussed may be organized. In formal instruction, textbooks are often used as synchronizers in order to organize the succession of teaching units, according to a specific pattern; people have therefore to adjust their own rhythm according to the pace imposed by such resources. The medium used to dialogue also impacts the rhythms of exchange. For instance, the use of new technologies provides learners and educators with alternative formats of verbal interactions (e.g., synchronous and asynchronous) imposing their own structure and logic to the temporality of the educational process (e.g., Kabat, 2014).

A second rhythmic dimension refers to corporeity. The experience of dialogue is always embodied. It depends therefore on individual dispositions, as they may be experienced in a very intimate manner: hunger, tiredness, or emotional states, as expressions of how one feels in one's body, determine how dialogue may occur. Studies developed in chronobiology and chronopsychology (e.g., Testu, 2008) have shown how much educational activities may be impacted by the rhythms that characterize one's physiological and cognitive functioning. Referring to corporeity also suggests that dialogue occurs in different manners, whether participants have or not the possibility to get closer to each other, move around, or at the opposite do not have the possibility to even see one another (e.g., virtual setting). Furthermore, the flow of a discussion may be drastically influenced by the non-verbal dimensions demonstrated by the interlocutors; as shown by psychologists and anthropologists (e.g., Hall, 1989), at this level, the non-verbal rhythms of interactions (e.g., body movements) reveal unconscious dynamics that determine the perceived quality of the exchange.

A third rhythmic dimension refers to what Michon, inspired by Mauss' anthropological inquiry, calls 'sociality', i.e., the variation of the level of intensity that characterizes recurring encounters between people. The duration, the intensity and the frequency of encounters impact indeed the nature of dialogue. In the same way, the consistency (e.g., predictability versus unpredictability) of the pattern of encounter also plays a critical role: «A successful dialogue involves a willing partnership and cooperation in the face of likely disagreements, confusions, failures, and misunderstandings. Persisting in the process requires a relation of mutual respect, trust, and concern – and part of the dialogical interchange often must relate to the establishment and maintenance of these bonds.» (Burbules, 1993, pp. 19-20). In formal education, such features are typically shaped by organizational and institutional constraints. As suggested for instance by Ben-Peretz' (1990), following Zerubavel sociological contribution, schools' sequential structure (e.g., learning cycles), calendars or planning (e.g., annual and daily cycles) are constitutive of temporal modes of organization that impose a specific order and coherence to the

rhythms of interactions. In the same way, the different forms of alternance that characterize the sequence between vocational training and work in dual education (Geay, 1999) also constitute patterns that condition the development of dialogic relationships. Such organizational patterns shape the ways people sustain through time the way they interact with each other. At the level of the activity, the organization of instructional time, and more broadly the routines and rituals that punctuate everyday life in a classroom (e.g., Jacklin, 2004) provide us with additional examples. Rhythmic patterns of dialogue emerge from the scripts that structure, regulate and eventually constrain the gathering of students and educators (e.g., individual versus group activities, work versus recess).

The moment of dialogue: between continuity and discontinuity

« Dialogue is not something we *do* or *use*; it is a relation that we *enter into* – we can be caught up in it and sometimes carried away by it. » (Burbules, 1993, p.xii). Sometimes, dialogue can take a life on its own, even beyond our control. When people experience dialogue as a repeated activity they consciously choose to enter in, it could be defined, according to Lefebvre's theory, as a 'moment' of existence (like eating, playing, contemplating art, etc.) As pointed by Burbules (1993, p.15):

« What sustains a dialogue over time is not only lively interchange about the topic at hand, but a certain commitment to one's partner; a commitment that might not precede the dialogue, but arises only gradually in the spirit of the engagement. »

The moment of dialogue evolves and grows (or it eventually loses traction and disappears) through its own repetition. Dialogue requires some form of continuity; however, it is most of time unfolding in contexts characterized by discontinuity. There are therefore many reasons that make such a commitment difficult to sustain. As suggested by Burbules (1993, p.145) « ... an exploration of the possibilities of dialogue would be incomplete without an acknowledgement of the social conditions, including especially conditions in schools, that contribute to 'dialogue breakdowns', making dialogue difficult or impossible. » The following sections identify three of them, from a temporal perspective.

A first reason to consider is the brevity of training opportunities. In a context where 'accelerated learning' becomes more prevalent (Wlodkowski, 2003), training opportunities are often reduced to short term workshops or seminars (just a few hours or days long), or coaching practices that are bounded by a fixed timeframe. In that context, the possibility to establish the required conditions in order to sustain a meaningful dialogue is limited. In training, discussions happen within dyads or groups whose existence may be limited to a few hours. In coaching, it may be limited by a pre-defined format that may or may not be extended over time. Such limitations may trigger – consciously or not – a feeling of restraint, disengagement, or frustration among participants. The transformative potential of dialogue cannot therefore be unfolded, because it is inhibited by the lack or the inadequacy of the planned duration of the setting.

A second reason that makes dialogue difficult to sustain from an educational perspective is when, by design, the training process is organized around alternate settings (e.g., professional activity and formal instruction; health care and personal life), and the terms of such a dual organization are not integrated appropriately. Meaningful dialogue cannot be established or sustained, either because the time for

formal and informal dialogue occurring in each sphere (e.g., in the classroom, at work, at the hospital, in family) is too short (see above), or because it fails at integrating in a relevant manner the contributions of the other spaces involved (e.g., formal knowledge, experience from the field, care given, personal experience). The possibility to establish a dialogical space that provides learners with the possibility to articulate, reflect and discuss their heterogeneous learning experiences appears then as critical. Such a format is for instance found in practices associating coaching, tutoring or mentoring with dual education (Mehran, Ronveaux & Vanhulle, 2007), providing learners with a ‘third space’ to process both knowledge and experience.

When considering the temporalities of learners’ life more broadly, a third source of discontinuity seems to affect attempts to establish or sustain dialogue. People evolve every day through heterogeneous spheres: family, work, formal education, leisure, social commitment, etc. Because the temporalities of those environments are heterogeneous (i.e., they are regulated by rhythms that are diverse, sometime complementary, sometime antagonistic with each other), they often lead people to experience what Pineau (2000) calls ‘schizochrony’ (from the Greek *schizo-* meaning divide, and *chronos*, time). The idea of ‘split time’ refers to the various forms of temporal divide that are experienced and eventually lead individuals to the feeling of being temporally alienated. Such divides occur for instance when a person is unable to establish a feeling of coherence between the different activities constitutive of one’s life, evolving through environments (e.g., personal, professional) that seem not only disconnected but conflicting with each other. Schizochrony also occurs when tensions emerge between the qualitative aspects of lived time (e.g., the feeling of flow) and the social necessity to remain temporally oriented and therefore quantify and measure one’s time (e.g., checking the hour or the date to respect a schedule). The reference to chronological time and the prescription to objectivize one’s temporal experience may thus split the subject’s experience of time (e.g., the flow that emerged from within the course of action), leading discontinuity to take over the creative experience of duration. The experience of schizochrony may constitute an obstacle for sustaining dialogue, because time allocated for meaningful discussions is experienced as compartmentalized, disjointed, or artificially bounded, due to schedule conflicts, competing agendas, disruptions, unexpected events, etc.

In order to overcome such difficulties, it seems crucial to develop strategies that help conceive the temporal complexity of dialogue, considering together its dual features: continuity and discontinuity. From a conceptual perspective, referring to Lefebvre’s (1961/2002, 2009) theory of moment appears as particularly relevant. Accordingly, dialogical situations can be conceived as constitutive of a specific ‘moment’ of existence. A moment refers to some form of constancy within the course of time. It constitutes a common element, shared by a series of instants, events, circumstances, and dialectical movements (Lefebvre, 2009, p.640) that could otherwise be considered as disjointed or unarticulated. A moment tends to designate a ‘structural’ element that can be isolated or abstracted from the everyday life only through careful thinking. It appears as a ‘core’ of the real-life experience which condensates what is scattered in everyday life through a unity, constituted by words, actions, situations or attitudes, feelings and representations (Lefebvre, 2009). Thus, the moment of contemplation, the moment of struggle, the moment of love, the moments of play and rest, the moments of justice, poetry or art (ibid., pp.226-227) repeat themselves in a lifetime. Each of those moments is built and emerges through the repetition of a specific

pattern of activity. The moment can therefore be defined as « a higher form of repetition, renewal and reappearance » characterized by « the recognition of certain determinable relations with otherness (or the other) and with the self. » (Lefebvre, 1961/2002, p.344). The moment suggests a duration and, through its coexistence with other moments, generates a history; moments alternate and resonate with each other; they cover each other, emerge, last and disappear (Lefebvre, 2009).

Considering dialogue as a moment of existence with its own history, constitutes a privileged way to conceive both, the continuity and the discontinuity characterizing dialogical situations throughout a curriculum, or more broadly through the lifespan. From this perspective, interpreting the effects of dialogue requires one to interpret, among others, their inscription and the meaning they take in the learner's trajectory and in one's biography. Furthermore, acknowledging dialogue as a specific moment of one's life, also contributes to recognize the history and reinforce the meanings and the functions of specific 'rules' and 'principles' whose effects are « to establish a degree of reliability and consistency in the discussion that allows the participants to engage confidently in open interchange » (Burbules, 1993, p.16). Designating a moment as such is a fundamental operation, because it provides the person with a principle of coherence in order to organize and intensify the meaning of what would be otherwise experienced, either as a continuous repetition of everyday routines, or as a discontinuous sum of unrelated experiences (Hess, 2009, p.195). A moment is not a 'situation', because it results from a choice, an attempt to single a form of experience out. The moment creates and provokes situations; it condensates them by putting them in relations (ibid.) Conceived through the lens provided by the designation of a moment, everyday situations are no longer experienced passively through their banality; they are rather taken in charge as lived, and they can become a matter of reflection and communication (ibid.) For Lefebvre (1961/2002), the relevance of this concept is inherent to his critical project aiming at favoring people's active appropriation of the everyday life. Using it in order to rethink the idea of dialogue leads one to question what is at stakes for participants in order to acknowledge and elaborate some form of continuity, even when their experience of conversation is disrupted. For that purpose, the activity of journaling (Hess, 2009) plays a critical function, as it contributes to give consistency to a specific form of experience and build a repository for its singular memory. Establishing rituals (ibid.) may also help people identifying the entry and the exit time inherent to the moment of dialogue, facilitating its connection with other moments of existence, and reinforcing a broader sense of cohesion with others and with one's own life organization.

The *kairos* of dialogue: between flow and opportune action

Educational dialogue is challenging because the temporalities through which people evolve are fragmented and heterogeneous. Someone may participate to a class discussion, however because of family or professional concerns, this person may be absorbed by other problems that do not leave enough 'mental space' in order to really process what is at stake in the conversation. More broadly, considering one's development (e.g., emotional, cognitive, social), people engaged in a dialogue may not always be at the same 'stage' in their own evolution, which means that they may be more or less receptive to what is shared considering their own history, their level of maturity or their current preoccupations. The organization of training curriculum usually addresses some of those developmental issues, through selective processes (based on prior formal credentials, interviews, etc.) However, in order to be truly

educational or even transformative, it is not enough for a dialogue to occur between people sharing some similar formal background, in ‘good enough’ conditions. What is discussed has to occur at the ‘right’ time for each participant. In order to formalize this idea, I am referring here to Galvani’s (2011) reflections around the notion of *kairos*.

Inspired by Jankélévitch’s philosophical work, Galvani (2011, p.75) designates intense moment of self-development (*auto-formation*) with the term *kairos*, originally borrowed from the Greek mythology, in order to stress how much they constitute ‘opportune’ moments when ‘everything is at stake’. The *kairos* is a moment of inspiration, a time when meanings and new forms emerge. It is found for instance in the moments of the ‘very first time’; all those times that inaugurate the emergence of a new kind of experience in someone’s life (e.g., the first love, the first encounter with death, the first day of work). It also emerges through the paroxysm of ‘great moments’ characterized by the intensity of borderline situations when the experience of love, death, loneliness, or infinite, dissolves usual landmarks and references (ibid.) Most of the time dialogical situations are not so intense. However, the most meaningful ones may rely on particular feelings that single them out from other experiences. Considering dialogue from this perspective suggests that, in order to trigger significant changes (in self-perception, in relation to others, in the way one interprets events), it has to occur in a time that appears as particularly meaningful for the learner, in regard to one’s own life course for instance.

At another temporal scale, the *kairos* also appears in the everyday repetition of daily activities, such as those exercised for instance by professional athletes or musicians. It designates then the spontaneous and non-reflected ability to operate the relevant move, or the correct judgment, at the right time (Galvani, 2011). In this case, the notion is close to Csikszentmihalyi’s concept of ‘flow’ (Csikszentmihalyi & Selega Csikszentmihalyi, 1988). The *kairos* usually requires one to suspend self-consciousness and intentionality, in order for the self to spontaneously cope with the moment and be fully involved within it (Galvani, 2011). From an educational perspective, the emancipatory value of the *kairos*, as an intense moment, requires both, the spontaneous capacity to be in the ‘flow’, and the retrospect ability to reflect on the theoretical meanings, practical effects and existential values it carries. Considering dialogue from that perspective, such considerations suggest first that it requires some kind of spontaneity in order for participants to ‘synch’ with each other, beyond rational and conscious decisions, and learn to be in tune with feelings and reactions that are expressed. From a rational perspective, it also suggests that interpretations produced or comments made are formulated at the right time; what could be called the *kairos* of interpretation. In educational dialogue, like in psychotherapy, interpretations or questions raised by a participant or by the therapist only have a significant effect when they occur at the right point during the interchange. When it is too early, they may not even be ‘heard’ by the other. When it is too late, they may just be irrelevant, dismissed and have no impact on the evolution of the dialogue.

The *kairos* refers therefore to the capacity to identify the right time in order to act properly within a dialogical relationship. Such opportune time can be conceived from the perspective of the learner; it questions then when does a person appears as the most ‘receptive’ for a comment, a question or an interpretation, considering one’s life

broadly, and the dialogical activity itself. It can also be envisioned from a collective perspective, questioning when does someone's intervention carry the potential to trigger or reinforce a collective change. From that perspective, the *kairos* of dialogue has to be conceived in regard to the educational purpose of the interchange, and its relation to the social context within which it emerges.

Envisioning the educator as a rhythm analyst

For Burbules (1993, p.47), dialogue reveals a developmental and diachronic nature: « Dialogues change over time; they move through different phases or stages; they take shape gradually as the participants discover more about the communicative process, about each other, and about the topic at hand. » From a temporal and educational perspective, what is at stake is the capacity to promote, regulate and sustain dialogue, so that it can evolve in a meaningful way through the learner's life course, and eventually become an end in itself.

« In the to-and-fro of exchanged comments and responses, dialogue builds upon itself to reach new and unexpected results – and this can give us pleasure and delight ... we enjoy dialogue when we are fully engrossed in the activity, and because we enjoy it, we seek ways to keep it going. In its purest forms dialogue becomes intrinsic; we are carried forward in the dynamic of the to-and-fro movement without regard for any particular goal or end point. » (Burbules, 1993, p.50)

In order to study the conditions associated with the transformational effects of dialogue, this contribution explored three paths. The first one was to conceive dialogue through the rhythms that constitute it: the 'to-and-fro' movement through which people listen and question each other. Such a rhythmic activity involves discursive features that characterize the flow of speech, and the contents and medium that organize it. It also depends on the embodied rhythms that condition and affect one's physiological and psychological activity, proximity and interactions as well. Dialogue also evolves rhythmically through the variations of the level of intensity that characterizes recurring encounters between people, including duration and frequency, as they may be shaped by organizational temporal structures. The second path was to conceive dialogue as a specific moment of one's life; a moment that suggests some form of continuity and, at the same time, unfolds in contexts characterized by discontinuity, due to the brevity of training opportunities, the alternance of heterogeneous settings, or because of the conflicting temporalities that affect participants' lives. The third path was to conceive dialogue, beyond its process, through its timing, its *kairos*: the relevance of the time when dialogue occurs; the spontaneity and the flow of an exchange; the meaning and the effects of formulating comments, questions or interpretations at the 'opportune' time, when participants may be ready to 'hear' them.

Considering those three dimensions inherent to the temporality and the rhythmicity of dialogue may open up an innovative way to conceive the role of the educator and the protagonists involved within dialogical relationships. Three functions appear indeed as critical in order for educators to sustain the rhythms that may foster dialogue and transformation. The first one reveals the importance of being able to synchronize the heterogeneous rhythms that are constitutive of a dialogue, so that they reinforce each other and participate to a coherent movement, rather than appear as disrupting the dynamics of the interaction. The second function refers to the educator's capacity to nurture and regulate the rhythms involved in dialogue, in order to sustain such a

moment through time, beyond discontinuities. The third function suggests one to acknowledge and foster the moment of dialogue as a key experience; an experience that may help people finding or developing meanings that are particularly relevant considering their current life. Such an approach raises questions rather than it brings solutions. It opens up a path to start considering educators as ‘rhythmanalysts’ (Lefebvre, 1992/2004) able to discriminate, interpret, evaluate, argue, judge and challenge the rhythms involved in the transformational and potentially emancipatory journey they may be participating to (Alhadeff-Jones, 2014, in press).

References

- Alhadeff-Jones, M. (2014). Pour une approche réflexive et critique des rapports entre temporalités et professionnalisation. *Revue Phronesis*, 3(4), 4-12.
- Alhadeff-Jones, M. (in press). *Time and the rhythms of emancipatory education*. London: Routledge.
- Alhadeff-Jones, M., Lesourd, F. Roquet, P., & Le Grand, J.-L. (2011). Questioning the temporalities of transformative learning in a time of crisis. In M. Alhadeff-Jones, & A. Kokkos (Eds.), *Transformative learning in time of crisis: Individual and collective challenges. Proceedings of the 9th International Transformative Learning Conference* (pp.394-407). New York & Athens: Teachers College, Columbia University & The Hellenic Open University.
- Ben-Peretz, M., (1990). Perspectives on time in education. In M. Ben-Peretz, & R. Bromme (Eds.), *The nature of time in schools: Theoretical concepts, practitioner perceptions* (pp.64-77). New York: Teachers College, Columbia University.
- Bouton, C. (2013). *Le temps de l'urgence*. Lormont, France: Le Bord de l'eau.
- Burbules, N. C. (1993). *Dialogue in teaching. Theory and practice*. New York: Teachers College Press.
- Csikszentmihalyi, M., & Selega Csikszentmihalyi, I. (1988). *Optimal experience: Psychological studies of flow in consciousness*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Galvani, P. (2011). Moments d'autoformation, kaïros de mise en forme et en sens de soi. In P. Galvani, D. Nolin, Y. de Champlain, & G. Dubé (Eds.), *Moments de formation et mise en sens de soi* (pp. 69-96). Paris: L'Harmattan.
- Geay, A. (1999). Actualité de l'alternance (note de synthèse). *Revue Française de Pédagogie*, 128, 107-125.
- Hall, E. T. (1989). *The dance of life. The other dimension of time*. New York: Anchor Books.
- Hess, R. (2009). *Henri Lefebvre et la pensée du possible. Théorie des moments et construction de la personne*. Paris: Economica-Anthropos.
- Jacklin, H. (2004). *Repetition and difference: A rhythmanalysis of pedagogic practice*. Unpublished doctoral dissertation, University of Cape Town, South Africa.
- Kabat, K.J. (2014). Time, space, and dialogue in a distance-learning class discussion board. *E-Learning and Digital Media*, 11(2), 162-175.
- Lefebvre, H (2002). *Critique of everyday life* (vol. 2) (J. Moore, Trans.). London: Verso. (Original work published 1961)
- Lefebvre, H. (2004). *Rhythmanalysis: Space, time and everyday life* (S. Elden & G. Moore, Trans.). London: Continuum. (Original work published 1992)
- Lefebvre, H. (2009). *La somme et le reste*. Paris: Economica-Anthropos.

- Mehran, F., Ronveaux, C., & S. Vanhulle, S. (Eds.) (2007). *Alternances en formation*. Bruxelles: De Boeck.
- Mezirow, J. (1991). *Transformative dimensions of adult learning*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.
- Michon, P. (2005). *Rythmes, pouvoir, mondialisation*. Paris: Presses Universitaires de France.
- Pineau, G. (2000). *Temporalités en formation. Vers de nouveaux synchroniseurs*. Paris: Anthropos.
- Plumb, D. (1999). Adult education in a world 'on speed'. *Studies in Continuing Education*, 21(2), 141-161.
- Rosa, H. (2013). *Social acceleration: A new theory of modernity* (J. Trejo-Mathys, Trans.). New York: Columbia University Press. (Original work published 2005)
- Sauvanet, P. (2000). *Le rythme et la raison (vol.1) Rythmologiques*. Paris: Kimé.
- Testu, F. (2008). *Rythmes de vie et rythmes scolaires*. Issy-les-Moulineaux, France: Masson.
- Virilio, P. (1977). *Speed and politics*. Los Angeles: Semiotext(e).
- Vostal, F. (2015) Speed kills, speed thrills: Constraining and enabling accelerations in academic work-life. *Globalisation, Societies and Education*, 13(3), 295-314
- Wlodkowski, R.J. (2003). Accelerated learning in colleges and universities. *New Directions for Adult and Continuing Education*, 97, 93-97.

The dynamics of a safe and accepting learning environment: Theorizing the conditions for dialogue in facilitating reflection and transformative learning

Kaisu Mälkki

Research group of educational psychology
Department of teacher education
University of Helsinki

Larry Green

Counselling Psychology
City University of Seattle, Canada

In this paper we look into the conditions in which dialogue could be utilized to facilitate transformative learning and reflection. We explore the notion of a safe and accepting learning environment from the relational and phenomenological viewpoint, and analyze what it actually means and how it may be developed.

The role of dialogue in Mezirow's transformative learning theory is explicitly emphasized as a venue for exploring alternative viewpoints which in turn stimulates reflective thinking. Dialogue can be understood as a conversation between two subjects rather than between subject and object (see bell hooks, 2007; Freire & Shor, 1989; Rainio, 2010). Similar humanizing and respectful characteristics are attributed to dialogue by Mezirow (e.g. 1991), who follows Habermas' ideas on the ideal speech situation. In addition Mezirow claims that participants experience increased autonomy as a result of this process. These fine sentences express ideal outcomes of an educational activity, rather than processes or methods that might actualize them in pedagogical praxis (see also Illeris, 2007). In a more realistic tone Mezirow (2000) notes that dialogue is subject to human error and does not necessarily make issues of power, gender, class, for example, subject to critical thinking and reflection. Mezirow (1991; 2000) calls for a safe and accepting learning environment as essential for the kind of dialogue that promotes reflection and transformative learning. Again, this is left as an ideal generalization without specifying how it stimulates reflective thinking nor what must be done to promote such an environment.

In this paper we explore the processes by which a safe and accepting learning environment can be generated. We look into it from a relational and phenomenological viewpoint: relational in the sense that we consider the safe and accepting learning environment to be formed in the interaction among the participants; and phenomenological in the sense that we consider the issue with conceptualizations that aim to grasp the first-person experiential viewpoint. We employ the concept of reflection to refer to the process of becoming aware of, and then interrogating the assumptions governing our thinking, feeling and acting (Mezirow, 1991; Mälkki 2011). The paper is organized as follows. Firstly, we review the purpose or function of reflection in Mezirow's framework. Secondly, we submit the notion of "safe and accepting learning environment in facilitating reflection" to a conceptual analysis that reveals its underlying assumptions and thereby, open up questions for further analysis. Thirdly, we consider the challenges and prerequisites implicated in reflection as factors to be considered in the design of such an

environment. We draw on previously published work, explicitly rooted in Mezirow's theory, on the relationship between reflection and edge-emotions, indicating of the challenges to reflection (Mälkki 2010; 2011; see also Mälkki & Green 2014; Mälkki & Green 2016). Fourthly, we consider how the challenge of working with "edge-emotions" can be mitigated in order to facilitate reflection. We bring this theoretical understanding of the challenges to reflection together with Malinen's (2000, 2003) theorization of the role and responsibilities of an adult educator (as balancing the four dimensions of epistemic, existential, ethical and temporal), in order to conceptualize some essential features of a safe and accepting learning environment in relation to the individual process of reflection.

What is the purpose of reflection?

In order to understand the dynamics of facilitating reflection in education, it is helpful to examine its function from a broader, human life perspective. In Mezirow's (1991; 2000) theory of transformative learning, the process of reflection has been presented in connection with two different but related directions (Mälkki & Green, 2016). Firstly, reflection (or critical reflection) is seen as a vehicle to more valid knowledge. The ability to become aware and critically review paradigmatic assumptions is indispensable if general knowledge is to move forward. Likewise critical reflection can be directed towards that which one has personally learned pre-reflectively. Secondly, reflection is seen as the means both toward understanding one's experience and thereby, towards a more authentic existence. According to Mezirow (2000), "[a] defining condition of being human is our urgent need to understand and order the meaning of our experience, to integrate it with what we know, in order to avoid the threat of chaos" (p.3). Reflection can serve as a method for maintaining sense of coherence and continuity of one's self-understanding through keeping up one's sense of agency at the face of changing contexts and contents of one's meaning frameworks (Mälkki & Green, 2016). Thus, reflection may be seen to serve two intertwined directions, toward more truthful understanding of the world and knowledge, and toward more truthful understanding of one's own being and experience (Mälkki & Green, 2016). Transformative learning as well as possibilities for creative and critical action may be seen to be enhanced by them both.

Revisiting the notion of '*Facilitating reflection in safe and accepting learning environment*'

The idea that reflexivity requires a safe and accepting learning environment is an idea that is often voiced in educational literature. Specific practices for generating such an environment in the service of transformation have also been articulated (e.g. Mezirow, 1991; Cranton, 2006; Jokikokko, 2009). However, we wonder if the notion has become an 'empty' generalization that resonates with our intuition, but doesn't forward our theoretical understanding of the processes involved. In particular we claim that there is an "in-between" zone that partakes or joins both theory and practice. In the following we reflect on this notion itself, in order to form more detailed questions for analysis.

Social environment as individually experienced

Often conceptions of reflection emphasize an intra-individual perspective without considering the relationship between individual processing and the social environment (see Fleming, 2014). However, to emphasize the importance of the social and emotional environment in facilitating reflection implies that reflection requires more

than a simple, intellectual reorganization. The cultural and institutional context and the relations among the participants as well as their relationship to the facilitator forms the context wherein reflection either takes place or doesn't.

However, the notion of safe and accepting learning environment does not just refer to the objective characteristics of an environment but to something that is individually experienced: (the expectation) that *one feels oneself accepted* and that one's contributions to the discussion will be received, even contemplated in a given social environment. Furthermore, because this environment is something that is individually experienced, through one's socially formed meaning perspectives (Mezirow, 1991), we cannot assume the environment to be or feel the same for everyone.

"Facilitated" - A facilitator, an authority?

Within adult education, facilitated dialogue is often considered as a means for promoting transformative learning. The facilitator initiates and guides the activities from an implicit position of authority that is different than that of the participants (see Cranton, 2006). Yet dialogue is frequently conceptualized as a conversation amongst equals rather than within hierarchies of authority and power. (see Mezirow, 1991). Thus, to better understand the role of dialogue in facilitating transformative learning, it is necessary to examine the role of the facilitator, and its relationship to the participants. Specifically, we ask, how it is possible to reconcile the impact of an authority figure with the aims of dialogue (see Cranton, 2006; Rainio 2010; Rainio & Marjanovic-Shane, 2013; cf. Matusov 2009)?

"Facilitated" - Reflection on demand?

The claim that "a safe and accepting learning environment facilitates reflection" assumes that reflection can be facilitated. This assumption needs examination. Facilitation often comes with goals that, in the context of educational programs, may easily turn into expectations or demands, especially if it is tied to course gradings. In such a context, authority can, intentionally or unintentionally, continue to influence or condition a dialogue towards predetermined outcomes. However, earlier research indicates that reflection is something one cannot demand. This is particularly true if the educator is expecting reflection to deliver predetermined results (e.g. Mälkki & Lindblom-Ylänne, 2012). That is to say, the more specific the expectation, the greater the likelihood that they will be fulfilled on the surface level, but at the expense of both the authenticity of the process and the actual transformative potential of reflection (Mälkki 2011; Cranton, 2006). While it may be possible to "push" people to become aware of their assumptions, that does not necessarily result in revised assumptions that could generate new behaviors and understanding (Mälkki 2011). In the end, the making of meaning is an act of personal commitment - on the existential level - and as such something that cannot be demanded (Malinen 2000), in an ethically sound educational praxis. In facilitating reflection there must thus be a delicate understanding about the nature of reflection, so that the facilitation does not become disguised socialization.

What is non-safe and non-accepting about the "default" learning environment that is in need of adding safety and acceptance to it?

Addressing the need for safe and accepting learning environments implies that these conditions are not always present while failing to specify what makes these settings unsafe. Articulating these less than ideal conditions would be the first step in remedying them. Both a starting point (actual conditions) and an end point (ideal

outcomes) need to be articulated as a means for charting the path from “here” to “there”.

What constitutes an experience of a safe and accepting learning environment

Above we noted that the notion of safe and accepting learning environment, in the end, becomes realized in the experience of an individual learner, rather than through reference to objectively measurable properties of the environment. This begs the question of what constitutes an *experience of* a safe and accepting learning context which would support reflection and transformation?

Why does reflection need to be facilitated

As mentioned above, it often becomes taken for granted that any approach that emphasize safety and acceptance provides a more fruitful context for reflection and transformative learning. At the same time, however, this notion implies that reflection, by its very nature, is somehow difficult - otherwise there would be no need to facilitate it in the first place. Consequently, any attempt to delineate effective facilitation needs to address what makes reflection so difficult. Effective facilitation would, by definition, lessen or overcome those difficulties.

Within the light of the above we suggest that *to track the dynamics of safe and accepting learning environment* is a matter of

- a) explicating the challenges or prerequisites of reflection (that do not get addressed in the default context)
- b) explicating how the safe and accepting learning environment addresses these challenges through its understanding of the resistances to, and motivation for reflective thinking.
- c) explicating how does the addressing of these challenges facilitate reflection?

In the following we address each of these questions in order to (begin to) conceptualize, from a relational and phenomenological perspective, the dynamics of safe and accepting learning environment in facilitating reflection and transformative learning.

Reflection as pushing against the current - embracing the counterwave

In earlier work (Mälkki 2010; 2011; Mälkki & Green, 2014) we conceptualized the challenges and prerequisites of reflection by positioning it in the context of our human condition where both biological and social factors operate to insure our survival in the face of profound ontological insecurity. Here the challenges of engaging in reflection become visible in the negotiation between the intent to reflect, learn and develop, and the struggle to remain within the comfort zone by avoiding the very edge-emotions that paradoxically are the prime motivators for reflection (Mälkki 2010; 2011). In the following we will briefly explicate this theorization of reflection and edge-emotions, and elaborate on the prerequisites for safe and accepting learning environment.

The relationships that we will be exploring include that between reflection and edge-emotions, between individually experienced edge-emotions and comfort zone, and between edge emotions and the collective comfort zone. Reflection is here understood in the manner that Mezirow (1991) used it: an effort to become aware of, and question the taken for granted assumptions governing one’s thinking, feeling and

acting. The experience of edge-emotions and comfort zone occur as an interaction amongst the emotional, cognitive and social dimensions of experience (Mälkki 2010; 2011). Thus, while these dimensions refer to individual functioning, they open up a conceptual bridge to the social dimension of learning. As a result we can investigate the transformative potential of dialogue.

Comfort zone, as defined in our work (Mälkki 2010; 2011), refers to the affective dimension of meaning perspectives. When we are able to carry on with our lives and interpret events, our social relations and ourselves unproblematically—according to our established meaning perspectives—we experience ourselves as sufficiently comfortable and safe. The world appears as understandable, and consequently we have confidence in our ability to survive. Although we may be aware of the possibility of multiple, alternate, interpretations we are able to maintain a sense of coherence and continuity as we apprehend the world with via our expectations and previous understandings.

In contrast, when something questions our meaning perspectives, our taken-for-granted values or assumptions, we are thrown out of our comfort zones. We no longer experience ourselves as secure because uncomfortable *edge-emotions* have appeared. We've come to understand these emotions as a signal that our assumptions are being challenged and our meaning perspectives threatened (Mälkki 2010; 2011). Thus, we may feel a number of unpleasant emotions including anxiety, fear, anger. We theorize that their appearance at the edges of one's comfort zone, relates to one's basic life-support system (Mälkki 2010; 2011). As Damasio (1999) explains, emotions not only inform us of the suitability of our external or internal environment as being safe or dangerous, but also automatically orient us to action in order to avoid danger. Sometimes this orientation happens so quickly that we may not be conscious of the shift (Damasio, 1999). Consequently, when our meaning perspectives, and thus our innate coherence-producing system is being threatened, our emotions mobilize us to restore our comfort zones (Mälkki 2010; 2011).

On the positive side this kind of automatic orientation allows us to keep up our meaning perspectives and sense of coherence while avoiding the psychic fragmentation that can arise through unrestricted or unimpeded reflection. On the negative side this protective/defensive reaction can produce serious obstacles to learning, development and reflection. Thus, while the revelation that our meaning perspective is no longer adequate to life challenges can act as a stimulus for reflection (Mezirow, 1991), this very activation seems inhibited by unpleasant edge-emotions (Mälkki 2010; 2011). While our assumptions may be seen to be *in need of* updating, they nevertheless have their history in being a part of our self, and bringing coherence to our understanding/being that we are reluctant to forgo (Mälkki & Green, 2014).

Why would we abandon assumptions that had worked so well in the past? Everything seems to be relatively stable as the present moment becomes assimilated to our past experiences, while simultaneously allowing us to form coherent expectations for the future. However, this does not go far enough toward explaining our resistance to reflection as it overlooks the influence of the social dimension. Our meaning perspectives are formed in social interaction, through culture and language (Mezirow 1991). Our meaning perspectives can be seen as individual compilations of shared social resources (Mälkki, Sjöblom & Lonka, 2014). Our personally held meanings are not only born out of, but also maintained by, social interaction. That is to say, shared meanings form connections between people bringing with them feelings of acceptance and recognition (Mälkki 2011). It is these fragile bonds of belonging that our edge emotions are attempting to preserve. That is to say, to reflect on one's "personally

held” assumptions, means risking the threat of exclusion (Mälkki & Green, 2014). Brookfield’s (1994) notion of cultural suicide is exemplary in this regard. Therefore, both our psychic need for coherency and our social need for belonging, govern when it is acceptable to question other’s viewpoints or voice our own. This gives rise to a *collective comfort zone* (Mälkki 2011), where all parties work to protect each other’s comfort zones, and thereby preserve relationships. For much of the time this serves a positive purpose but on the negative side this may produce inhibited, conventional dialogue, when some fresh thinking is required by the circumstances being encountered. Clearly both our need for psychic coherency and social belonging are major factors to consider when we try to conceptualize both resistance to reflection and prerequisites for dialogue.

The edge-emotions operate as thresholds beyond which we leave our comfort zone. We can, and frequently do, avoid those emotions by holding, rather than examining, our assumptions. Instead we can ‘explain’ the problem away or blame the other, and thus disown it (Mälkki 2010; 2011). In this way, our cognitive resources become channeled into service of maintaining comfort zone, rather than increasing understanding or critical self-awareness through reflection.

On the other hand, the edge-emotions can also be used as a prompt for reflection, as it is through these emotions that the problematic assumptions may be accessed and identified. This becomes more possible when we value the edge-emotions as a potential doorway to a greater existential truth. This construal of edge emotions as natural, normal and even worth welcoming stands in stark contrast to the general Western view that they are irrational and shameful. From our point of view, however, the path toward more rational thinking would go precisely through embracing the potential wisdom that these unpleasant emotions signify (Mälkki 2010; 2011; Mälkki & Green, 2014).

We preserve, rather than examine, our assumptions, because it keeps our meaning system and our identity stable. Secondly, it allows us to maintain the impression that we can handle any challenge that comes our way. Thirdly, it reinforces our sense of belonging with those with whom we share assumptions. However, reflecting on those very assumptions, entails the risk of alienation from that group as well as loss of assumed adequacy. Although we have theoretically separated these challenges to reflection into the psychological and social, in practice it is often difficult to fully disentangle the intra-subjective from their social origins. Thus, a challenge to one of these dimensions stretches the others as well.

The above considerations reveal how reflection may be experienced as a “threat” to our psycho-social functioning. Therefore, in order to facilitate reflection, this threat should be addressed in the educational environment. This means understanding the cognitive, emotional and social dimensions of those challenges to reflection, and forming a pedagogical praxis that address them.

Facilitating reflection - *what needs to be facilitated?*

To summarize, we have now recontextualized the challenges to reflection as natural in the sense that they are part of the system that maintains our mental balance. It is not simply a matter of bypassing these resistances and proceeding directly to reflection. Rather, we must first valorize the pre-reflective intelligence of edge-emotions as the privileged means for identifying problematic assumptions. Once identified, they can be critically examined (Mälkki 2011). Secondly, we can build a safe and accepting

classroom culture where reflection doesn't necessarily put at risk the need to belong. In the following section we will examine the latter in more detail.

Facilitating reflection - How?

To address the question of how to address socially based resistances to reflection we turn to Malinen's (2003; see also 2000) typology of teacher responsibilities. According to Malinen (2003), there are four dimensions present in a pedagogical relationship: epistemic, existential, ethical and temporal. First, epistemic dimension refers to the aspect of teaching that traditionally has been the primary focus - for example, to organize and present epistemic content, to conceptualize phenomena, and to disclose the knowledge structures of the learners. Second, the existential dimension refers to a way of *being*, to the particular person that interacts with students through their teacher role. Whereas the epistemological dimension is often non-symmetrical—i.e. the teacher as assumed expert—on the existential dimension the teacher student relationship is symmetrical or equal. According to Malinen (2003), the existential dimension cannot be taught, but only demonstrated through being authentic which indirectly but powerfully influences the students. The third, temporal dimension refers to the responsibility to understand and scan the temporal trajectories within different intervening processes of learning, and to plan the activities accordingly. The fourth, ethical dimension refers to the balancing among these intertwined dimensions, and to detect one's limitations in each.

Meeting at the point of imperfection

As stated above Malinen (2000) suggests that at the epistemic dimension the teacher student relationship is asymmetric while at the same time cautioning that the teacher has an ethical responsibility to be aware of their limitations (Malinen 2000; 2003). Regarding some topics, the teacher may be an expert when compared to the student. The distance between their levels of expertise is exaggerated if the authority role has an overlay of infallibility. However, with regard to the process of reflection the situation is a bit more complex. On a general level the teacher may be an expert of reflection, but regarding the contents and the private pathways of given student's reflection the teacher cannot be. The teacher may understand the general features of the process and the most common obstacles, but it is impossible for the teacher to know the specific assumptions and specific pathways of meaning that would be most productive for a given student. This brings in view the limits of the teacher's abilities and forces the teacher *to respect the student's ownership of their own process*. Thus the teacher needs to respect the emergent nature of reflection—as an ongoing process rather than a completed product. For example, the teacher may use various metaphors to stimulate certain kind of processing, but the teacher may not know exactly which of them and in what ways they may or may not stimulate reflection for given student. Furthermore, while the teacher may be a theoretical expert on reflection, or even an expert in facilitating reflection, they may not be adept at their personal reflection. As the challenges to reflection are not to be overthrown but rather negotiated for the first time, every time (see Mälkki 2011), it is not possible for anyone to be perfect at the process of reflection. Personal familiarity with the process of reflection reveals that it not easy, automatic or unchallenging and thus can cultivate patience and a supportive presence to students embarking on that journey. Teachers who practice reflection know first hand that being comfortable with not knowing is a prerequisite. Thus the teacher has to be willing to let the student engage in their own process, rather than “filling in” that vacuum with their supposed ‘expert’ knowledge.

However, this position of incompleteness or not knowing can be helpful in facilitating reflection. It requires us to acknowledge that we are not perfectly rational creatures but rather a work in progress. From this viewpoint, a teacher in an authority position who is also aware of their uncertainty, may act as an encouragement for the student to own theirs. This allows the student to understand that it is not just them who is imperfect, but rather a common feature of being human. Here the teacher may indirectly teach, by being calm and confident in the face of uncertainty.

Reflection by its nature involves becoming aware of something that one used to hold as valid but now is being revealed as a) a taken for granted ‘given’, and b) possibly in need of revision. As such it requires encountering one’s imperfections and inadequacies. Furthermore, if revision is required and new paths of meaning to be formed, it requires a leap of faith from the platform of one’s previous assumptions into the clearing of the unknown (Mälkki & Green, 2014). The experience of continuity and ontological security which had been anchored within previous understandings is being suspended and this may provoke questions of confidence in other meanings as well.

Ethical authority - existential collective comfort zone

The above described challenges to reflection clearly point to a need for a facilitator - someone who can accompany the student as they jump into a ground that is yet to be formed. The epistemic asymmetry that characterizes the position of authority may serve a purpose as it can act as a beacon that the student can trust when their internal landscape is in turbulence (see Mälkki & Green, 2014). Authority can be exercised effectively by offering confirmation that the process of reflection and critical thinking is valid even though one cannot know beforehand where it will lead. That is to say, the expertise or competence that the teacher enacts may offer the student a reason to trust the process because the teacher does.

Earlier we referred to the notion of a collective comfort zone (Mälkki, 2011) regarding the implicit understanding of what, how and to what extent it is acceptable to say or question in a classroom (or any social setting for that matter). When the teacher—as a representative of the culture—holds explicit or implicit expectations for an appropriate outcome (see also Cranton, 2006) he or she can easily misuse the student’s trust by encouraging conformity rather than critical thinking (see Malinen, 2003). However, this natural tendency to sense the comfort zones of the other, may also be utilized ethically in facilitating reflection. That is to say, the teacher may explicitly and momentarily suspend their membership in a community of like-minded individuals. And, further, they can surrender the effort of portraying oneself as exclusively rational. In addition, the teacher may question the implicit expectation to “sell” their viewpoint as the preferred outcome of education. *Thus the teacher may decline offering reassurance through an appeal to shared assumptions.* Rather, the teacher may offer the assurance that we all share the human condition—creatures moving toward their own mortality and responsible for their own meaning making. Although individuals have their own unique experiences and history, they have in common this existential condition. In this way, the collective comfort zone might not be exclusively anchored within the epistemic register - where the boundaries of acceptability are found. Rather, it could be cultivated within the existential dimension where experience is inclusive (as opposed to the exclusive nature of the epistemic). Thus their need to belong would be met through the reception and honouring of the student’s own process of consulting their experience in the service of examining and revising their own assumptions. Thus belonging would not be bought at the expense

of conformity. Rather, their cognitive and affective resources could be more freely employed to consider different viewpoints with the possibility, but not the pressure, of adopting them for themselves.

In order to develop an *existential collective comfort zone*, it is vital for the teacher to be sensitive to the edges of their own comfort zone. For example, with regard to gradings, the teacher may explicate their own responsibility and challenge to be able to appreciate the kind of justified viewpoints that assess critically also those viewpoints that the teacher has presented or applied in their practice. Here the teacher is in a way extending the edges of the epistemic collective comfort zone, which allows space for existential collective comfort zone to emerge. That is, the teacher explicitly addresses the common yet implicit assumption about the teacher valuing only those student papers that fall within the teacher's comfort zone. Furthermore, in focusing on facilitating safe and accepting learning environment, the teacher must be sensitive to not to mistake their own comfort zone for the optimal learning environment for the learners. Indeed, in many times in order to support the optimal learning environment for learners, per se, requires the teacher to work at the edges of their own comfort zones.

Existential collective comfort zone points to a phenomenological viewpoint of an optimal learning environment that respects humanness and free exploration of viewpoints; the teacher uses their power in the way that the innate need to feel accepted, becomes oriented away from epistemic conformity (epistemic collective comfort zone). Instead, the authority-supported existential collective comfort zone allows one to use one's epistemic resources more freely, especially in relation to one's personal experiences. When one is not primarily attached to shared meanings but to the shared humanness, the exploration and revising of meanings appears less threatening. As teachers we cannot turn off the innate needs of the students, but we may have an effect on where they derive their satisfaction in our educational programs.

The peer support for diving into one's own experience

Adult education traditionally involves more than the relationship between teacher and student because the peer group also exerts an influence on the collective comfort zone. Students are clearly attuned to the reactions of others to their offerings. This sensitivity to peer acceptance can take the form of excessive competitiveness and the fostering of alliances. Consequently it requires some ethical sensitivity from the teacher to channel this peer influence into a culture that fosters reflection. The teacher may, for example, explicitly acknowledge the fact that each individual is different, and thereby have their own unique experiences. This allows the student to feel sense of community with other unique individuals. Thus, acknowledgment of uniqueness may become the new social norm, which facilitates a fruitful framework for meeting the other in a dialogical space. The sharedness and commonness can be found on the existential level, whereas the epistemic level of opinions and viewpoints becomes positioned as if wobbly branches of a tree, something that need not be taken as static and overly definitive but rather as being in progress.

Here the social community may offer social confirmation and acceptance to this (new) approach and positioning within educational program - "because everyone else is doing so; it's not just me who's being carried away". The innate need for feeling accepted becomes related to the way of working rather than specific epistemic contents. This, in itself, may offer "compensation" for the stretching of social elastic bands, which an individual often experiences as threatening one's comfort zone and

social relations.

Conclusion

In this paper we have explored the dynamics of facilitating reflection through a dialogic space of safe and accepting learning environment. We considered what makes reflection challenging in the first place, and based on that built conceptual framework to grasp some essential features of a classroom culture that supports reflection and critical thinking. We suggest that in order to understand the prerequisites of bringing about such a culture, it is fruitful for each of us to look into the ways that we strive to maintain our comfort zones to insure both our feeling of continuity and our sense of belonging. Thus, rather than just pushing towards the ideals, we need to understand what hinders us in the first place.

When our epistemic resources are not confined to protecting our comfort zones, as if being a chock of experiencing, we suggest that the “urgent human need to... understand one’s experiences” (Mezirow, 2000) will have more fruitful environment in which to be realized. That is, the embodied, experiential feelings, images, ideas, felt senses may be more freely accessible to our conscious mind in the process of reflection, if our conscious mind is not preoccupied with sticking with the old meanings and trying to maintain social relationships through these. The ethical authority may offer the acceptance for everyone to explore their own uniqueness, and in the social situation this diving may produce the experience of sharedness, and the experience of this being ‘normal’ (see also West, 2014). Then, it depends on each individual what these circumstances, this safe and accepting learning environment, gives rise to. A necessary requirement for an ethical authority is their sensitiveness to the edges of their own comfort zones, so that the dialogical space of the class is not merely defined and bounded by the educator’s edge-emotions.

References

- bell hooks. 2007, *Vapauttava kasvatus*. Suomentanut Jyrki Vainonen. Helsinki: Kansanvalistusseura
- Brookfield, S. D. (1994). Tales from the dark side: A phenomenography of adult critical reflection. *International Journal of Lifelong Education* 13(3), 203–216.
- Cranton, P. (2006). *Understanding and Promoting Transformative Learning: A Guide for Educators of Adults*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.
- Damasio, A. R. (1999). *The feeling of what happens. The Body and Emotion in the Making of Consciousness*. New York: Hart Court Brace.
- Freire, P & Shor, I. 1987. *A pedagogy for liberation. Dialogues on transforming education*. Massachussets: Bergin & Garvey. 80
- Illeris, K. (2007). *How we learn. Learning and non-learning in school and beyond*. London, England: Routledge.
- Jokikokko, K. (2009.) The role of significant others in the intercultural learning of teachers. *Journal of Research in International Education* 8(2), 143–164.
- Malinen, A. (2000). *Towards the essence of adult experiential learning. A reading of the theories of Knowles, Kolb, Mezirow, Revans and Schön*. Jyväskylä: Sophi, University of Jyväskylä 2000.
- Malinen, A. (2003). *Opettajuus rakentuu ihmistuntijuudesta ja asiantuntijuudesta. Teoksessa P. Sallinen & A. Malinen (Eds.), Opettajuus muutoksessa. Aikuiskasvatuksen 43. vuosikirja*. Helsinki: KVS-kirjat, p. 63-92.
- Mälkki, K. 2010. *Building on Mezirow’s Theory of Transformative Learning*:

- Theorizing the Challenges to Reflection. *Journal of Transformative Education* 8 (1), 42–62.
- Mälkki, K. 2011. *Theorizing the Nature of Reflection*. University of Helsinki, Institute of Behavioural Sciences. *Studies in Educational Sciences* 238. Doctoral dissertation.
- Mälkki, K. & Green, L. (2014). Navigational Aids: The Phenomenology of Transformative Learning. *Journal of Transformative Education* 12(1), 5-24.
- Mälkki, K. & Green, L (2016). Reforming transformative learning theory in light of the demands of liquid modernity: Pace of change, Ontological security and the embodied experience. *Manuscript under review*.
- Mälkki, K., & Lindblom-Ylänne, S. (2012). From reflection to action? Barriers and bridges between higher education teachers' thoughts and actions. *Studies in Higher Education*, 37, 33–50.
- Mälkki, K., Sjöblom, K. & Lonka, K. (2014). Transformation of the Physical Space and Transformation of the Subject. In: Nicolaides, A. & Holt, D. (Eds.). *Spaces of Transformation and Transformation of Space. Proceedings of the XI International Transformative Learning Conference*, New York, Teachers College, Columbia University, p. 550-556.
- Matusov, E. (2009). *Journey into dialogic pedagogy*. New York: Nova Science.
- Mezirow, J. (1991). *Transformative dimensions of adult learning*. San Francisco, CA:- Oxford Jossey-Bass.
- Mezirow, J. (2000). Learning to think like an adult. Core concepts of transformation theory. In J. Mezirow & Associates (Eds.), *Learning as transformation. Critical perspectives on a theory in progress*, (pp. 3–33). San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.
- Rainio, A. P. (2010). *Lionhearts of the playworld: An ethnographic case study of the development of agency in play pedagogy*. (Doctoral Degree). Finland, Helsinki: University of Helsinki.
- Rainio, A.P., Marjanovic-Shane, A. (2013) From ambivalence to agency: Becoming an author, an actor and a hero in a drama workshop. *Learning, Culture and Social Interaction* 2, p. 111–125.
- West, L. (2014). Love, Actually, and Recognition, in *Transformative Learning: Connecting the Individual and Collective in a Theory of Recognition*. In: Nicolaides, A. & Holt, D. (Eds.). *Spaces of Transformation and Transformation of Space. Proceedings of the XI International Transformative Learning Conference*, New York, Teachers College, Columbia University, p.114-118.

Rethinking the Critical Theory influences on Transformative Learning: In Dialogue with Honneth

Ted Fleming

National University of Ireland Maynooth

Abstract

This paper discusses Honneth's critical theory in order to develop the theory of transformative learning as emancipatory learning. This dialogue includes: rethinking the relationship between personal and social learning; a reinterpretation of disorienting dilemmas as a struggle for recognition; a reconfiguring the relationship between personal problems and social issues.

From the beginning Mezirow relied on Habermas for theoretical support and in particular on his concepts of critical reflection and emancipation (Habermas, 1972). Later he relied on Habermas's (1984) understanding of the kinds of free open dialogues that support democracy and transformative learning (TL). Mezirow borrowed pragmatically, without taking into account the works of other critical theorists such as Adorno, Hoekheimer, Fromm, and Marcuse that are the Frankfurt School. Having conducted research for Mezirow in the 1970s aimed at updating his (and more importantly my) understanding of critical theory I am aware of the how his work was focussed on ideas useful for developing a philosophical foundation for TL. More recently, it is clear from access generously given to Jack's library (I had this access on many occasions and indeed he to mine) that detailed engagement with critical theory may have escaped his attention, but he had studied of Jay (1973), Schroyer (1975) and Geuss (1981). His reliance on Habermas protected his work from critiques that, for example, asserted that TL had an individual rather than a social view of learning (Fleming, 2002).

As the third generation of critical theorists emerges it is an opportune moment to think about the implications that this iteration of critical theory might have for TL. Previous papers (Fleming, 2011, 2014) have addressed the interpretation of TL that sees learning as individual and lacking a social dimension. This paper will review more recent work of Honneth on emancipation that follows directly from the Habermas project and Mezirow's borrowings (1978).

Critical theory as a school of thought engages in a critique of society drawing on a wide range of disciplines with an interest in not merely understanding society but changing it. The changes may be political, social or economic and aim to bring about justice and freedom using a neo-Marxist set of analytical tools including ideology critique and occasionally psychoanalytic insights, e.g. Fromm (see Fleming, 2012).

Transformative learning (Mezirow, 2000, pp. 7-8) is;

the process by which we transform our taken-for-granted frames of reference (meaning perspectives, habits of mind, mind-sets) to make them more inclusive, discriminating, open, emotionally capable of change, and reflective so that they may generate beliefs and opinions that will prove more true or justified to guide

action.

Who is Axel Honneth?

Axel Honneth's refocussed critical theory continues to hold that the living conditions of;

Modern capitalist societies produce social practices, attitudes, or personality structures that result in a pathological distortion of our capacities for reason... They always aim at exploring the social causes of a pathology of human rationality.

(Honneth, 2009, p. vii)

In re-imagining emancipatory philosophy he foregrounds a theory of intersubjectivity and the 'struggle for recognition' as the crucial mooring points for the future of critical theory. The task of his critical theory is to identify experiences in society that contain 'system-exploding energies and motivations' in pursuit of freedom and justice (Fraser and Honneth, 2003, p. 242). He offers 'a link between the social causes of widespread feelings of injustice and the normative objectives of emancipatory movements' (Fraser and Honneth, 2003, p.113). Honneth re-writes critical theory so that damaged recognition is the pathology to be overcome, rather than Habermas's distorted communication. He links together the struggles of individuals to be recognized by significant others with self-realization, that is only achieved through interpersonal relations. In a direct connection with Habermas;

Individuation is pictured not as self-realization of the independently acting subject carried out in isolation and freedom but in a linguistically mediated process of socialization and the simultaneous constitution of life-history that is conscious of itself... Individuality forms itself in relations of intersubjective acknowledgement and intersubjectively mediated self-understanding.

(Habermas, 1992, pp.

152-153)

Building on Mead and Winnicott he outlines how only by taking the perspective of others towards oneself can one begin to construct a sense of self, with beliefs, desires, values and needs (Mead, 1934, p. 151). Of course, the perspectives of others are shaped by culture, life history and by internalizing these the individual grows. Later as socialized adults, one can critique inherited values; decide on their justification and adequacy; alter, test and integrate them in the light of this reflection. This is transformative learning.

Honneth (1995, p. 92) argues that the struggle for recognition, based on the need for self-esteem and the experience of disrespect, also explains *social* development.

It is by the way of the morally motivated struggles of social groups - their collective

attempt to establish, institutionally and culturally, expanded forms of recognition -

that the normatively directional change of societies proceeds.

Social change is driven by inadequate forms of recognition and internal (psychic) conflict leads to social change. In this way the social and personal are connected.

Distortions in identity provide motivation for struggle and social conflict and this moves the debate about emancipation away from the perceived highly cognitive and rational interest of Habermas toward a theory of intersubjectivity. This has the potential to resolve the problem in transformation theory as to whether learning is an individual or social phenomenon. It implies that not only is the personal political but

the political is personal. Transformative learning can only be understood as both personal and social (Fleming, 2002).

As self-development can only be achieved through interpersonal relationships (Honneth, 1995, p.74), one's private relationships of love and attachment are a precondition for participation in political will formation, public life and democracy. Following Bowlby and Mead, Honneth (1995, p. 79) sees taking the perspectives of others as moments of such recognition;

...for it is his taking of the attitude of the others that guarantees to him the recognition of his own rights. To be a 'me' under these circumstances is an important thing. It gives him his position, gives him the dignity of being a member in the community...It is the basis of his entering into the experience of others.

(Mead, 1934 in Honneth, 1995, p.

79)

Honneth (1995, p. 107) interprets the separation between mother and child as a struggle for recognition leading to the development of the child's independence that he also understands through Winnicott's object-relations theory. Perspective taking is essential for transformative learning (Mezirow, 1978, p. 104). Transformative learning and communicative action are always already more than the following of rules of discourse or dialogue (Habermas, 1987, p. 121) and involve mutuality and intersubjectivity (Honneth, 1995, pp. 92-95). The antidote to being too individualistic lies in critical theory as articulated by both Habermas and Honneth.

Honneth argues that there are three differentiated recognition orders in modern society. The first is self-confidence and is established and developed in relationships of friendship and love. If one experiences love an ability to love one's self and others is developed and one is then capable of forging an identity. Without a special relationship with another person and the recognition involved this it is not possible to become aware of one's own uniqueness and special characteristics. This is reminiscent of John Bowlby's Attachment Theory (Fleming, 2008) that maps the relationships of trust that build a secure base for a child's development. These are the preconditions for the formation of identity and the ability to become involved in a democratic society. Adult relationships can also be infused with such recognitions and are also developmental.

The second type of relationship to self involves self-respect, when a person is given recognition as a morally and legally mature person. When a person is recognized as having rights they have an ability to participate in the dialogues of organizations and society. Legal rights institutionalize the acknowledgements that each owes to another as autonomous persons. Without rights there is no respect and laws symbolize this (Honneth, 1995, p. 118). This form of recognition acknowledges the ability to be part of social dialogues.

The third form of recognition is provided through work or when a community honors one's contribution through work. This leads to self-esteem. Relationships of solidarity with others in work and communities enhance one's self esteem and one is recognized as having something to contribute to the community and one becomes 'recognized as a person whose capabilities are of constitutive value to a concrete community' (Honneth, 1997, p. 30). People with high self-esteem will reciprocate a mutual acknowledgement of each other's contribution to the community (Honneth, 1995, p. 129). These three forms of recognition constitute Honneth's version of the good life as they provide the conditions for successful identity development.

It is not surprising that there are three corresponding forms of disrespect (Honneth,

1995, p. 131). If people are denied rights their self-respect may suffer, or as Huttunen expresses it, there is ‘a mal-distribution of recognition’ that damages self-esteem (2007, p. 428). Disrespect harms subjects and is destructive because it ‘injures them with regard to the positive understanding of themselves that they have acquired intersubjectively’ (Honneth, 1995, p. 131). If a child is neglected and humiliated they may lose self-confidence. If people are denied their rights their self-respect may suffer and if one’s way of life is not respected damage is done to one’s self-esteem. For these reasons, abuse, insults, ignoring people will not only be an injustice (it will harm people and deny their rights) but injuries are done to their understanding of themselves, their identity (Honneth, 1995, p. 132).

In highlighting misrecognition Honneth brings private matters to the centre of sociological attention and struggles for recognition motivate social action and change. The theory of recognition establishes a link between the social causes of experiences of injustice and the motivation for emancipatory movements (Fraser and Honneth, 2003, p. 113). Internal conflicts lead to social change and we begin to see how in Honneth’s critical theory the social and personal are connected. The political is personal! In this process the age old sociological dualism of structure and agency is being reconfigured. As in much of critical theory the best solution is not to fix the priority given to structure or agency but to see how they are connected dialectically.

The Freedom Turn of Honneth

Honneth goes beyond Habermas by seeking a broader vision of democracy involving not only the political sphere but emancipated democratic families and a socialized market (Honneth, 2014, p. 345). The realizations of freedom in one of these areas depends on its realization in others as democratic citizens, emancipated families and ethical markets ‘mutually influence each other, because the properties of one cannot be realized without the other two’ (Honneth, 2014, p. 331). Free market participants, self-aware democratic citizens and emancipated family members ‘mutually influence each other, because the properties of one cannot be realized without those of the other two’ (Honneth, 2014, p. 330-1). A working democracy requires all sectors (family, labor and democratic public sphere) to work in collaboration.

From the first sentence of his most recent work, *Freedom’s Right* Honneth (2014, p. 15) states that freedom is the key value of modern life;

Of all the ethical values prevailing and competing for dominance in modern society, only one has been capable of leaving a truly lasting impression on our institutional order: freedom, i.e. the autonomy of the individual....all modern ethical ideals have been placed under the spell of freedom....

Freedom involves inhabiting a space where social life can be better. It involves the ability to realize one’s own desires, intentions and values in the social environment of roles and obligations. As one might anticipate, individual and social freedom are connected – and not in some vague or superficial way but essentially. In addition, he asserts that markets, interpersonal relationships and the spaces of public politics are best understood as places of potential social freedom. Places such as work, friendships, family, are all justified only if they promote, support and bring about a free society for all. These can be evaluated as successful to the extent that they encourage and bring into being social freedom and a better life. Education and the right to education are part of that emancipatory project.

In *Freedom’s Right* Honneth (2014) sets out to update Hegel’s *Philosophy of Right* (1979) for the present era. More importantly for this study, he reorients critical theory

again to focus on freedom rather than on recognition (Honneth, 2014, p. 337). In order to realise social freedom three conditions must be realised. Individuals must be able to view each other's freedom as a condition for their own (2014, p. 60). Secondly, there is a validity and persuasive power in institutions that enhance and enable mutual recognition and the members of a free society are defined as free by their ability to enhance and initiate mutual recognition (2014, p. 261). Thirdly, social freedom involves the expectations and obligations of relational institutions that must be agreed on by all members in reflexive dialogue (2014, p. 59). This has implications for transformative learning that valorizes emancipatory learning.

Family, friendships and relationships of sexual intimacy all contribute to social freedom (2014, p. 132). Friendship is the safe space of mutuality and the precondition for a well-lived life (p. 138). Honneth is critical of legal, political and other spheres (including work) that do not support the values that are achievable through interpersonal relations.

Social freedom is also connected to the sphere of markets that offer forms of co-operative activities in the interest of all participants and these involve offering goods for sale as well as jobs. In markets there are consumer rights; regulations as to what can be sold and how; regulations about pricing, wages, imports, illegal commodities, etc. There are also regulations about fairness in business transactions (2014, p. 202). Honneth outlines a series of changes in society that have contributed to disconnecting markets from social freedom and he asserts that neoliberalism does not increase or support social freedom (2014, pp. 176-177) and is a social mis-development. This makes more explicit comments about the kinds of learning and actions that would be emancipatory.

The most important sphere of social freedom is what he calls the 'We' of democratic will formation (2014, p. 253). This leads to his theory of democracy where democratic interactions enable citizens to make their lives and conditions better through a process of dialogue that is democratic will formation (2014, p. 254). This suggests that learning (and teaching) for the development of the 'we' of democratic discourse may be a vital task of education and a necessary one for transformative learning and places dialogue at the centre of transformative learning. This is a re-statement in emancipatory language of the potential involved in the dialogues of transformative learning.

Social movements have been important in enhancing democratic moments of the public sphere and current indignations and insurgent social movements in places such as Barcelona, Athens and Wall Street are typical of the expanded 'we' that are, in Honneth's view, examples of spheres of social freedom. Only through agreed and mutually supportive cooperations with others can there be political freedom. Freedom of this kind is inherently social as it cannot be realized unless one is involved in the 'we' of democratic will formation where the same weight is afforded to all contributions of citizens (p. 261). This is reminiscent of Dewey's affirmation that 'democracy is a name for a way of life of free and enriching communication' (Dewey, 1954, p. 148), in other words dialogue. A new vision of TL would involve supporting through pedagogy a collaborative environment that supported and taught and indeed learned how to be democratic.

Implications and Discussion

Transformative learning theory has followed the communicative turn of Habermas (Mezirow, 1991, pp. 64-99). I suggest that TL might now follow the recognition turn as well as the freedom turn of Honneth. Transformative learning is critical of

presuppositions; aims to create discursive spaces for dialogue in which the force of the better argument is the only force and in which all have full and equal rights to participate freely in democratic will-formation. Transformative learning requires critical reflection and now recognition becomes central to the learning process including critical reflection. TL offers freedom and Honneth explains how this emancipatory interest is realised.

In order to engage in the critical dialogues associated with transformative learning we now assert that the formation of democratic dialogue requires three forms of self-relating. We need caring individuals (teachers) and these are produced through and by those with self-confidence. It requires recognition of the reciprocal nature of legal rights and, as one might anticipate, a person who possesses self-respect (the capacity to know one's own rights) is better able to recognize the rights of others. And thirdly, a democratic discursive society requires the reciprocal recognition provided by work and solidarity. Dialogues of this kind enhance recognition.

This 'recognition turn' suggests strongly that the high rationality of the critique required by transformative learning is 'softened' by this understanding of the interpersonal recognition that underpins the democratic dialogue of a learning environment. Teaching might usefully address the struggles for recognition that function as motivations for TL. Without altering the importance of critical reflection for transformative learning there is now the possibility of reframing transformation theory so that rational discourse or dialogue is based on an interpersonal process of recognition that builds self-confidence, self-respect, self-esteem. Democratic participation is an important means of self-development that produces individuals who are more tolerant of difference, sensitive to reciprocity and better able to engage in dialogue (Mezirow, 2003, p. 60). This enhances the emancipatory potential of TL.

The previously referred to individualism of Mezirow's theory can now be reframed as a fundamentally intersubjective process of mutual respect and recognition. These relations of mutuality are preconditions for self-realization, critical reflection and transformative learning. Recognition and emancipation are connected; recognition becomes the foundation on which communicative action, emancipatory learning and social change are based. This implies that learning is best supported by interactions that explicitly recognize the individual worth of each individual along with the aspirations and dreams that prompt their struggle for recognition.

The process of transformative learning commences with a 'disorienting dilemma' and includes a phase or stage where one's individual 'problem' becomes identified with a significant social issue (Mezirow, 2000, p. 22). In Mezirow's work this dilemma normally involves a disconnect or discomfort between old inadequate frames of reference and the possibility offered by new ones. The dilemma is about whether to stay in a world circumscribed by old experiences of misrecognition or respond to the struggle to be recognized through learning. The dilemma for the learner is whether to stay with old ways of making meaning that have lost their ability to usefully guide understanding and action or search for new ones. The struggle for recognition acts as a disorienting dilemma. It motivates the search for new meaning schemes and identities. The struggle for recognition is a form of perplexity and has within it the possibility that this may be the paradigmatic form of disorienting dilemma.

A further step in the transformative process involves making connections between one's individual problem (that may have prompted learning) and broader social issues. It is now suggested from this study of Honneth that personal problems are intimately connected to broader social issues. The connection is not just an empirically grounded finding in TL but is a philosophically important and essential step in interpreting the

world. The personal is indeed political but now, relying on Honneth, the political is personal, and the TL process necessarily involves the making of this connection. TL requires the ability to perceive the world in this way – the personal and political and social are connected.

Transformative learning, at least as articulated by Mezirow, has always been grounded in critical theory that aims to understand society with an emancipatory intent. Emancipation is also the aim of transformative learning. Social freedom becomes a well founded aim of education for adults in family relationships, in communities, in legal and public policy contexts and also in the world of work. This enhances the emancipatory agenda of TL that now becomes a learning project with the practical intent of increasing freedom, justice, and equality in the spheres of family, law and work and it requires transformation not just of the individual but of society also.

It is the important to attend to teaching as a process of mutual recognition between teacher and learner. With the current emphasis on functional learning, competency and behavioral outcomes in education, and a neo-liberal inspired valorization of the market as the ultimate supplier of all needs, these ideas take seriously the contribution of intersubjectivity as important for teaching, learning and transformation and as an antidote for dominant models that give primacy to the imperatives and demands of the economy. The motivation to engage in learning becomes less economic, functional and instrumental and more communicative, social and potentially transformative and emancipatory. This is achieved not just by an emphasis on critical reflection but on the always presupposed imperative of interpersonal recognition.

Many in today's society may well have exchanged an active participatory role in the market place and in politics for greater comfort and occupational security offered by capitalism, which legitimates the social order in this way. This is a form of socially constructed silence and what is needed is ideology critique addressing this systematically distorted communication and misrecognition. The very foundation of democracy is under threat from the monopoly of technical reason in our society. The forces of technical control must be made subject to the consensus of acting citizens who in dialogue redeem the power of reflection and intersubjectivity. Educators have found in Habermas a social critique with which to analyze the dominance in education of technique and instrumental rationality. The preoccupation, as a result of such critique, would shift from prioritizing how to get things done to realizing genuine democracy. By including the third generation of critical theorists recognizing that the struggle of people to exercise their rights to learn is developmental and a necessary condition for emancipation and transformative learning.

Habermas prompts us to see learning as a community in dialogue and we are most rational when we participate in communities characterized by free and unconstrained dialogue. The critical reflection on assumptions and practices in education is central to this. For self-understanding to be reached in dialogue democracy is necessary and for democracy recognition is presupposed. To do its work (of critique) adult education creates the very conditions necessary for a democratic society. Transformative learning and freedom are gained through dialogue. Above all, education would be redefined as an exercise in democracy, that teaches democracy and aims to reproduce more democracy in classrooms, communities, the work place and society.

The aim of education is to develop and respond to the needs of a democratic society. For Honneth it involves the recognition of student desires and also the political recognition of their desires and learning aspirations through which they wish to live the good life. Such adult education would create a democracy and in the process teach democracy and create a democratic society. In this it would make a contribution to a

society in danger of being over whelmed by neoliberalism. And Freire may have agreed.

References

- Dewey, J. (1954). *The public and its problems*. Chicago: Swallow Press.
- Fleming, T. (2002). Habermas on civil society, lifeworld and system: Unearthing the social in Transformation Theory. *Teachers College Record on-line*, 2002, 1-17. Retrieved June 25, 2015 from <http://www.tcrecord.org/content.asp?ContentID=10877>
- Fleming, T. (2008). A secure base for adult learning: Attachment theory and adult education. *The Adult Learner: The Irish Journal of Adult Education*, 25, 33-53.
- Fleming, T. (2011). Recognition in the work of Axel Honneth: Implications for transformative learning theory. In M. Alhadeff-Jones & A. Kokkos, (Eds.). *Transformative learning in time of crisis: Individual and collective challenges* (pp. 95-101). New York: Teachers College.
- Fleming, T. (2012). Fromm and Habermas: Allies for adult education and democracy. *Studies in Philosophy and Education*, 32(2), 123-136.
- Fleming, T. (2014). Axel Honneth and the struggle for recognition: Implications for transformative learning. In Nicolaidis, A. & Holt, D. (Eds.). *Spaces of transformation and transformation of space*. Proceedings of the 11th International Transformative Learning Conference, (pp. http://www.tedfleming.net/doc/Conference_Version.pdf318-324). New York: Teachers College.
- Fleming, T. (forthcoming 2016). The critical theory of Axel Honneth: Implications for transformative learning and higher education. In V. Wang & P. Cranton (Eds.) *Theory and practice of adult and higher education* (Chapter 3). Little Rock, AK: Information Age Publishing.
- Fraser, N. & Honneth, A. (2003). *Redistribution or recognition? A political-philosophical exchange*. London: Verso.
- Geuss, R. (1981). *The idea of critical theory: Habermas and the Frankfurt School*. New York: Cambridge University Press.
- Habermas, J. (1972). *Knowledge and human interests*. Boston: Beacon.
- Habermas, J. (1984). *The theory of communicative action, Vol 1: Reason and the rationalization of society*. Boston: Beacon.
- Habermas, J. (1987). *The theory of communicative action, Vol 2: The critique of functionalist reason*. Boston: Beacon.
- Habermas, J. (1992). *Postmetaphysical thinking: Philosophical essays* (pp. 149-204). Cambridge, MA: MIT Press.
- Hegel, G.W.F. (1979). *Phenomenology of spirit*. New York: Oxford University Press.
- Honneth, A. (1995). *The struggle for recognition: The moral grammar of social conflicts*. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press.
- Honneth, A. (1997). Recognition and moral obligation. *Social Theory*, 64(1), 16-35.
- Honneth, A. (2009). *Pathologies of reason: On the legacy of critical theory*. New York: Columbia University Press.
- Honneth, A. (2014). *Freedom's right: The social foundations of democratic life*. Cambridge: Polity.
- Huttunen, R. (2007). Critical adult education and the political philosophical debate between Nancy Fraser and Axel Honneth, *Education Theory*, 57(4), 423-

433.

Jay, M. (1973). *The dialectical imagination: A history of the Frankfurt School and the Institute for Social Research 1923-1950*. Boston: Little Brown.

Mead, G.H. (1934). *Mind, self and society*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Mezirow, J. (1978). Perspective transformation. *Adult Education*, 28, 100-110.

Mezirow, J. (1991). *Transformative dimensions of adult learning*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.

Mezirow, J. (2000). Learning to think like an adult: Core concepts of transformation theory. In J. Mezirow and Associates (Eds.), *Learning as transformation: Critical perspectives on a theory in process* (pp. 3-34). San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.

Mezirow, J. (2003). Transformative learning as discourse. *Journal of Transformative Learning*, 1, 58-63.

Schroyer, T. (1975). *The critique of domination: The origins and development of critical theory*. Boston: Beacon.

Dialogue in Freire's Educational Method, in Era of Crisis

Anagnou Evaggelos

Hellenic Open University, Greece

Vaikousi Danae

School of Pedagogical & Technological Education, Hellenic Open University, Greece

Vergidis Dimitris

University of Patras, Hellenic Open University, Greece

Abstract: In this paper we focus on dialogue in Freire's theory and method for literacy and adults' basic education. Then, we refer to the implementation of Freire's method in Greece in 1980's. Finally, we formulate suggestions for the implementation of elements of Freire's method in Second Chance Schools.

1. Introduction

The purpose of this paper is to discuss the issue of dialogue in Freire's theory and the implementation of his methodological approach in basic adult education and literacy in Greece, both as a reality in the mid 1980's and as a suggestion for the near future at the era of profound economic crisis in Greece. For the great thinker, dialogue constitutes the cornerstone of his theoretical and methodology construction. He conceives dialogue as inseparably linked with the essence of man and our endeavor for humanization. In his view, the only way to an authentic and liberating education is through dialogue. Only with dialogue, he states, can we acquire knowledge of reality and of ourselves. In the first part of our work, we will discuss Freire's ideas on dialogue. Then we will refer to his methodology for adult literacy programmes. Subsequently we will present evidence from a basic adult education and literacy national project in Greece in 1984-1987, in which Freire's method was applied. Finally, we will formulate suggestions for the implementation of elements of Freire's method in Second Chance Schools, (i.e. schools of the first cycle of secondary education, attended by adults).

2. Freire on dialogue

In Freire's view, man and human society are of central importance. The achievement of humanization is both an educational as well as a political act, so it is necessary to assess his work not only in terms of learning, but also in human terms. As Jarvis (2007, p. 370) points out, since adult education was incorrectly primarily discipline of psychology, with an emphasis on adult learning, neither had the sociological nor the political dimensions of learning been analyzed and utilized sufficiently. Nowadays it is perceived that learning should be understood in a broader context.

For Freire, 'authentic education is not carried on by A *for* B or by A *about* B, but rather by A *with* B, mediated by the world-a world which impresses and challenges both parties, giving rise to views or opinions about it' (Freire, 1977a, p. 109). In this conception, the key element of the learning and

cognitive process and strategy is dialogue (Patlakidis, 2010, p.205).

In particular, in his system, that which is studied is social practice, while dialogue is the form of study (Freire, 1977a, p. 108). As outlined (Shor, 2011, p.157), dialogue should be understood as part of the historical nature of man and of our historical path towards humanization. It is a kind of attitude necessary to the extent that people have increasingly become critical communication beings. Dialogue is a moment where humans meet to reflect on their reality as they make and remake it. Through dialogue, reflecting together on what we know and don't know, we can then act critically to transform reality (Freire & Shor, 1987, p. 13).

Starting from the axiomatic position that knowledge is not neutral, but varies depending on who and why is constructing it, Freire holds that the primary purpose of adult education is empowering individuals and social groups, so that they can express their own worldview. In this perspective, the dominant ideology ceases to be obvious and unique. This knowledge is necessary for one to understand the world with their own terms and to recognize the potential for social change (Barr, 1999; Marin, 1999, in Papageorgiou, 2010, p. 313).

Freire understands dialogue as a dialectic relationship between trainer and trainees: the trainer strengthens the participants' ability for critical thinking. He or she does not impose their own views, but neither do they hide them. At the same time, the trainer learns from trainees' thoughts and reactions and critically reviews his or her own views (Kokkos, 2010, p. 75). Alongside, in the critical approach of adult education, trainees are not just participants in the educational process, but the source per se of knowledge (Papageorgiou, 2010, p.312). Specifically, dialogue is the encounter between people, with reality being the intermediate, for the discovery and naming of this reality (Freire, 1977a, p.102-103). It must be noted that Freire distinguishes between the "horizontal" dialogue, as emancipatory-problematizing education, and the "vertical" anti-dialogue, as oppressive-banking pedagogy (Freire, *ibid*, p.109). According to his analysis, the essence of dialogue itself is the *word*, which includes two constitutive elements: reflection and action. As he eloquently puts it "There is no true word that is not at the same time praxis. Thus, to speak a true word is to transform the world" (*ibid*, p.101). As he clarifies, when a word is deprived of the dimension of the action, it becomes verbosity. On the other hand, if emphasis is placed solely on the action, word is converted into activism.

He underlines that "To exist humanly is to name the world, to change it. Once named, the world in its turn reappears to the namers as a problem and requires of them a new naming. Human beings are not built in silence, but in word, in work, in action-reflection" (*ibid*, p.102). Dialogue is an existential necessity, because "If it is in speaking their word that people, by naming the world, transform it dialogue imposes itself as the way by which they achieve significance as human beings" (*ibid*, p. 103).

There are certain requirements for the existence of a substantive dialogue.

Dialogue does not take place in a political vacuum. That is, there are limits and contradictions that restrict what we can do. It is not a "free space" where you can do whatever you want. Dialogue is carried out within the context of a specific program and content. To achieve the goals of transformation, dialogue presupposes responsibility, orientation, discipline, determination and targets

(Schor , 2011, p. 161).

Dialogue requires questions. According to Freire, education, as our cognitive practice, raises some theoretical-practical, not intellectual, issues: What to know? How to know? Why should we know? In whose/what favor to know? Moreover, against what and whom to know? These are fundamental issues, which are in dynamic relation to other issues surrounding the praxis of education, its potential, its legitimacy, its objectives and aspirations, its agents, methods and content (Freire, 1977a, p. 97).

At the same time, dialogue cannot be reduced to the act of one person's "depositing" ideas in another, nor can it be restricted to a simple exchange of ideas to be "consumed" by the discussants. As an act of creation, it can also serve as a fraudulent instrument for dominating a man from another (Freire, *ibid*, p. 103).

According to the humanitarian spirit in Freire's thought, dialogue cannot exist in the absence of a profound love for world and for people, as well as in the absence of humility. As the great thinker puts it characteristically: "How can I dialogue if I always project ignorance onto others and never perceive my own?... How can I dialogue if I start from the premise that naming the world is the task of an elite and that the presence of the people in history is a sign of deterioration, thus to be avoided? How can I dialogue if I am closed to — and even offended by — the contribution of others? How can I dialogue if I am afraid of being displaced, the mere possibility causing me torment and weakness?" (*ibid*, p.105), concluding that self-sufficiency is incompatible with dialogue.

As it derives from the above, dialogue, founded on love, humility and faith, becomes a horizontal relationship of which mutual trust between the dialoguers is the logical consequence.

It should be stressed that a prerequisite for a dialogue is hope, which is rooted in the imperfection of humans. Starting from this imperfection, people, are driven to a constant search, which can only be carried out jointly with other people. Despair is a form of silence, denial of the world and escape from it. It should be noted, of course, that hope does not mean crossing arms and wait, but fighting (*ibid*, p. 107).

Finally, true dialogue includes critical thinking, which sees reality in its dynamic course and not as a static entity, a thinking not isolated from action.

As Freire concludes, without dialogue there is no communication, and without communication there is no real education (*ibid*, p.108).

Subsequently we will refer to the methodology of the Freirian programme.

3. Freires' methodology for teaching adults

Freire's basic position is that teaching should be giving hope, not telling people that they are wrong (Jarvis, 2007, p. 364). According to his methodological approach, the starting point for the organization of the training program should be the investigation of the current situation, a situation that reflects the trainees' desires, aspirations, needs and fears. If needs investigation is done correctly, the thematic universe will reflect the trainees' real needs. Trainers must, utilizing the basic contradictions that will identify, put this situation as a problem that causes trainees to provide answers which concern mainly the level of action (Freire, 1977a, p.112). Trainees should continually problematize as to their existential situations (Freire, 1977b, p.47). This problem posing education aims to strengthen the trainees' skills of

thinking critically or contemplating on the object of knowledge and reasons for their existence.

Exploring the thematic universe of learners, i.e. the complex of productive themes -themes that generate other themes-launches, according to Freire, dialogue as an exercise of freedom. The methodology of this inquiry should be interactive. Trainers-researchers must have constantly in their mind that the object of the investigation is not people, but the thought-language people use to refer to reality, the levels at which they conceive this reality and their view of the world that is the source of this reality (Freire, 1977a, p. 113-114). Freire argues that research will be cultural and critical to the maximum when close descriptions of the individual and more "timely" aspects of reality are avoided and the focus is on understanding reality as a whole. Research on important issues should include a) concern for connecting links between themes, b) concern that these themes are raised as problems and c) interest in the historical-cultural surrounding atmosphere (Freire, *ibid*, p. 128). It is noted that the theme should be presented as a problematic situation and never as problem to solve (Jarvis, 2007, p. 366).

In Freire's conception, people overcome the situations that limit them, the limit situations, applying limit actions, ie actions aimed at overcoming rather than passive acceptance of "the given" situation. In this way, Freire, following Alvaro Viera Pinto, accepts "limit-situations" are not "the impassable boundaries where possibilities end, but the real boundaries where all possibilities begin"; they are not the frontier which separates being from nothingness, but the frontier which separates being from being more." (Pinto, 1960, as cited in Freire, 1977a, p. 117, note 15).

As Freire explains, themes are not things and they do not exist in some objective purity, outside people. The same objective fact can cause different complexes of generative themes in different seasonal subunits. There is therefore a relationship between a given objective fact, the perception that people have for the objective fact and productive issues. Two important elements arise from this perception: a) trainees must participate in the investigation of important for them themes, and b) the researcher-trainer needs to find the starting point from which people consider the 'given' reality and then check if, in the course of the investigation, a change in perception of the objective-and-invariant physical reality appeared or not (Freire, 1977a, p. 126-127).

The focus of Freire's educational method was the process of visual "codifications" by the participants. These visual codifications were often artwork, mainly sketches, which he ordered to important painters, because he wanted them to be of high aesthetic value. The codifications depicted situations related to the participants' experiences and were constructed in a way that made it possible for a critical analysis of the various aspects of social reality. Each coding depicted a subtheme of each investigated subject. The dialogic analysis ("decoding") of the elements contained in each coding made possible the critical understanding of each subtheme by the participants. Eventually, through the synthetic, holistic analysis of all subthemes participants reconstructed their perceptions on the investigated subject (Kokkos, 2011, p.83). The themes are based on words that encapsulate trainees' existential situations (Gerou, 1985,p.104).

At all stages of the decoding people externalize their worldview and,

depending on how they are facing the world and think about it-fatalistically, dynamically or statically, so will the generative themes they discover will be. It is possible that a theme of silence arises, which indicates a muteness structure in front of the overwhelming power of limit situations (Freire, 1977a, p. 126).

In conclusion, in the theoretical context of the dialogue, the facts presented by the actual or specific context are critically analyzed. This analysis involves the exercise of abstraction, with which, trainers and trainees try together to understand reality. Thematic investigation thus becomes a common effort for knowledge of reality and self-knowledge (Freire, *ibid*, p. 127-128).

In the next part of our paper we will refer to the implementation of Freire's methodology in a national programme for adults' literacy in Greece in mid 1980's.

4. The literacy program and basic adult education and literacy programme in Greece in the 1980's. Its pilot implementation

The literacy and basic adult education programme was designed in 1984 by the Department of the General Secretariat for Popular Education. The pilot phase of the project took place in 1985 and 1986. The teaching materials were co-formed, during the pilot phase, by trainers and trainees on the basis of Freire's theory (Vergidis, 1995, p.176-181). Both the planning and the implementation of the pilot phase of the programme were based on the systematic study of Freire's work and on the dialogue among all those involved, as well as on the formative evaluation of the programme (*ibid*). Some of the teaching materials were issued in folders, so that their potential users have the possibility to enrich, enhance and / or modify them, depending on the needs of each of literacy and basic education learning groups.

4.1. Basic principles

The basic principles on which designed the literacy and basic education programme, of the literacy section, was designed, were (Poimenidou, 1987, p.7):

In order to understand a lesson or a course, in a literacy and basic education learning group, it is necessary to analyze the principles that constitute the trainer's concept regarding the educational process.

1. There is no such thing as a neutral education; therefore, in every educational process there are two paths one can follow. The first (known to us from our personal experience) leads trainees to the accumulation of detached knowledge, transforming them into passive receivers. The second leads trainees to critical and creative analysis of reality and offers them potential for an active attitude towards their lives.
2. Literacy and basic adult education (from the perfect ignorance of writing to improving it in various stages) cannot be a mere technique of reading and writing according to grammar and syntax rules, but also mean acquiring knowledge.
3. For man, the acquisition of knowledge is dialectically linked with praxis and is not limited to mere information about detached events; it brings one face to face with this reality and thus, from the understanding of simple data, they progress, penetrate and discover the whole character of the social, political, economic and cultural phenomena.
4. The literacy method is not simply a technique, i.e. an alienated recognition of inanimate symbols, but a method which inextricably connects "how one

learns' (which covers the technical side) with "to whom somebody teaches something" (which detects the adult's social situation and psychology) and the "why to learn" (referring to the ideological texture of the didactic act).

5. The trainer must take into account the adult trainees' specific characteristics (experiences, history, way of thinking, vocabulary used, opinions, habits, practices) and also must watch their multidimensional personality and their multiple social roles, (e.g. worker, parent, trade unionist, etc.).

6. In order to enable the learning group to move faster towards acquisition of writing, the words the trainer uses must have a dynamic that is, they should be psychologically charged. Furthermore, the texts, photographs, drawings, film projections must relate to, or better, reveal problems of its members, and be articulated on their daily lives.

7. The attendance period of a learning group is only a short time. The success of the programme in the learning group is decided by the degree to which the trainees' interest was initiated and the knowledge provided from written texts was revealed, so that they can read on their own, i.e. progress in their self-education.

During the learning process of the learning group self-learning processes must be promoted, i.e. to be taught "how to learn" by utilizing written texts.

4. 2. *The educational material*

The trainers-authors of educational material followed the following procedure in their work (Vaikousi, 1987, p.7):

- Selection of topics and situations, after discussion and dialogue with the trainees on their daily lives and / or interests.
- Recording and **coding** of words and expressions trainees frequently use in their everyday lives.
- Selection of suitable **generative** words, which were later on used in teaching.
- Analysis of the codified situations by trainees (**decodification**).

Subsequently we provide some indicative elements from the educational material that was formed in the literacy groups in 1985-1986. The first example refers to newspapers and information.



Example 1. Newspapers

The axes of conversation-dialogue were:

- What do newspapers inform us about, besides news?
- Do we learn the news only from newspapers?
- Can you present an example of how may the press influence public opinion?
- The press is called, due to its importance for our lives, “the fourth power”. What does the word “power” mean?
- What should, in your opinion, be our attitude towards press?

(Source: Vaikousi, 1987, p.34).

We note that in the 1980’s no private TV channels were operating, only state television. Therefore, newspapers played a very important role in informing and in the country’s political life. Nowadays we should be asking the same questions about TV and the Internet.

The 1980’s was a period of rapid expansion of consumerism in Greece. Thus, reflection and dialogue on overconsumption made sense at the time.

In this era of economic crisis and deep recession that has plagued the country since 2010, this concern is clearly of not the same social significance.



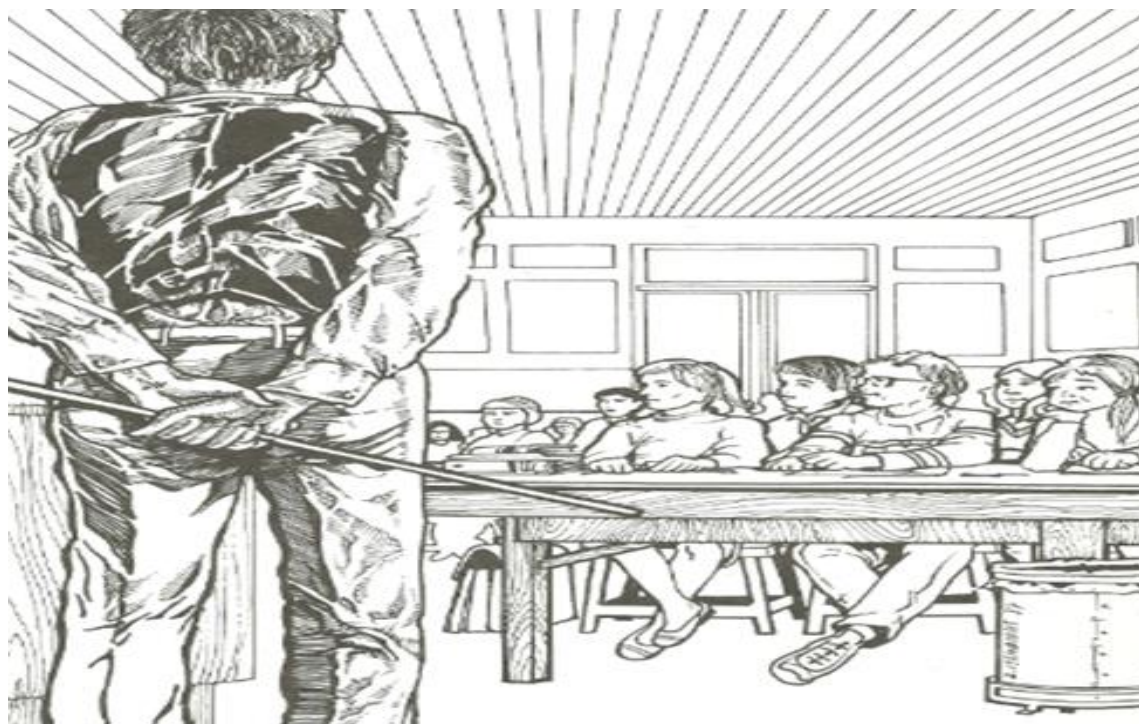
Example 2. Consumption

The axes of conversation-dialogue were:

- Why do you think the persons in the photo look happy?
- What are all these things on the table? Do you have any of those things?
- Do you share this opinion on happiness?
- Are all these things necessary? Do they save us work load or create more? What happens with the energy they consume?
- Who do you think really “benefits” from this?

(Source: Tsiokos & Kontrarou, 1987, p. 201).

The third example refers to the authoritarian traditional school.



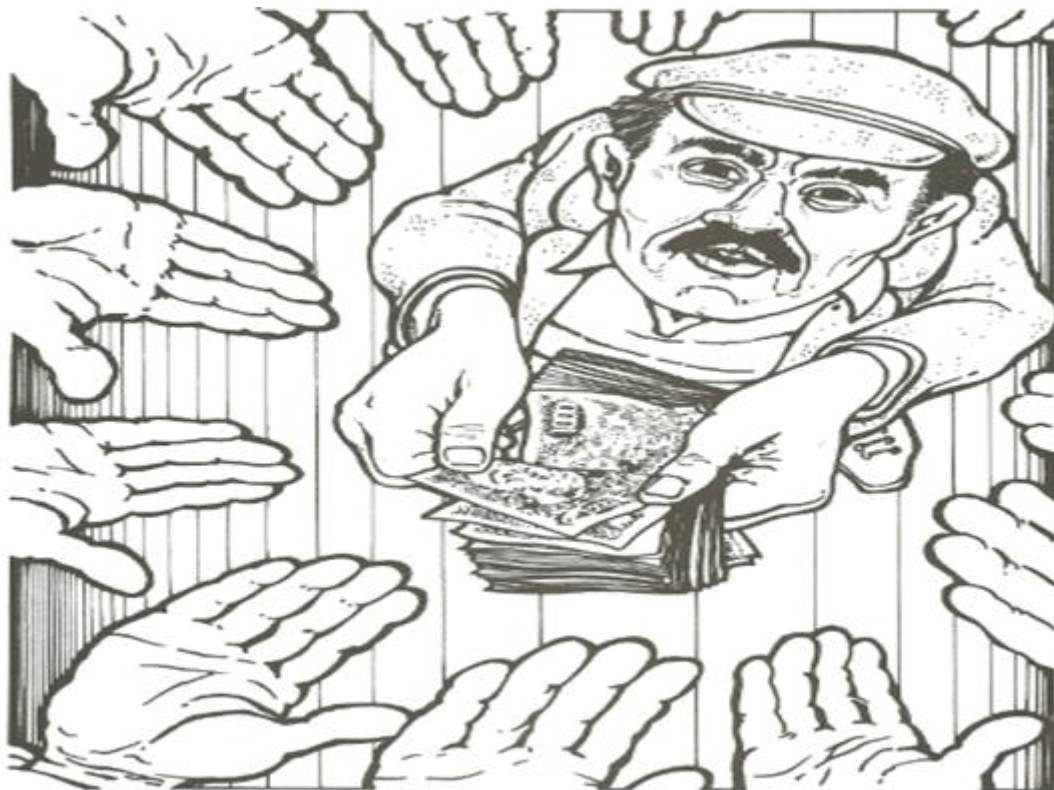
Example 3. School

After discussing about the picture, trainees were asked to write an essay on their memories from school [description of the environment (family, village), description of the school, relation with the teacher].

(Source: Tsiokos & Kontrarou, 1987, p. 52).

It is worth asking whether we could raise similar school authoritarianism issues nowadays, after 30 years. It is likely that the memories of adults who have not completed compulsory education might be different nowadays.

During the period the learning group was operating, the government had imposed an austerity program and reduction of public spending. The timely issue of austerity was raised by participants.



Example 4. Austerity

The axes of conversation-dialogue were:

- Which countries have taken austerity measures?
- When do governments take austerity measures?
- Which notion is opposite to “austerity”?

(Source: Vaikousi, 1987, p.46).

In the next part of this paper, we will formulate suggestions for the implementation of elements of Freire’s method in Second Chance Schools.

5. Suggestions for implementation of Freire’s method in Second Chance Schools in Greece

The fundamental objectives of Second Chance Schools (SCSs) were: a) to combat social, exclusion and marginalization, a) to facilitate the return of school drop-outs to compulsory education, b) the acquisition of basic knowledge and updating of social and professional skills, thus enabling trainees to c) develop self-esteem and d) link themselves to the labour market (Karalis & Vergidis 2004; European Commission 2007).

SCSs in Greece were instituted in 1997 by Law 2525/1997 (Article 5), as an innovative adult education programme, for graduates of primary school, who had not completed the nine-year compulsory education. The first SCS operated in 2000/2001 and since then these schools have increased significantly in number and have been the main national institution for basic adult education and literacy. It is worth mentioning that a significant number of immigrants, Romani and other vulnerable social groups are attending SCS, especially those in prisons.

In our opinion, Freire’s problem-posing dialogical method is applicable in SCSs, especially in those with a significant number of trainees belonging to

vulnerable social groups, such as the SCSs operating in prisons. We should underline, that given the current situation, with Europe and especially Greece living a great refugee crisis, a significant and increasing number of refugees and immigrants will be in need for adapting in a new environment, while facing danger of marginalization, stigmatization, social exclusion and lack of basic education and literacy. Furthermore, the ongoing economic crisis which is oppressing Greece for over 6 years may result in an increase of school dropouts. Therefore, it is likely that there will be more potential future trainees in SCSs-besides those operating in prisons- who will belong in the aforementioned target group.

For a successful implementation of this attempt, the following points are fundamental:

- Trainers' training. Adults' trainers with experience on Freire's methodology, as well as scientists and researchers will work together in training the target group on the issues such as basic elements of Freire's theory, the Freirian methodology for teaching adults, principles of designing educational material, characteristics of vulnerable social groups, the role of the adults' trainers, etc.
- Pilot phase. During the pilot phase the method will be applied in 1-2 SCSs, so that useful conclusion will be drawn, in order to ameliorate the practice.
- Production of educational material. Trainers, guided when necessary by the scientific committee, will produce educational material during the pilot phase.
- Evaluation. All the above will be evaluated, so that all necessary correctional and amelioration action can be taken before the project is expanded.

6. Conclusive remarks

Freire's method for basic adult education and literacy was deeply adapted to the social, political and educational conditions in which it was applicable. It was usually directed at socially excluded, living under very oppressive conditions. However, as it has been pointed out (Schor, 2011, p. 159), dialogical education is an epistemological positioning and not a strange or foreign practice from an exotic part of the world, such as the Third World. It is acknowledged (Kokkos, 2011, p. 84) that his ideas are a valuable legacy for adult education. As Jarvis underlines (2007, p. 367), Freire's thought for teaching is widely accepted by adult educators of every field-and surely says something to those who have introduced the problem-based training in medical and other forms of higher and continuing education.

As shown, the educational material for adults can only be part of the trainees' space-time and connected with the problems and issues that concern them and that emerge through dialogue. As the socio-economic and cultural context change, a part of the educational material loses its meaning.

We believe that Freire's method and ideas may very well be applied in the education of vulnerable social groups, particularly refugees and immigrants, with the SCSs-mainly in prisons-providing an excellent educational environment for such an attempt.

References

- European Commission. (1999). *Second Chance Schools: Guide for setting up a second chance school*. Brussels: European Commission.
- Freire, P. (1977a). *Pedagogy of the oppressed* (translation in Greek Kritikos, G.). Athens: Rappa (in Greek).
- Freire, P. (1977b). *Cultural Action for Freedom* (translation in Greek Tsamis, S.). Athens: Kastaniotis (in Greek).
- Freire, P. (1986). Education in progress: Eleventh letter. In KEMEA, *For a popular education. Alternative institutions and policies* (translation Katsoulis, M.), p. 96-118. Athens: KEMEA.
- Freire, P & Shor, I. (1987). What is the 'Dialogical Method' of Teaching? *Journal of Education*, 169 (3): 11-31.
- Gerou, Th., (1985). International experiences-literacy practices. In General Secretariat for Popular Education, *Conference to tackle illiteracy*, p. 98-105. Athens: General Secretariat for Popular Education.
- Greek Government Gazette. (1997). Comprehensive Lyceum, Access of Graduates to Tertiary Education, Evaluation of Educational Performance and Other Provisions. Law 2525, 188A (Athens: National PrintingOffice).
- Jarvis, P. (2007). Paulo Freire. In: Jarvis, P. (ed). *The founders of adult education* (Scientific editor in Greek edition Kokkos, A.,translation in Greek Theodorakakou, A.). (pp.355-375). Athens: Metaixmio (in Greek).
- Karalis, Th., Vergidis, D. (2004). Lifelong education in Greece: Recent developments and current trends. *International Journal of Lifelong Education*, 23(2), 179–189.
- Kokkos, A. (2010). Critical reflection. A critical issue. In Vergidis, D. & Kokkos, A. *Adult education. International approaches and Greek routes* (p. 65-93). Athens: Metaixmio (in Greek).
- Kokkos, A. (2011). Transformative learning through aesthetic experience: the configuration of a method. In: Kokkos, A. & Associates. *Education through art* (pp.71-120). Athens: Metaixmio. (in Greek).
- Papageorgiou, H. (2010). Investigation of epistemological beliefs of adults' trainers: a case study in Second Chance Schools. In Vergidis, D. & Kokkos, A. *Adult education. International approaches and Greek routes* (p. 306-328). Athens: Metaixmio (in Greek).
- Patlakidis, K. (2010). *The teacher's/trainer's role in Freirian tradition*. Athens: Gordios (in Greek).
- Poimenidou, V. (1987). *Adult Basic Education Courses (Literacy)*. Athens: Ministry of Culture. General Secretariat for Popular Education.
- Tsiokos, G. & Kontrarou, S. (1987). *Completion of basic adult education*. Athens: Ministry of Culture/ General Secretariat for Popular Education (in Greek).
- Shor, I. (1985). Experiencing in an unusual way the usual. Theory of critical teaching. In KEMEA, *For a liberating education. Anthology of pedagogical texts* (translation Katsoulis, M.), p. 106-148. Athens: General Secretariat for Popular Education.
- Schor, I. (2011). *A pedagogy for Liberation. Dialogues on Transforming Education* (Scientific editor in Greek edition Kokkos, A.,translation in Greek Koulaouzidis, G). Athens: Metaixmio (in Greek).

- Vaikousi, D. (1987). *Adult literacy courses*. Athens: Ministry of Culture/
General Secretariat for Popular Education (in Greek).
- Vergidis, D. (1995). *Undereducation. Social, political and cultural
dimensions*. Athens: Ypsilon/Vivlia (in Greek).

ON TRANSFORMATIVE LEARNING THEORY

Dialogue and Communication in Transformation Theory: New Ideas from the Perspective of Systems Thinking

Saskia Eschenbacher
University of Augsburg

Abstract: Four verbal application dimensions are going to be presented in order to explore new ways of teaching for change. The aforementioned dimensions are embedded in a theoretical framework that provides practical dimensions on how the adult educator is able to challenge the learner's intrapersonal communication through interpersonal communication.

Introduction

This paper is mainly concerned with two dimensions of communication: intrapersonal and interpersonal communication in relationship to transformative learning theory. While the latter refers to behavior and relations between persons, intrapersonal communication describes processes that take place within the individual, including making decisions and making meaning of experiences within or outside of our awareness. As adult educators our interventions are limited to communication. This implies fundamental pragmatic consequences: While psychologists have construed a multiplicity of models and concepts about how the human psyche works, we (as adult educators) have failed to realize that our main business is communication. Therefore I argue, that we have to realize that there is a fundamental void in transformation theory concerning the fact that we as adult educators can solely operate on transforming the learner's inter- and intrapersonal communication. Too little is known about the pragmatics of human communication pertaining to interactional patterns, paradoxes and pathologies in the context of transformative learning processes. While Mezirow (1991) focuses on Habermas' ideal conditions (1973; 1981a; 1981b) for fostering transformative learning, I am convinced that there is a need for a theoretical framework that would provide insight into the circular internal processes of how meaning is construed and reconstructed in respect to the individual's frame of reference. At the same time this framework has to possess practical dimensions on how the adult educator is able to challenge these processes while interacting with adult learners. Therefore I will focus on the idea of challenging the learner's intrapersonal communication within his or her taken-for-granted worldview through (interpersonal) communication. In order to fill the aforementioned void, we might take the perspective of systems thinking which provide some answers to the question that can be raised regarding the communicative dimension within transformative learning theory. The purpose of the paper is twofold: On the one side it will stay within the tradition of Mezirow's theory while it will extend the communicative dimension at the same time.

In searching for a capable extension, it is useful to consider the embeddedness of complex systems theory in transformative learning. Swartz and Sprow (2010) argue that transformative learning is related to complexity science, although Mezirow did not make this connection explicit. In order to improve our understanding of transformative learning, Swartz and Sprow refer to his incorporation of ideas from the systems thinker and anthropologist Bateson. In addition to linking transformative

learning to complexity science, Tyler and Swartz also make a connection to narrative theory (Tyler & Swartz, 2012; Mezirow, 1991). The process of narrating is described as a uniquely human way to give meaning to experience (Clark & Rossiter, 2008). They also argue that the “construction of the narrative is necessary to make the experience accessible (that is, to language it), and how it is constructed determines what meaning it has for the person” (Clark & Rossiter, 2008, p. 64). This linguistic access to transformative learning theory allows us to connect both levels (intrapersonal and the interpersonal) to each other. Against this background we are able to explore different verbal application dimensions that enable the adult educator to foster change in perspectives. The focus shifts from trying to create an ideal speech situation to increasing the likelihood of achieving the goal of perspective transformation by irritating the learners’ process of narrating/storytelling. In order to expand Mezirow’s theory we need to find a model that provides narrated and experienced life as a form of human communication (Tyler & Swartz, 2012, p. 455) and explains how they both are linked to each other. The role of language as a fundamental structure of humanity can be chosen as a starting point to outline the relationship between individual experiences, communication and transformative learning.

Communication as the exclusive exchange of stories

According to the ancient Egyptians, the tongue is the repository of the mind. The tongue functions as a type of rudder, which enables humans to navigate through the currents of the world. As the fundamental structure of humanity, language has two crucial functions; it not only enables movement through the world but also determines direction and purpose. Language is located twice: in the mind and in communication. The peculiarity of language becomes clear at this point as it is at the same time a type of bridge that can connect both: the mind and communication (Retzer, 2006, p. 13).

How can we as adult educators support the learner in navigating through the currents of the world through communication or more precisely language? How does communication have to look like and how do we have to use language to facilitate this navigation through a learners’ frame of reference in order to arrive at a new, revised frame of reference or life story that is more inclusive, discriminating, open and emotionally capable of change in the context of adult education? How do we have to communicate or use language to facilitate perspective transformation and the process of re-storying? What enables or inhibits fostering change through dialogue?

One of the central assumptions of this paper is that there is a strong relationship between the experienced life and narrated life. *Experienced life* as it is understood in

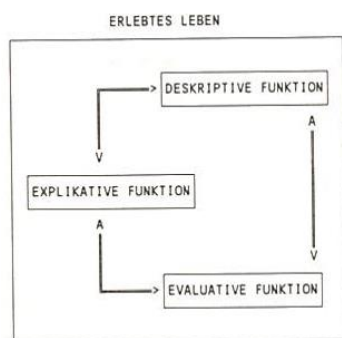


Figure 1, Retzer, 1994, p. 15

this paper can be described as consciousness, psyche or perception. Retzer (1994, pp. 9-17) splits what he calls the experienced life into three functional areas which are description, explanation and evaluation (figure 1). It is rather a process than a structure and all the elements have a circular relationship to one another. How an experience is perceived and evaluated depends strongly on the way it is described and explained. Through formative learning we do not solely learn certain contents but how to make sense of and give meaning to them and craft a coherent life story. Retzer (1994, 2006) offers a perspective that gives us a more in-depth insight on formal aspects:

Instead of focusing on changes in what we know and experience (informative) he puts an emphasis on the question of how we know and experience (transformative) our life or certain aspects of it (see also Kegan, 2000). In addition to that, Transformation Theory (Mezirow, 1978; 2000; 2012; Mezirow & Taylor, 2009) is concerned with the question of change: “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; changing these structures of habitual expectation to make possible a more inclusive, discriminating, and integrative perspective; and, finally, making choices or otherwise acting upon these new understandings (Mezirow, 1991, p. 167).” Changing these structures means re-storying one’s life story. Transformative learning can be described as re-storying (Randall, 1996). How are these structures or perspectives related to the process of narration? “Perspectives are constitutive of experience. They determine how we see, think, feel and behave. Human experience is brought into being through language. [...] Language builds up linguistically circumscribed areas of meaning. Meaning perspectives can incorporate fragmented, incomplete experience involving areas of meaninglessness” (Mezirow 1981, p. 14). When we are able to identify those areas of meaninglessness and incomplete experience, we are able to extend or re-write life stories to fill voids or build bridges between gaps.

Creating a relationship between Retzer’s work and transformative learning theory enables us to gain greater insight into how prior experiences and interpretations are used to construe an interpretation of a new experience. At the same time we can explore ways on how to challenge those interpretations and their guiding assumptions as educators. For Retzer (1994; 2006) and Schumacher, the *experienced life* can be seen as an internal story – it has not been told yet – but it gives the individual a concept of his or her being in the world “a self-awareness of one’s own individuality” (Schumacher 1997a, p. 71). If this internal story is told as a narrated life it can be re-storied. This process of restorying – as mentioned above – can be described as transformative learning by (Randall, 1996).

Narrated life as a second area of phenomena refers to interpersonal communication, or more precisely to everything that takes place as communicative action between people and includes but is not limited on linguistic elements. It also involves non-linguistic elements and all forms of behaviour or “performance” that are experienced (by someone else) as a meaningful sign within the social system. This is very important and provides an option for extending Mezirow’s theory insofar as it is not limited exclusively on cognitive ways of knowing but involves expressive and embodied ways of knowing as well. The strong link between what Retzer (1994; 2006) refers to as *experienced* and *narrated life* is made explicit by Clark and Rossiter (2008, p. 64), arguing that the “nature of experience is always prelinguistic; it is “language” after the fact, and it is through the process of narrating how learners give meaning to experience. Narrative learning is constructivist in character, but the construction of the narrative is necessary to make the experience accessible (that is, to language it), and how it is constructed determines what meaning it has for the person”.

What has been already partially introduced is a theoretical model that allows us to bring the whole person – mind and body – into our theoretical and practical reflections on transformative pedagogy. In the aforementioned model systems thinker Arnold Retzer conceptually splits life into three categories: he distinguishes *lived life* (*gelebtes Leben*) from *experienced life* (*erlebtes Leben*) and *narrated life* (*erzähltes Leben*). Two of these categories - *experienced* and *narrated life* - have already been

introduced. The third and last category *lived life* refers to all biological, organic and physiological processes and states (Retzer 1994, p. 9). Even though *lived life* is distinguished from other areas of phenomena like psyche and consciousness (*experienced life*) and narration (*narrated life*), it can interact with both areas and react with adaptation if needed² (Retzer 1994, p. 17).

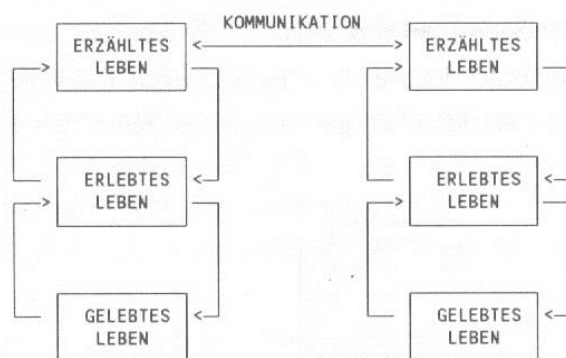


Figure 2, Retzer, 1994, p. 18

As illustrated in figure 2 above (Retzer 1994, p. 18), all phenomena of human life interact with each other. They are unable to determine what causes the impulse in each system, but they can determine what kind of narrative or experiential pattern might be realized. Each narrative or life story has an author (who

narrates) and certain contents, which have to be chosen over others by the author. We aim at

constructing a story that is coherent. Another necessity for stories is textual stringency (Schumacher 1997b, p. 84). This process of selection, where certain experiences are chosen over others in order to create coherence, shows at the same time how sensitive these narratives are. “Narrative is also how we craft our sense of self, our identity” (Clark & Rossiter 2008, p. 62). Max Frisch writes that “[s]ooner or later, everyone invents a story, which – often under tremendous sacrifices – is held on to for life” (Frisch 1975, p. 45). As long as experience and storytelling are not perturbed, they mutually confirm each other. If this internal story is told and becomes externalized as *narrated life* it can be re-storied. This is important for the adult educator insofar as every inquiring, every comment, every supplement may have an impact on the narrative if the narrator reacts to them, so that the internal story (experienced life 2), the old frame of reference, might differ from the internal story before (experienced life1) it has been told (*narrated life*) (Schumacher 1997b, p. 84). Therefore we have to not only figure out, where the connections for rewriting one’s life story can be located within the narrative, but also what communication or, more precisely, what our linguistic practice has to look like in order to increase the likelihood of perspective transformation through dialogue.

What is the advantage of using narrative as a complementary concept for not only understanding but extending transformative learning theory? Amann (2003, p. 26) argues that Mezirow (see Mezirow, 2000) “advocates a transformational focus for adult education that is created as a result of critical reflection and rational discourse. Given these two functions, much of what Mezirow proposes as critical to transformation is a result of cognitive functions – processes carried out with our minds”. The first reason to extend the communicative dimension in Mezirow’s theory is that learning transformatively goes beyond cognitive ways of knowing, as it also involves embodied ways of knowing (Merriam, Caffarella & Baumgartner, 2007, p.137) to mention just one other alternative way of knowing. The way we story our lives includes cognitive, affective, spiritual *and* somatic dimensions (Merriam,

² For an example see Schlattner 1994.

Caffarella & Baumgartner, 2007, p. 215; Brooks & Clark 2001, p. 2). All of these dimensions offer a very rich potential for theorizing transformative learning theory: “Narrative offers us a window through which we can view the self, a self that is multiple and complex, a self that is dynamic and changing” (Brooks & Clark 2001, p. 3). Through the close relation between narrative and identity (or *internal story* or *experienced life*), stories (as *narrated life*) offer a rich potential for both: reflecting on continuity and changing perspectives. At this point it makes sense to take a closer look on the three functions which are distinguished by Retzer (1994, 2006) regarding what he calls *experienced life*. The temporal character (past, present and future) of the narrative illustrates and underlines the procedural nature of constructing a narrative. Within the descriptive function borders can be drawn. On the level of *experienced life* those borders are namely concerned with temporal (there is a ‘before’ and ‘after’ every experience) and spatial (being ‘inside’ or ‘outside’ of one’s awareness) distinctions. The second function – explanation – is concerned with cause-effect relationships and the question of how something arises from or is caused by something else and who is responsible for what (Retzer, 1994, p. 13). The last function – evaluation – has the strongest link to somatic and affective dimensions. Emotions are related with judgements (Dirkx 2008, p. 14) and characterize embodied learning itself (Merriam, Caffarella & Baumgartner, 2007, p. 194). Dirkx (2008, p. 15) argues that “[e]motions convey a deep and intimate connection with our world, and this connection is often manifest neurophysiologically through the body”. As soon as the internal story arrives in the phenomena of *narrated life*, it becomes possible to extend or re-write it. *Narrated life* becomes then a part of the dialogue between educator and learner.

Communication – or the question of how to make a difference?

Retzer’s (1994; 2006) model on communication sets the backdrop for the last section as well, which explores systems thinker Schumacher’s work on the use of language in consulting situations. We can build on Schumacher’s (1997a; 1997b) study on communication or more precisely on how to balance stability and change in narrations in the context of consulting situations. He identifies four verbal application dimensions with respect to their connection with narration and change (Schumacher 1997b, p. 85) against the theoretical background of Retzer’s model of communication. The four dimensions he analyzes are the *temporal dimension* (past, present, future), the *spatial dimension* (context), the *mode of language* (indicative or subjunctive) and the *focus of attention* (referring to the distinction problem or solution) (Schumacher 1997a; 1997b).

Schumacher’s findings lead to the conclusion that we increase the likelihood of change or perspective transformation if we focus on a linguistic practice that fosters variability. Like Brooks and Clark (2001, p. 2) he suggests that we should therefore focus on *how* the story is told, *how* the central elements are joined together and on the way *how* coherence is constructed by the narrator. In addition to that Brooks and Clark invite us to do the same at the level of language by asking which metaphors are used, how the story is told (active or passive voice), how the protagonists are characterized or how the themes relate to each other. The emphasis is less on what is told (content), but rather on how (form) the story is told. They argue that the aforementioned approaches “offer us ways to interpret what the informant is experiencing and what meaning they are giving to that experience” (Brooks & Clark, 2001, p. 3). They invite us to focus on *how* the experiences within the story are described, explained and evaluated. By doing so, we are not solely able to better

understand how the narrative is construed and in addition to that, we might gain deeper insight in what the frame of reference might look like. Keeping in mind that every inquiring, comment, or supplement may have an impact on the narrative if the narrator reacts on them (Schumacher, 1997a), we have to find a way to challenge the intrapersonal communication within one's frame of reference through interpersonal communication. The aforementioned findings of Schumacher's study provide some guidance here. In the context of adult education or, more precisely, transformative pedagogy, we can use language in a way to increase the likelihood of change (within what Retzer (1994; 2006) refers to as *narrated life* and thus in the *experienced life* of the learner). Regarding the four verbal application dimensions, Schumacher (1997a; 1997b) suggests the following: In order to foster perspective transformation we should focus on discussing possible and or even already successful applied strategic solutions. In addition to that we should maintain within the focus of attention a rhetoric that is able to integrate the problem and solution at the same time (Schumacher 1997b, p. 111). According to the results of the study concerning the mode of language (indicative or subjunctive) we should foster playing hypothetically with thought experiments that are carried out in subjunctive (Schumacher 1997b, p. 111). Concerning the temporal dimension we should shift the focus from talking about the past to discussing possible futures (Schumacher 1997b, p. 111). And as a last finding Schumacher (1997b, p. 111) emphasizes the importance of the spatial dimension by bringing the context of adult education into adult education or transformative education – discussing the context within the context. All these findings increase the likelihood of changes in perspectives according to Schumacher. Even though his study is concerned with consulting situations, we can transfer his results to transformative learning theory. To explore the communicative dimension within the theory, in the context of adult education, we need to work with a model that reflects both, intrapersonal and interpersonal processes, which are interwoven. Building upon that model, we are not only able to describe and explain processes of communication, furthermore we are able to possess practical dimensions on how the adult educator is able to challenge these (communicative) learning processes while interacting in a way that allows the adult learner to develop a new meaning perspective that is less limited, more inclusive, discriminating and integrative of new (and old) experiences, thus expanding the learner's range of options and to rewrite his or her life story.

Final Thoughts

My approach focuses on the communicative dimension in transformative learning theory. To explore this perspective we need to work with a model that reflects circular intrapersonal communication, which in turn reflects on the circular internal processes of how someone realizes lived experiences through communication – as well as the interpersonal dimension describing the dialogue between the adult learner and the adult educator. Building upon that model we are able not only to describe and explain communication processes, but we possess practical dimensions on how the adult educator is able to challenge these (communicative) learning processes through dialogue. Furthermore narrating experiences enable us to make experience accessible, and story or re-story our lives (Clark & Rossiter 2008, p. 62). On the basis of the close “connection between narrative and identity, stories offer enormous potential as a mode of personal change” (Clark 2001, p. 88) if they are challenged. Regarding the question of how we can communicate or use language to facilitate perspective transformation and to help adults re-narrate personal and collective stories, four verbal

application dimensions have been presented. Those reflections might be helpful in “finding a balance between the old and the new, familiar and unfamiliar, confirmation and non-confirmation” (Schumacher 1997b, p. 84). Therefore we should not limit our focus on the question of how learning leads to change, but also on how the adult educator is able to initiate and catalyze these changes through communication by learning how to balance stability and change in perspectives.

References

- Brooks, A. & Clark, C. M. (2001). Narrative Dimensions of Transformative Learning. In R. O. Smith et al. (Eds.), *Forty-Second Annual Adult Education Research Conference and Proceedings*.
- Clark, C. M. & Rossiter, M. (2008). Narrative Learning in Adulthood. In S. B. Merriam (Ed.), *Third Update on Adult Learning Theory* (p. 61 – 70). San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.
- Dirkx, J. M. (2008). The Meaning and Role of Emotions in Adult Learning. *New Directions for Adult and Continuing Education*, (120), p. 7 – 18.
- Frisch, M. (1964). *Mein Name sei Gantenbein*. Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp.
- Habermas, J. (1973). *Erkenntnis und Interesse*. Mit einem neuen Nachwort. Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp.
- Habermas, J. (1981a). *Theorie des kommunikativen Handelns*. Handlungsrationalität und gesellschaftliche Rationalisierung. Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp.
- Habermas, J. (1981b). *Theorie des kommunikativen Handelns*. Zur Kritik der funktionalistischen Vernunft. Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp.
- Kegan, R. (2000). What „Form“ Transforms? A Constructive-Developmental Approach to Transformative Learning. In J. Mezirow (Ed.), *Learning as Transformation. Critical Perspectives on a Theory in Progress* (p. 35 – 69). San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.
- Merriam, S. B., Caffarella, R. S. & Baumgartner, L. (2007). *Learning in adulthood. A comprehensive guide*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.
- Mezirow, J. (1978b). Perspective Transformation. *Adult Education Quarterly*, 28 (2), p. 100 – 110.
- Mezirow, J. (1981). A Critical Theory of Adult Learning and Education. *Adult Education Quarterly*, 32 (1), p. 3 – 24.
- Mezirow, J. (1991c). *Transformative dimensions of adult learning*. San Francisco: JosseyBass
- Mezirow, J. (2000). Learning to Think Like an Adult: Core Concepts of Transformation Theory. In J. Mezirow (Ed.), *Learning as Transformation. Critical Perspectives on a Theory in Progress* (p. 3 – 33). San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.
- Mezirow, J. (2012). Learning to Think Like an Adult. Core Concepts of Transformation Theory. In E. W. Taylor & P. Cranton (Eds.), *The Handbook of Transformative Learning. Theory, Research, and Practice* (p. 73 – 95). Hoboken: John Wiley & Sons.
- Mezirow, J. & Taylor, E. W. (2009a). Preface. In J. Mezirow & E. W. Taylor (Hrsg.), *Transformative Learning in Practice. Insights from Community, Workplace, and Higher Education* (p. XI – XIV). San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.
- Mezirow, J. & Taylor, E. W. (Eds.). (2009b). *Transformative Learning in Practice*.

- Insights from Community, Workplace, and Higher Education. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.
- Randall, W. L. (1996). Restorying a Life. Adult Education and Transformative Learning. In J. E. Birren et al. (Eds.) *Aging and biography: Explorations in Adult Development* (p. 224 – 247). New York: Springer.
- Retzer, A. (1994). Familie und Psychose. Zum Zusammenhang von Familieninteraktion und Psychopathologie bei schizophrenen, schizoaffektiven und manisch-depressiven Psychosen. Stuttgart: Fischer.
- Retzer, A. (2006). *Passagen – systemische Erkundungen*. Stuttgart: Klett-Cotta.
- Schlattner, C. J. (1994). The Body in Transformative Learning. In M. Hymans, J. Armstrong & E. Anderson (Eds.), *35th Annual Adult Education Research Conference Proceedings* (p. 324 – 329). Knoxville: University of Tennessee.
- Schumacher, B. (1997a). Die Balance der Unterscheidung. Zur Form systemischer Beratung und Supervision. Heidelberg: Carl-Auer Verlag.
- Schumacher, B. (1997b). Kommunikation in Beratungssituationen als balancierte Unterschiedsproduktion. *Familiendynamik*, 22 (1), p. 83 – 113.
- Swartz, A. L. & Sprow, K. (2010). Is Complexity Science Embedded in Transformative Learning? In P. Gandy, Tieszen, S., Taylor-Hunt, C., D. Flowers & V. Sheared (Eds.), *Proceedings of the 51st Adult Education Research Conference* (p. 461 – 467). Sacramento: California State University.
- Tyler, J. A. & Swartz, A. L. (2012). Storytelling and Transformative Learning. In E. W. Taylor & P. Cranton (Eds.), *The Handbook of Transformative Learning. Theory, Research, and Practice* (p. 455 – 470). Hoboken: John Wiley & Sons.

The inner dialogue and the transformation process

Pinelopi Boznou

Hellenic-American Educational Foundation

Abstract

This paper attempts to examine the role of the emotions and the inner dialogue in the transformation process, emphasizing on the personal impact of the transformation in terms of self and emotional awareness.

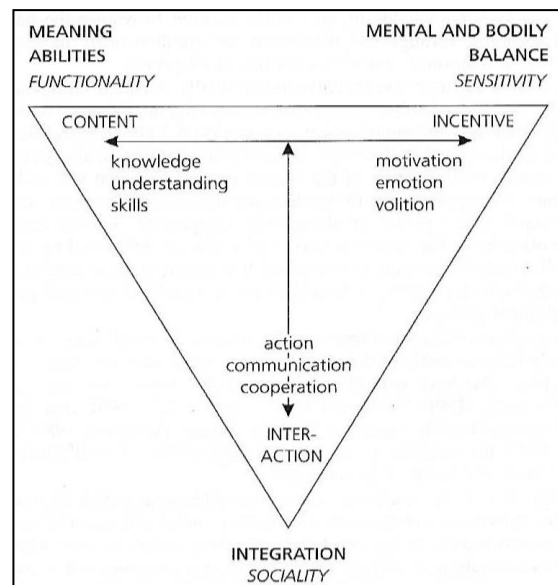
The theory of transformative learning was presented by Jack Mezirow in the early '80s. Transformative learning refers to the process by which problematic habits of mind which delimit our cognitive and emotional functions, determining thus our action, are being transformed (Mezirow, 2006). Transformative learning theory is widely disseminated in the field of adult education. Mezirow, however, emphasized in the cognitive dimension, receiving critics about neglecting the emotional dimension. Later theorists and researchers attempted to enrich the theory of transformative learning towards the affective direction (Kokkos, 2006). In the present paper the emotional dimension of learning is examined and, in particular, the way in which awareness of emotions and personality affects and is affected by the transformation process.

The emotional dimension of learning

Every learning process, whether referring to infants, children, adolescents or adults, cannot be regarded as unilaterally cognitive process. In this process, the motivations and the emotions involved interact and determine the outcome. Reciprocally, learning has an impact on emotions, as it affects directly the self-confidence, the self-awareness and the intrapersonal consciousness of the learner (Kegan, 1994). As Illeris (2003) states, all learning implies the integration of two very different processes, an external interaction process between the learner and his or her social, cultural or material environment, and an internal psychological process of acquisition and elaboration, as presented in the graphic below:

Illeris' scheme provides a holistic view on learning, including the cognitive, emotional and social dimension. The cognitive dimension refers to skills and knowledge, on anything that could help the learner to create meaning and develop competencies, to develop its functionality. The social dimension refers to communication, cooperation and motivation in the social context, which triggers the learning process through participation, imitation, experience, perception or knowledge transfer. The social dimension contributes to the integration of the individual in society and the socialization.

The emotional dimension, finally, relates to feelings and motivations and emphasis is given on ensuring the intellectual balance of the learner and the development of



the emotional world. The emotional or psychodynamic dimension is the dimension encompassing mental energy, feelings and motivations. Its ultimate function is to secure the mental balance of the learner and thereby it simultaneously develops a personal sensibility. The cognitive and emotional dimensions are always initiated by impulses from the interaction processes and integrated in the internal process of acquisition and elaboration. Consequently, the cognitive result is affected by the emotions and the motives of the learner and, correspondingly, emotional learning is always influenced by the cognition or understanding, e.g. new information can change the emotional condition (Illeris, 2007). Therefore, the outcome of the transformation process is influenced by the motives of the learner and forms ways of organizing and meaning making from our emotions.

In addition, Taylor (2001) refers to the implication of Gardner's and Goleman's theories in transformative learning. Both, Gardner and Goleman refer to the intrapersonal intelligence and its impact on the social interaction and on the understanding of other persons' behaviors. Developed intrapersonal intelligence is a prerequisite for successful human relations on every aspect of life. Gardner introduced the theory of multiple intelligences, one of which is the intrapersonal intelligence. The intrapersonal intelligence includes understanding of one's own emotions, interests, goals, motivating oneself and having strong will and self-confidence. Moreover, the intrapersonal intelligence includes the capacity to discriminate among feelings, and the way in which feelings and emotions affect our own behavior and other peoples' behavior is guided by their own emotions.

Goleman's definition of intrapersonal intelligence also highlights the emotional awareness that promotes effectiveness in life. Intrapersonal intelligence is a correlative ability, turned inward. It is a capacity to form an accurate, veridical model of oneself and to be able to use that model to operate effectively in life (Goleman, 1995). Goleman also focuses in the importance of the emotional dimension in learning by introducing the term "emotional literacy" in order to express the development of emotional intelligence where people manage their emotions well and can interpret and deal effectively with other people's feelings. People with well-developed emotional skills are more likely to be content and effective in their lives, mastering the habits of mind that foster their own productivity, while people who cannot marshal some control over their emotional life fight inner battles that sabotage their ability for focused work and clear thought. Emotional literacy involves promoting the following abilities:

- Awareness of emotions, self-awareness, recognizing a feeling as it happens, monitoring feelings explaining feelings.
- Management of emotions, such as anger and anxiety.
- Motivating oneself for creativity and productivity.
- Empathy, reading emotions of others, reflecting their needs and wants by taking another's perspective and through active listening.
- Handling relationships, managing emotions in others.

However how does emotional intelligence correlate with transformative learning? According to Goleman (1995), emotions are the cognitive manifestations of behavioral acts and serve as a cognitive guide, helping adults make decisions every day. Mezirow (2006), highlighting the influence of the affective dimension in the meaning making process states that the interpretation of our experiences involves stereotypes, values, rationalization and for this reason it is important to critically examine the ground of our beliefs and our expectations. Taylor (2011) suggests that promoting emotional intelligence in the practice of fostering transformative learning focuses more attention on developing emotional self-awareness, the management of

emotions in one's self and others, and the building of trusting relationships. These outcomes rely on metacognitive activities that promote emotional expression and exploration. In addition, the role of emotions in adult learning has been thoroughly examined by Dirkx, who highlights the fact that emotions can either impede or motivate learning, shaping the context of learning experiences. Moreover, emotions play a critical role in the construction of meaning and knowledge of the self in the adult learning process (Dirkx, 2001). Tennant (2005) ascertains that nearly all designs for transformative learning have a dimension of knowing oneself. This may take various forms such as examining one's world views, assumptions, and paradigms, bringing to conscious awareness previously repressed or hidden feelings and thoughts, analysing discrepancies between self-concept, self-esteem, and ideal self, revisiting one's biography or life story, seeing oneself anew through the eyes of others, measuring oneself against established norms through undertaking psychological tests and completing psychological inventories.

Defining inner dialogue

One of the abilities mentioned above concerning the emotional intelligence is the emotional awareness. Towards this direction, Goleman (2005) proposes inner dialogue as a way of coping with a topic or challenge. Sometimes, an inner dialogue between the conscious and the unconscious is needed in order to become aware of our unconscious side and, therefore elaborate it, in order to make obvious the way in which it determines the person's beliefs, actions and emotions. This frees one from obsessions, compulsions and complexes that can shape and distort our frame of reference. The ego and conscious awareness have critical roles to play in our abilities to discern the meaning of the messages arising within the unconscious. Therefore, conscious ego awareness is a necessary condition for transformative learning. Dirkx introduced the "inner community of the self" in order to describe the set of personal beliefs, thoughts and values of which we are conscious and the part of ourselves of which we are not aware and emerges surprising us. Although we know that it exists, we are reluctant in exploring it. Through a dialogue between the conscious and unconscious, mediated through symbols and images, learners gain insight into aspects of themselves that are outside conscious awareness but influence their sense of self as well as their interpretations and actions (Dirkx, 1997; in Mezirow, 2006).

This inner dialogue is essential in transformative learning, as it can reveal dysfunctional beliefs, stereotypes and emotions. After being revealed, they can become object of elaboration from the person and lead to the transformation of the frame of mind. Moreover, as we will examine in the last part, a result of the transformation process, our intrapersonal relationship is affected. According to Kegan (1994, 2000), as our orders of consciousness evolve, we manage to elaborate the relationship with ourselves as an object, and, consequently, handle our feelings and our impulses.

Disorienting dilemmas and the inner dialogue

Crucial moment in the transformation process is when the person is confronted with a disorientating dilemma, which may be an event or a condition that acts as a catalyst and leads the person to the realization of the non-functionality of his assumptions. Disorienting dilemmas can be acute internal or external personal crises (Mezirow, 1978· in Roberts, 2013) or integrating circumstances which are indefinite periods in which individuals search for something that is missing from their lives

(Taylor, 1998 in Roberts, 2013). As Goleman (1995) cites, “to recognize a foul mood is to want to get out of it”. Self-awareness means being aware of both our mood and our thoughts about that mood. A habit of mind, therefore, includes cognitive and emotional elements. A person needs to become aware of the dysfunction of a habit of mind or a point of view and then feel the need of transforming it.

The realization of a dysfunctional mental habit that restricts the individual's action can be accompanied by a multitude of emotions such as fear, anxiety, anger, shame or guilt (Lintzeris, 2008). In the same time, emotions and feelings provide both the impetus for critical reflection, and the gist of which to reflect deeply (Taylor, 2000 in Roberts, 2013). There are times when any major challenge to established perspective is painful since it questions deeply held personal values and threatens the sense of self (Mezirow, 2006).

After the disorienting dilemma arises, the person examines his own feelings and critically evaluates his underlying assumptions. As learners engage in critical reflection, some experience grief even as they become enlightened (Scott, 1997· in Roberts, 2013) and they struggle to embrace new ways of thinking and of being. This is because we are often unaware of our mental models and how they affect our behavior until we are faced with a disorienting dilemma. Mental models are “deeply ingrained assumptions, generalizations, or even pictures and images that influence how we understand the world and how we take action” (Senge 1990· in Roberts, 2013). They are often barriers to change and can impede learning.

Transformation of the intrapersonal consciousness

A person's intrapersonal intelligence can trigger the transformation process and reciprocally is evolved and transformed through this process. As Tennant (2005) notes, the self can be seen as a whole of attributes and identifications, and it can be known from oneself as an object, in order to promote self awareness and self consciousness. A more detailed approach on the examination of the self as an object is presented by Robert Kegan, a developmental psychologist in Harvard University, who examined the “epistemology”, which is the process of creating knowledge, making meaning and evolving our orders of consciousness, referring not only to the cognitive domain, but also to the interpersonal relationships and the intrapersonal consciousness. Kegan's theoretical approach is structured on the relationship between “object” and “subject”. “Object” is the experiences and the assumptions of which we are aware and conscious. We can examine, control, reflect on them and we can connect them with others. On the other hand, “subject” is the experiences and the assumptions that we unconsciously accept and consider as part of ourselves. The subject-object relationship determines our behavior in all aspects (cognitive, social, and intrapersonal). This relationship is being gradually transformed as a result of growth, education and social stimuli, and is characterized by alternating periods of stability and instability, leading to ongoing restructuring of the relationship of the individual with his environment (Kegan, 1982).

The subject-object relationship, the relationship between what we know consciously and unconsciously what guide our behavior changes gradually as a result of growth due to maturity, education and social stimuli. The process of development includes the development of meaning making process, which is characterized by alternating periods of stability (views) and instability, leading to lasting reconstruction of the relationship of the individual with his environment (Kegan, 1982). As the meaning making process is evolving, thinking becomes less rigid, exclusive, simplified, dogmatic and more critical, flexible, open, and tolerant to differences. The

development process occurs as a person's attempt to overcome, on the one hand, the tension between the desire to differentiate and become independent and on the other hand to integrate into his environment.

Kegan (1986, 1994) mentions six orders of consciousness. These orders do not replace each other or add to each other. Instead, they evolve, they transform and incorporate as each next order encompasses and includes the previous. The next order is of higher-level, more complex and more comprehensive and includes the previous as an element or a tool. The transition to the next level presumes the transformation of the cognitive, social and intrapersonal domain. It should be noted that age limits are not fixed and that age alone does not ensure the transition to the next order. The transition depends on the maturity of the individual, as it evolves through personal, social, educational and work experiences. According to a survey of Lahey, Souvaine, Kegan, Goodman, & Felix (1988), about 2/3 of adults are at the third order of consciousness.

In the age of 2-6 years old, infants start gaining control of their reflexes and perception of objects from their environment as separate from themselves and can distinguish between inner sensation and outside stimulation but cannot distinguish the role of impulses. Their thinking is imaginative, their emotions are impulsive and their social relations egocentric. They make decisions based on the persons who recognize that they have power in their lives. From the age of 6 to the adolescence people set up "durable categories", which means that they categorize objects, people, or ideas based on specific characteristics. The implication of this transition in the intrapersonal domain is the fact that the person can regulate its impulses in order to produce enduring dispositions, needs, goals and delay immediate gratification of its needs. Beyond the adolescence, in the order of the socialized mind, critical and abstract thinking, awareness of emotions and internal procedures related to them and commitment with communities of people and ideas are being developed. In this order, empathy and coordination of more than one points of view are built, guiding individuals to experience emotions as internally subjective states rather than social transactions. At this order, individuals cannot organize own states of self into a systematic whole, neither fully consider themselves as the "author" of their own psychological life. When these goals are achieved, the person has the ability to take charge of his thought and to choose his own sets of ideas and ideologies. Relationships are part of his existence rather than his own existence. The individual is independent and has achieved self-regulation. The last order, according to Kegan is this of the self-transforming mind. This order is rarely reached and, if so, after the age of 40. In this order the individual sees beyond himself, others and the systems in which he belongs and understands in which way all people and systems are connected, the similarities and interdependence with the others.

Conclusion

Transformative learning facilitates personal development through the change of dysfunctional points of view that hinder a person's everyday life. The path that leads to the personal change is the exercise of knowing oneself. Self-awareness can be facilitated by techniques, processes, and practices for knowing oneself, but the most visible and dominant is the examination of assumptions, paradigms, and perspectives, the examination and subsequent challenging of the lens through which you view the world (Tennant, 2005).

Towards this direction, the role of inner dialogue is crucial. Through the inner dialogue the person has the opportunity to elaborate his emotions, feelings, attitudes,

behaviors. The inner dialogue sets the self as an object of examination, and the behavior is seen under the emotions, the ideas and the attitudes that establish it. The inner dialogues is part of the whole transformation process, as it can trigger a disorienting dilemma, it promotes motivation in the beginning and during the transformation process and self-awareness through the transformation process. Reciprocally, self-awareness is being developed and transformed, affecting the way in which the person handles its emotions, the inner dialogue and its intrapersonal relationship.

References

- Dirkx, J., Mezirow, J., Cranton, P. (2006) Musings and Reflections on the Meaning, Context, and Process of Transformative Learning: A Dialogue Between John M. Dirkx and Jack Mezirow, *Journal of Transformative Education*, 4: 123
- Dirkx, J. (2001). The power of feelings: Emotion, imagination, and the construction of meaning in adult learning. *New Directions for Adult and Continuing Education*, 89, 63-72.
- Goleman, D. (1995) *Emotional Intelligence*, Bloomsbury
- Illeris, K. (2003) Towards a contemporary and comprehensive theory of learning, *International Journal of Lifelong Education*, 22:4, 396 – 406
- Illeris, K. (2007) *How we learn Learning and non-learning in school and beyond*, London/New York: Routledge
- Kegan, R. (1994). *In Over our Heads: The Mental Demands of Modern Life*. Harvard University Press.
- Kegan, R. (2000) Which form transforms?, in Illeris, K. (ed.) *Contemporary theories of learning. Theorists in their own words*. (2009) Routledge, pp. 90-107.
- Lahey, L., Souvaine, E., Kegan, R., Goodman, R., & Felix, S. (1988). *A guide to the Subject- Object Interview: Its administration and interpretation*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard Graduate School of Education, Subject-Object Research Group.
- Mezirow, J. (2006) An overview on transformative learning, in Illeris, K. (ed.) *Contemporary theories of learning. Theorists in their own words*. (2009) Routledge, pp. 90-107.
- Roberts, N. (2013). *Disorienting dilemmas: Their effects on learners, impact on performance, and implications for adult educators*, accessed at: <http://citeseerx.ist.psu.edu/viewdoc/download?doi=10.1.1.125.6315&rep=rep1&type=pdf>
- Taylor, Ed. (2001) Transformative learning theory: a neurobiological perspective of the role of emotions and unconscious ways of knowing, *International Journal of Lifelong Education*, 20:3, 218 – 236
- Tenant, M. (2005) Transforming Selves, *Journal of Transformative Education*. 2005: 3, 102-115,
- Lintzeris, P. (2008). Η σημασία του κριτικού στοχασμού και του ορθολογικού διαλόγου στη θεωρία του Jack Mezirow για τη μετασχηματίζουσα μάθηση. Αθήνα: Επιστημονική Ένωση Εκπαίδευσης Ενηλίκων.

Xenophobia - Xenophilia:

Pictures from a transformative journey with the vehicle of dialogue

Eleni Giannakopoulou

Hellenic Open University, Greece

Abstract

Over the recent years, with a peak in the past summer (2015) a great number of people, most of Syrian origin, arrived on the shores of Greece, seeking a secure life in Europe. As the exodus of these people from areas of conflict and warfare continued endlessly we noticed a visible transformation of Greek people's reactions. A real wave of sympathy accompanied by spontaneous acts of support and volunteering replaced racist and hostile activities which were seen in previous years in the country. This transformation of perspective has many characteristics that may be defined and analysed by transformative learning theory. Those days I worked for the Governmental Committee coordinating public agencies and non-governmental organizations involved in the establishment of settlement infrastructures for refugees and migrants. On this occasion, wishing to trace the primary cause of this transformation I carried out an informal survey interviewing persons who showed off a positive attitude and a supportive behavior to the refugees and migrants. My finding was that various forms of conversational transactions between Greeks and between Greeks and refugees seem to have modified the meaning of «xenos» and could be detected in the underpinnings of a perspective transformation. On this ground I carried out a further study aiming to trace the fundamental aspects of those conversational transactions that seem to be fueling a perspective transformation of their interlocutors on crucial issues concerning identities of immigrants and refugees. Data of this later study were collected utilizing an oral history approach and its main conclusions are briefly presented and commented in this paper adopting the concept of transformative dialogue as introduced by Gergen et. al (2001). Transformative dialogue essentially aims at facilitating the collaborative construction of new realities and it may in a sense be considered as a social constructionist alternative to the individualistic conceptions of transformative learning related in particular to the transformation of a point of view.

“When we left home I locked the door but what if I locked it. The war had already got in.... The bombs were falling in our garden every day the last years”

Nisri, a refugee from Syria

“Exodus” from conflicts areas, violence and repression

It is well known nowadays, that in recent time, a vast number of people fled the Middle East and North Africa, due to warfare and life-threatening conditions, seeking a secure life in Europe. People predominantly of Syrian origin, but also Afghans, Iranians, Iraqis, Moroccans arrived - when they managed to - on the shores of the

Greek islands of the north-eastern Aegean Sea, particularly Lesvos, Kos, Chios, Samos and Leros, that is they arrived on the shores of Europe. For the majority of them, Greece has been seen as just a transit point, a Balkan pathway to northern Europe. It is estimated that particularly last summer and autumn approximately 4,500 men, women and children were crossing by the sea into Greece every day.

Their long journey to reach the European coasts is arduous, entailing significant risks, as well as a great deal of money to pay the smugglers transporting them. Fatal incidents occurred, almost on a daily basis, because of rickety boats and adverse weather conditions.

Clearly overwhelmed by the sheer size of arrivals, the Greek authorities, similarly to other European ones, were not prepared for this emergency situation. As a matter of fact, this situation has evolved into an «emergency crisis» due to the absence of a national and a European response and the lack of a common comprehensive EU policy on migration and asylum.

The exodus of these people from areas of conflict and warfare has substantially different characteristics than any previous mass movement of people. These groups of people including newborn children up to elderly men and women, «refugee flows» as so called, usually carry in their small baggage a unique request: an assistance to cross Greece and to travel freely in the countries of their choice.

As «refugee flows» continued endlessly, while no long-term solution was implemented, Greek authorities proved ill-equipped to fill even the basic needs of the people as food, water, blankets, sanitary items, baby clothes and nappies, despite the considerable efforts of volunteers, activists, doctors and other civil society actors. The two main difficulties faced by authorities have to do with lack of adequate facilities, infrastructure and resources and lack of know-how in dealing with identification, registration and relocation (formal) procedures.

In the mean time this awful situation for refugees and migrants which led even in an inadequate access to food and healthcare, communication difficulties, given to the shortage of interpreters, had not been discourage the newcomers, although in despair many of them whispered «we escaped death and we are now afraid that we will die in a peaceful land».

By the middle of past summer, in addition to the registration and «hot-spot» set up in the islands, several «accommodation» established around the country by the Greek authorities. Among the first ones, it is the «accommodation site» in the neighbourhood of Eleonas/Votanikos in Athens, firstly established in August 2015 to accommodate around 700 persons. In these centres people are provided with essential services, such as catering, clothing, places to sleep and take a shower, medical care, etc.

Since the first arrivals of refugees, we noticed in Greeks, especially among the residents of the islands where refugees and migrants arrived, a visible transformation of their reactions. A real wave of sympathy accompanied by spontaneous acts of support and volunteering replaced racist and hostile activities which were seen in previous years in the country. Such an obvious change of people's attitude and behavior may be attributed either to an expression of solidarity to the victims of various conflicts and warfare caused by political or economic interests, or a manifestation of humanitarian duty towards people who are helpless and powerless regardless of their religious beliefs, cultural origins or social status. Whatever the reasons which trigger it, this transformation of both perspective (sympathy) and supporting involvement (activism), has many characteristics that may be defined and analysed by transformative learning theory.

Those days I worked for the Governmental Committee coordinating public agencies

and non-governmental organizations involved in the establishment of reception, relocation and settlement infrastructures for refugees and migrants. On this occasion, wishing to trace the primary cause or the activating reason of the mentioned transformation of Greek people I carried out a small-scale informal survey interviewing persons who showed off a positive attitude and a supportive behavior to the refugees and migrants. My finding, although it may be considered as a not fully valid and reliable one, was that various forms of conversational transactions both between Greeks themselves and between Greeks and refugees, which modified the meaning of «xenos», could be detected in the underpinnings of this perspective transformation.

By the way, the word «xenos», although it runs through everyday life, acquires various meanings during different periods of time, in particular societal formations, according to prevailing cultural patterns, dominant social values or/and political ideologies. Nowadays, in an era of globalization, the synonym «foreigner», the antonym «indigenous» as well as related words as «citizen», «person», «identity» etc. undergo rapid changes in meaning and turn out to be multidimensional to the extent that people are freed from their cultural, linguistic, religious or racial bonds. In brief, they are concepts fabricated by the conceptual, religious and economic «materials» that abound in every era and society. The concerns about the preservation of our identity meet the fears for the «other» and this meeting determines the sign of our relationship with the «other» involving the dilemma of strengthening or interrupting this relationship. In this context, a contradiction emerges manifested by symptoms of excessive care or excessive hatred for all those people differing, from our perspective, in their body, race, ethnicity, religious or other characteristics.

During August last year (2015) as a part of my duties, I actively involved in the reception and hosting of «xenos» in the first «accommodation site» established in Eleonas/Votanikos in Athens. At the occasion of this activity (utilising this chance) I carried out a further study attempting to trace an answer to the following question: which are the fundamental aspects of those conversational transactions that seem to be fueling a perspective transformation of their interlocutors on the meaning of «xenos», that is about crucial issues concerning identities of immigrants and refugees.

Method and data of the study

Adopting a standpoint proposed by Gergen et al. (2001) I followed in the study reported here a «bottom up» approach. That is, instead of approaching my subject matter «top down» whereby a pre-selected theoretical framework lays out the research rules and practices, I moved «bottom up» from the world of action, examining particular cases in which people are struggling successfully with problems of their multiple and conflicting realities and locating in these cases those conditions of conversational actions which seem to have a broad transformative potential. Therefore capitalizing on these findings, I attempt to provide a theoretical rationale for these effects which will enable me to imply possible reasons for their efficacy.

This approach may be considered as included in the transformative research paradigm as defined by Mertens, which «it places central importance on lives and experiences of the diverse groups that traditionally have been marginalized» (Mertens, 2010, p.21).

In this rationale, data for my study were collected during August of 2015 utilizing an oral history approach which aimed to explore the fundamental conditions of the conversational acts developed between people in Eleonas' accommodation site for refugees and migrants.

An oral history is a type of interviews in which personal testimonies are collected and studied by a researcher. The term «oral history» can refer to the method itself, but also to the data produced and it is actually an approach within the wider-reaching methodological practices of life history, which (as known) are focused on the subjective realities of the individuals and attempt to link personal experiences and actions to theoretical perspectives (Gramling & Carr, 2004). Oral history as a method of collecting first-hand accounts of life experiences may provide individual and localized insights which complement events, as are «migration crisis» that are widely viewed through an objective lens of numbers and records (Yow, 2005). In the drawbacks of oral history many researchers refer its subjective nature which does not permit generalizations (e.g. Freeman, & Krantz, 1980), as well as the possibility that the research subject may be presented in a decontextualized or romanticized manner although the method privileges his or her socio-cultural background (Cary, 1999). In the interviews planned for this research broad topics to be covered were indentified but they do not limit the narrator when other topics were raised during the course of the interview.

Since the interviewees were refugees having experienced fear, persecution, loss, and separations, the typical oral history approach of asking participants to recount their life story was avoided at the first interview which was delimited in practical and everyday problems related to their life in the Eleonas' accommodation site. In a second interview participants invited to talk about their life prior to emigration, about their journey from their homelands and their current life experience as refugees. Thus the interviews interweave past stories and memories with present experiences through dialogues, potentially leading to mutual understanding of researcher and refugees. This was a further self-reflective inquiry for me as an adult educator working in applied practice and as an academic struggling to make meaning out of everyday life experiences.

Excerpts from a dialogue

Although the terms conversation and dialogue are often used interchangeably, they have in my view a crucial difference. A conversation is more of a purposive attempt to reach some conclusion or to express some viewpoints among two or more persons, while a dialogue is a reciprocal act between two or more persons anticipating an on-going communication, rather than a purposive attempt to reach some conclusion or to express some viewpoints.

Short excerpts of a conversation illustrating primary conditions allowing its development to a dialogue having transformative potential are presented below.

.....
.....

Me: I try to comprehend the difficult situation that you are currently experiencing, the dramatic change in your life, so could you please let me have few words about your life in homeland?

Sarah: *I do not like to think of myself as a refugee ... I recall my life with a feeling of homesickness. I lived in a beautiful neighborhood in Homs and I worked in a construction company for more than twenty years. Our house was an old and beautiful building, with high ceilings, white walls and tiled floors. We spent our days at work and our evenings with our friends - we ate out, we listened to music ... we were normal people.*

Me: However, as far as I know, your life and most people's life in Syria has begun to change before becoming refugees; so when you believe that your status of a normal person, as you say, has been changed?

Sarah: *Day by day during the last year things started to change in my country and conflicts between armed groups and the army started to occur in areas near the borders. However, I was not personally scared in the beginning ...I did not think they would affect me.*

Me: I suppose many people shared the same feeling with you those days.

Sarah: *Yes, it is true, we agreed on that with most of our friends. But as the time passed the hostilities have multiplied and extended everywhere in the country... and one day bombs started falling on our homes and our everyday life changed dramatically. We stopped leaving the house at night, we stopped seeing friends, we stopped being social beings. I stayed awake the nights listening to bombs falling and wondering if we'd make it through the night alive... scary days... terrible experiences...*

Me: and what about your work?

Sarah: *I continued going to my office in the company, but there was nothing to do. Everything had stopped and all that happened was the war. Nobody did anything, nobody walked in the streets; everybody was out of sight hidden in the back rooms of their ruined houses, behind walls that had been blown apart. It was a real nightmare for me. Day by day the food started running out, and we found ourselves having nothing for everyday meal. But food was the least of my concerns, our lives was first.*

Me: So did you decide to leave your homeland as not having any other option?

Sarah: *It was only after months of living under those terrible conditions when I accepted that I had to leave my home mainly because I did not want my daughter to grow up in a country full of fear. I was horrified to the idea that my daughter couldn't go to kindergarten and she might not go to school. Everything was precarious, unpredictable... My husband did not want to leave the country ... so for days we argued on leaving but when things were going from bad to worse; he agreed to let me go with our daughter. The last word he told me was to keep myself and our daughter safe, because we're his whole life.*

Me: I fully understand you I believe that being in your position I would had the same fears as you did and I would have taken the same, although extremely difficult, decision as you did ... so how your exodus from the war places begun?

Sarah: *Early one morning in past June I disguised myself in hijab, a headscarf that Muslim women usually wear in public, I kissed goodbye my husband and keeping my daughter by the hand we walked out of town for hours and every time my daughter got tired I urged her to continue walking a little longer, a little more time....When night fell we were so tired that we could no longer even stand on our feet. We hid in a clump of bushes next to the road, I embraced my daughter, who immediately fell asleep, in my arms and I waited to dawn. Once dawned, we continued to walk and at noon we arrived at Hamidieh, a small town by the sea that I knew very well from my work. In a*

specific cafe known by friends we met the smugglers. They showed us a car and we paid the driver to take us across the border to Turkey. It was a madness ... we spent hours hidden in the back of the car, as we went through the checkpoints, then we took a bus and arrived at Izmir long after midnight. We found a hotel and spent three days hidden in a room. We didn't go out even not for food. Nothing was worth the risk of being caught and deported back.

Me: It is astonishing, I really admire your courage; and your journey had so far a long sequel.

Sarah: *Yes, indeed. In Izmir I found another smuggler and I agreed to take us in Europe for 2.000 euros. He put us in the back of a van with about 30 others, and nobody knew where we were going. Then, after time, he asked us to get out and to walk for hours through a forest. Late morning we stopped at a clearing where we were made to sit on it and wait. As time was passing more and more people were arriving. On the evening some men came, drive us to the coast and embarked us on a boat.*

Me: and found yourself traveling on the sea to where?

Sarah: *I did not know ... to Europe. I didn't mind but I will never get out of my mind the up and down of the sailing boat threatening to topple and throw us into the sea and a feeling that caused an ache in my stomach. We were crammed in the boat more than fifty people and I couldn't move my arms or my legs. Everything was wet and even the life jackets we put on provided me any assurance. If you could not swim, you did not have a chance to live. Yes, once again I was afraid...that would you ask me, don't you? When we reached the shore of Lesvos in Greece, I couldn't speak. I just pressed my daughter to my chest and sobbed.*

Me: Although I have never had a similar experience, I can feel your emotions at that time. But your odyssey continued ... and thereafter?

Sarah: *It was already night and we were transferred to a hosting camp on the island. I had money but we weren't allowed to stay in hotels. I found through the darkness an empty tent using the light of my cell phone and we lie down on flattened-out cardboard boxes using them as beds. Our clothes were still wet from the sea, but we had nothing to change into. My daughter slept immediately but in the middle of night had a nightmare and woke up screaming. I could not sleep and lay there for hours, shivering and scared but in the depth of my soul somewhat relieved because we had set our feet on an area of Europe where people are not killed without a legal reason. Would you like to continue? Are you not tired by my stories?*

Me: On the contrary, I am very interested and as I have told you I admire you for your strength both physical and emotional. Please .. unless you do not want to continue because you do not want to you recall all that unpleasant experience you had.

Sarah: *Oh no, sharing my bad experiences with a person like you make me feel better. I keep going. In the morning, the camp was busy. Thousands of people had arrived overnight. I didn't know what to do, where to go, who to talk to, how*

things worked, so I sat in the tent, waiting for our clothes to dry. Police officers told us by loudspeakers to form a queue to register. I borrowed clothes from a neighboring family and took my daughter to the toilet but a man pushed past her and she fell into the dirty, stench-filled mud. I thought that not even among the refugees I could find some kind of solidarity and tears filled my eyes. My daughter reacted squeezing my hand and telling me not to cry, but then I cried more. It was one of those moments in our journey that I did not know whether to be pleased or sad... anyway, after registering we were allowed to leave the camp. We walk to the port, bought tickets for the first ship leaving the island on the same evening and after nine hours we arrived at Piraeus. Then you know what follows up to coming to the Elaiona but I don't know what is going to happen until I will arrive in Germany.

Me: I think that, at least, you may feel safe now, don't you?

Sarah: *I know we are safe now, and I know we are lucky, and that means many things for me. But I think that the fact that we have arrived in Europe does not mean the end of our problems. I am afraid that getting to Europe will be just the beginning of ...*

Me: Your new life?

Sarah: *I don't know yet. I feel so lonely and it's hard to me not to cry all the time. I missed my husband and many nights I hold to my nose a small roller-ball bottle of his aftershave to get to sleep. Yesterday night I sent him a message by cell phone assuring him that we are safe and we feel well. I don't know if I told him the truth, I don't know... many things... the time will tell.*

Thus a conversation on meeting the everyday life needs of Sarah and her daughter starting with questions as «what do you think you are in need now for you and your girl», some kind of food, clothes and the like seems to have been transformed gradually, and more or less not consciously, into a dialogue starting with questions and answers as above and continuing with questions posed to myself about the multiple identities of persons getting in a refugee status, the similarities and differences in the ways of life and cultural values between Europeans and people from other countries emigrating to Europe. In other words, a dialogue which fueled a self-reflective inquiry about my personal beliefs and views on the relevant matters and about realities never encountered in my past. This process of self-inquiry assisted me in developing meaningful connections between past experiences and current personal and professional circumstances and to convey a deeper understanding of my values, beliefs, and theoretical underpinnings of lives lived (Cole & Knowles, 2000).

In the same context, reflective self-inquiry made, according to my evidence, a significant contribution to knowledge creation concerning adult learning and as put by Barg (2009, p. 100) «it differs from simply writing one's story in that researchers seek to discover significant moments of truths within the ebb and flow of life, which give meaning to that experience».

Transforming dialogue for mutual understanding

As put by Gergen (2009) “Dialogue is one of the few means available for transcending boundaries of difference” under the condition that dialogue does not initiate the supposition of two or more isolated individuals seeking to communicate. In such a perspective the conceptualization of dialogue is crucial.

Most dictionaries offer the common definition of dialogue as conversation between two or more people. However, it is widely accepted in scholar communities that a mere conversation may not be considered as authentic dialogue but the ingredient transforming a conversation to a dialogue is the discriminator of the views on dialogue.

Bohm (1996, p. ix), for instance, defines dialogue as a form of communication from which something new emerges, Grudin (1996, p. 11) as a reciprocal exchange of meaning...across a physical or mental space. Putnam and Fairhurst (2001, p. 116) define dialogue as a mode of communication that builds mutuality through the awareness of others and results to a convergence in views and Hawes (1999, p. 229) as a praxis for mediating competing and contradictory discourses, to mention a few.

Quite different from all these approaches which conceive dialogue as an interaction between fundamentally independent individuals, Isaacs (1993, p. 25) defines dialogue as a sustained collective inquiry into the processes, assumptions, and certainties that compose everyday experience and moreover Gergen (2009, p. 3) conceive dialogue as a collaborative action, a view adopted in this paper.

In foregrounding the concept of collaboration, Gergen, calls attention to the fact that meaning within dialogue is an outcome not of individual action and reaction, but of the coordinated actions of the participants. In this sense, the meaning of a phrase expressed by an individual in a dialogue depends primarily on the response of his or her interlocutor, which means that is there no individual expression that acquires meaning in itself, but by the process of interaction itself or in other words the source of meaning is not within but between individuals. For example, an utterance which may be conventionally indexed as a hostile comment can be turned into a joke through a response of laugh.

It is in this context, Gergen et. al. (2001) set forth the concept and practice of transformative dialogue. “Transformative dialogue may be viewed as any form of interchange that succeeds in transforming a relationship between those committed to otherwise separate and antagonistic realities (and their related practices) to one in which common and solidifying realities are under construction.” (p. 682)

Transformative dialogue presumes five requirements, all applied to the greatest possible extent to the dialogue reported in this paper:

1. Relational responsibility

As a consequence of the socially prevailing individualist view of persons as agents of their own actions, there is a tendency in all of us to see persons as morally accountable for their own actions, and thus responsible for their wrong decisions and erroneous acts. This discourse of individual responsibility blames or praises individuals for their bad or good acts. However, if we ascribe the origins of individual acts not in the persons themselves but in their relationships then the processes of jointly constructing meaning acquire primary importance and the quest is for modes of sustaining processes of communication in which the meaning is a continuous never ending process.

Utterances as «*many people shared the same feeling with you those days*» and «*we agreed on that with most of our friends*» or «*as far as I know, your life and most people’s life in Syria have begun to change before becoming refugees*» and «*Day by day during the last year things started to change in my country*», highlight the relational as compared to individual responsibility for the decision of people to immigrate.

2. *Self-Expression*

The self-expression of participants in dialogues is vital and gives them multiple opportunities to share views that are important to them since they virtually define them. Thus, it is critical for a successful dialogue to be expressed the thoughts and feelings of the participants provided, however, that the participants speak personally as opposed to using abstract arguments, to tell their own stories instead of narrating events heard.

In our discussions I incited on every occasion my interlocutor to openly express her experiences, feeling and thoughts responding positively to concerns as «*Would you like to continue? Are you not tired by my stories?*» with replies as «*On the contrary, I am very interested ... Please ... unless you do not want to continue because you do not want to recall all that unpleasant experience*» receiving reactions as «*sharing my bad experiences with a person like you make me feel better. I keep going*».

3. *Affirming the Other*

Assuming that meaning is constructed in relationships, an individual's expression doesn't acquire full significance until appreciated and affirmed by his or her interlocutors. Affirmation is actually the act of tracing something within the expression of the other to which agreement and support can be offered. Since thoughts and feelings are perceived as individual possessions challenging or threatening their expressions may be considered as putting into question the person expressing them. In contrast, to affirm is to grant worth to the realities of the other, thus to the relationships from which they derive, and to honor the validity of his or her own subjectivity

Affirmation of Other's realities and actions was throughout our conversation a constant concern, as traced in the follow utterance «*I really admire your courage; and your journey had so far a long sequel*».

4. *Coordinating Action*

Meaning making is primarily a form of coordinated action. Thus, people who are decided to generate meaning together; they must develop smooth and reiterative patterns of interchange co-constituting coordination of the rhythms of conversation, bodily expressions, spontaneous comments and so on, which creates possibilities for a conventional conversation to be transformed to an authentic dialogue.

Chats like the following contribute to the construction of mutually comprehensible meanings of «*xenos*», «*I try to comprehend the difficult situation that you are currently experiencing, the dramatic change in your life, so could you please let me have a few words about your life in homeland?*» ... «*I do not like to think of myself as a refugee ...*».

5. *Self-Reflection*

Shifting a conversation in the direction of self-reflection is a necessary condition for its transformation to a dialogue generating meaning. Self-reflection presupposes self-questioning which opens possibilities for other conversations to take place. Such self-reflection is made possible by the fact that a person is rarely a participant in only a single reality-making relationship, but is involved and participates in multiple social, economic, cultural, communal etc. relationships and carry within himself or herself numerous traces of these relationships. In a Bakhtinian sense every person can speak with many voices and if suppressed voices can be located and brought forth within the

conversation of differences, then a transforming dialogue is made possible.

The following expressed thought is characteristic of a self-reflection situation «*I know we are safe now, and I know we are lucky, and that means many things to me. But I think that the fact that we have arrived in Europe does not mean the end of our problems. I am afraid that getting to Europe will be just the beginning of ...*».

Co-Creation of New Realities

The ultimate aim of a transformative dialogue is the facilitation of a collaborative construction of new realities through the participants' perspective transformation. However, it seems that this aim had not been completely fulfilled through the dialogues collected for the research reported here, although they met all requirements outlined above. According to Gergen et al. (2001), who have theorized transformative dialogue, the springboard to the collaborative construction of new realities is the creation of «imaginary moments» in which participants join in developing new visions of a reality (p. 697). The key reason for this should be that the participants in our dialogues have not set – and it was in fact impossible to be set due to the status of people involved– a common purpose, so each one would redefine the other, and lay the groundwork for a conception of «us», a necessary condition for the co-creation of a new reality.

Concluding: Transforming points of view via transformative dialogue

Transformative dialogue essentially aims at facilitating the collaborative construction of new realities and it may in a sense be considered as a social constructionist alternative to the individualistic conceptions of transformative learning related in particular to the transformation of a point of view. Recall that a point of view is one of the two dimensions composing a frame of reference, the other being the habits of mind. According to Mezirow (1991, 1994), «*Habits of mind are broad, abstract, orienting, habitual ways of thinking, feeling, and acting influenced by assumptions that constitute a set*» of cultural, political, social educational, and economic codes. The habits of mind get expressed in a particular point of view: «*the constellation of belief, value judgment, attitude, and feeling that shapes a particular interpretation*». When someone undergoes a fundamental change in frame of reference he or she has, in essence, «transformed» his or her view of himself or of the world or of how he/she interacts with others and the environment. In a few words, models and theories based on transformative learning can be a particularly useful lens for exploring and understanding the experiences of adult refugees (Magro, 2007) provided that the particular socio-legal context is not ignored, otherwise we will have only a partial and distorted picture of identity processes at work for a particular group of immigrants (Morrice, 2012).

References

- Bohm, D. (1996): On dialogue. Edited by Lee Nichol. New York: Routledge.
- Cary, L. J. (1999). Unexpected Stories: Life history and the limits of representation. *Qualitative Inquiry*, 5(3), 441-427.
- Cole, A., & Knowles, J. G. (2000). *Researching teaching: Exploring teacher development through reflexive inquiry*. Needham Heights, MA: Allyn & Bacon.
- Freeman, J. M., & Krantz, D. L. (1980). The Unfulfilled Promise of Life Histories. *Biography*, 3(1), 1-13.

- Gergen K. J. (2009) Dialogue as collaborative action, *Journal für Psychologie*, Jg. 17, Ausgabe 2: Dialog/Dialogizität. Retrieved from <http://twoja-zaloga.pl/index.php/jfp/article/view/155/156>.
- Gergen K. J. , McNamee, S. & Barrett, F. (2001). Toward A Vocabulary of Transformative Dialogue. *International Journal of Public Administration*, 24, 697-707.
- Gramling, L. F., & Carr, R. L. (2004) Lifelines: A life history methodology. *Nursing Research*, 53(3), 207-210.
- Grudin, R. (1996). On dialogue: An essay in free thought. New York, Boston: Houghton Mifflin.
- Hawes, L. C. (1999). The dialogics of conversation: Power, control, and vulnerability. *Communication Theory*, 9, 229-264.
- Isaacs, W. N. (1993). Taking flight: Dialogue, collective thinking, and organizational learning. *Organizational Dynamics*, 22, 24-39.
- Magro, K. (2007). Exploring the needs and challenges of adults from war affected backgrounds, Adult Education Research Conference, Retrieved from <http://newprairiepress.org/aerc/2007/papers/65>.
- Mertens, D. M. (2010). *Research and Evaluation in Education and Psychology*, (3rd Ed). Thousand Oaks, Ca: Sage.
- Mezirow, J. (1991). *Transformative dimensions of adult learning*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.
- Mezirow, J. (1994). Understanding transformation theory. *Adult Education Quarterly*, 44, 222-32.
- Morrice, L. (2012). Learning and refugees: Recognizing the darker side of transformative learning. *Adult Education Quarterly*, 63(3) 251–271.
- Putnam, L. L. & Fairhurst, G. T. (2000): Discourse analysis in organizations. In Frederic M. Jablin & Linda L. Putnam (Eds.), *The new handbook of organizational communication: Advances in theory, research, and methods* (pp. 78-136). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Yow, V.R. (2005). *Recording Oral History: A Guide for the Humanities and Social Sciences*. Walnut Creek: AltaMira Press.

Promoting dialogue for transformative learning in local communities: the case of a Learning City in Greece

Dimitris Deligiannis, PhD(c)

Municipality of Larissa, Hellenic Open University

Manos Pavlakis, PhD(c)

Hellenic Open University

The paper explores the role that dialogue plays within the context of collective transformative learning. The case of a Learning City in Greece is examined in a period of more than a year, during which educational institutions interacted and collaborated so as to face the consequences of crisis at local level.

Introduction

According to Mezirow (1994), the culture of the developed western world often blocks dialogue, as it focuses on competitiveness and the promotion of the self, downgrading the importance of collective thinking. In a period of crisis, in which a political philosophy of tolerance, equality, education and democratic participation is required more than ever, additional socio-cultural barriers emerge making citizens' participation in a meaningful dialogue even more difficult.

The framework of Learning Cities provides a great opportunity for research in the field of dialogue and examination of the relation between dialogue and transformative learning and consequently citizens' participation at a local level. Under the idea of Learning Cities one can find UNESCO's initiative which defines a Learning City as '*one which effectively mobilizes its resources to reinforce individual empowerment and social cohesion, economic and cultural prosperity, and sustainable development*' (Unesco, 2013). In this paper, we will examine the case of City of Larisa in Greece, which seems to use dialogue in various forms with an impact on at local level.

Concluding these introductory thoughts, the main research questions of this paper aim to shed some light on the discussion regarding the process under which dialogue can be used as a tool for collective development, which at the same time affects local communities, especially during a crisis period. The paper is divided into three main sections: the first one will deal with basic theoretical perspectives regarding the concept of Learning Cities and main aspects of Mezirow's Transformative Learning theory, combined with Freire's work on the issue, already being mentioned above. In the second section we will present the case of Larisa and we will try to discuss step by step the progress, which has been made so far. Mezirow's 10 stages of transformation will be our monitoring tool toward this direction. The final section will close with a discussion on the main findings of this learning journey and some final remarks.

Theoretical background

In 2012 the UNESCO Life Long Learning Institute presents the conditions under

which a Global Network of Cities can take place. The proposed title, Learning Cities, bears in mind the Learning Organization concept. At the same time, Learning Cities highlight the need for searching current practices of development and renegotiating in a changing world characterized by an unprecedented economic, social and cultural crisis. In particular, the Beijing Declaration on Building Learning Cities defines the main objectives of a Learning City, which include the following:

- Promotion of inclusive learning from basic to higher education;
- Re-vitalization of learning in families and communities;
- Facilitation of learning for and in the workplace;
- Extension of the use of modern learning technologies;
- Enhancing quality and excellence in learning;
- Nurturing a culture of learning throughout life (Unesco, 2013).

But how easy is that? What does a Learning City mean within the European or more specifically the Greek environment in the midst of crisis? It is clear that we live in difficult times. The fear of bankruptcy and disintegration of the social fabric is obvious. Austerity policies, recession and unemployment, subversion of everyday citizens' lives and forecasts for a lost generation. The welfare state dissolves and the traditional family support network gradually declines. The latest surveys refer to 1 in 5 Greeks that live in a household where nobody works (Poulopoulos, 2014). The outbreak of a humanitarian crisis is becoming more evident as thousands homeless make their appearance in Greek cities. Moreover, cuts in public health and welfare meet imposed neoliberal strategies of privatization of welfare services. International organizations, such as UNESCO, a long time before the outbreak of the current crisis, have pointed out that the welfare state is threatened by the forces of the Global Market:

‘Many countries are experiencing a crisis of their social policy which destabilizes the foundations of a solidarity system that had appeared capable of reconciling with a democratic manner the social, political and economic dimensions of society under the auspices of the Welfare State’ (Unesco, 1996: 56)

So, which is the reason of presence and the contribution of a Learning City within this environment? UNESCO documents refer to specific conditions, when referring to ‘Learning Cities’: First of all, a strong political will and commitment of the authorities of a city, secondly the involvement of all stakeholders and last but not least, mobilization and utilization of resources (Unesco, 2013). The description of the objectives of a ‘learning city’ reveals the need for specific educational interventions through certain processes. These interventions cannot be impersonal and unpolitic in nature. As Freire (1970) suggests, for education to be empowering, the teacher needs not only to be democratic, but also to form a transformative relationship between him or her and the students, students and their learning, and students and society.

Let's talk about politics then and the services citizens ask especially during a crisis period. Aristotle, some 2.500 years ago argues that politics is not like the art of medicine, where the skill of the expert is dominant. It is more like building and cooking, where the most important opinion belongs to those who will get the impact of that opinion, in other words the final beneficiary (Politics, 1282a). Active participation of citizens should be the goal of every political process. The prerequisite to effectively involve all citizens with active and critical role and recommendations that affect them in decisions making, seems to be the increase of knowledge through a dialogue that marks the journey to self-awareness.

Is, therefore, education and lifelong learning a way to address the current

crisis? Are the traditions of adult education which appeared after the 19th century with goals of improving the educational level of vulnerable social target groups and was associated with the popular movements still alive? It is true that during the '90s international organizations referred to the concept of lifelong learning as the key aspect for modern knowledge societies (European Commission, 1995 · OECD, 1996). These developments quickly raised the legitimate question whether lifelong learning is a progressive movement or a threat to public educational systems and their role in the promotion of equal opportunities and facilitating access to knowledge (Illeris, 2002). International competition and the trend of decreasing public expenses -with impact in financing educational organizations- shift responsibility for the care and continuous education from public to personal level (Kallen, 1997 in Kokkos, 2005), while at the same time the rhetoric of progressivism, equal opportunities, general access to knowledge, is present in name of 'employment' and 'competition' (Griffin, 2006).

On the other hand, Freire and Mezirow are clear. From the mid-20th century the first one and later on the second, they both referred to an education dedicated to the challenge of social change. Freire talks about the progressive teacher who is political fighter (2006), while Mezirow describes an educator who is cultural activist, dedicated to the assertion of social justice (2000).

Freire was among those who highlighted the value of 'popular education' for the empowerment of socially excluded groups and treats education as a practice primarily political and secondarily cognitive, within the framework of a pedagogical proposal (1970). Freire also refers to a process of liberation, an instrument for the critical awareness where students self-evaluate their personal experiences, interact with the educators and form a critical relationship with knowledge. For Freire, education does not end in the classroom but continues in all aspects of a learner's life. Therefore, education is always political in nature-regardless of whether both the learner and the teacher realize their politics (Freire & Shor, 2011). At the heart of this process, dialogue is crucial, since it may help learners to search for political actions, in order to confront the repressive mechanisms: 'The following discussion makes it possible to re-reading of reality which may well lead to the engagement of learners with political practices aiming at the transformation of society. What? Why; How; For what purpose? For whom; Against whom? By whom; In favor of what? For the sake of what? These are questions that challenge students to focus on the essence of things' (Freire, 2006).

In addition, Mezirow also stated the need for the creation of those conditions for every organization, for each adult to acquire critical perspective and to participate freely in a critical discourse that will embrace all citizens of current societies. It is this kind of discourse that does not seek uniformity. On the contrary, Mezirow argues that diversification enriches reflection, trains the different perspective in tolerance and encourages synergies. Ideal dialogue conditions refer to ideal learning conditions, which although they have never been achieved in real life, they 'constitute a political philosophy which implies that tolerance, equality, education and democratic participation are essential conditions of human communication' (1994).

Concluding, the basic objective of a Learning City is common to Mezirow's belief (1996) that is creating conditions under which dialogue can help establish a sense of solidarity among the participating citizens. This belief can be well connected with Freire's suggestion (1970) about the relation between dialogue for praxis and social change. However, these are not easy procedures, since they are connected with concerns and options that also relate to social policies and the needs of citizens. At

this point, it is important to recognize that a collective transformation to take place is much more complex and challenging task in comparison with individual transformation. In the following lines we will present the 10-phase model of Transformative Learning, proposed by Mezirow about three decades ago, and later on we will try to link these phases with the steps City of Larissa has taken till now, in the framework of its nomination as Learning City by UNESCO.

Mezirow first applied the label transformation in his study of women returning to postsecondary study or the workplace after an extended time out. He was particularly interested in identifying factors that impede or facilitate women’s progress in the re-entry programs (1978). He insisted that critical self-reflection on assumptions, often dysfunctional, and critical discourse, where the learner validates a best judgement, are the two most important elements of the transformation learning process. In order transformation to occur, learner should pass through certain phases during a period of time. These phases are described in table 1.

Table 1:Mezirow’s (1978) Ten Phases of Transformative Learning

Phase	Situation
Phase 1	A disorienting dilemma
Phase 2	A self-examination with feelings of guilt or shame
Phase 3	A critical assessment of epistemic, sociocultural, or psychic assumptions
Phase 4	Recognition that one’s discontent and the process of transformation are shared and that others have negotiated a similar change
Phase 5	Exploration of options for new roles, relationships, and actions
Phase 6	Planning of a course of action
Phase 7	Acquisition of knowledge and skills for implementing one’s plans
Phase 8	Provisional trying of new roles
Phase 9	Building of competence and self-confidence in new roles and relationships
Phase 10	A reintegration into one’s life on the basis of conditions dictated by one’s perspective

The case study

The case of Larissa, a Greek city in the heart of the financial crisis of the last years, provides some unique characteristics of a community in action. The city, under the new City Council in the beginning of 2015, decided to invest on extroversion, looking for opportunities in the global arena, pursuing collaborations with the environment, while at the same time recognized the needs of socially vulnerable groups and tried to develop educational interventions for their support. In order to achieve this goal, City of Larissa cooperated with the Hellenic Adult Education Association, a non-governmental scientific organization specialized in adult education in Greece. A long term project was born, titled ‘Larissa, A learning city, in which lifelong learning was expected to act as a liaison among interested bodies and stakeholders. Since, this is a project in current action, the goal is to create networks of different institutions and organizations and provide spaces for dialogue, new communication channels and collective actions, which are expected to take place with a focus on local needs. Meanwhile, City of Larissa was accepted as a member of UNESCO’s Learning Cities Network. The vision, the strategy, the methodology and specific actions of the project mentioned above were presented during the 2nd International Conference on Learning Cities in Mexico in September 2015.

The beginning

A few months earlier the project had already begun with the organization and hosting of an international Conference on Adult Education and Lifelong Learning. The

Conference was attended by over 200 delegates, teachers in the majority from the region of Thessaly, officials and representatives of local government, institutions of the public and the private sector etc. During the conference participants had the chance to exchange views about the challenge of Learning City and discuss with academics, such as P. Jarvis, T. Fleming and P. Mayo, who presented their own perspectives on the issue of a Learning City.

In total, the large majority of participants expressed surprise by this initiative and evaluated it positively. When they were asked to express their opinion about other events or activities, participants made some very interesting proposals, such as the organization of an ‘Adult Education Week’ in city of Larissa, the establishment of a network between institutions based on overall needs of the local community and also the repetition of similar events with the participation of key persons of Adult Education, re-assuring thus, the continuity of the project.

The workshop – some ideas

Following steps of this project included the organization of a 2-day workshop titled ‘Networking and Developing Social Skills’, designed and implemented by Hellenic Adult Education Association. The main aim of this workshop was to gather representatives of all organizations dealing with educational issues and activities in the broader region of the City of Larissa and to create an environment for open dialogue and presentation of best practices, in which further opportunities for networking would be developed. Dialogue itself was considered as an essential tool in the methodology and educational approach of the workshop. Among the participating organizations were representatives from the educational department of the Therapy Center for Dependent Individuals (KETHEA), Second Chance Schools (SDE), Center for Vocational Training, Union of Philologists, Union of Foreign Languages Centers, the educational department of the Hellenic Confederation of Professionals, Craftsmen & Merchants (GSEVEE), from NGOs and various organizations of the public, private and third sector, all of which dealing with education and training issues.

Suspiciousness among participants was obvious from the beginning of this initiative, as this was probably the first time competitors were sitting on the same table discussing on the possibility of creating a common vision and cooperate in specific actions. The idea of the project itself was not taken a priori as a pre-decided and finalized project, but was given as a group task discussion, so as to help everyone express their views and concerns. After a thorough but fruitful discussion, representatives found themselves in a position to share views and opinions and recognize certain benefits of the project. The main findings of this session are presented in table 2.

Table 2: Aspects discussed from Representatives during an open dialogue session

Benefits	Concerns
Free / open access to education for all	Manpower shortage
Education diffusion in the society	Lack of finances
Promoting Research	Absence of a strategy designed at central level
Activation towards Learning	Poor organization / bureaucracy
Empowerment	Interconnection with local society
Volunteer programs development	Political instability
Communication with youth	Absence of Educational Vision
Cooperation	Individualism against Collectivism
Innovation	Suspiciousness
Employment opportunities	Lack of time
Participation in local society	Need for recognizing Adult Education as a Culture

	Factor
Transparency / removing injustices regarding education	Labor substitution by voluntary actions
Claim rights (for educational purposes)	Just an experiment?
Setting the basis for a discussion regarding Adult Education Policy in Greece	

The second day of the workshop was devoted on the discussion among the representatives and the possibility to create and work on common projects. Participants worked on project ideas and agreed to create common action plans during their next year’s agenda preparation. In total, 12 project titles were proposed, in each of which 4-5 at least organizations were taking part declaring via their representatives their will to participate and collaborate with each other. An indicative list of these project ideas includes the following:

- Providing free lessons for disadvantaged pupils
- Opening School to Society
- Creation of an Information & Consulting Network for unemployed people
- Creation of a web platform for educators

The success of this initiative was evident in the final assessment of the workshop. The positive mood of everyone was obvious, something that was also obvious when participants were asked to evaluate the level at which their attitudes had changed in a positive way during the workshop and the result was an almost 95% who stated ‘high’ or ‘very high’ in a 5-level scale.

New projects / initiatives

Other initiatives of City of Larissa during this period were focusing on dealing with special social and financial problems of vulnerable social groups. This approach includes projects such a) as the distribution of food and relief items to more than 4.500 households in the region, a project that required close cooperation between public sector, NGOs and citizens in recording the needs, training volunteers and manpower and commitment in a common goal, b) the ‘Learn, my grandfather, Facebook!’ initiative which aimed to deal with computer literacy of elder people and c) the ‘Local Government and Disabled People’ project in cooperation with many organizations of the City, aiming at solutions for transportation, education and creative activities of disabled people.

Future challenges City of Larissa to retain its dynamic in a difficult environment. However, the strategic plan of 2016 includes actions that promise continuity: Firstly, it seems necessary that all participating bodies form a committee under the auspices of the City Council, in order to coordinate the projects ideas. Moreover, City of Larissa has started already to invest in extraversion, by presenting its best practices in conferences and fora and pursuing twinning with cities with similar concepts.

The above discussion reveals that the experiment of Larissa, as a Learning City, is still in progress. In other words, although there is evidence of a collective transformation learning process, we are not in a position to insist that the cycle is over. At this point, we would like to refer again to Mezirow’s cornerstone, his 10-phase model and try to find out where exactly the project of Larissa is right now (see table 3).

Table 3: Larissa City within Mezirow’s Transformative Learning model

Phase	Situation	Larisa as Learning City
Phase 1	A disorienting dilemma	- New City Council takes over (January 2015)
Phase 2	A self-examination with feelings of guilt or shame	
Phase 3	A critical assessment of epistemic, sociocultural, or psychic assumptions	- Discussion with people from the Hellenic Adult Education Association / Memorandum of Cooperation (February 2015)
Phase 4	Recognition that one’s discontent and the process of transformation are shared and that others have negotiated a similar change	- Contacts with other bodies in the broader region of Larissa (February – May 2015) - Organization and hosting of an international Conference on Adult Education and Lifelong Learning (May 2015)
Phase 5	Exploration of options for new roles, relationships, and actions	- Participation at the 2nd International Conference on Learning Cities in Mexico (September 2015) - Workshop ‘Networking and Developing Social Skills’ (October 2015) - Other initiatives (September 2015 – now)
Phase 6	Planning of a course of action	
Phase 7	Acquisition of knowledge and skills for implementing one’s plans	
Phase 8	Provisional trying of new roles	- Probably the point the whole project is right now
Phase 9	Building of competence and self-confidence in new roles and relationships	- Future challenges
Phase 10	A reintegration into one’s life on the basis of conditions dictated by one’s perspective	

In any case, the experiment of Larissa seems to be on the right direction. As Fleming states,

‘It is clear that in Larissa things are different. The City Council and the participating educational institutions have together taken on a view of education that is expressed in a language infused with democratic imperatives. All the officials and elected representatives give priority to citizens, encouraging citizens, learning citizens, engaged citizens. This is important as the language captures the values of the city and its learning projects. ... The city allows kinds of learning to take place that may not be possible in other contexts and opens the possibility that together the citizens and the institutions may make the place a better environment in which to live, rear children, and work and enjoy living’ (2015: 4-5).

Discussion

The experience from the adoption of such perspective seems positive. Unfortunately it is not granted. It never was. The creation of the cooperation network, mentioned in the case of Larissa, which deals with failures of the past and proposes a new educational culture is just a reminder towards this direction. On the other hand, it should not cause any special impression to anyone. A Learning City in Europe, within the crisis context, can only have references to the enlightened and progressive traditions of Adult Education of the 19th and early 20th century, during which popular movements contributed to a social change. In the 21th century, during a period of crisis, a Learning City has the potential to support individuals and groups at risk, to help citizens to critically understand the political context, the real learning needs

(Steele, 2006). This Learning City has to bring to the fore all those democratic traditions that may offer a way out of the current economic crisis. With a concept that transcends the sterile need to train people in order to develop skills that will be used for market needs, but rather for a social function, which is important for citizenship, human relations and personal development.

The truth is that defining ‘social function’ with a satisfactory way is a quite difficult task, at least at European level. Within a local community framework, social services are addressed to individuals or groups and may vary from those facing health or mental health problems to people who are in a particularly vulnerable situation, such as the unemployed. The common characteristic of all is social exclusion. Education, as a social service, may play an important role and become the link between these people and the society in total. Their active participation in an open dialogue on issues that are of their interest is the very first step, which could be part of a more holistic strategy, a strategy based on inclusion and collaboration.

The vital question is whether a Learning City could launch and continue such a dialogue, a dialogue that would create the potential of a support system for vulnerable social groups on the basis of lifelong learning, common objectives development, communication and collaborative actions. Future requires organized local communities more responsible in social policy issues. The way is long and passes through decentralization, not necessarily limited in administrative systems. Decentralization is a deeply philosophical, political and cultural sense. It means to create areas of responsibility through partnerships rather than power fields, with people conscious of their responsibility, with new modes and transformational processes.

References

- Aristotle, *Politics*, 1282a.
- European Commission (1996). *Teaching and learning: towards the learning society* (White Paper on Education and Training) Brussels: European Commission.
- Fleming, T. (2015). Indignation and the Struggle for Recognition: Learning Cities, Transformative Learning and Emancipation. *Adult Education and the Learning Society Conference*, Larissa City Council/Hellenic Adult Education Association, Larissa, Greece June 2015.
- Freire, P. (1970). *Pedagogy of the oppressed*. New York: Herter and Herter.
- Freire, P. (2006). *10 Letters to Those Who Dare Teach*. Athens: Epikentro (in Greek).
- Freire, P. & Shor, I. (2011). *A Pedagogy for Liberation: Dialogues on Transforming Education*. Athens: Metechmio (in Greek).
- Griffin, C. (2006). Life Long Learning as policy, strategy and cultural practices. *Adult Education*, Athens: Metechmio, vol. 9 (in Greek).
- Illeris, K. (2002). *Adults Learning*, v. 14, N 4. National Institute of Adult Continuing Education- NIACE.
- Kokkos, A. (2005). *Adult Education. Tracing the Field*. Athens: Metechmio (in Greek).
- Mezirow, J. (1978). Perspective transformation. *Adult Education*, 28, 100-110 (in Greek).
- Mezirow, J. (1994). Understanding Transformation Theory. *Adult Education Quarterly*. Vol. 44, pp. 222-232. American Association for Adult and Continuing Education: Sage Publications.
- Mezirow, J. (1996). Contemporary Paradigms of Learning. *Adult Education Quarterly*. Vol. 46, pp 158-172. American Association for Adult and Continuing Education: Sage Publications.
- Mezirow, J. (2000). Learning to think like an Adult. Core Concepts of Transformation Theory. In Mezirow, J. et. al. (Hg): *Learning as Transformation Critical Perspectives on a Theory in Progress*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.
- OECD (1996). *Lifelong Learning for all*. Paris: OECD.
- Poulopoulos, Ch. (2014). *Crisis, fear and disruption of social cohesion*. Athens: Topos (in Greek).
- Steele, T. (2006). The role of Adult Educator in the era of Life Long Learning and Globalization. In Kapsalis, A. & Papastamatis, A. (Eds). *Professionalism in Continuing Education*. Athens: Typothito – Georgios Dardanos, 43-64 (in Greek).
- UNESCO (1996). *Learning the treasure within* (The Delors Report). London: UNESCO/HMSO.
- UNESCO (2013). *The Beijing Declaration on Building Learning Cities*. Available online at <http://learningcities.uil.unesco.org/about-us/learning-cities-on-30/05/2016>.

Modern Reflection Of Platonic Dialogues

Apostolidou Magdalini

Hellenic Open University

Abstract

The present paper explores the connection between the concept of critical reflection in transforming learning in Adult Education, as framed by the contemporary scholars Dewey, Freire, Mezirow and Brookfield, and Plato's theory and ideas. The interest focuses on pinpointing similarities and differences between the concepts of contemporary scholars and Plato's ideas placing the concept of dialogue in the center as the most representative and essential element in critical thinking.

Dialogue in Adult Education

In education in general, especially in Adult Education, the term “contemplation” or “reflection” usually refers to that individual intellectual or mental procedure in which we process and evaluate an experience (ex postfacto reasoning), after recalling it in our memory (Zarifis, 2009). Reflection, however, as an intellectual or mental process, is largely based on the Aristotelian concept of “fronisis”, which relates primarily to the processing capacity of the characteristics of a status. Through reflection, the person is effectively able to link theory with practice, thus creating a framework for action aimed at the person's development and improvement. Therefore, reflection is an integral part of human learning, and it is virtually that process in which knowledge is produced, through the processing of experience (Zarifis, 2009).

As a means of teaching, dialogue predominates in **Dewey's** teachings. It is an essential tool of the tutor that allows him to establish a proper relationship with the student. The dialogue is achieved through the use of language, which is the principal means of communication. Through speech, the student will identify with deeds and actions, since knowledge, in Dewey, is essentially and more than anything else, action, and actions naturally enrich the experience (Christopoulos, 2005). He believes that critical reflection examines the opinions of a person on a particular topic based both on their origins, as well as on the effects these opinions may have. This is not a

random act but is a conscious effort for an opinion to be established and mastered (Dewey, 1993).

For Dewey, taking a decision based on immediate external stimulation, is definitely successful. Only through the combination of external opposite but similarly symbiotic processes is a mature target achieved. To achieve this, dialectics is an essential tool in learning, since it integrates the experience into an indivisible sum. Knowledge becomes a process, with not only a beginning, a middle and an end, but also connected with the concepts of observation and judgment (Zarifis, 2003).

Paulo Freire, coming after Dewey, believed that the only way for oppressed societies to get rid of this situation was to realize its causes and take action to bring about change (Kokkos, 2010). In the 70s, it was Freire that related critical theory with the notion of the individual's freedom from any kind of oppression and social empowerment through educational programs (Kioupeoglou, Zarifis, 2009). With this background, the education proposed by Freire aims at the awareness of reality through critical reflection (Kokkos, 2005). The title of the third chapter in Freire's book, "Pedagogy of the oppressed" encapsulates the essence of his opinions on the value of dialogue. So the title "Dialogue is the essence of a pedagogy seeking the freedom of man" (Freire, 1977) is not at all random. With the contribution of dialogue man manages to chase away anything that oppresses him, and he becomes free. Combined with personal action, it is useful at any time and social reality must be taken into account. The monologue does not set free, instead it subdues and transforms them into a spineless mass. In order to carry out a dialogue, the people involved should have the right to speak. Therefore, they will become meaningful creatures and they will satisfy this existential need. Since dialogue is combination of thought and action, it cannot be a simple deposit of opinions nor an aggressive mood, but rather a creative act (Freire, 1977). The characteristics of dialog are love as an act of courage and not fear (Freire, 1977 p 104), humility (Freire, 1977 p 105), faith in humanity (Freire, 1977 p 106) and hope (Freire, 1977 pp 107) thus creating a climate of mutual confidence between interlocutors. This establishes communication and true pedagogy, and finally the essential revolution (Freire, 1977 p 156). Through critical reflection people manage to overcome the established situation, and through action, they manage to create a new, better situation, leading to humanism. To achieve this transformation, of course, the oppressed should confront reality with a critic view, and not simply perceive

(Kioupeloglou, Zarifis, 2009). The attempt to acquire critical awareness can be achieved through the contribution of substantive dialogue, which will help the person understand the importance of their actions and the unavoidable need for critical intervention on reality, through action (Kioupeloglou, Zarifis, 2009).

Jack Mezirow is utilizing the basic educational, psychological and sociological theories by Dewey and Freire, also an exponent of the theory of transformative learning (Kokkos, 2011; Tsimpoukli, Philips, 2010). According to Mezirow a thoughtful dialogue is the cornerstone and plays the key role in adult learning. Through this we try to understand the meaning of any claims; it contributes to sound decision making and to positive action (Lintzeris, 2007).

For Mezirow, dialogue is the means to achieve a purpose. Through dialogue it can be proved that knowledge through experience is valid. In other words, dialogue is an ongoing effort of the individual during which they interact with their interlocutors to extract non-permanent conclusions, since these will be challenged in the next dialog step. If a review, derived from dialogue, leads to new information that could undermine the past, then the new data will replace the old until they are in turn replaced by new means of critical reflection (Lintzeris, 2007). Learning is not a simple accumulation of knowledge, but is a process in which basic principles and assumptions of adult learners are changed (Tsimpoukli, Philips, 2010). The purpose of adult education is to help people critically review their perceptions and challenge them when they realize that they are dysfunctional (Grain, 2005; Mezirow, 2006). The ultimate goal is to help adult learners realize their potential and achieve empowerment; to enable them to critically edit their choices in a given social context (Mezirow, 2000). He points out that reflection and review are mainly processes of adult learning leading to maturation (Jarvis, 2003; Grain, 2005).

Within this framework, tutors of adults reinforce social democracy conditions and help students become aware of their problematic interpretations, and act, with free participation and dialogue, according to their stochastic judgment (Mezirow, 2006). They promote thoughtful dialogue, which is a special form of dialogue that focuses on the search for and the justification of a belief or an attitude.

The essential aim of dialogue is the ratification of the validity of a claim. Of course, this does not mean that it always leads to full agreement on an issue, but at

least it is the primary goal, although it is indeed difficult to achieve (Mezirow, 1991: 75-78). Dialogue is necessary for adults to communicate and agree on the validity of their experiences. Critical reflection is connected with dialogue in social contexts that encourage these functions. Societies with strong progressive and pro-change characteristics encourage these processes and people are encouraged to take personal decisions easier (Mezirow, 1994: 222). Therefore, Mezirow himself concludes that critical reflection, combined with effective participation in rational dialogue, constitute the hallmarks of democratic citizenship in modern times (Mezirow, 2003: 62)

Of course, in order for the dialogue to be constructive and to work perfectly within the educational process, certain conditions need to be fulfilled, in accordance to Mezirow. More specifically, participants must have a minimum level of personal safety, health and education. They must be free from superstition and fraud, while being open to new opinions, and understanding that others profess different beliefs and way of thinking. A basic prerequisite is the ability to assess whatever is called objective, and the effective will to find the best possible judgment, even temporarily, until new perspectives and arguments rise and gain validity, always through dialogue. In other words, the person is required to have the will to identify emotionally with the interlocutor, to show tolerance to difference and have expertise in the management of social relations. In this direction, the greater empathy of the context of given ideas and concepts, and equal opportunities in the participation in various roles that emerge through dialogue, significantly help. Hungry, frightened adults and in general those who are deprived of freedom have been less likely to be able to successfully participate in a dialogue that will help them understand the meaning of their experiences (Lintzeris, 2007; Mezirow, 2006).

The theory of **Brookfield** does not particularly differ from Mezirow views on the importance of dialogue. He considers that dialogue is an essential component of adult education and should promote diversity. Focusing on the investigation through cooperation and discussion, the identification of truth and the interpretation of the experience itself is achieved (Brookfield, 1995). Brookfield himself holds that reflection cannot be critical by definition and cannot be used in all cases without any restriction whatsoever. He considers that people reflecting critically should analyse power relations that exist in a given state and the framework in which this state

occurs, and to identify their own assumptions on the topic, which essentially serve the interests of others (Brookfield, 2007). For Brookfield, critical thinking takes more than logical argument or a thorough and persistent investigation of the arguments that support perceptions; the latter are not the product of empirical research (Brookfield, 1987). The mechanisms which are being reproduced by capitalist societies and promote political ideologies and perceptions in order to reproduce the existing political system should be revealed (Brookfield, 2005). Brookfield connected the concept of critical thinking with self-directed learning. He thinks that self-directed learning is a process where a person, after setting goals for learning, consults specialists and uses appropriate literature to critically process the criteria to evaluate his learning (Brookfield, 1985). The combination of self-directed learning with critical reflection is the most complete form of learning, in adults. That said, absolute self-direction is impossible, since political elements are always included, which may be used by the dominant interests to maintain their power (Kalogridis, 2010).

Dialectics in Plato

Dialectics, as mentioned in Plato's "Phaedo", is the method where we transfer from the observable universe into the imaginary, with its help meaning is given, and observable things become true (Phaedo 99e- 100e). The ultimate goal of Dialectics is the idea of the good that gives meaning and unity to all our actions. It is the cause of all creation. The path is upward and appears so, both in the "Republic" (517b) where it is "the soul's rise to the imaginary place", and in Phaedrus, which it is mentioned as the fluttering of the soul towards the heavenly place of truth. The highest point at which Dialectics reaches are the very same principles that constitute reality. This Dialectics leads to an extreme/ultimate point approaching the Idea. Its viewing, however, is not the result of Dialectics and of the subsequent mental process, but a personal contemplation of the Idea, which arises intuitively as a flare. The soul reaches a trance, it communicates with something inexpressible and intangible, either as the idea of a good or as the beauty itself, and it reaches beyond Dialectics (Michailidis, 1998).

The Republic (537b-538a) condenses the meaning and specifies the content of Dialectics, clarifying what it is that distinguishes Dialectics from non-Dialectic nature. What distinguishes the two natures is the ability of the first to join and find

affinity between individual knowledge and the inability of the second to find the affinity between individual knowledge and finally to identify their affinity to the being. Through Dialectics, one can understand the essence of things

In the second part of *Phaedrus*, Plato, through Socrates' words, tries to give an explanation of the difference between rhetoric and dialectic. It considers that Dialectics is the art of being able to summarize the scattered elements in one idea and simultaneously separate everything into types. In other words, Dialectics must have the ability of fusion (*synaeresis*) and division of a concept (*Phaedrus*, 265d- 266a). A typical characteristic of speech is its personal character; it reflects the individual specificity of each person's soul. Because its dialectic formation, speech fosters internal dialogue with everything it proposes, so different speeches are produced through this dialectical relationship (*Phaedrus*, 277a).

At *The Sophist* Dialectics is the science that distinguishes the philosopher from the pugnacious, appropriate only for the free and philosophical spirit, taking account of the diversity wherever it exists (*Sophist*, 253d-e).

Knowledge of things is nothing more than memory, as indicated in *Menon*, i.e. the recall into our consciousness and reactivation of the first cognitive principles within us (*Menon*, 85c). This knowledge, existing like a dream within us and activated through memory, is a kind of dialogue that we do with ourselves. We communicate the richness of our inner world, which comes to light. Thus, drawing on the depth of our soul, we highlight good opinions and proceed towards true knowledge (Michaelides 1998).

Similarities and differences regarding the concept of dialogue

The theoretical approaches of modern theory in Adult Education examined hereby, regarding the concept of dialogue, have many similarities both in their starting point as well as in their final goal, but follow a different sequence of steps to reach their purpose. It is this diversity of approaches that gives the special significance these methods have for the modern concept of critical thinking.

Dialogue is considered a necessary condition for the achievement of critical reflection. Both Dewey and Freire believed that dialogue is an integral part of the learning process, one that helps knowledge into practice. It is the foundation for the

communication between tutor and student, aimed at critical reflection. Of course, Freire suggests the political dimension of the dialogue, where change and liberation from suffering is achieved through dialogue (Freire, 1977). It is not a simple deposit of opinions, but the creative research for the truth.

Mezirow and Brookfield have no particular differences in their opinions regarding the value of dialogue. O Mezirow calls it “thoughtful dialogue”, which is the constant effort of humans to interact with others and draw conclusions. The additional element imparted in the concept of dialogue in comparison to the previous concept, is that the agreement between interlocutors is not always a given (Mezirow, 1991). It is a necessary condition for the existence of critical reflection, which in turn leads to democratic conditions. Furthermore, Mezirow adds that there should be prerequisites for the existence of constructive dialogue, which differentiates him from other scholars who do not refer to them at all.

According to Plato’s theory, dialogue is the instrument that gives meaning to the tangible world. The ultimate objective is to give meaning all human acts and lead the soul towards truth. It contributes to enabling man to unite his scattered knowledge and ultimately understand the essence of things. As in modern scholars, dialogue helps to transmit and process knowledge in order to achieve critical reflection, so in Plato too, dialogue becomes the means for man to separate and unite concepts in order to achieve the conquest of the Good, which is the ultimate truth. Recollection and memory, in Plato, is a kind of internal dialogue, like the one meant by Dewey and Freire, through which we emphasize good judgment and acquire true knowledge. However, the differentiation in Plato is that memory is a creative process, not a simple/ passive recall of knowledge, as maintained by Freire. It is the creative process of the revelation of meaning.

Additionally, Dialectics leads to the idea of approach. Its viewing is, however, an intuitive revelation. Through Dialectics, the subject reaches an ultimate point of uplift. From there, the truth is not a matter of mental process anymore, but of individual-personal viewing. This differentiates the Platonic view from that of modern scholars of transformative learning, such as Mezirow and Brookfield, who consider that the critical reflection, namely the contemplation of the Good, is dedicated derivative of rational dialogue, without referring to the position of the individual viewing of things.

References

- Brookfield, St. (1985). *Self- directed adult learning: A critical review of research*.
New Directions for Continuing Education, 25, 5-16.
- Brookfield, St. (1987). *Developing critical thinkers*, San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.
- Brookfield, St. (1995). *Becoming a Critically Reflective Teacher*, Jossey – Bass, San Francisco.
- Brookfield, St. (2005). *The Power of Critical Theory*. San Francisco: Jossey –Bass
- Brookfield, St. (2007). «Transformative learning as a critique of ideology», In Mezirow J. & Associates, *Transformative learning*, (Chapter 5). Athens: Metaixmio
- Christopoulos, C.K. (2005). *The new school and the current educational reality . The philosophical views of John Dewey*, Athens: Grigori.
- Dewey, J. (1933). *How we think: A restatement of the relation of reflective thinking to the educative process*, Boston: Health & Co.
- Freire, P. (1977). *Pedagogy of the oppressed (transl.: G Kritikos)*, Athens: Rappa
- Jarvis, P. (2003). *Continuing education and training. Theory and practice*. Athens: Metaixmio.
- Kalogridis, S. (2010). The contribution of self-directed learning in adult education. In Vergidis D., Kokkos A. (Eds.), *Adult education international approaches and Greek routes*(pg 127-163). Thessaloniki: Metaixmio
- Kioupeloglou, N. & Zarifis, G.(2009). Critical thinking and “Conscientizacao” circle: Understanding issues of the action framework for empowerment and social change. In G. Zarifis (Ed), *Critical Reflection in Learning and Adult Education Approaches Theoretical & Practical Implications* (pg.137-160). Athens: Papazisi.
- Kokkos, A. (2005). *Adult Education Methodology. Vol A .Theoretical framework and conditions for learning*. Patra: Hellenic Open University.

- Kokkos, A. (2010). *Critical Thought : A Critical Issue* . In D. Vergidis & A. Kokkos (Eds.), *Adult Education , international approaches and Greek routes*. Athens: Metaixmio.
- Kokkos, A. (2011). *Contemporary Approaches on Adult Education. Study Guide for EKE 52*. Patra : Hellenic Open University.
- Lintzeris, P. (2007). The importance of critical thinking and rational dialogue on Jack Mezirow’s theory of transformative learning, pg. 1-48. Athens: Hellenic Adult Education Association. *Parallel texts for EKE52 “Contemporary Approaches on Adult Education”*, (Text 17). Patra: HOU.
- Mezirow, J. & Associates. (2000) *Learning as Transformation: Critical Perspectives on a Theory in Progress*, Jossey-Bass, San Francisco.
- Mezirow, J. (1991). *Transformative Dimensions of Adult Learning*, Jossey-Bass, San Francisco.
- Mezirow, J. (2003).“Transformative Learning as Discourse”, *Journal of Transformative Education*, Jan.2003, Vol1, pp.58-63.
- Mezirow, J. (2006). Learning to think like an adult . Key concepts of the Transformation theory . **In** Mezirow, J. & Associates, *Transformative learning*, Athens: Metaixmio.
- Mezirow, J.(1994). “Understanding Transformation Theory”, *Adult Education Quarterly*, Vol.44, pp.222-232. American Association for Adult and Continuing Education: Sage Publications».
- Michaelides, K. (1998), *Plato Reason and myth Introduction to Platonic philosophy*. Athens: Papadima.
- Plato, ([s.a.]). *Platonis Opera I- XIV*. Athens: Greek Company Publications.
- Plato, (1993). *Sophist*. Introduction- translation Nikoloudis H.P., Athens: Cactus.
- Plato, (2001). *Phaedrus*. Study - translation – comments Doikos P., Thessaloniki: Zitros.
- Plato, (s.a.). *Laches- Menon*. Introduction- translation- comments Patakis B., Athens: Daedalos.
- Tsimpoukli A., Philips N. (2010). *Adult education trainers, distance training*

program, duration 100 hours, 1st module, Introduction in adult education, Athens: Ministry of Education, Lifelong Learning and Religious Affairs, General Secretariat for Lifelong Learning, Institute of Adult Continuing Education.

Zarifis, G. (2003). From Dewey to Kolb: presentation , analysis and comparative assessment experiential adult learning models. *Pedagogical inspection*. 35, 49-73.

Zarifis, G. (2009). The critical reflection as “ex-post facto” learning and development condition in adults. In Zarifis G., *The Critical Reflection in Learning and Adult Education Approaches Theoretical & Practical Implications* (pg 47-76). Athens: Papazisi.

ON ARTS AND TRANSFORMATIVE LEARNING

Dialogue in Plato’s Symposium and in Transformative Learning Theory. Convergence, Divergence and Propositions.

Vasileia (Liana) Kalokyri

Hellenic Open University

Abstract:

This paper traces the characteristics and the role of Socratic dialogue in Plato’s Symposium and highlights convergence to and divergence from the dialogue and theory of Transformative Learning. The approach is proposed as a “mirror” of “self-reflection” of Transformative Learning, and as an “exercise” of critical reflection in learners.

Introduction

This paper focuses on the inquiry of Socratic dialogue, which is traditionally regarded as the basis of critical thinking and learning, under the perspective of reflective dialogue in Transformative Learning. In particular, we attempt to trace the Socratic dialogue in Plato’s Symposium, where issues of the Educator-teacher relation and learning can be traced, in relation to reflective dialogue and to Transformative Learning. It is suggested that this approach can offer a “self-reflective” and retrospective view, one that broadens and deepens the field of Transformative Learning itself. It can also provide a means for practicing critical thinking and reflective dialogue, in the field of adult education methodology.

In this spirit, the aim of this paper is to trace the characteristics and the role of Socratic dialogue in Plato’s Symposium and to highlight points of convergence to- and divergence from the dialogue and theory of Transformative Learning (TLT). In addition, it is posited that Plato’s Symposium can be utilised as a work of art in groups of adult learners in relation to issues of Transformative Learning. This in turn enables examination of issues pertaining to reflective dialogue and to the reasoning of Transformative Learning. Socratic dialogue in Plato’s Symposium, through its interactive and participatory educational processes, can be a “mirror” that reflects notions, assumptions and questions on reflective dialogue and Transformative Learning, and can thus promote critical thinking and “self-learning”, in the framework of participants’ interaction. It can also be utilised in various subjects of adult education, in cases where critical reflection on dysfunctional stereotypes, under the perspective of Transformative Learning, is required.

Transformative Learning Theory and Socratic dialogue: the epistemological framework of their interconnection

From an epistemological viewpoint, Transformative Learning provides the framework for its interconnection with Socratic dialogue and philosophical thinking.

In particular, Jack Mezirow, the theorist of Transformative Learning, provided the foundation of an Adult Education philosophy (Mezirow 1991, p. 198-201; 2000) emphasising the role of Adult Education in the cultivation of critical reflection through dialogue and self-reflective learning (Mezirow, 1990; 1991; 2000). Transformative Learning encompasses the liberation of adults from forms of thinking

that trap them in dysfunctional stereotypes and entrenched habits of expectation. As Mezirow (2000) wrote:

Transformative Learning refers to the process by which we transform our taken-for-granted frames of reference (meaning perspectives, habits of mind, mind-sets) to make them more inclusive, discriminating, open, emotionally capable of change, and reflective so that they may generate beliefs and opinions that will prove more true or justified to guide action. Transformative learning involves participation in constructive discourse to use the experience of others to assess reasons justifying these assumptions, and making an action decision based on the resulting insight. (p. 7-8)

In the framework of Transformative Learning, a special kind of dialogue is pivotal, differing from the mere exchange of opinions and the contemporary “argument culture” (Tannen, 1998 in Mezirow, 2000, p. 12) that polarises points of view thus cultivating models of competitive argumentation. It is about the reflective dialogue, which through critical assessment aims at mutual comprehension and consent in conditions of freedom and equality (Mezirow, 2000; 2006). Under this perspective, adult educators are cultural activists, committed to broadening practices and systems which enhance free and active participation of adult learners in dialogue and in transformative learning (Mezirow (2000, p. 30).

Mezirow (2000, p. 31) claims that “adult educators create protected learning environments in which the conditions of social democracy necessary for transformative learning are fostered”. In this sense, by fostering transformative adult learning, adult educators do not indoctrinate, but instead create opportunities and foster norms supporting fuller participation in discourse and in democratic social and political life. In this spirit, the process of helping learners become more critically reflective on their assumptions and those of others, more fully and freely engaged in discourse, and more effective in their reflective judgments is crucial for adult education in democratic societies (Mezirow, op. cit., p. 30-31). Another factor to consider is the ethical considerations of an adult educator’s influence on the learner. Is it unethical for an educator to present his/her own perspective, which may be unduly influential with the learner? (Mezirow 1991, p. 201).

‘Learning as transformation’, ‘reflective discourse’, and ‘critical reflection’ bind Transformative Learning Theory (Mezirow, 1998; 2003; 2009; Mezirow and Associates, 1990; 2000) to Socratic dialogue, which is traditionally regarded as the basis of critical thinking and learning. In the dialectic discourse between Socrates and his interlocutors, established assumptions and entrenched ‘habits of expectation’ are contested by Socrates by means of questions that re-examine *ab initio* fundamental notions, meanings and values. In particular, in Plato’s Symposium (Burnet, 1963; Papageorgiou, 1967; Xatzopoulos, 1992) the inquiry of pedagogic issues concerning the spiritual, emotional and cultural relation between the Educator-teacher and the learner bring the Socratic dialogue and the dialectic discourse very close to the reasoning and practice of Transformative learning.

On the basis of the above, it is interesting to trace the Socratic dialogue in Plato’s Symposium and examine issues such as reflective dialogue, learning as transformation, and the role of the adult educator, in relation to its convergence to- or the divergence from Transformative Learning. This process permits expanding the reasoning of theoretical and practical aspects of Transformative Learning.

Socratic dialogue in Plato’s Symposium. Convergence to- and divergence from the theory of Transformative Learning

1. *Socratic dialogue and the reflective discourse of Transformative Learning theory*

By means of his dialectic method, Socrates fosters the development of critical reflection and thus promotes the change of assumptions and opinions of his interlocutors, distancing them from established cultural beliefs. Therefore, a point of convergence to Socratic dialogue can be found in the concept of “critical-reflective discourse” of Transformative Learning (Mezirow, 2000; 2003; 2009; Mezirow, & Associates, 2000).

In Plato’s Symposium, in its casual atmosphere, the interaction among interlocutors about the praise of “Eros” gives the opportunity for different aspects of the topic to be presented. In this way, dialectic discourse develops, as in the end Socrates enters into a dialogue with Agathon and introduces a philosophical perception of “Eros” which is linked to the pedagogical relationship between the Educator-Teacher and the learner, on the one hand, and to the desire for the Good, on the other.

The importance of dialogue as a means of revelation of the truth in Socrates is obviously discerned in the Symposium, where Socrates, in order to express his own perception of “Eros”, recalls his dialogue with Diotima, a “wise woman” from Mantinea, where the transformation of his own beliefs is highlighted. That is, Socrates admits that, in the beginning of the discourse with Diotima, he held similar views with those of Agathon and in the process his perception of “Eros” was enhanced, through her questions and dialogue.

In general, through the lively dialogue with Agathon as well as the recalled dialogue of Socrates with Diotima about “Eros”, we can identify “processes of learning as transformation”, rejection of culturally established stereotypes and “entrenched habits of expectation” (Mezirow, & Associates, 1990; 2000), in other words, points of convergence to the reasoning and practice of Transformative Learning.

However, educational conceptions about reflective dialogue and emancipation of thinking are not easy aims, as is shown in the following questions concerning Socratic dialogue and Transformative learning.

- *The Educator and the process of the discourse: triggering critical thinking through irony or creating protected learning environments?*

The inquiry in Socratic dialogue raises ethical questions concerning the role of the educator – teacher and the process of dialogue:

Is the atmosphere of the dialogue that Socrates develops with his interlocutors really suitable for freely forming an opinion?

Does the atmosphere of the discourse truly conform to the principles of respect towards the opinion and the personality of the interlocutors?

Is Socrates’s attitude, after all, that of an expert, of a manipulating constructor of opinions, or that of a fellow companion in the quest for new perceptions and breaking of stereotypes?

In Symposium, in front of the interlocutors, in the dialogue between Socrates and Agathon about “Eros”, poet Agathon admits, with frustration, that he cannot compete with Socrates in discourse. And while the dialogue with Agathon tends to become contentious and the pleasant atmosphere of the symposium risks being disrupted, Socrates recalls and narrates his perception of “Eros”, that he had learned through his interaction with Diotima. He is thus able to win the sympathy of his interlocutors, by going beyond the method of scientific proof, into to the realm of emotions, myth and belief “where the boundaries of truth do not coincide with those of rational proof” (Papageorgiou, 1967, p. 66). Without elaborating any further on persuasion through the transcendence of rationalism, we should note that Socrates’s interlocutors admit

not only their confusion, but also his appeal on them, as a result of the dialogue, in certain cases.

In the case of Agathon, Socrates started by extolling him for the praise of Eros, for the beginning of his discourse (investigating the nature of “Eros”) but also for the “epilogue with its beautiful wordings”. However, the reader can discern in these statements irony about the essence of Agathon’s reasoning, which resembles the discursal patterns of the Sophists.

Then, Socrates resorts to the well-known “Socratic irony” i.e. confesses his ignorance of the topic and poses “naive” questions, asking for “clarifications”. Meanwhile, he leads Agathon to embarrassment, contradiction and confusion, suggesting that what he was saying was true only superficially. He prepares the ground for accepting new ideas, once again through guided questions. The ironic stance is also highlighted in Symposium by Agathon, at the beginning of the evening (175e), and by Alcibiades towards the end (215b), despite their admiration for him. Consequently, the dialogue with Socrates is not always easy for his interlocutors. Socrates’ attitude is not always that of a ‘mild’ and ‘yielding’ Educator-teacher (Vrettos, 2013, p. 15)

It could be argued that Socrates’s stance and role, and the conditions of the dialogue (intense atmosphere, irony) are not always compatible with the stance and role of an adult educator in Transformative Learning, where emphasis is placed on the creation of “protected learning environments”, on fostering environments of discourse that help learners engage more fully and freely, taking action on their reflective judgments (Mezirow, 2000, p. 30-31). On the other hand, it should not be ignored that Socrates was not an “adult educator” in the framework of an organised educational structure, but met with his interlocutors on various occasions, in the 5th century B.C. Athens, trying to examine topics which he considered significant for understanding the world and life. His passion, in other words the ‘oestrus’ for what is essential philosophical inquiry, complemented rational approach and, in the final analysis, may have contributed to the development of critical thinking of those refusing to think beyond stereotypes. His ignorance, sometimes real and sometimes aiming to trigger critical thinking and reversal of “ready-made” answers, his Socratic irony, might be considered unfit for the mildness and the respect for the learner that is expected from a modern adult educator, so as to be comply with “political correctness” in modern democratic societies. By contrast, these traits need to be interpreted and evaluated in the context of living and cultural standards, as a challenge for superficial rationalism of the Sophists or for stereotyped popular beliefs.

What is interesting, is that by tracing the elements of Socrates’s stance in the dialogue as a teacher-educator with the theory and the sensitivities of Transformative Learning in mind, we can analyse even more the content of the role and the ethos of a modern adult educator who ‘fosters transformative learning efforts’ (Mezirow, 2000). Perhaps, it may be a common belief, that irony and derisive attitude from the part of an adult educator vis-à-vis a learner are unacceptable in the context of modern democratic societies. *However, is it always effective and sincere for an educator to rationalise his reactions and behaviour and thus “adapt” his emotions, considering that in Transformative Learning the discourse is at the same time a quest for truth? Is it perhaps that rationalising the adult educator’s behaviour sometimes deprives the quest for truth of authenticity and depth? Should we reexamine the importance of resorting, sometimes, to the myth, to the non-rational element or to irony as means of the educational process of transformative learning (certainly with procedures that do not break the code of communication and deeper respect)?*

The more we investigate Socrates’s role as a teacher-educator and the more we trace

the way he handled dialogue, the more questions we see being raised for the adult educator of Transformative Learning.

1. *Fostering a reflective dialogue or leading to a formulated opinion?*

Another issue to consider is whether an Educator-teacher really fosters a reflective dialogue or ‘leads’ learners to a formulated opinion, since he “knows the truth”.

The question if Socrates had “ready-made truths” and if his dialogue was a mere effort to lead his interlocutors to such truths, or even if he himself was processing his views through dialogue, is a common topic in the literature of the field (Vrettos, 2013; Vlastos, 2008). In Plato’s Symposium, Socrates expresses his own opinion on “Eros” and presents it *after* listening to his interlocutors (due to Plato’s masterful direction). In the end, the applause shows that his interlocutors are convinced and adopt the views he had presented. As mentioned above, Socrates argues that he discovered what “Eros” is through his dialogue with Diotima. In other words, Socrates becomes an example of the transformation of one’s own beliefs: in this case, Socrates transforms his beliefs with the aid of a dialogue in which Diotima is the Educator-teacher. For Socrates, Diotima is a prestigious and wise teacher. Consequently, Socrates formulated an “insight” of “Eros”, and it is exactly this view that forms the basis of the dialogue with Agathon in the beginning. By contrast, in Plato’s “Protagoras”, Socrates’s dialogue with sophist Protagoras on “the teachability of virtue” does not end with a prevailing view. The text ends by referring the further elaboration of the topic to another meeting.

In general, it could be argued that in certain cases, e.g. on the topic of “Eros”, in Symposium, Socrates already had some answers, at least for some of the questions about values, but in certain other cases “his contemplation was triggered by the dialogue and, vice-versa, the dialogue triggered contemplation» (Vrettos, 2013, p.14). A point of convergence with adult educators can be identified here: educators, in the Transformative Learning paradigm, “do not indoctrinate” (Mezirow, 2000, p. 30). Tracing the Socratic dialogue, we discover an Educator-teacher with stable principles, i.e. faith in the Good and in the Truth, and still, one who redefines the content of values. By questioning cultural stereotypes, the Socratic dialogue approaches the reasoning of reflective dialogue found in Transformative Learning.

As regards the certainties and the values of the Educator, there is an ethical question raised through the Socratic dialogue, relating by analogy to the adult educator in the context of Transformative Learning: is it truly about “the cultivation of critical thinking” (Brookfield, 1995; 2012) and the development of “reflective dialogue”, when the educator *leads* and *directs* his learners into new “frames of reference”?

Approaching this issue does not mean contesting *the distinction* between values and non-values (Bourdieu, 1979); it simply means pointing out ethical considerations related to “dialectic discussion” and to “learning as transformation”. The Socratic dialogue is an opportunity for investigating the “limits” of transformations in the “frames of reference”, as well as the concept of redefinition of our perceptions through reflective discourse.

2. *What’s there between “cultural stereotypes” and “liquidity of meaning”?*

Challenging socially established stereotypes through the Socratic dialogue leads neither to new dogmatic beliefs nor to agnosticism. It is rather the path towards a dialectic approach to the issues under question. In the quest for concepts, the meaning of “betweenness” is recognised, as is also dialectic thinking. Socrates is placed in-between ignorance and the effort to redefine meaning and the fundamental concepts-values, the Good and the Truth, as by analogy Eros is the child of Poros (the personification of resourcefulness or expediency) and Penia (Poverty), is thus found

“in-between” (Symposium 203c5, 204b5), and the philosopher is found in-between God and the “idiot-mindless” (Vrettos, 2013, p. 15).

The foundation of dialectic process for pursuing meaning through the Socratic dialogue, is Socrates’s faith in the principles and in the existence of meaning, of which he seeks the special content. The questioning of meaning does not lead to its dislocation but to its redefinition (Vrettos, 2013).

Besides, if there are no stable principles or distinctions, or, in other words, “*the disjunction of opposites*” (Kristeva, 1970), reasoning is impossible; evaluative perplexity will destroy all meaning and will incapacitate communication and cooperation among humans. The adventure of meaning and values in the era of modernism and post-modernism (late post-modernism) has helped us realise that dogmatic or absolute disjunctions can lead to fascism and authoritarianism, and ultimately, to the challenging of values (Kalokyri, 1999). Consequently, we need to appreciate dialectic thinking, not for ending up to an ambivalence of all entities and to the “liquidity of modernity” (Bauman, 1990; 1993; 2000; 2003; 2007), but in order to continuously pursue syntheses on crucial cultural and social issues. Managing evaluative perplexity and ambivalence is a significant challenge, both for Socrates and for the contemporary adult educator. Ambivalence, in addition to being a starting point for distorting meanings, can also function as a creative principle encompassing negation of dogmatic oppositions (and of the concomitant fanaticism) and leading to synthesis.

Besides, the great questions that philosophy poses are not susceptible of definite answers. The questions remain open, while life is interesting and society has hope for improvement when Socrates or a contemporary adult educator who fosters “learning as transformation” try to trigger critical thinking and to optimise answers on critical questions.

Proposals. Dialogue in Plato’s Symposium as a “mirror of self-reflection” of Transformative Learning and as an “exercise” of critical reflection in learners

From the tracing of the aforementioned issues (i-iv), it cannot be assumed that the field of dialogical convergences and divergences between Plato’s Symposium and Transformative Learning has been exhausted. On the contrary, it is our aim to show that a field is open for exploration, one that can enrich our perception of dialogue, of the role of the adult educator, of his/her attitude vis-à-vis learners, of the reshaping of the educator’s views through dialogue, of the limits of his/her certainties and generally of the faith in meanings and their limits.

In this sense, the Socratic dialogue in Symposium becomes a “mirror of self-reflection” for the theory of Transformative Learning. In this paradigm, the goal of adult education is to help adults become more critically reflective as “dialogic thinkers” (Basseches, 1984 in Mezirow, 2000, p. 30). The utilisation of works of art has been proposed and applied in the frame of Transformative Learning, for cultivating critical thinking in learners (Kokkos, 2010; 2011; 2013). On this line of thought, we suggest that Plato’s Symposium can be in an educational context, in groups of adult learners of Transformative Learning Theory as a work of art that can appropriately trigger critical thinking on dialogue, on the relationship between adult educator and learners, on learning as transformation, and on other issues pertaining to the theory and practice of Transformative Learning. Interactive and participatory educational methods would be applied, such as dialogue between learners and educator, work on critical questions in groups of learners, and discussion “in full class session”.

Some questions, considered to be critical for tracing the Socratic Dialogue in Symposium and for gaining insight into Transformative Learning, can be proposed here:

Which are the elements of dialogue that determine its dialectic character and reveal its freedom-of-thinking aspect?

Which are the elements of dialogue that can reveal manipulative behaviours on the part of the Educator?

Does it contradict the concept of dialectic inquiry and dialogue itself, for the Educator to present a formulated opinion and lead learners to a “dialectic” frame of reference?

In what ways can dialogue contribute to the transformation of frames of reference (habits of expectation and assumptions), in the framework of Transformative Learning?

Should emotions, imagination, and non-rational aspects of thinking be taken into account in reflective dialogue and critical thinking?

Processing the above questions and/or other related ones, in groups of adult learners of Transformative Learning can offer a better understanding of its theory and practice, which would be particularly useful to future adult educators.

In addition, the dialogue in Plato’s Symposium can function as an “exercise of inquiry” and development of critical reflection in learners, in various subjects of adult education, when critical thinking on educational issues such as the use of dialogue, the authority and the attitude of the educator, his/her impact on adult learners are involved in the educational process.

Moreover, in cases of adult learner groups where the perception of dialogue and of the atmosphere of communication between educator and learners is found to be *problematic* or when other issues are identified in educator-learners relationships, the dialogue in Plato’s Symposium could be useful in the frame of the method of “*Transformative Learning through Aesthetic Experience*”, introduced by Alexis Kokkos (2010, 2011, 2013). Based on this combination, we can open up the issues at hand to hermeneutic approaches. Critical thinking, emotions and imagination are thus activated.

The stages of the method in which Plato’s Symposium can be utilised with a focus on dialogue and on its relevant questions are summarised below.

The stages (Kokkos, 2010, 2011)

The first stage relates to the determination of the need to critically examine stereotypical assumptions of the participants on a certain issue. For instance, at a certain point of the training process, while discussing the issue of critical thinking through dialogue or of the attitudes of an adult educator – the educator feels that the participants share rather stereotypical assumptions concerning the characteristics and attitude of an adult educator, which complicates the educational process and the relationships between its members.

During the second stage the educator facilitates a process through which the participants express their ideas on the issue. First, this expression is individual (with participants noting their views) and, subsequently, they formulate orally their collective assumptions on the characteristics of dialogue and on the attitude of an adult educator regarding the learners' critical thinking.

During the third stage the educator examines the answers and determines the sub-issues that should be approached holistically and critically so as to re-assess the taken-for-granted assumptions. Such sub-issues may in fact be determined in collaboration with learners.

During the fourth stage the educator selects works of art with meanings related to the sub-issues identified. The participants may propose various artworks to be included in the learning process. In our case, we propose Plato's Symposium, which in addition to characteristics of the Socratic dialogue, is interesting from an education perspective, also in terms of its content and way of reasoning.

During the fifth stage, the educator facilitates a process aimed to examine the various sub-topics from different perspectives so as to reveal as many different dimensions as possible to participants and to give them the opportunity to re-examine their initial views. Participants express their experiences, feelings and thoughts.

Synthesis and drawing conclusions are the object of the sixth stage.

Conclusions

Dialogue in Plato's Symposium offers a "field of parallelism", a "field of projection" in which topics of Transformative Learning can be examined from a distance, shedding an alternative light on them, and this transforming them into "objects of dialogue and reassessment".

In Symposium, Socrates becomes a salient example of "Transformative Learning through dialogue", through the recollection of his dialogue with Diotima, in which he reshapes views and combines reason, emotions and imagination. Moreover, his caustic and ironic stance is a perfect test bench for modern perceptions of "political correctness" in adult education, and challenges easy and one-dimensional answers of mass culture, triggering critical reflection and a dialectic approach to meaning.

The analogies identified between the era of Socrates and nowadays offer a basis for a retrospective look of Transformative Learning on itself through the approach of Socratic dialogue. The "relativism" of Sophists has unsettled meaning and values and challenged Socrates to pursue stable principles and redefine values. In the "liquidity" of our times, "in which identity is constantly fluid, generating unprecedented anxiety and insecurity" (Bauman, 2003; 2007), the adult educator who functions under the perspective of learning as transformation has perhaps to face his/her own uncertainties so as to be able to inspire and encourage learners "to become active agents of cultural change" (Mezirow, 2000, p.30).

Tracing the Socratic dialogue in Plato's Symposium under the perspective of Transformative Learning we rediscover our times; the Socratic quest for meaning insinuates that nothing is to be taken for granted, that the investigation of truth is an adventure, a journey through constraints raised by dogmatic beliefs and ambivalent assumptions.

Dealing with issues of dialogue, theorists of Transformative Learning, adult educators and learners explore the "dialectic process" in a period of history oscillating between dogmatism and the liquidity of meaning.

References

- Bauman, Z. (1990). Modernity and ambivalence. *Theory, culture and society*, 7, 143-169.
- Bauman, Z. (1993). *Modernity and ambivalence*. Cambridge: Polity Press.
- Bauman, Z. (2000). *Liquid Modernity*. Cambridge: Polity Press.
- Bauman, Z. (2003). *Liquid Love: On the Frailty of Human Bonds*. Oxford: Polity Press.
- Bauman, Z. (2007). *Liquid Times: Living in an Age of Uncertainty*. Polity Press;
- Bourdieu, P. (1979) *La distinction. Critique sociale du jugement*. Coll. Le sens

- commun. Paris: Les Editions de Minuit.
- Brookfield, S. (1995). *Becoming a Critically Reflective Teacher*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.
- Brookfield, S. (2012). *Teaching for critical thinking*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.
- Burnet, J. (1963). *Platonis Opera [Symposium]*, Tomus II. (2nd ed). Scriptorum Classicorum Bibliotheca Oxoniensi. The Oxford Classical Texts.
- Kalokyri, V. (1999). *Challenge in greek post-war literature (1945-1967)* [in greek]. Ph.D. Dissertation, University of Ioannina. National Documentation Centre. <http://phdtheses.ekt.gr/eadd/handle/10442/11227>
- Kokkos, A. (2010). Transformative Learning through Aesthetic Experience. *Journal of Transformative Education*, 8(3), 155 – 177.
- Kokkos, A. (2011). Transformative Learning through Aesthetic Experience. Towards a method. In A. Kokkos, and Associates. *Education through the Arts* [in greek]. Athens: Metaixmio.
- Kokkos, A. (2013). The Use of Aesthetic Experience in Unearthing Critical Thinking. In P. Mayo (Ed.), *Learning with Adults*. Rotterdam: Sense Publishers.
- Kristeva, J. (1970). *Le texte du roman*. Paris: Mouton.
- Mezirow, J. (1990). a) Preface, b) How Critical Reflection Triggers Transformative Learning. In J. Mezirow & Associates, *Fostering Critical Reflection in Adulthood. A guide to transformative and emancipatory learning*. San Francisco: Jossey – Bass.
- Mezirow, J. (1991). *Transformative Dimensions of Adult Learning*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.
- Mezirow, J. (1998). On Critical Reflection. *Adult Education Quarterly*, 48, 185-198.
- Mezirow, J. (2000). Learning to Think Like an Adult. In J. Mezirow & Associates, *Learning as Transformation: Critical Perspectives on a Theory in Progress*. San Francisco: Jossey – Bass.
- Mezirow, J. (2003). Transformative Learning as Discourse. *Journal of Transformative Education*. 1(1), 58-63.
- Mezirow, J. (2006). An overview on transformative learning. In P. Sutherland & J. Growther (Eds.), *Lifelong Learning: Concepts and Contexts*. London/New York: Routledge.
- Mezirow, J. (2009). An overview on transformative learning. In K. Illeris (Ed.), *Contemporary Theories of Learning* (pp. 90-105). London / New York: Routledge.
- Mezirow, J., & Associates (1990). *Fostering Critical Reflection in Adulthood. A guide to transformative and emancipatory learning*. San Francisco: Jossey – Bass.
- Mezirow, J., & Associates (2000). *Learning as Transformation: Critical Perspectives on a Theory in Progress*. San Francisco: Jossey – Bass.
- Papageorgiou, A. (1967). *Plato. Symposium (or about Eros)*. [in greek]. Athens: Editions Nomikos.
- Vlastos, G. (2008). Socrates. Ironist and moral philosopher (5th ed.) [in greek]. P. Kalligas trans. Athens: Estia.
- Vrettos, G. (2013). Socratic irony in the Platonic Dialogues and “Educator’s Haughtiness” in Paulo Freire’s work. *Adult Education*, 29, 10-16.

Xatzopoulos, Od. (Ed.) (1992). *Ancient Greek Literature*. (vol. 2: Plato. Symposium (or about Eros)) [in greek]. Athens: Kaktos

Transformative Learning and the Use, Role and Potential of the Arts

Maria Papadopoulou

University of Athens

Abstract

The author is inspired by both the theory and the process of Perkins, by its visible and tangible results through the application of the arts in education, and even more by the Professor A. Kokko's method. A. Kokkos complements and completes the aforementioned method, applying the theory of transformative learning. The writer discusses on the above method, presents and collects the results from various studies, showing the importance of the use of the arts in education, and the amazing results obtained by combining the above two methods.

The Establishment of a Method

The Educational Background

In relation to educational institutions, each politico-ideological system tends to favor the development of knowledge, capabilities and attitudes that are compatible with the social imposed stereotypes, all of which being prerequisites for a successful professional and social life. However, the impact of social stereotypes on the formation of human perception has not always desirable effects. Therefore, a crucial issue arises, the necessity of establishing a critical way of thinking, capable to become a moral mound against each harmful ideology.

Undoubtedly, there are many potential ways to confront the impacts of such ideologies. In particular, a fertile dialogue might help the individuals to present their arguments and conclude to an objective point of view. Other potential manners of gaining ideological independence could be via learning to deal with literature or, alternatively, the cultural travelling, aiming at broadening the individual's mental horizons. In fact, even if the aforementioned activities could contribute in the formation of a holistic perception, until recent days no spherical method has been developed in the educational field that could enhance the evolution of critical reflection.

According to surveys (EPE Research Center in PCAH, 2011, p. 28) conducted in the US a high percentage of students, that graduate from high school lack the critical and creative thinking, hampering their ability to achieve the next stages of their educational objectives, as well as becoming citizens equipped with critical and creative abilities. Several studies (Burnaford, 2007; Deasy, 2002; Fiske, 1999; Seidel, 2009; & Stevenson in PCAH, 2011, p.57-58) have demonstrated that the incorporation of artworks into the school context turns out to give impressive results, while bridges the aforementioned gap and eventually improves the probabilities for success. Students involved in various forms of art, such as in drama, dance, music, visual arts, broaden their intellectual horizons and develop their brain skills. Such skills could be the development of critical and creative thinking, problem solving, teamwork capabilities, social tolerance and self-confidence. This is reflected in the work of the education researcher M. McLaughlin (2000), who revealed that students who participated in arts programs were more likely to become high academic achievers, be elected to class office, and participate in math or science competitions.

The Need of Art in Transformative Learning

The theory of transformative learning was first expressed by J. Mezirow in the early 1980s. In particular, he described transformative learning as «*an adults' orthological process, characterized by the discovery, the evaluation and reformation of dysfunctional perception, so as to become more comprehensive, articulate, reflectionally and emotionally receptive to change*» (Mezirow in Kokkos, p. 82). However, this is not the unique approach of transformative learning, as several alternative approaches have been also presented in the respective literature. An important reference is that of P. Freire, who introduced the contribution of arts in perceptions' transformation. Stemming from this observation, the role of art is becoming important in meeting a key educational objective: To enable the individual to develop creative and critical thinking, and thus provide him/her with the necessary tools to achieve success.

A review of the past works on the need of art in transformative learning proves the essential role of aesthetics in the development of critical and creative thinking. It is remarkable to mention M. Greene's (1995) opinion on this matter, according to whom the engagement with art boosts the imagination and offers them light and life, as she maintains «*art offers life; it offers the prospect of discovery; it offers light*» (p. 133). In addition, another great academic, D. Perkins (1994), outlines the importance of the systematic observation of work of arts, aiming at the promotion of a reflective disposition, as well as of a creative and critical thinking. However, he does not aim at transforming the observer through the art.

In 2011, Prof. A. Kokkos, inspired by the theory of transformative learning in adult education, with main exponents P. Freire and J. Mezirow, has developed the novel method of «*Transformative Learning through the Aesthetic Experience*». A. Kokkos method complements the model of D. Perkins and approaches the theory of transformative learning in conjunction with the contribution of art, in order to build up the ability of critical reflection. Therefore, he completes this approach by integrating all the positive characteristics from the systemic art observation in his method and combining them with the transformation of dysfunctional perception.

The Method of Transformative Learning through the Aesthetic Experience Theoretical Basis of the Method

A. Kokkos method on the Transformative Learning through the Aesthetic Experience is based on the innovative combination of the stimulation that quality artwork may induce, with the principle that the initial point for transformative learning is the so-called «*disorientation dilemma*» (Mezirow, 1991). The theoretical background of the method stems from the generic framework of transformative learning, with emphasis on ways to alter mental habits and transform stereotypes. During the educational process, the individual may need to be exposed on certain aspects of his/her ideas that have not been revealed so far. Evidently, understanding of the individual mental habits, changing and/or cultivating them will increase critical reflections. As follows, a presentation is made on key literature that forms the basis of the method.

In the book «*Art as experience*», J. Dewey (1934), claims that the engagement with art constitutes the basic instrument for the cultivation of imagination, and is a vital tool of the educational process: «*A mental activity cannot be complete, unless it is characterized by art. In a few words, if the aesthetic experience is separated by the mental experience, the last cannot be complete*» (Dewey in Kokkos, 2011, p. 74). In addition in an effort to approach, J. P. Sartre remarks that the understanding of a

literature work is achieved when the reader manages to develop reflective tools, giving, in this way, meaning to the work's content. J. P. Sartre, also, claims that the contact with literature enables the individual to see the reality through alternate prisms (Sartre in Kokkos, 2011, p. 75).

The above ideas were also endorsed and supported by P. Waltzlawick, J. Beavin Bavelas and D. Jackson, according to the studies of which it was shown that equal and mutually complementary function of both hemispheres of the brain renders human thought complete (Waltzlawick, Beavin, Bavelas & Jackson, 1967). Therefore, P. Waltzlawick (1982) reaches to substantial conclusions concerning the way of human dysfunctional assumptions' transformation, as well as the role of arts in this process. (Waltzlawick in Kokkos, 2011, p.75). The subject of art in education was, also, analysed by the Frankfurt School and great European philosophers, like philosophers C. Kastoriadis (Kastoriadis 2008) and B. Boyd (Boyd, 2009). In the book «*The aesthetic dimension*» - Marcuse (1978), claims «*the contact with the quality artwork renders feasible the inversion of the established experience and reignites the avidity of the human liberation*» (Marcuse in Kokkos, 2011, p. 78).

From the educational perspective, D. Perkins (1994) in the book «*The intelligent eye: Learning to Think by Looking at Art*», recognizes the benefits of arts in enhancing an individual's way of thinking - «*Thinking through looking thus has a double meaning: The looking we do should be thought through, and thoughtful looking is a way to make thinking better*» (p. 5). Furthermore, D. Perkins created a four stepped process of analysis of artworks, starting with the observation, continuing with the discovery of its aspects and meanings, and finally ending with the synthetic gathering of the observer's thought and the deduction of critical conclusion.

D. Perkin's (1994) process aims to achieve - «*more intelligent lookers*» with creative and critical thinking. Such an objective should be considered as feasible when the observation of artworks is guided through the production of constructive thoughts, as it would broaden the mind and strengthen its analytic abilities. Furthermore, this process contributes to the development of «*experiential intelligence*» and the enrichment of experience, discovering at the same time various knowledge aspects.

Therefore, art can act as a stimulation tool that encourages students to develop their critical reflection. Quality of art is characterized by the advantages of a broad band of stimulating symbols and the ability to generate a complexity of feelings and emotions that will eventually build the necessary grounds for the individual's critical development. Furthermore, the individual is exposed to aspects of his/her emotional being that are not easily accessed through a rational approach.

The Method of Transformative Learning through the Aesthetic Experience

Method via an illustrative example

The absence of an appropriate method aiming at a holistic development of both adults and underage students triggered the introduction of an innovative and a distinctive method. In particular, A. Kokkos (2013), in his article «*Transforming Learning through Art*», claims «*Nevertheless, in spite of the growing recognition of the role of aesthetic experience in various theories of adult learning, a literature review (see ARTiT, 2012a) shows that there are very few methods aiming to provide adult educators with guidelines and tools which might enable them to design training modules that help them to develop learners' creativity and critical mode of thinking through the exploration of works of art*» (p.2).

Based on the above background and in the absence of a structured learning method for adults and children, A. Kokkos introduced the six-staged innovative method of

Transformative Learning through the Aesthetic Experience that uses the exposure to fine art as a key tool for the transformative process, with main goal the transformation of stereotypes perceptions through the critical reflection.

In A. Kokkos method, art can act as a stimulation tool that encourages students to develop their critical reflection. Quality in art though may be considered as a difficult characteristic to define. It could be qualitatively characterized by the advantages of a broad band of stimulating symbols and the ability to generate a complexity of feelings and emotions that will eventually build the necessary grounds for the individual's critical development. As a result, the individual is exposed to aspects of his/her emotional being that are not easily accessed through a rational approach. In this way, individuals are capable of realizing the reality holistically and creating new challenges for their life.

The unique element of the method lies in its structured form, which differentiates it from other similar theories. In this regard, the method's significance relatively to the approaches of its theoretical background is evident, as it is not restricted to a simple contact with art, but a stepwise methodology towards the achievement of the desired effects in education. In addition, the method focuses on the special needs of individuals, as at the first stage the educator takes into account the stereotypes or the dysfunctional perceptions that the students have.

In the following paragraphs, A. Kokkos' method stages are presented accompanied with an illustrative example that serves as a demonstrator to explain how the method could work to transform a stereotype. For illustration purposes only, the following stereotype that regards to the quality of information flow has been chosen: several people accept a piece of information without critical thinking over its source or means of transport. A set of artwork and stimuli in the form of discussion subjects is selected to demonstrate the use of the method in enabling the trainee to recognize the need of verification of information sources. The method stages are the following: (Kokkos, 2011, p. 97-100)

1) The first stage concerns the need for the exploration of an issue, for which learners have dysfunctional perceptions or stereotypes. At the beginning or during a lesson or a seminar, the educator is possible to become aware of a dominated stereotype. Then, it would be ideal to coordinate a discussion on the specific issue, in order to help the individuals to figure out the need of critical reflection on this matter. Precisely, the goal is the reconsideration of their perception, in order to activate the specific mental habit. This process is the «*disorientation dilemma*» that J. Mezirow poses in his theory. Final, a crucial condition for the application of the method is to obtain the positive assent of the learners. As an example, the teacher could trace the stereotype of lack of information verification through an open discussion regarding how they perceive the validity of news presented daily in social media.

2) In the second stage, the educator encourages the trainees to express their ideas in writing relatively to the specific issue. This step is aiming at the activation of critical and creative thinking concerning this issue. Furthermore, the recording of ideas in written form can help the teacher to compare the original ideas of learners with those who will be expressed at the last stage of the process. In the end, the educator motivates the individuals to discuss their ideas in small groups and subsequently to participate in a general discussion. The goal of these discussions is to establish a hierarchy of agreements and form a theme, which is going to be analyzed

with critical thinking disposition. In our illustrative example, the teacher could trigger a discussion over the issue of information validity, by asking the students to express their opinion towards a recent story that appeared in social media and caused rumors and vague assumptions.

3) In the third stage, the educator examines the expressed agreements and defines the sub-issues that will be analyzed in this process. The sub-issues could, also, be determined by the learners through the discussion. Additionally, either the educator himself or in cooperation with the students, can define some critical questions that have to be associated with the sub issues. In our example, the teacher could trace patterns in the answers of the students regarding (a) the source(s) of information that they used, (b) the ways that they checked the information validity, (c) their personal emotions towards the subject, etc.

4) The fourth stage is characterized by the selection process of quality artworks (these that trigger critical reflection on the specific issue) of all kinds of art by both the educator and the students through the discussion process. At this point it is significant to mention that the combination of the critical questions with the artworks is a crucial characteristic of this stage. In our example, the teacher would pick artworks that depict how information flow could be affected by various factors, leading to distorted information. Here, a set of artworks is collected to demonstrate the use of the method in the next stages: (a) N. Rockwell's painting *«the Gossip»* (1938), (b) T. J. Elliot's quote *«Where is the wisdom we have lost in knowledge? Where is the knowledge we have lost in information?»* (From the poem *«The Rock»*), and (c) M. Cervantes' novel *«The Ingenious Gentleman Don Quixote of La Mancha»* (1605). All these pieces of art demonstrate various ways that can cause information distortion: (a) a social network, like the one literally shown in N. Rockwell's painting; (b) a weak perception of what knowledge is, like in T. J. Elliot's poem; and (c) the idealization, as expressed through Don Quixote's personality. The critical questions that have been defined in stage 3 relate to the artworks of stage 4 as in Table 1.

5) In the fifth stage, the educator encourages the development of a discussion through the systematic observation of the artworks, trying to approach critically the examined issue. This stage consists of three steps: firstly the educator figures out the students' opinions, categorizes them and announces these categories to them. Subsequently, the model of D. Perkins is used for the observation of the artwork. The next step is to have a discussion concerning the interrelated interpretations that have resulted from the observation. The interpretations of the students are the triggering event in order to be held critical discussion on the examined issue. In the end, all the selected artworks are observed consecutively in the same way. As a result, the interpretations that are related to the examined issue trigger the critical reflection. In our example, the students would discuss (in written or oral form) on the three artworks, expressing their thoughts and feelings, guided by the teacher through the key questions of the third stage.

6) In the last stage, the trainees write down or discuss their perceptions that emerge from the critical process of the fifth stage. Afterwards, the transformed perceptions, of those who have managed to transform them, are compared with these

of the second stage. Finally, all the members discuss the synthetic conclusions that emerge from the issue by thinking reflectively. In our example, the students would revisit their opinion towards the subject discussed in the second stage of the method (a story that appeared in social media), but with incentives and influenced from the knowledge they gained in stages 3 to 5. It is the change in focal point, achieved through the observation of the artworks and the analysis through dialogue, which would play key role in transforming the student’s perception towards the initial subject. As a result, the method manages to increase the probability of stereotype transformation, giving the students the option to reconsider whether they just absorbed information, or they did search about it.

TABLE 1
Illustrative example on the method of Transformative Learning through Aesthetic Experience: Correlation between critical questions and artworks.

<i>Artwork</i>	<i>Critical question (as in stage 3)</i>
N. Rockwell “ <i>the Gossip</i> ”	(a),
T. J. Elliot “ <i>The Rock</i> ”	(a), (b)
M. Cervantes “ <i>Don Quixote</i> ”	(c)

The contribution of Dialogue to the Method of Transformative Learning through the Aesthetic Experience

3.1 The role of dialogue

Viewing the individual steps of the A. Kokko’s method, through the prism of dialogue reveals that the fertile discussion is crucial on the formation of an open communication stream between the individuals and the effective exposure of their perceptions. In fact, the dialogue is used as a key tool for expanding the critical reflection of the individual, by incorporating the dynamic exchange of ideas between the team, throughout all stages of the method. Therefore, the interrelation of the theories regarding arts in education, as well as their combination in this structured innovative and dialectical method, has a promising potential for the transformation of dysfunctional perceptions and stereotypes.

The method «*Transformative Learning through the Aesthetic Experience*» could be characterized as dialectical, as it is based on the discussion between the interlocutors. It is worth to mention that from the first stage of the method, the dialectical discussion is fostered. The teacher initiates a discussion, whose main theme is the analysis of one ascertained stereotype of the participants. In this stage even if the dialogue has not developed at a full scale, it is the triggering event, in order the trainees to be faced with the so called «*disorientating dilemma*» and start thinking critically.

Subsequently, at the second stage, the dynamic role of the dialogue is evident. At the end of this stage, the educator encourages the participants to discuss their ideas that they have already written on paper individually, in small groups. After that, the learners are asked to discuss their ideas collectively. Prominently, the goal of the dialectical discussions is to classify the individuals’ opinions hierarchically and pose an issue, which is analyzed with critical reflection. Consequently, the participants elaborate the expressed ideas through the dialectical discussion, in a reflective way of thinking.

Afterwards, at the third stage the dialogue is at a progress phase. Both the sub-issues and the critical questions could stem from the conversation between the educator and

the learners. At the fourth stage, the opinions of all the participants are taken into consideration and as a result the artworks that will be analyzed, are defined, through a dialectical conversation.

At the fifth stage the dialogue is at the peak of his development. The artworks that have been chosen, in accordance with the critical questions that have arisen, are thoroughly observed and analyzed with the key tool of dialogue. Each participant of the conversation announces his/her opinions to the others and each artwork is analyzed separately, enhancing in this manner a fertile way of thinking. All the members of the team are led gradually to the transformation of their initial stereotypical perception through the dialogue and their contact with the art, by the adoption of a reflective thinking.

Finally, at the last stage the educator can remind the learners of their firstly expressed ideas, so as to help them realize their transformation. Subsequently, it is necessary to discuss all together the perceptions that each one might want to alter or transform. It is remarkable that both the dialogue and the team dynamics are crucial for the transformation of the learners. According to a relative abstract from the book *«Education through the Arts»*, (Kokkos, 2011), a student mentions: *«I have understood the importance of team dynamics for the evolvement of consciousness, reconsideration and the abandonment of the previous perceptions»*. Finally, each student can write down his/her final thoughts concerning the examined issue, as well as and his/her feelings that emerged from the above process.

The essential purpose of A. Kokko's method is the formation of a free and holistic thinking through the critical reflection, contrary to the deeply rooted stereotypes that are imposed by the society. The constructive dialogue in combination with art stimuli not only trigger the necessary transformation process, but also encourage the individuals to reveal their ideas and fuse them in the framework of a group. At this point, it is worthy to note that further research would reveal the impact of group dynamics over the method's effectiveness. Such an analysis would shed light on the roles that team members acquaint depending on their stereotypes and how these link to the roles that the individuals obtain in the framework of the team. As a result, the educational method would further evolve to encapsulate the effects that stereotypes and their transformation have on the individual's behavioral patterns on a societal perspective.

3.2 Review of A. Kokkos Method Results

A. Kokkos method has been applied on a trial basis, in Greece in 2009, at universities, businesses, programs of training the trainers, second challenge schools, therapeutic communities and institutes of education and training. The method was applied in Denmark, Greece, Romania and Sweden through the EC funded project *«ARTiT: Development of innovative methods of training the trainers»*. Nowadays, the method is adopted by organizations of Denmark, Romania and Sweden, as well as by the Hellenic Open University, the Universities of Athens, Macedonia and Patras, several Addiction Treatment Centers and Lifelong Learning Centers of Greek Municipalities³. The EC funded project *«ARTiT: Development of innovative methods of training the trainers»* (2011) concerned the participation of twenty two trainers (6 from Denmark, 6 from Greece, 6 from Romania and 4 from Sweden), who were trained in order to applied the method to two hundred and twelve trainees. The results showed that a significant percentage of trainees highlighted that the usefulness of the method in education process, because *«the use of such methods that base on art enhances the*

³ Retrieved from <http://www.alexiskokkos.gr/texni.html>

interest in acquisition of knowledge, encourages and creates a positive and ancillary ambiance for discussion». Furthermore, several trainees claimed that the method helped them to cultivate their personality, improved the imagination and developed the horizons of the mind. In addition, a majority of trainees were positively disposed towards the method, which based on art and on «the critical dialogue». Finally, a large number of them remarked the interactive process of the method and its impact on the communication between the members of the group.

According to the study of Raikou (2013), the method was applied on a group of adult trainees achieving the critical reflection at a high level. The trainees broadened the horizons of their thinking and were led to a deeper understanding and realization of the examined issue. Furthermore, the trainees adopted a positive attitude about arts and presented a high level of empathy. Apart from these positive results, the target of the method was achieved, as the majority of the trainees transformed the stereotypes that had arisen by the examination of the issue.

Moreover, the study of Christou (2015) applied on children of 11 – 12 age showed that the kids managed to develop a critical and creative thinking, by facing the examined issue in a holistic way. The children, also, developed «the good thinking», as they learned to substantiate their claims. Additionally, arts served as the triggering event to evolve the ability of empathy. Finally, a large number of the children changed their point of view and transformed their dysfunctional perceptions regarding the examined issue.

A large number of teachers that applied this method arrived at the aforementioned conclusions (Kokkos, 2011). In particular, their trainees developed critical reflection through the art and the dialectical discussion. They, also, learned to think critically and were able to manage the problems of their life in a proper way. It is remarkable that they evolved empathy and social awareness, which are two necessary elements of a moral personality. The most important factor of all is that the majority of trainees transformed their dysfunctional perceptions relatively to the examined issues.

Finally, A. Kokkos (2011) in his book «*Education through the Arts*», claims that his method stimulates the thinking process and arouses emotions in a unique way among other educational methods. Furthermore, the method enables individuals to have a critical approach on a wide variety of issues and fosters the development of their «*soft skills*» and their creativity. In conclusion, as the individuals develop critical reflection, they become able to perceive the reality in a holistic way.

Epilogue

Concluding, the role of art in education acts catalytically in academic contexts, providing the underage students with a key to success in their future life. Specifically, the art enhances students' academic progress and reduces the odds of a premature termination of their education. Therefore, the art plays an essential role in the development of critical and creative thinking, as well as it grows the individual's imagination resulting in the spherical understanding of the world. Finally, the usefulness of art is not restricted at the narrow limits of the underage students' education, but it also plays an important role in adult's educational contexts.

According to the aforementioned results, it is noted that the integration of A. Kokkos art based method in education has a greater positive impact relatively to other simple art observation models. The method «*Transformative Learning through the Aesthetic Experience*» complements and completes the other techniques of education through the art, as it fosters the development of the ability of critical reflection and leads to the transformation of the dysfunctional habits of human minds. Therefore, this is a

method that involves the participants in a dialectical discussion, through which they evolve a critical and creative thinking, by cultivating their «soft skills».

In conclusion, the scope of this method, which focuses on society's specific characteristics, is to help the individuals to expand their mental horizons and create a free ideology without the social stereotypes. Particularly, Mezirow (2007) maintains that «the ultimate purpose of adults' education is to help the trainees to appreciate their abilities and become ideologically free, socially responsible, and self-reliant learners – that means to have the ability to choose consciously and think more critically» (Mezirow in Bergidis & Kokkos, 2010, p. 65). Summarizing it can be understood that this method is human centered and as a result its international application could lead to a better and more ideologically free society.

References

- Cristou, M. (2015): The development of «soft skills» with the utilization of the art in the elementary school. Master's Dissertation. Pedagogical University, Athens
- European Project ARTiT: «Development of innovative methods of training the trainers».* (2011). Athens, D.C: Author.
- Greene, M. (1995). *Releasing the imagination; Essays on education, the arts, and social challenge.* San Francisco: Jossey-Bas
- Kokkos, A. (2011). *Education through the art.* Athens: Metaichmio
- Kokkos, A. (2013, April). *Transforming learning through art.* LLinE (Lifelong Learning in Europe), v. 4/2013.
- Mezirow, J. (2007): *Learning to think like an adult.* In Bergidis, A. & Kokkos, A. (Eds.), *Critical reflection: A critical issue. adult education: National approaches and Greek ways:* Athens: Metaichmio 2010, pp. 65-93
- Perkins, D. (1994). *The intelligent eye; learning to think by looking at art.* Los Angeles. California: The Getty Education Institute for the Arts
- President's Committee on the Arts and the Humanities. (2011). *Reinvesting in arts.* Washington, DC: Author.
- Raikou, N. (2013): The development of critical reflection through the aesthetic experience: The example of students of Pedagogical University. Doctoral Dissertation. Pedagogical University, Patras

Implementing Poetry, Music & ICT in unearthing Critical Thinking in KETHEA EXODOS Alternative Adult School.

Efstathia Georgopoulou

Hellenic Open University

Remos Armaos

Hellenic Open University

Abstract

This paper aims to highlight the importance of art (poetry & music) and ICT in unearthing critical thinking in learning of former drug addicts currently in drug free treatment. It underlines how music, tapped with technology provide pathways for them to optimize and generate new perspectives in their learning. Art appears to be a key parameter in engaging this socially vulnerable group in promoting their mental abilities and in developing their initiation and opportunities for critical thinking. Art becomes conducive for them to regain control of their formally shattered lives and to re-enter back into the society and prevent relapse.

Drug Addicts as Social Vulnerable Groups

People who are socially marginalized and have little or no access to public goods, such as housing, work, education and healthy social relationships, are defined as social vulnerable groups. Unemployed citizens, people with social needs, single mothers, HIV patients, immigrants, refugees, drug addicts are considered to be among these groups (Koutrouvidis, 2015; Matsa, 2006; Ntafouli, 2009; Pouloupoulos, 2011, 2014). Their lack of social and material resources leads to their social impairment on the ground that they are dangerous for proper social development (Alexiou, 2006).

More specifically, drug addiction causes social exclusion in many ways. On the one hand, the fact that many people tend to believe that drug addiction consists a free choice stigmatizes the addict as well as his/her family. Consequently, drug addicts are considered as a threat to public order and its prevailing attitudes and values (Grammatika, 2011; Matsa, 2006). This perception very often results in these people's marginalization (Matsa, 2013; Pouloupoulos, 2011, 2014). On the other hand, drug addicts themselves feel too lonely to cope with serious family or social problems, such as unemployment, a divorce, a death, family abuse, alcohol or drug abuse. So, they tend to find their "salvation" in drugs, a "salvation" which in the first place seems to be a free choice, but it's rather a matter of personal and social crisis (Koutrouvidis, 2015; Matsa, 2008, 2013; Pouloupoulos, 2011, 2014).

Drug addiction leads to absolute loneliness, because it replaces every form of social relationship, a loneliness which could be referred as a synonym to marginalization. In fact, drug addicts are characterized as vulnerable people, because their addiction affects important cognitive, behavioral and mental functions (Pouloupoulos, 2011, 2014). Low self-esteem, sentimental deficiency, a negative social identity and the syndromes of guilt are some of their behavioral symptoms (Kremmydas, 2006) related to conflict with their dysfunctional family, school drop-out, inability of time perception, lack of life interest and a general self-destruction (Matsa, 2013·

Poulopoulos, 2011, 2014· Poulopoulos, Tsiboukli & Papanastasatos, 2001).

Drug Addicts and Education

Drug addicts encounter school dropout and young delinquency at an early age (Poulopoulos, 2011, 2014). School dropout is considered to be one of the main causes of marginalization as well as social and economic exclusion (Kiritsi & Armaos, 2011; Koutrouvidis, 2015). Research evidence (Armaos & Koutrouvidis, 2011; Deligiannis, 2007; Kiritsi and Armaos, 2011; Koutrouvidis, 2010b, 2015) suggests that return to school is a necessary factor concerning addicts' detoxication, one's life transformation and social reintegration. In fact, any prior problematic and traumatizing school experiences make difficult for them to reenter and readjust into this context. Consequently, the liberating and non-hegemonic adult education principles appear to be an optimal way for them to regain their self-respect and enhance their self-efficacy while struggling to return back to life (Brookfield 2012· Freire & Shor, 2011· Jaques, 2004· Jarvis, 2004, 2007· Kokkos, 2005a, 2005b, 2006, 2010· Mezirow, 2007, 2009a, 2009b · Rogers, 1999).

Art as an educational transformative tool against addiction

Art consists an important tool for fostering critical thinking, which can lead to people's transformation. That is the reason why there is a latest tendency in formal and informal education using art as a basic tool for promoting creativity, imagination as well as empirical knowledge (Dewey, 1934[2005]; Gardner, 1990; Kokkos, 2009, 2010, 2011, 2012, 2013; Kokkos & Mega, 2007; Perkins, 1994; Raikou, 2013). Moreover, art in anyone of its forms (music, literature, theatre, dance etc.) combined with psychotherapy (Matsa, 2008) can assist former drug addicts to enjoy learning and its benefits, by actively participating in the process. In effect, they reformulate their problematic assumptions with their past, become open minded and socialized. Art through its unique values helps them transform their cognitive and sentimental relationship with themselves and the world (DeBotton & Armstrong, 2014; Matsa, 2008, 2013) and gives them the great opportunity to get away from drug or any other form of addiction. Moreover, higher order thinking skills and critical reflection processes, an inner discourse with the self seems to initiate, resulting from the aesthetic experience, as it stimulates learners' way of thinking and imagination and helps them renegotiate stereotypes and false concepts (Dewey, 1934[2005]; Kokkos, 2009, 2010, 2011, 2012, 2013; Kostara, 2014; Perkins, 1994).

Perkins' method (1994) and Alexis Kokkos' "Transformative Learning through Aesthetic Experience" (2009, 2010, 2011, 2012, 2013) are models really appropriate for implementation in such cases, because they use the arts as a tool in order to unearth critical thinking. Thus, they focus on the process through which learners transform their values, beliefs and their attitude towards life (Giannakopoulou, Deligiannis, Ziozias & Hadoulitsi, 2011; Deligiannis, Dimitriou, Kiritsis & Smitlianou, 2011; Koulaouzidis, 2007).

ICT, Art and Adult Education

ICT consists a useful educational tool, as it offers high quality educational opportunities. Learners are given the chance to actively participate in an environment characterized by equality, interaction and freedom, where autonomous and experiential learning leads to the development of critical reflection (Alimisis, 2003; Konstantinou, 2005; Lionarakis & Fragkaki, 2009; Motekaityte et al, 2010; Mouzakis, 2006; Vrasidas, Zempylas & Petrou, 2005;

Zogopoulos, 2001). Taking into account that these characteristics are known as some of the basic principles in Adult Education (Courau, 2000; Noye' & Piveteau, 1999; Rogers, 1999), it is clear that ICT is a necessary tool in this field.

As regards the Arts through ICT, students can easily gain access to a great deal of pieces of art in museums and galleries all over the world (Alimisis, 2003; Fanarioti, 2004; Psiharis, 2010). ICT helps learners undertake the leading role and discover the pieces of art that meet their personal needs. The use of multimedia stimulates students' senses and this process causes new sentiments and thoughts that result in a better understanding of art. In other words, ICT can become an "Open Window" to Art and help learners think critically as it provides pathways for gaining new knowledge, information, allow interaction and communication as well as supported learning in an alternative and autonomous way (Lionarakis & Fragkaki, 2009; Motekaityte et al., 2010; Vrasidas, Zempilas & Petrou, 2005). All in all, art via ICT can become a new alternative educational method, the basis of learners' liberation (Freire & Shor, 2011), in order to transform their feelings and ideas about their lives and formulate sensory perception. Not only does it help adults learn, but it also promotes their creativity. That is the reason why it is appropriate for social vulnerable groups.

KETHEA EXODOS Alternative Adult School: A case Study

EXODOS Alternative Adult School (AAS) was established in the school year 2000-2001 and since then it operates as an informal educational structure, according to the Greek educational framework, concerning students at home (Deligiannis, 2007; Koutrouvidis, 2010a, 2010b, 2015; Ntafouli, 2009). It was the first Alternative Adult School that was established by KETHEA and an exemplar for future educational projects (Kiritsi & Armaos, 2011) as it operates in order to pile the therapeutic piece. Nine teachers of several specialties and an education training - consultant manager are AAS' teaching staff.

This research was held in KETHEA EXODOS Alternative Adult School in Larissa on the 30 of March 2015 and lasted from 17:25-20:35'. A qualitative approach was implemented while participant observation, self-reported questionnaires, a focus group on learners and two educator's interviews were deployed in an equivalent Lyceum Grade 3 class. The research subjects were four men 26-39 years old and their Literature teacher, a woman, 38 years old. Along with the class teacher's collaboration, an art-based intervention was implemented based on the transformative learning through aesthetic experience method (Kokkos, 2009, 2010, 2011 & 2012).

Class adult learners were invited to work in two groups on Dionisios Solomos' poem titled "The Cretan" coupled with classical music echoes, in their effort to shed light into themselves, think deeply and reflect about their personal change and transformation, and appreciate their efforts accomplished so far.

The specific poem was chosen because it describes the transformation of a shipwrecked Cretan warrior, who, after the defeat of the Cretan Revolution in 1823-1824, tries to get away to Greece having his fiancée with him. While being in the sea he goes through some tests of the nature, which transform him from a person full of hatred against Turkish enemies into a creature full of love and understanding for every other creature on earth.

Firstly, the learners heard the poem once in recitation by Lydia Koniordou, a well-known Greek actress, in order learners to form a slight opinion. Then, the researcher recited an excerpt of the poem to background music from the Moonlight Sonata by Beethoven. After that, learners were asked to work on couples in order to do the same, to choose an excerpt of the specific poem and look for classical music on the Internet as a background music. When they were ready, they cited their excerpts in the class.

Research findings

At first, all learners mentioned that their previous relationship with poetry was very limited or non-existent:

“Almost none, only lyrics on the walls” (man, 32 years old),

“It was only a boring subject” (man, 39 years old),

“I have no opinion” (man, 26 years old).

They all accused school of failing to persuade students to form a good opinion about poetry:

“The teaching methods are tiring” (man, 32 years old),

“Incomprehensible...” (man, 31 years old).

After the first recitation of the poem, three of the learners characterized it as long, tiring, incomprehensible and pessimistic:

“Very long and tiring! I was swept away in it and filled with grief” (man, 39 years old),

“I didn’t understand it in the first place. I didn’t like it. Then, it became more depressing. I understood only specific phrases” (man, 26 years old),

“It was long and difficult to pay attention and understand” (man, 31 years old).

Only one learner mentioned that he liked Lydia’s Koniordou recitation:

“I really liked Koniordou’s tone. I didn’t understand it all, but I liked it, because it excited my imagination” (man, 32 years old).

Concerning the music, they all referred to it as a great factor that helped them change their opinion about the poem:

“Music accompanied my thoughts. I will remember it more easily. It’s the first time that something like that happens to me!” (man, 32 years old),

“Appropriate music can make you think more!” (man, 31 years old),

“In the first place, when Koniordou started reciting, I thought it would be boring. But then, the music made it better. I can remember some phrases that swept me away!” (man, 26 years old),

“Music made the poem more comprehensible, easier, more pleasant for me to listen”(man, 39 years old).

The adult educator agrees that the background music to the poem was a splendid idea and she found really interesting the fact that learners had to cope with classical music:

“Music and poetry fit to each other, that’s why there are many set to music poems. Music can enhance poem’s atmosphere, can make you feel more and I

think that it is a suitable technique to unite these two types of art. I really liked the choice of the specific kind of music as it suits it” (woman, 38 years old).

All four learners emphasise on the fact that with the music they transformed their views about the poem and they focused on the optimistic characteristics:

“I liked the choice of this poem. Ok, with the music I saw the love in it!” (man, 32 years old),

“The poem was a little bit depressing. It had death. I would like something more optimistic. But the music made me watch it better and in the end I lost these bad feelings. I didn’t keep the anger, nor the pain” (man, 31 years old),

“In the first place I didn’t like it, it was boring. But with the music I liked it a lot! I can express it with colors! While at first it was black with a touch of grey, then it became a little red, I mean an intense color! Better thoughts came to my mind” (man, 26 years old),

“I would never choose this poem at first. But, when the music came, I liked it! I thought it was a good choice! It is a great poem, it has many feelings; Suddenly, it came to me to analyze the whole poem and understand its deepest meanings. Music made it softer, more optimistic, it pushed you to go on!” (man, 39 years old).

Moreover, they all noted that ICT made an important contribution to this research, as it activated them and helped them understand poetry better:

“It is a significant tool. It surely makes things more interesting” (man, 32 years old),

“It is a fast tool. It goes fast and you have to go fast as well and this is very good because it makes you energetic” (man, 26 years old),

“ICT gives you much information and it is a direct tool” (man, 31 years old),

“I think that ICT is really helpful in every subject! It keeps you up with the latest information and stimulates you to take action. You participate more, you take and give, and this activates you (man, 39 years old)”.

The adult educator mentioned that ICT helped a lot the research because it prompted learners to take action and become a part of the whole process. Apart from that, she noted that ICT helped them recall personal experiences and find in music symbolisms relevant to their lives:

“It helped a lot! They had a PC and Internet and this was a new world for them. I think that this part was very important, because they are adults and they need to be activated. I think that a learner said that we make the lesson here; And this is the key task, this is what they really want, and they like it”,

“Without any doubt the music piece they chose is relevant with their personal experiences, their memories, their situation. I think that the fact that they had to look for music in the internet and choose a music piece prompted them to look inside themselves and think why they chose this specific one” (woman, 38 years old).

Finally, learners mention that this specific method (Poetry, Music and ICT) activated them and under the appropriate circumstances it can be a new incentive in their lives:

“It impressed me that I can approach it through a second level; this way older and younger people can get more easily in the process” (man, 32 years old),

“I cannot study poetry at all, but this combination of poetry with music intrigued me! I really suggest it to people! Because I am a strange character, guys! I do not understand poetry, but I can remember my lyrics by heart!” (man, 39 years old),

“The arts are good. They give you much, interest, hope, sentiments, satisfaction. I would possibly write music” (man, 31 years old),

“All types of good art can offer a lot. As regards poetry, I think it would be really difficult for me to understand. But in combination with music I would definitely let it happen!” (man, 26 years old).

Conclusions

This paper aimed to highlight the importance of art (poetry & music) and ICT in unearthing critical thinking in learning of former drug addicts currently in drug free treatment. It was found that art is a key parameter in engaging this socially vulnerable group in promoting their mental abilities and in developing their initiation and opportunities for critical thinking (Dewey, 1934[2005]; Gardner, 1990; Kokkos, 2009, 2010, 2011, 2012, 2013; Kokkos & Raikou, 2014; Mega, 2011; Perkins, 1994). The combination of two separate forms of art (poetry and music) becomes conducive for them to regain control of their formally shattered lives and to re-enter back into the society and prevent relapse.

Furthermore, the support of ICT in the art-mediated learning experience (Lionarakis & Fragkaki, 2009) proved inspiring, as it provided pathways for gaining new knowledge, information, allow interaction and communication and supported learning in an alternative and autonomous way. The use of ICT made a great contribution to this process, becoming an open window to art and helping learners to think critically (Vrasidas, Zempilas & Petrou, 2005; Motekaityte et al., 2010).

Finally, classical music in combination with ICT helped adult learners “unlock” the deeper meanings of the poem, change their first negative feelings and made them face poetry from an alternative point of view. Thus, combining arts and ICT can be a helpful educational strategy for former drug addicts, as it “unchains” their feelings and positive thoughts and gives them the opportunity to transform, to taste the creative aspects of education and -why not- of their life. For this reason, the specific strategy can be a central point of a dialogue concerning transformative learning.

References

Alexiou, Th. (2006). «Κοινωνικός αποκλεισμός» και «αποκλεισμένες ομάδες»: Οι ιδεολογικές λειτουργίες μιας εννοιολόγησης (Social exclusion and social vulnerable groups: The Ideological functions of a conceptualization). *Κοινωνία και Ψυχική Υγεία*, 1, 32-50. Retrieved from:

http://www.psy.auth.gr/sites/default/files/Periodiko_1st_volume.pdf

Alimisis, D. (2003). *Ο Υπολογιστής ως Εργαλείο Παραγωγικότητας*,

- Πληροφόρησης & Επικοινωνίας στην Εκπαίδευση: Εργαστηριακός οδηγός για την εκπαίδευση Εκπαιδευτικών στις Τεχνολογίες Πληροφορίας & Επικοινωνίας (Computer as a Tool of Productivity, Information and Communication: Laboratory Guide for Educators' Education in ICT)*. Athens: Ίων.
- Armaos, R. & Koutrouvidis, P. (2011, May). *Transformative Learning through the Therapeutic Community Model of Treatment in Addiction Recovery*. Paper presented at the 9th International Transformative Learning Conference, Athens. Retrieved from:
http://blogs.sch.gr/stelam/files/2011/06/TLC-2011-Proceedings_MAJv3_2011-05-23.pdf
- Brookfield, St. (2012). *Teaching for Critical Thinking: Tools and Techniques to Help Students Question their Assumptions*. San Fransisco: Jossey–Bass.
- Courau, S. (2000). *Τα Βασικά «Εργαλεία» του Εκπαιδευτή Ενηλίκων (Les outils d'excellence du formateur)*. Athens: Μεταίχμιο.
- DeBotton, A. & Armstrong, J. (2014). *Η Τέχνη ως θεραπεία (Art as therapy)*. Athens: Πατάκης.
- Deligiannis, D. (2007). Εναλλακτικό Σχολείο Ενηλίκων του Θεραπευτικού Προγράμματος ΕΞΟΔΟΣ (KETHEA EXODOS Alternative Adult School). *Εκπαίδευση Ενηλίκων*, 10, 27-35.
- Deligiannis, D., Dimitriou, A., Kiritsis, G. & Smitlianou, F. (2011, June). *Ο ρατσισμός, εμείς και οι άλλοι (Racism, we and the others)*. Paper in the International Conference «Εκπαίδευση και Κοινωνική Ένταξη Ευάλωτων Ομάδων», (Vulnerable Groups' Education and Social Integration), Thessaloniki. Retrieved from:
http://www.uom.gr/media/docs/ekp/conf_2011/PROCEEDINGS_24_6_2011.pdf
- Dewey, J. (1934 [2005]). *Art as Experience*. New York: The Penguin Group.
- Fanarioti, P. (2004). *Η Εκπαίδευση στο Σύγχρονο Κοινωνικοοικονομικό & Τεχνολογικό Περιβάλλον: Συστήματα, Στρατηγικές και Νέες Τεχνολογίες στην Πορεία προς την Εκπαιδευτική Αλλαγή (Education in the Modern Social Economical Environment: Systems, Strategies and ICT towards a Change in Education)*. Athens: Σταμούλης.
- Freire, P. & Shor, I. (2011). *Απελευθερωτική Παιδαγωγική: Διάλογοι για τη μετασχηματιστική εκπαίδευση (A Pedagogy for Liberation. Dialogues on Transforming Education)*. Athens: Μεταίχμιο.
- Gardner, H. (1990). *Art Education and Human Development*. Los Angeles: The Getty Education Institute for the Arts.
- Giannakopoulou, M., Deligiannis, D., Ziozias, A. & Hadoulitsi, B. (2011). Εκπαιδευτικοί Πειραματισμοί στο Εναλλακτικό Σχολείο Ενηλίκων του ΚΕΘΕΑ «ΕΞΟΔΟΣ»: Η Ποίηση ως Καταλύτης για την Απόδραση από την Επιφάνεια της Καθημερινότητας (Educational Experiments in KETHEA EXODOS Alternative Adult School: Poetry as a Means of Escape from Superficial Reality). In A. Kokkos & Affiliates (Ed.), *Εκπαίδευση μέσα από τις Τέχνες (Education through the Arts)* (pp. 138-158). Athens: Μεταίχμιο.
- Grammatika, M. (2011, June). *Προσεγγίσεις και Σχέσεις ανάμεσα στον Κοινωνικό Αποκλεισμό, τις Κοινωνικές Ανισότητες και την Τοξικοεξάρτηση (Approaches and Relationships between Social*

- Exclusion and Drug Addiction*). Poster in the International Conference «Εκπαίδευση και Κοινωνική Ένταξη Ευάλωτων Ομάδων» (Vulnerable Groups' Education and Social Integration), Thessaloniki. Retrieved from:
http://www.uom.gr/media/docs/ekp/conf_2011/PROCEEDINGS_24_6_2011.pdf
- Jaques, D. (2004). *Μάθηση σε ομάδες: Εγχειρίδιο για όσους συντονίζουν "ομάδες ενήλικων εκπαιδευομένων (Learning in Groups)*. Athens: Μεταίχιμο.
- Jarvis, P. (2004). *Συνεχιζόμενη εκπαίδευση και κατάρτιση: Θεωρία και πράξη (Adult and Continuing Education, Theory and Practice)*. Athens: Μεταίχιμο.
- Jarvis, P. (2007). Paulo Freire. In P. Jarvis (Ed.), *Οι Θεμελιωτές της εκπαίδευσης ενηλίκων (Twentieth Century Thinkers in Adult and Continuing Education)* (pp. 355-375). Athens: Μεταίχιμο.
- Kiritsi, V. & Armaos, R. (2011, Ιούνιος). *Η εκπαίδευση ως μοχλός ψυχοκοινωνικής ενδυνάμωσης των πρώην χρηστών ουσιών στην πορεία της κοινωνικής τους επανένταξης: Μια ποιοτική μελέτη στο Εναλλακτικό Σχολείο του ΚΕΘΕΑ-ΕΞΟΔΟΣ (Education as a lever of psychosocial empowerment of former drug addicts in the process of social reintegration: A qualitative Study in KETHEA-EXODOS Adult School)*. Paper in the International Conference «Εκπαίδευση και Κοινωνική Ένταξη Ευάλωτων Ομάδων» (Vulnerable Groups' Education and Social Integration), Thessaloniki. Retrieved from:
http://www.uom.gr/media/docs/ekp/conf_2011/PROCEEDINGS_24_6_2011.pdf
- Kokkos, A. (2005a). *Εκπαίδευση Ενηλίκων: Ανιχνεύοντας το πεδίο (Adult Education: Detecting the Field)*. Athens: Μεταίχιμο.
- Kokkos, A. (2005b). Η εμπειρική Εκπαίδευση Ενηλίκων (Empirical Adult Education). *Εκπαίδευση ενηλίκων*, 4, 4-13. Retrieved from:
<http://alexiskokkos.gr/keimena/14iempirikiekpaideusienilikwn.pdf>
- Kokkos, A. (2006). Η Ιδιαιτερότητα και ο σκοπός της Εκπαίδευσης Ενηλίκων (The Specific Nature and Purpose of Adult Education). *Εκπαίδευση Ενηλίκων*, 9, 4-9. Retrieved from:
<http://alexiskokkos.gr/dimosieuseis.html>
- Kokkos, A. (2009, Μάιος). *Ανάπτυξη της δημιουργικότητας μέσα από την επαφή με την τέχνη (Developing creativity through the arts)*. Paper presented in the 1st Greek Interdisciplinary Art and Environmental Education Conference, Athens. Retrieved from:
http://www.ekke.gr/estia/Cooper/Praktika_Synedrio_Evgenidio/Files/Text_file_s/II_Kentrikes_Eisigiseis/Kokkos_k_eisigisi.pdf
- Kokkos, A. (2010). Transformative Learning through Aesthetic Experience: Towards a comprehensive method. *Journal of Transformative Education*, 8(3), 155-177.
- Kokkos, A. (2011). Μετασχηματίζουσα Μάθηση μέσα από την Αισθητική Εμπειρία: Η Διαμόρφωση μιας Μεθόδου (Transformative Learning through Aesthetic Experience: Configuring a Method). In A. Kokkos & Affiliates (Ed.), *Εκπαίδευση μέσα από τις Τέχνες (Education through the Arts)* (pp. 71-120). Athens: Μεταίχιμο.
- Kokkos, A. (2012, November). *Critical Reflection through Aesthetic*

- Experience: How could a wide range of learners gain access to the process?* Paper Presented at the 10th Conference on Transformative Learning, San Francisco.
- Kokkos, A. (2013). The use of aesthetic experience in unearthing critical thinking. In P. Mayo (ed.), *Learning with Adults: A Reader* (pp. 205-217). 10.1007/978-94-6209-335-5_16. Retrieved From: <http://alexiskokkos.gr/keimena/30Theuseofaestheticexperienceinunearthingcriticalthinking.pdf>
- Kokkos, A. & Mega, G. (2007). Κριτικός Στοχασμός και Τέχνη στην Εκπαίδευση (Critical Thinking and Art in Education). *Εκπαίδευση Ενηλίκων (Adult Education)*, 12, 16-21.
- Kokkos, A. & Raikou, N. (2014). Αξιοποίηση της Τέχνης στο Μεταπτυχιακό Πρόγραμμα Σπουδών «Εκπαίδευση Ενηλίκων»: Μια Καινοτομική Πρακτική (Using Art in Graduate Programme “Adult Education”: An Innovative Practice”). *Εκπ@ιδευτικός κύκλος*, 2 (2), 9-163.
- Konstantinou, K. P. (2005). Διδασκαλία και μάθηση σε μια σύγχρονη κοινωνία (Teaching and Learning in a modern society). In S. Retalis (Ed.), *Οι προηγμένες τεχνολογίες διαδικτύου στην υπηρεσία της μάθησης (ICT in Learning)* (pp. 21-34). Athens: Καστανιώτης.
- Kostara, E. (2014, June). *Interpretation of Greek Drama for the Development of Critical Thinking*. Paper presented at the 1st Conference of ESREA's network “What’s the point of Transformative Learning? ”, Athens.
- Koulaouzidis, G. (2007). Jack Mezirow και μετασηματίζουσα μάθηση: μια εκτεταμένη προσωπογραφία (Jack Mezirow and transformative learning: an extensive portrait). *Εκπαίδευση Ενηλίκων (Adult Education)*, 10, 36-39.
- Koutrouvidis, P. (2010α). *Σχολείο και Έφηβοι Χρήστες ψυχοτρόπων Ουσιών (School and Adolescents Drug Addicts)* (Doctoral Thesis). Πανεπιστήμιο Ιωαννίνων (University of Ioannina)/ Π.Τ.Ν.Ε.
- Koutrouvidis, P. (2010b). Εκπαίδευση και Κατάρτιση πρώην Χρηστών. Προγράμματα δια βίου Μάθησης στα Θεραπευτικά Προγράμματα και στον Τομέα εκπαίδευσης του ΚΕΘΕΑ (The Education and Training of Former Drug Addicts. Programmes of Lifelong Learning in Therapeutical Programs and in the Sector of Education in KETHEA). *Εκπαίδευση Ενηλίκων (Adult Education)*, 20, 19-25.
- Koutrouvidis, P. (2015). *Σχολείο και Χρήστες Ναρκωτικών: Όταν οι απόβλητοι του εκπαιδευτικού συστήματος ξαναγυρίζουν στα θρανία (School and Drug Addicts: When the Outcasts of Educational System go back to school)*. Athens: Φίλντισι.
- Kremmydas, A. (2006). Δυσκολίες και Προοπτικές στην Κοινωνική Ένταξη Αποφυλακισμένων Τοξικοεξαρτημένων Ατόμων (Difficulties and Prospects Concerning Ex-Prisoners’ Social Reintegration). *Εξαρτήσεις*, 10, 8-38. Retrieved from: http://www.exartiseis.gr/FilesUP/EXARTISEIS_10.pdf
- Lionarakis, A. & Fragkaki, M. (2009, November). *Στοχαστικό-Κριτικά Μοντέλα Επαγγελματικής Ανάπτυξης και Επιμόρφωσης στην ΕξΑποστάσεως Εκπαίδευση: μια πρόταση με Πολυμορφική Διάσταση (Stochastic-Critical Professional Development and Training Models in Distance Education: a proposal with Polymorphic Dimension)*. Paper in the 5^o International Conference in Distance Learning, Athens.

Matsa, K. (2006). Κοινωνικός αποκλεισμός και Τοξικομανία: Όψεις της βιοπολιτικής της εξουσίας (Social Exclusion and Drug Addiction: Aspects of Biopolitics of Power). *Κοινωνία και Ψυχική Υγεία*, 1, 66-76.

Retrieved from:

http://www.psy.auth.gr/sites/default/files/Periodiko_1st_volume.pdf

Matsa, K. (2008). *Ψυχοθεραπεία και Τέχνη στην Απεξάρτηση: Το «Παράδειγμα» του 18 Άνω* (Psychotherapy and Art in Detoxication: The “Example” of 18 Ano). Athens: Άγρα.

Matsa, K. (2013). *Ψάξαμε Ανθρώπους και Βρήκαμε Σκιές: Το Αίνιγμα της Τοξικομανίας* (We Searched for People and Found their Shadows: The Enigma of Drug Addiction). Athens: Άγρα.

Mega, G. (2011). Η τέχνη στο σχολικό σύστημα ως στοχαστική διεργασία (Art in the school system as a thinking process). In A. Kokkos & Affiliates (Ed.), *Εκπαίδευση μέσα από τις Τέχνες* (Education through the Arts) (pp. 21-67). Athens: Μεταίχμιο.

Mezirow, J. (2007). Μαθαίνοντας να σκεφτόμαστε όπως ένας ενήλικος: Κεντρικές έννοιες της θεωρίας του Μετασχηματισμού (Learning to think like an Adult: Key concepts of Transformative Learning). In J. Mezirow and Affiliates, *Η Μετασχηματίζουσα Μάθηση* (Transformative Learning) (pp. 43-71). Athens: Μεταίχμιο.

Mezirow, J. (2009a). Μιαεπισκόπηση της μετασχηματίζουσας μάθησης (An Overview on Transformative Learning). In K. Illeris (Ed.), *Σύγχρονες θεωρίες Μάθησης: 16 θεωρίες μάθησης...με τα λόγια των δημιουργών τους* (Contemporary theories of learning. Learning theorists...in their own words) (pp. 126-146). Athens: Μεταίχμιο.

Mezirow, J. (2009b). Transformative Learning Theory. In J. Mezirow, E. W. Taylor & Associates (Ed.), *Transformative Learning in Practice: Insights from Community, Workplace and Higher Education* (pp. 18-31). San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.

Motekaityte, V., Knot, S., Ciegiewicz-Wachowiak, A., Karczewska, E., Darul, A., Valles, A., Avramidis, I., Kosmidis, P., Kubiliunas, R., Raisutis, D., Guobys, M., Parpalas, I., DelleDonne, E., Martellini, L. & Drasutis, S. (2010). *Καινοτόμες Τεχνολογίες Πληροφοριών και Επικοινωνιών στην Εκπαίδευση Ενηλίκων: Εγχειρίδιο* (Innovative Information and Communication Technologies in Adult Education: Manual). Gdansk: GALANGdansk. Retrieved from:

http://www.tcteacher.eu/image/TCT_Methodical%20material_EL.pdf

Mouzakis, Ch. (2006). *Εκπαίδευση Ενηλίκων: Τεχνικές εκπαίδευσης Ενηλίκων από Απόσταση και ο ρόλος του Εκπαιδευτή* (Adult Education: Techniques from distance in Adult Education and the Educator's role). Athens: Ινστιτούτο Διαρκούς Εκπαίδευσης Ενηλίκων.

Retrieved from: <http://repository.edulll.gr/edulll/handle/10795/791>

Noye', D. & Piveteau, J. (1999). *Πρακτικός οδηγός του Εκπαιδευτή* (Guide pratique du formateur). Athens: Μεταίχμιο.

Ntafouli, E. (2009). *Τα κίνητρα ένταξης σε εκπαιδευτική διαδικασία των ατόμων που βρίσκονται σε διαδικασία απεξάρτησης. Η περίπτωση του Εναλλακτικού Σχολείου Ενηλίκων του ΚΕΘΕΑ «ΕΞΟΔΟΣ»* (Former Drug Addicts' Motivations to go back to school: The case of KETHEA Exodos Alternative Adult School (Thesis). Hellenic Open University, Patra.

- Perkins, D. (1994). *The Intelligent Eye: Learning to Think by Looking at Art*. Los Angeles: The Getty Education Institute for the Arts.
- Poulopoulos, Ch. (2011). *Κοινωνική Εργασία και Εξαρτήσεις: Οι Κοινότητες της Αλλαγής (Social Work and Addictions: The Communities of Change)*. Athens: Τόπος.
- Poulopoulos, Ch. (2014). *Κρίση, Φόβος και Διάρρηξη της Κοινωνικής Συνοχής (Crisis, Fear and Disruption of Social Cohesion)*. Athens: Τόπος.
- Poulopoulos, Ch., Tsiboukli, A., Papanastasatos, G. (2001). The Narrow Door-Path of Social Exclusion: The Greek Case. In M. Pollo (Ed.), *The Narrow Door – Path of Social Exclusion: A research Project by Mario Pollo* (pp. 37-122). Rome: CEIS. Retrieved from: <https://www.academia.edu/2573985>.
- Psiharis, S. (2010). *Η Μοντελοποίηση και οι Θεωρίες Μάθησης στις Τεχνολογίες Πληροφορίας και Επικοινωνίας (ΤΠΕ) στην Εκπαίδευση: Οι επιπτώσεις τους στην Διδακτική-Εκπαιδευτική Τεχνολογία (Modeling and Learning Theories in ICT in Education: Its results in Teaching-Learning Technology)*. Δεύτερος Τόμος. Athens: Παπαζήση.
- Raikou, N. (2013). *Εκπαίδευση Ενηλίκων και Τριτοβάθμια Εκπαίδευση: Διερεύνηση Δυνατότητας για Ανάπτυξη Κριτικού Στοχασμού μέσα από την Αισθητική Εμπειρία σε Εκπαιδευόμενους Εκπαιδευτικούς (Adult Education and Higher Education: Looking for Trainee Teachers' possibility to develop Critical Reflection through the Aesthetic Experience (Διδακτορική Διατριβή/Doctoral Thesis)*. University of Patras.
- Rogers, A. (1999). *Η Εκπαίδευση Ενηλίκων (Teaching Adults)*. Athens: Μεταίχμιο.
- Vrasidas, Ch., Zempilas, M .& Petrou, A. (2005). Σύγχρονα παιδαγωγικά μοντέλα και ο ρόλος της τεχνολογίας (Modern Pedagogical models and the role of technology). In S. Retalis (Ed.), *Οι προηγμένες τεχνολογίες διαδικτύου στην υπηρεσία της μάθησης (Advanced Forms of Technology in service of learning)* (pp. 35-58). Athens: Καστανιώτης.
- Zogopoulos, E. A. (2001). *Νέες Τεχνολογίες και Μέσα επικοινωνίας στην Εκπαιδευτική Διαδικασία (New Technology and Communication Media in Education)*. Athens: Κλειδάριθμος.

Discussing with “theoretical friends” on art-based learning

Alexis Kokkos

Hellenic Open University

Abstract

The workshop examines ways through which encountering works of art within the framework of transformative learning may contribute to the development of learners’ critical capability. First, we will review the literature regarding the concept of critical reflection. Then, we will discuss the views of Freire, Greene and Frankfurt School concerning how the contact with art may encourage the growth of our critical understanding. Finally, through the experiential exploration of a number of films and paintings, we will discuss whether they have inherent characteristics that might activate in our mind a holistic, meaningful and feelingful process of critical reflection.

Introduction

Since several years my research interest is focused on the contribution of aesthetic experience (a notion understood as the critical analysis of works of art) to the educational processes that are unfolded within the framework of transformative learning. My view is that the exploration of works of art may unearth critical reflection on various topics, provide learners with insights that are distinct from the dominant ones, and contribute to the transformation of their taken for granted assumptions.

I often enter in interior dialogue with relevant ideas that have been developed by certain theorists the work of whom constitutes inspiring source for me, thus I consider them as ‘theoretical friends’ (Freire, Adorno, Horkheimer, Marcuse, Kegan, Greene, Brookfield, Bourdieu, Mezirow, Cranton and other scholars of the transformative learning movement). I confront their perspectives to my own aiming to enrich, enlarge or challenge my considerations.

In the first section of this paper, I focus on the concept of critical reflection which is largely considered as crucial component of transformative learning, as well as its function within the transformational process. In the second section, I critically explore the ‘theoretical friends’ options regarding how we use art in order to foster critical reflection towards perspective transformation.

The concept and function of critical reflection

Mezirow (1990) recognized that a transformative learning process may be initiated from different reasons, such as culture change, coercion, and externally imposed disorienting dilemmas. However, his standpoint is that critical reflection on assumptions formulates the main transformative learning route that leads to an emancipatory outcome. He defined the concept of critical reflection as: “assessment of the validity of the presuppositions of one’s meaning perspectives, and examination of their sources and consequences” (Mezirow, 1990: xvi). It is obvious that, in this definition, the critical questioning of the origins upon which our ideas, values and beliefs have been founded –what Mezirow (1990) names ‘premise reflection’– constitutes the central component of critical reflection.

Later on, Mezirow (1998) clarified the specific characteristics of critical reflection as the consistent and impartial reevaluation of taken-for-granted beliefs in the light of the social, historical and biographical factors pertaining to them; comparison of evidences

and opinions on different sides of an issue; formulation of warranted arguments; reasonable and properly inductive and deductive inquiry for constructing a well-informed understanding. In another text, Mezirow (2000) offered a description of the learning process through critical reflection:

Learners may be helped to explore all aspects of a frame of reference: its genealogy, power allocation, internal logic, uses, affective and intuitive dimensions, advantages and disadvantages [...] The learner can look at the same experience from a variety of points of view and see that concepts and feelings depend on the perspective through which they occur.

(Mezirow, 2000, p.29)

We may therefore assume that Mezirow considered the engagement with critical reflection as a complex and holistic process of assessing what is being reflected upon, asking for reasons, moving back and forth between different perspectives, and examining possible consequences.

Kegan (1994) arrives at a similar consideration through an alternative way. His research interest focuses mainly on how humans may reach a state of consciousness in which they may have the capacity to think deductively, question and weigh the validity of their ideas and values, construct a system capable of regulating their relationships, and organize the different parts of their internal self into a systematic whole. Kegan argues, in tune with Mezirow, that this process is a matter of holistic mental growth, therefore it requires “not mere skills but a qualitative order of mental complexity” (ibid, p. 152), a “cognitive sophistication” (p. 286), a “complex system for organizing experience” (p. 185).

Brookfield (2005) focuses on the consideration of critical reflection as the means of recognizing how unjust dominant ideologies are perpetuated in everyday life. He identified (2012) critical reflection –and here his view resonates those of Mezirow and Kegan– as a complicated process that consists in discovering assumptions that influence the way we think and act, assessing their validity claim, seeing things from different views, and taking action that is based on thought and evidence.

Cranton (2006) supports the formation of an integrated theory of transformative learning that includes rational and affective ways of knowing. Within this framework, she underlines the importance of developing a capacity to be self-reflective and exercise reflective judgment. She further considers, in accordance to the aforementioned scholars, that critical reflection is a demanding process “that requires self-awareness, planning, skill, support, and discourse with others” (Cranton, 2006, p. 117).

On the other side, a large number of theorists of transformative learning challenge the cognitive reductionism in the learning process and emphasize the importance of the emotional, embodied, imaginative, unconscious or spiritual dimensions. However, none of them denies that, in one way or another, critical reflection constitutes an integral part of the transformational process. It is worth noting, indicatively, the statements of three of the leading theorists of the extrarational approach. Dirkx, in a dialogue with Mezirow (2006), claims:

You advocate a critically reflective approach to surfacing, analyzing, and potentially transforming epistemic belief structures. I suggest an imaginal approach to connecting and developing a conscious relationship with emotionally charged aspects of experience that remain unconscious and unavailable to everyday awareness. I also agree that we need both perspectives to deepen our understanding of this deep form of change and to fully incorporate these ways of learning into a transformative education. In

the final analysis, I suggest we are seeking an integration of mind and soul.

(Dirkx, Mezirow & Cranton, 2006, p. 137)

Lipson Lawrence (2008), although committed to triggering hidden knowledge beyond cognitive knowing, acknowledges that the cognitive approaches and the alternative ways of learning constitute an interwoven pattern of function that characterizes the process of learning. She states, for instance:

Our bodily sensations clue us into our cognitive state: we feel “butterflies” in our stomach and recognize this as anxiety. Our heart races, and we register it as fear. Once we have this knowledge (we have experienced it), we engage in reflection to understand our experience in the context in which it occurs.

(Lipson Lawrence, 2008, p. 70)

In addition, Tisdell (2008, 2014), although holding primarily a spiritual stance, seeks to merge this dimension with Mezirow’s conception. Indicatively, while exploring the role of critical media literacy, she argues that “the point is to raise consciousness and then to critically reflect on assumptions, which Mezirow (1998) suggests in the heart of transformative learning” (Tisdell, 2008, p. 51).

In turn, Mezirow in his latest texts (e.g. 2000, 2006) acknowledged that the emotions and intuition are intimately bound up with the critical reassessment of assumptions we make during transformative learning. Here, he echoes, as Cranton, Dirkx, Lipson Lawrence and Tisdell also do, the findings of the neuroscience researchers, such as Damasio (1994) and Goleman (1995): The cognitive structures are always emotionally loaded, while the emotional patterns are always affected by cognitive influences. Similar ideas have been suggested regarding the field of aesthetic experience that interests particularly this paper. I refer to the seminal work of Broudy (1987), who claimed that through the exploration of works of art arises knowing that includes both critically reflective and affective dimensions. Hereby, Broudy called aesthetic experience both a ‘*cognitive feeling*’ and a ‘*feelingful cognition*’ (1987, p.11).

Ways of using Art

Prelude

In the previous section critical reflection has been identified as a complex cognitive and affective process that requires that learners encounter an entire spectrum of aspects, as well as possible causes and consequences of the situations they explore in order to challenge their justifications. This conceptualization leads to the idea that, if transformative educators intend to encourage the growth of learners’ critical capability through aesthetic experience, it is important that their choice of works of art is appropriate for this task. In the following sections I will discuss a number of theoretical views regarding this issue.

Art that fosters criticality

Freire’s holistic view. Freire (1970) aimed to facilitate oppressed learners in constructing emancipatory dispositions vis-à-vis their sociopolitical condition. To achieve this, he used sketches that portrayed situations that were relevant to the experience of the learners, in a way that these could become incentives for critical analysis of social reality. Each sketch represented an aspect (sub-issue) of a major issue at hand. For example (Freire, 1978), the major issue of ‘culture’ was composed by sub-issues like ‘human being - a creator’, ‘human relationships’, ‘ways of behavior’, ‘products of human work’, ‘culture as a result of human work’, ‘democratization of culture’, ‘fundamental democratization’, etc, and each sub-issue was represented by a relevant sketch. The context of each sketch contained multiple

elements and symbols whose decoding was facilitated by the educator and performed through a critical elaboration of certain questions. For instance (ibid, pp. 130-131), the first sub-issue ('human being - a creator'), portrayed in Figure 1, was tackled through questions like "Who creates the wells, the houses, the clothes, the tools of work?", "Why he/she does so?", "How?". Furthermore, participants started exploring the aspect of relationships between genders. After grasping the meaning of the first sub-issue, learners would go on to discuss the second one ('human relationships'), portrayed in Figure 2, through questions like "What does 'communication' mean?", "How may human communication not become an object of domination?", "What do 'love', 'humility', 'judgment', 'creative spirit' mean?", and so on. Insights from the exploration of each sub-issue were correlated to those that occurred from the others, with an aim to deepen learners' understanding. The facilitator would link the parts together, forming a whole. Finally, through the holistic process, the learners reconstructed their perception of the major issue.



Figure 1. Source: Freire,



Figure 2. Source: Freire,

It 1978, p.131 e of Freire's criteria in choosi 1978, p.133 t their representational code might correspond to learners' schemata or conception in order for them to become familiar with it and able to decipher it. But it is worth noting that Freire was also preoccupied with the aesthetic quality of the sketches. He mentioned (ibid) that they were created by important painters, such as Francisco Brenand and Vicente de Abreu.

I claim in this paper that the aforementioned disposition of Freire is related to his overall interest regarding the quality of learning materials that should be offered to participants. For instance, speaking about books, he states:

Serious teaching is part of the rigor of the dialogical class. Of course, the students *have* to read. You *need* to read, to read the classics in your field. The students have to read Marx, for example, independent of their rejection or acceptance of the Marxist rigor. What for me is impossible is to deny the existence of Marx, as well as to deny the existence of the Positivists, of the Structuralists, of the Functionalists. You see, then, I don't accept a kind of *scientific racism*, where some classics are not allowed to be read, not considered part of the fundamental literature.

(Shor & Freire, 1987, p.83)

Freire shows the same disposition regarding the good practices of aesthetic experience that he suggests to his readers. He steadily mentions works of significant creators, such as Zola (ibid, p.100), Pasternak (Freire, 1978, p.44), Ionesco, Villa-Lobos

(Freire, 2000, pp. 50, 59). He even goes on to make a clear distinction between being *simple* as an adult educator, namely empowering learners to gradually grasp the meaning of synthetic conceptualizations, and *simplistic*, that is to say diminishing learners by acting as if they are not able to think thoroughly:

We have to be simple, but simplicity does not mean to caricature the students as simpletons. To be simple is to treat the object of study with seriousness, with radicalism, with depth, but in an easy way to be grasped by the others whose intellectual exercise is not the same as ours. Simplistic language reduces the object of study to a characterization of itself. By doing this, you also reduce the audience you are addressing.

(Shor & Freire, 1987, p.154)

For these reasons, it is my contention that Freire's view may be considered as a pivotal theoretical framework regarding the comprehensive use of aesthetic experience in transformative education. Nonetheless, I think that in contemporary societies, where the social conditions are overly multifaceted, it is of greater significance to use – instead of ordered sketches – works of art that are not implemented to serve a preexisting educational scope, aiming to provide learners with the necessary triggers for a more open inquiry of meanings, assumptions, emotions and alternative interpretations.

The Frankfurt School: The liberating function of art. The scholars of the Frankfurt School were concerned with the critique of the instrumental, bureaucratized rationality that pervades the established order. They were to challenge the process through which dominant ideology serves to manipulate individual consciousness in a way that what appears to be as a commonsensical value or belief often masks particular interests that go against human emancipation. Within this theoretical framework the Frankfurt School theorists, most notably Adorno (1970/1986, 1969/1983), Horkheimer (1944/1972 – with Adorno) and Marcuse (1978) claimed that the works of art with high aesthetic value may contradict the ordinary, alienating norms of status quo. This may happen because the content of important works of art includes a multitude of anti-conventional aspects that are distanced from the routine ways of meaning-making. Along with this, the elements of the morphological structure of significant works of art (plots, themes, shapes, schemata, signs, images, symbols, lines, colors, shades, rhythms, sounds, gestures, expressions, metaphors, allegories, paradoxes, etc) are dialectically interconnected and in turn inseparably associated with the content, so that they altogether form a complete whole that encompasses multidimensional meanings. Therefore art masterpieces acquire a holistic dimension and are capable of offering receivers opportunities to experience deep and unexpected insights that are estranged from the dominant meaning schemes. In Marcuse's terms, they offer "modes of perception, imagination, gestures – a feast of sensuousness which shatters everyday experience and anticipates a different reality principle" (1978, p.19). Thus, the contact with great art gives rise to our intellectual and affective potential that may foster critical reflection towards disengagement from the universe of taken for granted assumptions.

But which are the works of art that the Frankfurt School scholars consider as 'important' or 'significant'? Both Adorno (ibid) and Marcuse (ibid) state that the works of Baudelaire, Beckett, Brecht, Goethe, Euripides, Kafka, Proust, Rimbaud, Shakespeare, are of this nature. Adorno (ibid) adds references to Aeschylus, Bach, Bacon, Chopin, Dante, Debussy, El Greco, Ibsen, Klee, Mahler, Manet, Mann, Michelangelo, Mozart, Picasso, Raphael, Rembrandt, Schubert, Tolstoy, Van Gogh, Wagner, Wilde, etc.

Moreover, critical theorists had taken up the task of unveiling the role of ‘cultural industry’. They identified cultural industry as the production of artworks – particularly films, TV series and music – that are destined to be consumed by global audiences. Hence, by their nature, such works adapt themselves to an instrumental, commodified rationale and convey to receivers a standardized image of the social world. Moreover, since the products of cultural industry are designed with the purpose of entertaining the broad public they are resonant with meanings that are illuminating, simplistic and intrinsically oriented towards ‘positive results’ and ‘happy ends’. Through these mechanisms, the stated products impoverish our spirit and seduce us into assuming stereotypical attitudes and ready-made conceptual clichés. They render us more and more receptive to conformism and, in the end, operate towards the affirmation and consolidation of established values, perceptions and behaviors. Adorno stresses that the consumers of popular art “are encouraged to do what they are already inclined to do anyway” (1969/1983, p.52) and “are made once again into what they already are” (ibid, p.50).

Conclusively, the theorists of the Frankfurt School put forward criteria for selecting works of art that are capable of triggering the type of critical reflectivity that I attempted to identify in the first section of this paper. They also provided us with robust warning regarding the manipulating power of the all-pervasive cultural industry. Nevertheless, I share the insightful comment of Eco (2000), Bronner (2011) and others, that the fact that the products of cultural industry are commodities is not always mutually exclusive to a concern for challenging the status quo, as it is the case, for example, with films directed by Chaplin, Coppola, Kazan, Welles, or popular songs written and/or performed by Dylan, Holliday, etc.

Furthermore, Frankfurt School scholars – probably because they formed their theory before the emergence of Bourdieu’s work (1979/1984) regarding the distinctive function of cultural capital – do not seem to take into account the challenges that a number of learners are likely to face concerning their full access to the meaning of certain complex works of art, since they are deprived – due to the process of their socialization – of the capability to decipher the code of the messages embedded in the structure of these works. Furthermore, critical theorists do not deal with the integration of their ideas into educational settings, which results in a lot of unanswered questions regarding the tasks that should be undertaken by adult educators.

Epilogue

There is a broad convergence among the emancipatory adult education theorists, regardless of the fact that some of them stress the importance of the cognitive dimension of learning while others give emphasis on the extrarational approach, that critical reflection constitutes one of the connecting tissues of transformative learning. Regarding the character of critical reflection, Mezirow, Kegan, Brookfield and Cranton consider that it is a complicated, holistic process through which we seek for explanations, search behind appearances, correlate various aspects of issues, assess the thoughts and feelings we say we have, and construct assumptions alternative to those that we have taken for granted.

The use of aesthetic experience constitutes, according to a number of transformative learning theorists, an outstanding mean that may contribute to the implementation of the aforementioned complex cognitive process. Freire focused on the interplay between various triggers incorporated in sketches of high aesthetic value in order to achieve an integrated approach of interlinked social issues. Adorno, Horkheimer and

Marcuse demonstrated that the great artworks have an inherent emancipator potential due to the fact that their unconventional character as well as the holistic quality of their structure may give rise to insights that provoke rupture from the ordinary. They also unmasked the mechanisms through which the products of cultural industry nullify critical thinking and distract attention from the repressive social and political conditions.

I argue that these approaches are complementary to one another and altogether construct a consistent theoretical framework of using art towards perspective transformation. I would draw from Freire the holistic elaboration of the artworks' aspects and the disposition towards the simple, not simplistic. And I would share the view of Frankfurt School regarding the crucial role of the artworks' morphological elements, as well as the warning regarding the alienating impact of most of popular artworks.

Nevertheless, the stated approaches do not come up with the formulation of a comprehensive method, with the exception, of Freire's primal contribution. Consequently, there are crucial issues that should be further researched: How the use of art may be linked to disorienting dilemmas and phases of transformation? Which should be the method of appreciation, selection and elaboration of the works of art that are appropriate for the transformational process? How learners with various cultural backgrounds may be involved in multiple forms of aesthetic experience? How can the educators appraise the outcomes?

I have attempted to reach these issues through a method ('Transformative Learning through Aesthetic Experience') that I suggested to the educational community (e.g. Kokkos, 2010, 2013). I still work to assess and enrich my ideas by entering in interior dialogue with the views of theoretical friends.

References

- Adorno, T. (1969/1983). *Critical Models*. New York: Columbia University Press.
- Adorno, T., & Horkheimer, M. (1944/1972). *Dialectic of Enlightenment*. New York: Herder & Herder.
- Adorno, T. (1970/1986). *Aesthetic Theory*. New York: Kegan and Paul.
- Bourdieu, P. (1979/1984). *The Distinction*. London: Routledge and Kegan Paul.
- Bronner, S. (2011). *Critical Theory*. New York: Oxford University Press.
- Brookfield, S. (2005). *The Power of Critical Theory*. San Francisco: Jossey – Bass.
- Brookfield, S. (2012). *Teaching for Critical Thinking*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.
- Broudy, H. (1987). *The role of imagery in learning*. Los Angeles: The Getty Center for Education in the Arts.
- Cranton, P. (2006). *Understanding and Promoting Transformative Learning*. San Francisco: Jossey – Bass.
- Damasio, A. (1994). *Descartes's Error: Emotion, Reason and the Human Brain*. New York: Grosset/Patnam.

- Dirkx, J., Mezirow, J., & Cranton, P. (2006). Musings and reflections on the meaning, context, and process of transformative learning: A dialogue between John M. Dirkx and Jack Mezirow. *Journal of Transformative Education*, 4, 123 – 139.
- Eco, U. (2000). *Apocalypse Postponed*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press.
- Freire, P. (1970). *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*. New York: Herder and Herder.
- Freire, P. (1978). *L'Education: pratique de liberté [The Education: practice of liberty]*. Paris: Cerf.
- Freire, P. (2000). *Pedagogy of the Heart*. New York: The Continuum Publishing Company.
- Goleman, D. (1995). *Emotional Intelligence: Why It Can Matter More than I.Q.* New York: Bantam Books.
- Kegan, R. (1994). *In Over our Heads*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.
- Kokkos, A. (2010). Transformative Learning Through Aesthetic Experience. *Journal of Transformative Education*, 8, 155 – 177.
- Kokkos, A. (2013). The Use of Aesthetic Experience in Unearthing Critical Thinking. In P. Mayo (Ed.), *Learning with Adults*. Rotterdam: Sense Publishers.
- Lipson Lawrence, R. (2008). Powerful Feelings: Exploring the Affective Domain of Informal and Arts-Based Learning. In J. Dirkx (Ed.), *Adult Learning and the Emotional Self*. New Directions for Adult and Continuing Education, no 120. San Francisco: Jossey – Bass.
- Marcuse, H. (1978). *The Aesthetic Dimension*. Boston: Beacon Press.
- Mezirow, J. (1990). a) Preface, b) How Critical Reflection Triggers Transformative Learning. In J. Mezirow & Associates (Eds.), *Fostering Critical Reflection in Adulthood*. San Francisco: Jossey – Bass.
- Mezirow, J. (1998). On Critical Reflection. *Adult Education Quarterly*, 48, 185 – 198.
- Mezirow, J. (2000). Learning to Think Like an Adult. In J. Mezirow & Associates (Eds.), *Learning as Transformation: Critical Perspectives on a Theory in Progress*. San Francisco: Jossey – Bass.
- Mezirow, J. (2006). An overview on transformative learning. In P. Sutherland & J. Growther (Eds.), *Lifelong Learning: Concepts and Contexts*. London and New York: Routledge.
- Shor, I., & Freire. P. (1987). *A Pedagogy for Liberation*. New York: Bergin & Garvey.

Tisdell, E. (2008). Critical Media Literacy and Transformative Learning: Drawing on Pop Culture and Entertainment Media in Teaching for Diversity in Adult Higher Education. *Journal of Transformative Education*, 6, 48 – 67.

Theatre as a form of intercultural understanding and dialogue

Eleni Tsefala

National and Kapodistrian University of Athens

Abstract

The article explores theatre as a planned activity that can affect people in both the personal and social development, balancing the "particular" and "universal" truth. The creative artistic processes of a "production" and "products" can bring social change through personal empowerment and emancipation.

Key words: Theatre, drama

Migrant playwrights

Migrant identity

Migrant theatre

Collective identity

Introduction

Every culture, today, appears through some expression and creation events such as a play, a painting exhibition, the presentation of a book, a philosophical theory, the prevalence of a fashion show, a scientific discovery, a technical achievement, commercial messages, connected with art and intellect, as well as cultured people. The culture production process has been replaced by the product. Cultural forms are cultural consumer goods, such as theatrical performances, books, films, paintings, sculptures, dances etc. which contribute to the formation of a collective identity, in relation to national identity, ethnic identity, religious identity, sexual identity, migrant identity e.tc. The age of each culture creates an art that characterizes it (Bottomley, 1987, p.2).

A. The Arts: Theatre – drama – playwrights - theatrical play

The existentialist philosopher Jean-Paul Sartre (1971) emphasizes that theatre is philosophy in tangible terms, which is why he feels the need to express his philosophical thought into dramatic form and use the play as a method and as a form of communication and dialogue. Theater is an ambiguous and complex cultural activity. The interpretation of a play each time, depends on the viewing angle it is approached. Therefore, the outreach and interpretation levels can be multiple, such as historical, social, artistic, ideological, semantic etc. Theatre can function as a means to transfer the history, knowledge and experience of the people of a community and as a means to combat racism, prejudice and stereotypes which are experienced daily. Through theatre they can identify themselves, pass on their language and culture to future generations, Theater does not imitate reality, merely suggests it. So, what matters in theater is the process of the "appearances" that convinces as truth while in fact it is deprived of existence. This tag is the reality that highlights theater in a predominantly meta-linguistic operation of discourse and communication.

Theater is one of the most powerful tools in the teaching practice. It can work as a process through which people internalize social roles and codes of conduct. This is achieved by animating-encouraging imitation behavior - either to prevent or to adopt (Esslin, 1976, p. 20). Theater is the release space of relationship dynamics which serves as the general framework within which one interacts. Only in relationship with others, people can get a sense of their own identity and know themselves. Theater is an eternal “present”, such as a ritual, where the human community is experiencing its own identity and the reaffirmation of a collective experience, through a high intellectual level (ibid, p.18). Also in practical terms, it teaches or reminds us codes of conduct and social coexistence rules. In theater, contained data can exist from other arts (literature, music, painting) and other areas of culture (ideology, aesthetic).

Drama can be seen more than a pleasant activity. It can be accessed as a key component of the nature of beings, not only an artistic representation of human behavior but the most solid form, in which one can consider and process human situations (Esslin, 1976, p. 19). It is the most complete form of imprint of history, because it establishes in a direct way our situation, our conflicts, our controversies and tensions. Drama is understood as something more than a reflection of the society that creates it. It actively explains and interprets the way in which the world is perceived and felt (ibid, p.29). In addition, the views presented by a project may not represent the whole of society, which at the outset is divided into genders, generations, classes, religions and nationalities, while access to the media is not equal (Esslin, ibid., p.23).

The playwrights as ethnographers, decode, process, record and present to the audience their experiences, while participating in speech events through their symbols. They use experiential knowledge to develop their communication skills and narrative. The play is based on storytelling of "artists" of the wider community. The author, through the history and knowledge, transmits his/her experiences, memories and reflections, language, music and songs, whatever they consider representative of his/her own identity or the identity of the characters.

The "memory" and "collective memory" are integral functions of identity. Individual or internal memory is personal, autobiographical memory, which can be based on experiential or borrowed memories. Collective or external memory is social, historical memory. Individual memory is determined by the collective memory. The collective memory contains the individual, because it is wider than that. The individual memory needs a collective framework to settle its memories. But the collective framework needs individual memories, because through those “playing”, it can be rebuilt and maintained as a historical context. The memory is based on the reconstruction of the past into patterns that are meaningful for the present. The collective memory selectively isolates elements of the past that make sense for the group to withdraw (Damanakis, 2007, p. 131). According to Halbwachs, the collective memory must not be confused with the story because it begins there to stop the tradition, focuses on events and highlights differences. The collective memory is the content delivery, that displays similarities, for the team and the preservation of its identity. The memory is associated with what is called "oral history" and maintained through narrative (Damanakis, ibid, p.131).

The experiential or narrative offers elements in its composition to that of someone else and creates a comparative history, a cross-historiography in similar or different ways, investigating activities in other places, away from the birth place

(Green, 2004, p. 9). It enables the researcher to bring to light the processes that took place, follow the route of conventional narrative, going from one event to the next, as once did the chronicler, as it is done today by the reporters, where thousands of images are captured vivid and compose a colorful history, rich in adventures, with an infinite number of episodes. On a second level, recorded episodes and events are correlated, interpreted, based on the time sets; we call them periods, phases, events or circumstances. These long lasting events are free of unnecessary details. In the third level, the constants of cultures, their structures, and their shapes are displayed, almost in an abstract way, recording changes taking place over one or many centuries (Green, *ibid*, p. 92). Only in this long period of time, long-term, we are allowed to look to one culture, providing us with a thread that unfolds endlessly. This thread is nothing more than all the elements that a group of people preserved over the course of their turbulent history, has bequeathed it from generation to generation, as the most precious commodity. To understand what a civilization is, we must deal more with concrete cases (Green, *ibid*. p. 94).

The theatrical texts, through the style, the subjects, the use of language and intentions, we can say that they are in dialogue with the socio-political and historical context of the period it is written, and thus reveals the experiential relations of the playwright's cultural systems and mechanisms of his own generation. The dramatic text is addressed from person "A" to person "B", whether it is written in an impersonal form or not. Dialogue is the basis of any play. The playwright supports the dialogue, which in turn supports the action, the plot, moving speech from one hero to the other hero. The action is the transformation of the terms of the myth, the conflict, the generations and catalysis of relations between the heroes. Key points of the drama are: the myth, the conflict and its causes (structure and principles of economic activity), persons (heroes, ideologies/abstract concepts), the dialogue/monologue (communication system), the space in the theater, and the time at the theatre and the stage directions of the author. The characters are acting as the core value of the play. The plot takes place among persons with different characteristics (course and applications) in action. The psycho/spiritual particularities form the structural features of the hero's personality. If these attributes exceed the dimensions of the "particular", the hero acquires features "universal" and of timeless validity. The hero embodies the aspirations of the people (as a collective person or entity in the basic course of action) and struggles to conquer, to fulfill and to accomplish. He/she collides with opposing forces, which sometimes defeat the hero, and sometimes not (Moudatsakis, 1993, p.14).

B. The Monologue/Dialogue in Theatre

In Theatre, dialogue is moving speech from person to person; direct communication/transmission of dramatic values (feelings etc.) in an episode. Dialogue is a form of speech organized by the clash of persons, juxtaposed as carriers of the dramatic myth structures. The incident, the conflict is organized through the same persons who speak on behalf of the author. In the dialogue the persons choose for themselves the status and trend. Dialogue distinguishes, compares and combines different voices, legitimizing rupture or their reconciliation. The dialogue in a theatrical performance may take many and varied forms: artistic, spiritual, symbolic, intellectual and even political. The dialogue in the theater is subject to a technology that differs from project to project: opening mischievous, argument configuration, support, punctuation, number of persons (at least two on one episode), style, path of myth, structure event package and solution search equilibria, dilemmas, etc. relapses

of myth.

Dialogue dominates morphic dimension of the dramatic text and often gives way of the monologue on the same stage (while discussing two faces, one indulging in prolixity) or in a sequence (one person monologue, analyzing an internal division etc.). The monologue is incessant "confession" of a person who may have been dramatic, especially if it's content play a collision or reveals internal divisions, the dilemma of a hero. The monologue may be opposed to some form of oppression or possibly to accept terms.

The parameter 'space' in the theatre is a place of conflict, decisive in the understanding and interpretation of the action, the field/place where the opposing forces, the action develops. Every event is recorded and outlined in space. The site supports events. It gives them status by providing a framework within which they unfold. Even when space is abstract, it still makes the events visible, it facilitates the movements of the protagonists. The "space" offers asylum to an event. Whatever can occur anywhere. The facts are intertwined with the quality of the space. An episode animates the space, changes with the features and evolves.

The parameter "time" in the theater, in particular the "time" in a theatrical text is evolving within the space. The dramatic time is not continuous, but consists of a system of dots with a unique and unprecedented value. In any dramatic plot and conflict different time levels must be detected.

C. The semantics of theatrical performance

The dramatist, when composing a project knows that the text will be judged on the action and the theatrical discourse on stage. The drama ends with the intervention of the director and the other actors of the performance. It is represented and not seen just as literature. The dramatic text goes in the stage of formation through a system of principles, such as: acting, movement, stage design, the garment, the morphology of the actor, the music, the lighting (Esslin, 1976, p. 17). Tadeus Kowzan (1968, p.61) provides a basic classification typology of theatrical systems to: language, intonation, facial mime, gesture, movement, makeup, hairdo, costume, props, stage decoration, lighting, music and sound effects, including offstage, noise. Treatment of speech and feeling are the basis of the drama. The reason, the range of the voice, the sounds of the actor and the body, the organization of movement, dance, create a dynamic terminology which externalizes the text. The actor speaks and feels - "plays", represents a basis which is preplanned by the author. The actor on stage becomes a person, an entity, a "fate." The text transmits the "reason" imagery as spoken by the actor. The dramatic expression frees a psychic sense (because it suggests the author) connecting the format expression to the content of feeling (Pavis, 1976, p. 88).

The 'space' and 'time' on stage are co-stated through the scenery and the architecture of the space that houses the performance, the morphology of the actor (makeup, wigs, jewelry, clothing, footwear), utensils/equipment, lighting, music, songs, operational noises (live on stage, recorded). Therefore, the performance is a field coupling of different art forms and simultaneous expression.

Each object in space setting is a point, a "tone", a concept, a co-statement, referring to some ultimate cultural labeling. Every aspect of the performance is governed by the dialectic between declaration and connotations. The decoration, the body of the actor, movements and speech, acquire connotations to the public, relating to: a) social, b) ethical, c) ideological meanings and psychological characteristics that apply to the community to which they belong both rates of theatrical act, and the fans. The system of gestures and motional system is generally governed by semantic

contracts. The theatre performance is entirely symbolic. The text organizes the action and preconceives all scenes.

The "dialectic" of theatrical communication that develops between the actors and spectators this time of the performance, is a two-way contractual relationship where the "illusory" perceived as "real". Therefore, the aesthetic valuation and the value of a play does not lie exclusively in either the project itself or to the public, but the communicative relationship that develops between the project and the public, in the process of engagement acceptance (reception). The viewer can understand, communicate and evaluate the performance, when he knows the code, through which the provided message has the opportunity each time to interpret scenes are displayed signals (Grammatas, 1997, p. 68).

The author and the actors are only half of the overall process. The other halves are the spectators and their reaction. Without spectators there is no play. The performance shows whether a project works or not, whether the spectators accept it or not. The audience is the final recipient of the theatrical act. The audience, when watching a play, the very act that unfolds before and is identified with the characters on stage, can experience a similar feeling. When this happens, the enhanced purity of the emotional intensity of the public, leads to a higher level of spiritual perception scale creating experience similar to that of the religious / ritual feeling. (Esslin, 1976, p. 21).

The viewer is the one who actually initiates the communication network. Starting point is considered his arrival in theater, and then his willingness to attend the performance. These are the preliminary signals that cause the actors to take action. The viewer is invited to decode what he sees on stage, in the same way you would interpret every event in his personal life. The viewer is invited to experience what the character is experiencing on stage and react. Often this event is performed collectively, developed simultaneously between actors and spectators. The public, in a way, ceases to be an assemblage of individuals and from person becomes a person and then a member of a group that "is seen" Of course, a basic prerequisite is the receiver, familiar with the dramatic and theatrical codes used by the transmitter to be able to decode the message. In the presence of the spectator, the theatre fulfills the communication request into two levels:

- a) *Inter-stage communication system*, where "A" and "B" co-screened - "play", seek the truth, through ongoing regular dialogue of questions and answers.
- b) *Outer-stage communication system* in which the public perceives the performance as a compact bundle of meanings arising from arts and employs the literary structure, dramatic expression, the organization of space, the actor form, music, songs (Grammatas, 1997, p. 66).

The symbols / marks / signs are words, gestures, pictures or objects that carry a particular meaning, which is only recognized by those who share a 'special' culture. New symbols can grow easily as the old ones disappear. Other copy regularly, symbols of a particular group. Is that why symbols / marks / points representing the outermost layer of culture, like the cross has become a recognized symbol of faith for the Christian and the Muslim crescent. The viewer interprets this complex verbal messages, gestures, and continuous scene etc. - As an integrated text, according to the theatrical, dramatic and cultural codes, at its disposal, and takes in turn the role of signal transmitter (such laughter, applause, etc.) in the rates of performance through visual and auditory channels. To introduce the audience to the scene is bi-directional. This feedback process and inter-communication between viewers are two of the most important features of live theatre (Barthes, 1964, p. 261).

D. The form of educational value of theater and interculturalism

Beyond the dramatic treatment of the text, representation and communication as a fundamental concept in the theory of theatre must be recognized. Also, educational value is obtained according to the method of service of the message (meta-theatre), in addition to structure, style, content.

The comparative approach is the tool used in the dialectic between "universal" and "particular". Anthropologists such as Ruth Benedict (1961), have emphasized the "differences" between communities, but others, such as Clyde Kluckhohn (1949) and Dorothy Lee (1960), have emphasized the "similarities" between societies. The composition of these two different concepts summarize in the idea that all human beings seem to have common (universal) values, constant cultural particularities. A balance between particular and universal in every culture, personal identity (personal identity) and social understanding (social awareness) through different approaches, leads one to the conclusion that is common to all as a principle: the intercultural idea (Tsefala, 2003, p. 23). *"Intercultural idea is an attempt to respect the particular perceptions, perspectives and needs of each culture and while the mono-cultural world view and education happen to accept only those considered as global trends ..."* (Tsefala, *ibid*, p. 23)... *"Intolerance can be viewed as a component of both the particular and the universal"* (Tsefala, p. 24).

Inter-culturalism is governed by the following considerations:

- A) The principle of equality of cultures: The evaluation and ranking of civilizations is outside the logic of intercultural theory.
- B) The principle of "deficit" and the difference: the socio-cultural and linguistic minorities' code is not "limited" or "deficit", simply different.
- C) The principle of providing equal opportunities: The recognition of the cultural capital of minorities, in particular ethno-cultural minorities, helps to improve educational opportunities and the enrichment of the national culture of the host country (Damanakis, 1999, pp. 51-57).

Theatre is an art form par excellence, which recognizes the social nature of man and stresses the live communication of the group as an important activity. Its practice enables a person to communicate and operate as an integrated being. Theatre can act as a means of boosting social perception and amplifier of personality development. This can be achieved through exploring social, political, cultural and aesthetic issues and perceptions, thus reflecting the multicultural society in a global framework. The social communication and personal investigation is very important experiences for the participants in a theatrical process, which mobilized theatrical exercises and techniques, such as: role playing, teacher role, drama, improvisation, etc. The aim of all these practices is to facilitate the investigation of emotional experiences of participants and ideas, knowledge and information have contributed to the formation of personal identity.

Theatrical improvisation is the technique which, more than any other one used, involves participants in the process to use their imagination to escape from their reality and devise roles, situations and worlds "hypothetical", to escape "transcending" limitations of the real world. When this happens, the excess, the constraints of 'identity' 'moves' to another level, however slightly. Most importantly, one can learn through this experience "surpassing oneself", acquire the ability to investigate situations of more than one cultural perspective. Besides the diversity and difference of cultural perspective is not only present in the multicultural classroom, but also in a mono-cultural class, having potentially inherent in every human being

this different cultural perspective. This distinction was explored by the culturalist Rustom Bharucha (1993) who states that, when it comes to intercultural approach, cultures should include stories into an intra-cultural frame thinking and practice. Only then they can work to strengthen dignity, self-esteem and pride that comes through the inclusion, appreciation and respect for cultural experience and identity (p. 156). Utilitarian purpose of theatrical improvisation is the recruitment of two important elements of everyday life: a) spontaneous reaction to the unfolding of an unexpected situation, and b) acquisition of awareness of the problems presented in controlled conditions. Improvisation is a means of exploring experiences through the spontaneous human reaction to an idea or ideas or a series of statements. The word improvisation is now widely used when referring to the imaginative theatre. Through imaginative theatre one has the opportunity to express him-/her-self, if offered the same opportunities to participate.

Devising a play can be a part of an ongoing intercultural inquiry process, exchange and expression. The variety of roles and cultural expressions will automatically interlace with the form and meaning of the case progresses. Participants also have the opportunity to explore different kinds of cultural forms, traditions and parallel roles, combined and unlike one another. In doing so, the one who lives and works in environments with cultural otherness, is in an advantageous position, as the/she has the chance to a huge experience; to interrelate with people of different identities. Such experience, on one hand teaches someone to move between different cultural spaces with comfort and on the other promote the investigation of perspective and the development of increased understanding of criticism. So, if one has the potential development of such intercultural communication, expression, visual and intellectual choice, artistic and aesthetic creativity.

In this way, the combination of theatrical literary text and theatrical improvisation encourages participants in the exploration of humanity. Improvisation can be used as a central activity in the understanding of life either in the theatre or through education.

Varopoulou, E., (2002) in her article entitled "*Interculturalism and Tragedy*" presents the issue of interculturalism in ancient drama, namely the degree of assimilation of the "alien" in the system of a performance. She explains how a synthesis of disparate elements works in the reconciliation of opposites, searching another authentication that eventually exceed the initial, non-authentic relationship to the "foreign," different cultures. It suggests how interculturalism operates in this type of performances. She also insists that the viewer should be trained to have the intercultural gaze. If the viewer refuses anything different from his/her own national traditions and continues to insist to the relevant codes, as its only measure of understanding and enjoyment, the "foreign" horizons of the impact of intercultural performances remain inactive. In this way, perhaps, the recruitment and educational value deviates. The viewer, who wants to experience interculturalism in performances, must have a multi-prismatic perception, so that the gaze can encompass the perspective of the "other" (Varopoulou, 2002, p. 12).

Therefore, the intercultural approach is an approach that concerns everyone, regardless of mono-or bi-/multi-cultural origin. Also note the viewer's need to develop an intercultural glance, which enables him/her to "see" the diversity through the same diopters in everyday life with the protagonist. At this point it is worth mentioning the words of Elizabeth Burns (1972, p. 8), "... *the world is a large stage of human life.*" Therefore, "the implementation of interculturalism in theatre, as a reality, is a most appropriate means to get hold of a" language "of communication and understanding of

the “different”, beyond any national language (Tsefala, 2003, p. 75) .

Conclusion

In summary, theatre is an individual expression and one of the most social forms of art, since by its nature it is a collective action. The playwright expresses a personal identity in the theatrical text. Through its representation as a collective process, a collective consciousness is formed through actions like: listen, seek, meet, communicate, investigate, discuss, recommend, evaluate, formulate, choose, cooperate, organize, judge, disagree, participate, respect, support, and co-decide. Through these processes culture is created. Through collective processes such as: "Suggest-Spur-Support" a product may be produced such as a theatre performance where working relationships are developed. In addition, qualities as consideration, co-reciprocity and trust between team members permit exchanges of experience, advanced forms of self-education and training and support the development of theatrical collaborations. Theatre is a method of communication and intercultural dialogue.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Barthes, R. (1964). *Elements of Semiology*, London, Cape, p. 261.
- Batelaan, P. (1999). Evaluating Art for Social Change: A paradoxical Activity, *European Journal of Intercultural Studies*, vol.10, no 3, pp. 267-269).
- Benedict, R. (1961). *Patterns of Culture*, Boston, Houghton Mifflin.
- Bharucha, R. (1993). *Theatre and the World Performance and Politics of Culture*, London, Routledge.
- Bottomley, G. (1987). Cultures, multiculturalism and the politics of representation, *Journal of Intercultural Studies*, vol. 8, no 2, pp. 1-10.
- Burns, E. (1972). *Theatricality: a study of convention in the theatre and in social life*, Harlow, Longman, p. 8.
- Damanakis, M. (1999). Theoretical approach to the socialization of Greek Children Abroad" in Damanakis, M. (Ed.), *Paideia Omogenon: Theoretical and empirical approaches. Comprehensive Study Report of the scientific committee of the University of Crete, E. DIA.M.ME., Rethymnon / «Θεωρητική προσέγγιση της κοινωνικοποίησης των ελληνοπαίδων εξωτερικού»*, στο Δαμανάκης, Μ. (επιμ.), *Παιδεία ομογενών: θεωρητικές και εμπειρικές προσεγγίσεις*. Συνολική έκθεση –μελέτη της επιστημονικής επιτροπής του Πανεπιστημίου Κρήτης, Ε.ΔΙΑ.Μ.ΜΕ., Ρέθυμνο, pp. 51-57.
- Damanakis, M. (2007). *Identities and Education in the Diaspora*, an Intercultural Education Series,/ *Ταυτότητες και Εκπαίδευση στη Διασπορά*, Σειρά Διαπολιτισμική Αγωγή, Gutenberg Editions, p. 131.
- Esslin, M. (1976). *Anatomy of Drama*, Hill and Wang, N.Y., p. 20.
- Grammatas, T.(1997). *Theatrical Education and Training Teachers Training*, tybothito editions, Giorgos Dardanos, Athens/ *Θεατρική Παιδεία και Επιμόρφωση των Εκπαιδευτικών*, εκδ. τυπωθήτω, Γιώργος Δαρδανός, Αθήνα, p. 68.
- Green, Nancy L. (2004). *The roads of migration, modern theoretical approaches*, translation: Dimitris Parsanoglou, Savalas editions, Athens/ *Οι δρόμοι της μετανάστευσης/Σύγχρονες θεωρητικές προσεγγίσεις*, μετάφραση: [Δημήτρης Παρσάνογλου](#), εκδ. Σαββάλας, Αθήνα, p. 9.
- Kluckhohn, C. (1949). *Personality in nature, society and culture*, Knopf, N.Y.
- Kowzan, T. (1968). The Sign in the Theatre, *Diogenes*, 61, pp. 52-80.
- Lee, D., 1960, *Enduring Human Values* (mimeo), California Association For Nursery Education.

- Μουδατσάκις, Τ. (1993). *Theatrical Writing, Economics Principles of Action in Tragedy*, ed. Kardamitsa, Athen/ Η Θεατρική Σύνταξη, Αρχές Οικονομίας της Δράσης στην Τραγωδία, εκδ. Καρδαμίτσα, Αθήνα, p.14).
- Pavis, P. (1992). *Theatre at the Crossroads of Culture*, Routledge, London, p. 88)
- Sartre, Jean-Paul (1971), *What is Literature?* 70 Publications, Athens./Τι είναι Λογοτεχνία; Εκδόσεις 70, Αθήνα.
- Τσεφαλά, Ε. (2003). “*Theatre-in-Education and Cultural Diversity: Teacher training in intercultural theatrical practices and Theatre-in-Education groups in England*”, MA Master Thesis in Graduate Program "Comparative Education and Human Rights" Training and Education Department of Early Childhood Education, University of Athens./ Δραματοποίηση στην Εκπαίδευση και Πολιτισμική Ετερότητα: Εκπαιδευτικές πρακτικές δασκάλων θεατρικής εκπαίδευσης και θεατροπαιδαγωγικών ομάδων στην Αγγλία, Μ.Α. Μεταπτυχιακή διπλωματική Εργασία στο Μεταπτυχιακό Πρόγραμμα Σπουδών «Συγκριτική Εκπαίδευση και Ανθρώπινα Δικαιώματα», Τμήμα Εκπαίδευσης και Αγωγής στην Προσχολική Ηλικία, Πανεπιστήμιο Αθηνών, p. 23).
- Varopoulou, E. (2002). Interculturalism and Tragedy, “Vima” Sunday News (28.07.02)/Διαπολιτισμικότητα και Τραγωδία, *Το Βήμα Της Κυριακής* (28-07-02).

DIALOGUE with the ARTWORKS: a TRANSFORMATIVE LEARNING PROCESS

Georgia Mega
Hellenic Open University

Abstract:

The presentation deals with educational processes that enhance transformative learning in the field of adult education. A technique of observing artwork, based on transformational phases as specified by Mezirow (2000), will be presented. The aim of the technique, called *notice-accept-reconsider my truths* (NART), is the realization by the observer that there is not only one (personal) truth to interpret the world. Indeed, the more interpretations there are the richer in meanings and messages life becomes.

Theoretical Foundation

In the present paper, two fundamental notions meet:

- The notion of dialogue,
- The notion of artwork,
- This 'encounter' takes place under the light of a transformative learning (TLP) process.

In order to understand the scope of this 'encounter' in the context of a TLP, it is important to define the notions of *dialogue* and *artwork*.

Dialogue: In the context of TLP, *dialogue* is defined by the adjective 'rational' (Rational Dialogue/Discourse). It is a particular form of discussion during which people exchange viewpoints and negotiate their positions in a rational manner, while seeking consensus solutions, by presenting arguments that serve as evidence of what they defend (Mezirow, 2007: 351).

Works of art: In the context of TLP, art in its various forms constitutes an alternative language form. It helps to give meaning on the part of the observer (Mezirow, 2007: 48) and promotes learning transformation, if used as a trigger to realize the observer's habits of mind. The criteria for their selection are those determined mainly by the Frankfurt School: conventionalism, symbolisms, human values as messages, alternative approach, aesthetic harmony (Adorno, 1970).

Encounter of dialogue and art

I consider art (in its various forms) as a crucial moment of the artist's life, as an autobiographical moment and in this sense I use it as Brookfield mentions (1995), "*as a good strategy for promoting TLP*" (Brookfield 1995:49-51). In this sense, the works of art through specific observation techniques (defined below) encourage the observers to realize - through rational discourse - at first the artist's and then their own cognitive habits and values.

Theoretical foundation of the encounter between dialogue and art

The recognition of the value of this 'encounter' dates back to the beginning of the previous century, when Dewey (1934) explicitly says that "*The work of art is a challenge to the performance of a like act of evocation and organization, through imagination, on the part of the one who experiences it.*" Dewey (1934: 285).

Moreover, the critical-rational dimension of our contact with the works of art has been put forward, as A. Kokkos (2011) points out, by the Thinkers of the School of Frankfurt, who in short “*claim that the observer of an artwork activates his intellectual and mental abilities in order to penetrate its essence. He traces the meanings under its surface to provide his own meaning. By approaching them, he penetrates their intellectual content and recreates them*” (Kokkos, 2011:78).

Of course in the field of adult education, the relation between the works of art and dialogue is well recognized by the work of important thinkers, for instance in the context of Freire’s methodology (Shor&Freire, 1987: 83-85).

But Mezirow himself recognizes, inter alia, the multiple benefits of understanding the works of art. He even thinks that the disorienting dilemma can be caused also by the observation of an artwork the moment we try to understand the artist’s different way of thinking, as it emerges as an aesthetic experience before our eyes. (Mezirow, 1990, in Kokkos, 2011:85). While observing a work of art we investigate critically the validity of our own perceptions, our beliefs and therefore we question the reliability of assumptions that we considered as granted (Mezirow, 1998, in Kokkos, 2011:85).

Kokkos has developed a full methodological model, deployed in 6 stages which gradually activate the observer’s rational discourse in order to transform dysfunctional assumptions (Kokkos, 2010, 2011,2015). It is a methodological tool well known in Greece and abroad, which has been tested throughout the whole spectrum of education (formal and non formal), has inspired teachers and is being investigated and researched by postgraduate students in the Hellenic Open University.

Moreover, techniques supporting the rational value of the observation of artworks, mainly in the context of formal education have been developed in the pedagogical School of Harvard University, by D. Perkins (1994) as a forerunner and his associates (Ritchhard, R. 2002, Tishman &all 1999). These techniques are internationally recognized and widespread. Indicatively we can mention the projects Visible και Artful Thinking, which have been established as standard techniques for developing the learner’s critical thinking, as he confronts himself with the observation of works of art (Mega: 2011, p.21-67 in Kokkos: 2011).

Questioning Regarding the Notions of Reflective Dialogue with the Artworks and the TLP

In the following paragraphs, the question is raised as to whether and to what extent it is easy to negotiate a dysfunctional assumption of ours, after first recognizing it as dysfunctional. This questioning is necessary, because it explains the role Art can play in the transformative process of the learner.

We all know that our assumptions (functional or not) originate from our value system that we are constructing consciously and mainly unconsciously from the moment we are born. Our value system is actually a connective fabric of thoughts, ideas, and beliefs, practices which interpret our actions and give us the feeling that we are doing the right thing. The more tolerant-liberating societies are, the more this fabric leaves some small openings through which we can distinguish other realities, other connective fabrics in which *the others* act and vice versa. Today, globalization brings these fabrics close to each other in a violent way. Through the openings (loopholes) of our value system, our eyes look at the behaviors of *others*, which were unknown to us until recently, or at least were so remote that they did not affect any of our interests or any of our values. In the context of globalization however, understanding the Other today seems to be more of an imperative aiming at survival, rather than a sensitivity of marginal intellectuals. How easy is it, however, to understand the Other? How easy

is it to put under negotiation and question our own value systems? How simple is it to apply the 10 transformative steps wisely proposed by Mezirow? (Mezirow, 2007: 60) Supposing that the answer to this question is obvious but with a negative connotation, I believe we must develop or create techniques which assist the individual to negotiate and question consolidated assumptions (value systems). The technique proposed in the context of the present paper, moves along this direction.

The basis of the technique

The whole idea is based on observing the comments of my learners (adult students and pupils), but also of myself, when coming into contact for the first time with a work of art (for instance visual arts). Based on these observations I often hear the sentence: “*I like this work of art*” or “*I don’t like it at all*”. Why do we witness this initial acceptance or rejection of what the artwork represents? Maybe this is due to:

- ✓ The consistency between our perceptions and the artist’s as they are expressed in the artwork, or the discordance with these perceptions (aesthetic, cognitive, social and moral).

What the observer spontaneously sees at a first glance, is seen through his own aesthetic, cognitive, moral and social filter. This filter is nothing more than our assumptions on life, our frame of reference, our own connective fabric.

Going into the heart of the technique proposed here, let’s do the following working hypotheses:

Working hypothesis No 1 : What would happen if the educator’s first question to the learners was not “What do you see?”, but “*Do you like what you see and why?*” or “*What do you dislike in what you see and why?*” (That is, *does it match with your frame of reference, your filter to perceive things?*)

Working hypothesis No 2: What would happen if the educator did not ask: “What is the theme of this work of art?”, but “*Do you like the way the theme is put forward in the artwork and why?*” (Again, meaning “*Does it match with your frame of reference, your filter to interpret things?*”)

This simple pattern (*I like or I don’t like something*) constitutes the essence of the technique. It actually is the triggering point for the observer to face his disorienting dilemmas (DD). Let’s see how this happens:

According to Mezirow, the DD is defined as: “*Handling a situation which is not consistent with the way I think-understand myself and the world at a specific point in time*” (Mezirow, 2007: 349). However, as Mezirow himself pointed out, “*the works of art “are alternative ways of meaning perspectives”* (Mezirow, 2007:46). From my point of view this mean that a work of art can be a DD itself, when the way it is presented does not match, is inconsistent with our personal *aesthetic, cognitive, social and moral perceptions*. This is the moment when while looking at a work of art, the observer:

- ✓ Understands it in part.
- ✓ Feels the curiosity to study it better.
- ✓ Is surprised.
- ✓ Is emotionally shaken (but does not know why).
- ✓ Feels embarrassed.
- ✓ Does not understand it.
- ✓ It makes him feel uncomfortable.
- ✓ It provokes negative feelings and makes him want to skip it.

Examples

Let's take a closer look at this discordance on the *aesthetic level*:

The expressive means (colors, shapes, materials, sizes, volumes, lines) do not match what the observer is familiar with (through his culture).

Let's take a closer look at this discordance on the *cognitive level*:

The artist opts for and expresses himself through a composition which does not match the way I "put order" into things (classification, comparison, grouping, prioritizing, categorization). Let's take a closer look at this discordance on the *level of values (social-ethics)*.

- The artist adopts positions in a way contrary to the observer's value habits: social views, intellectual beliefs, ethical issues, philosophy of life.

Presentation of the Technique: notice- accept-reconsider my truths (NART)

Main Axes of the Technique: aim and characteristics

The aim of NART is the realization by the observer that there is not only one (personal) truth to interpret the world (and himself). Indeed, the more interpretations there are the richer in meanings and messages life becomes. Actually, as the individual realizes there are more than one truths on a theme, he 'exonerates' himself vis-à-vis his own truths (that might be dysfunctional) and may find it easier to express-accept them.

Multiple truths gradually lead to the question "*Why are there many truths?*" in a rational way. The answer to that question compels the individual to think critically about the others' assumptions (Revans, 1982 in Mezirow, 2007:61). Once this happens, it is inevitable to go deeper, down to the personal level. The individual naturally questions himself: "*OK, I have thought/wondered/ about the truths of the others. But what about my own truths?*" The answer to this question entails critical self-reflection on the individual's personal assumptions. Thus, the truths of others become now our own past truths, which refer to our self. They are also subject of critical thinking in the same way we thought critically about the truths of others. Although this is no easy task, (because according to Kegan (1994), all this is about the transition from the subject to the object), within the rationale of the technique proposed, it is a one-way path: "*Since I can reflect/think critically about the other's opinions, I can also reflect/think about my own.*" Perhaps the individual might not yet be ready to announce his thoughts about his own truths (especially if they are dysfunctional) to the educational group, but on a personal level the work is done.

During this process of announcing the dysfunctional assumptions, an aid can be offered by the educator's special handling and the educational group. We will talk about this further below.

Characteristics of NART

- Recognition of multiple truths: The basic characteristic of the technique is nothing but the recognition of multiple truths: the observer of the artwork is not faced with his/her own assumptions, as there is a high probability for him/her not being ready for such a mental and emotional adventure. By contrast, the technique highlights the artist's assumptions about life, which are then compared to the

observer's assumptions. The whole process takes place within the students' group, in which a spirit of mutual trust and structure for dialogue has been developed.

- Transformative intention: The technique is based on the rationale of the transformational phases as specified by Mezirow (Mezirow, 2007:60), starting with the notion of the DD, as defined above. In fact, the educator follows the first 4 out of ten transformative steps proposed by Mezirow as follows:
 1. Questions (on a work of art) for determining the disorienting dilemma
 2. Questions (on a work of art) for the realization of self-examination
 3. Questions (on a work of art) for the critical assessment of assumptions
 4. Recognition of the source of displeasure through the comparative study of his own assumptions and the others' (the artist's and his fellow learners')
 5. Investigating options for new roles, relations and actions
 6. Drafting an action plan
 7. Acquisition of knowledge and skills to implement the plan
 8. Testing new roles
 9. Capacity and self-confidence building for the new roles and relations
 10. Re-inclusion in life, based on the conditions now formed by the new prospects.

In fact, the technique is developed in the first four steps as defined by Mezirow, but at the beginning the rational dialogue pertains to the artist's perceptions (the other) and not to the observer's (1st, 2nd and 3rd steps). Then the observer compares his own perceptions with the others', reaching conclusions about the "objectivity" of everyone's truth, and finally this own. (4th step).

Once he realizes that multiple truths are the rule, the individual embarks upon a transformative learning path, liberated now from the observation of the artwork. The artwork has helped him to understand his truths and consequently to recognize his assumptions. The new roles and whatever follows may now enter into play (5th – 10th steps).

- Simplicity: It is developed through a minimalistic set of questions, easy for the educator to handle.
- The technique proposed is complex in its simplicity: Maybe the set of questions addressed by the educator to his trainees is extremely comprehensible; however, the rational viewpoint that needs to be adopted is a highly complex process. It presupposes: A) The appropriate selection of the works of art by the educator, B) Special handling to accept the other's truth (such as empathy), C) Special handling for the transition from the object (work of art) - and whatever this represents as regards the assumptions - to the subject (the observer's personal assumptions), D) Special handling to prove that the observer's assumptions on a theme may be dysfunctional.

The process of NART

In the frame that follows one can read the whole process of the technique:

	Educator's actions-lesson plan	IMPLEMENTATION				
THEORETI CAL FRAME	<p><i>BEFORE IMPLEMENTATION</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Selection of topic ✓ Selection of works of art that assist the study of the theme ✓ Selection of information about the work of art 					
<p><i>DISORIENTING DILEMMA</i></p> <p>1st transformational phase as specified by Mezirow</p>	<p><i>DURING IMPLEMENTATION (IN THE CLASSROOM)</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ <i>Observation questions (aesthetic/cognitive perception)</i> -Take a good look at the work of art. Pay attention to the technical side of the artwork: (colors, shapes, lines, volumes etc.). <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 1. What looks weird in what you see? What looks strange to your aesthetic perceptions? What "sounds" strange in your eyes? (as regards colours, shapes, volumes, disposition of objects in space [perspective]). What "sounds" familiar in your eyes? <p>WORK SHEET (1)</p> <table border="1" style="width: 100%;"> <tr> <td style="width: 50%; text-align: center;"><i>Familiar</i></td> <td style="width: 50%; text-align: center;"><i>Unfamiliar</i></td> </tr> <tr> <td style="height: 20px;"></td> <td style="height: 20px;"></td> </tr> </table>	<i>Familiar</i>	<i>Unfamiliar</i>			<p>INDIVIDUAL APPROACH WORK SHEET (1)</p> <p>ANNOUNCEMENT IN THE PLENARY</p> <p>(approximately:45 min)</p>
	<i>Familiar</i>	<i>Unfamiliar</i>				
<p><i>Observation question (social and moral perception)</i></p> <p>- Focus on the basic theme of the artwork. It might be a social event, a moment of history, a personal assumption of the artist about life, nature, or emotional statement. Describe this issue as best as you can, using your ability to observe.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 2. How does the artist depict the theme/notion of? (Name the theme).....in this work of art? What "sounds" strange/familiar in your eyes? <p>WORK SHEET (2)</p> <table border="1" style="width: 100%;"> <tr> <td style="width: 50%; text-align: center;"><i>Familiar</i></td> <td style="width: 50%; text-align: center;"><i>Unfamiliar</i></td> </tr> <tr> <td style="height: 20px;"></td> <td style="height: 20px;"></td> </tr> </table>	<i>Familiar</i>	<i>Unfamiliar</i>			<p>TEAM APPROACH WITH DISCUSSION AND INDIVIDUAL NOTES WORK SHEET (1)</p> <p>ANNOUNCEMENT IN THE PLENARY</p> <p>POSTING ANSWERS IN THE CLASSROOM WHERE EVERYONE CAN SEE THEM</p>	
<i>Familiar</i>	<i>Unfamiliar</i>					

			<p>The educator gives additional information about the basic characteristics of the artwork (e.g. material, dimensions, movement) (approximately:45 min)</p>										
<p style="writing-mode: vertical-rl; transform: rotate(180deg);">REALIZATION OF SELF EXAMINATION 2nd transformational phases</p>	<p><i>DURING IMPLEMENTATION (IN THE CLASSROOM: Part two: Fallings)</i></p> <p style="text-align: center;"><i>Talking about feelings</i></p> <p>3. What kind of emotions do you feel as you discover the "strange" technical aspects of the artwork?</p> <p>4. What kind of emotions do you have as you discover the artist's assumptions about the theme that depicts on this particular work of art?</p>		<p>GROUP DISCUSSION</p> <p>(approximately:15 min)</p>										
<p style="writing-mode: vertical-rl; transform: rotate(180deg);">CRITICAL APPROACH OF THE SOURCE OF DISPLEASURE 3rd transformational phases as specified by Mezirow</p>	<p><i>DURING IMPLEMENTATION</i> <i>Auxiliary questions to recognize assumptions</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 5. On which points does your view onmatch the artist's? (What do you like and why?) • 6. On which points does your view ondisagree with the artist's? (What do you dislike and why?) <p>WORK SHEET (3)</p> <table border="1" style="width: 100%; border-collapse: collapse;"> <tr> <td colspan="2" style="padding: 2px;">My point of view:.....</td> </tr> <tr> <td colspan="2" style="padding: 2px;">Artist's point of view:</td> </tr> <tr> <td style="width: 50%; padding: 2px; text-align: center;">MUCH</td> <td style="width: 50%; padding: 2px; text-align: center;">DOES NOT MUCH</td> </tr> <tr> <td style="padding: 2px;"> </td> <td style="padding: 2px;"> </td> </tr> <tr> <td style="padding: 2px;">.....</td> <td style="padding: 2px;">.....</td> </tr> </table>		My point of view:.....		Artist's point of view:		MUCH	DOES NOT MUCH			<p>INDIVIDUAL APPROACH FOR EACH QUESTION WORK SHEET (3)</p> <p>POSTING ANSWERS (Work sheet 3) IN THE CLASSROOM WHERE EVERYONE CAN SEE THEM</p> <p>(approximately:45 min)</p>
My point of view:.....													
Artist's point of view:													
MUCH	DOES NOT MUCH												
.....												
	<p style="text-align: center;"><i>Communication of results</i></p>		<p>WALK GALLERY/ TEAM WORK The learners read the</p>										

		<p>posted answers of the others members of the class. They tick the ones they find interesting and explain why through rational discourse in their groups</p> <p style="text-align: center;">INDIVIDUAL APPROACH</p> <p>Learners go back to their own approach (Q. 5° and 6°) and broaden it. Additionally they take under consideration work sheet 1 and 2.</p> <p style="text-align: center;">PLENARY</p> <p>The learners submit the points in which their reflection/thinking has been enriched, on the theme under study. They also express how they feel about this enrichment. Rational dialoge is also recomented</p> <p>(approximately:50 min)</p>
--	--	---

Implementation of NART

Above a hypothetical example of implementation of NART is being presented.

Educational Background: adult education, self-learning group

Learning Group: 10 teachers (between 40-50) how are examining aspects from the filed of social psychology

Teaching Subject: human relations

Topic : The notion of "error" in human relations, especially in Companionship

Justification for the choice of the theme: One of the basic principles in adult education is that the object of the lesson must arouse the learners' interest. There are many reasons reinforcing this position.

The most crucial is that the learner feels that his involvement in the learning process is not a waste of time, but vital time for searching something that interests him (cognitively, socially, professionally, etc.). Assume for example, that this particular self-learning group has joined the class in order to investigate the idea of "failure" in human relations. A "failure" which is experienced in various ways (in the workplace,

in the context of the parent role, in the context of marriage and friendship).

Let's assume that our adult educational group in informal discussions had come up with a particular set of questions such as: "*What mistakes have I made in my communication with my partner?*", "*Could I have predicted my mistakes?*", "*What should I do next time, in order not to make the same mistakes?*" "*Why do I find myself making the same mistakes over and over again?*" Questions like those arise for every human being from the moment he decides to connect with others. In the context of our hypothetical example, let's assume that our educational group wants to approach the theme: *The notion of "error" in human relations: "Companionship"*

Purpose of NART: Towards an exploratory-transformative learning path

The main purpose of the educational technique is to investigate the theme "Companionship", via the observation of works of art.

That means that the educational team is going to recognize areas of agreement and disagreement on the theme of "Companionship", as it is depicted in specific works of art. This investigation follows transformative pathways: The educational team addresses the theme "Companionship" studying their own perceptions on companionship in relation and juxtaposition with the others'. Through rational discourse, every member of the educational team will eventually realize that there are many ways to reflect on the idea of Companionship, perhaps not only in the ways he had used before, according to his personal experience.

Objectives of NART: Towards a developmental intention to change our personal truth

The structure of objectives follows the logic of the researcher Roberta Liebler (R. Liebler, 2007: 199-202, in Mezirow, 2000). According to this, objectives are not presented as final achievements, but as a path with the intention of changing through rational discourse. Therefore the objectives are as follows:

- Highlight the assumptions of "others" on the theme: Companionship
- Critical examination of the assumptions of "others"
- Awareness of personal assumptions on the subject
- Comparative study of assumptions on the subject
- Recognition of the degree of dysfunctionality of personal assumptions
- New roles for a more meaningful relationship

Methodology

The technique is formed, as already have been mentioned under the methodological umbrella of Transformative Learning. Therefore, we have followed the first four steps of transformation that are defined by Mezirow, (Mezirow, 2007:60)

The educator's actions

- *Selecting artworks*: The educator is about to present a number of artworks related to the topic of "Companionship". He/she searches for artists who are interested in this particular theme of "Companionship", such as Rembrandt, Sezanne, Manet. He/she then selects one artist, whose work will be helpful in approaching the theme of "Companionship". It is important to select artworks from the repertoire of one artist, because it is easier to explain the idea that the same person (here the artist) has a variety of perspectives on the same theme ("Companionship"). It

is also convenient to select at least three of four works of art that represent the same theme from different perspectives.

Let's have a look to some of them:



1rst work of art: Manet 1880, Bunch of Asparagus, oil on canvas 46X55cm, Wallraf-Richartz-Museum

For De Botton and Armstrong (2013) “ it is Manet's seemingly unflattering treatment of the asparagus that is the point. In delicately depicting the subtle individuality, the hue and tonal variation of each of the fronds, Manet reveals their ignored merits.” (De Botton and Armstrong 2013:124) In addition the bunch is bound with two strong threads. The links

between the asparagus in this work of art are strong. A humble vegetable turns into a lesson of social cohesion.



2nd work of art: Manet, 1863, The Lunch on the Grass, 208.3 × 264.2 cm, Musée d'Orsay, Paris

The Luncheon in the Grass, with its depiction of a nude female with fully clothed men was a controversial piece when it was displayed at the Salon de Refuses in 1863. It was considered an affront to the times, not only because of the stark nudity of the woman in contrast to the men but also because Manet used familiar models for the figures in the painting. The nude woman is a combination of both his wife, Suzanne Leenhoff, and one of his other female models, Victorine Meurent. The men, on the other hand, are his brother, Eugene Manet, and his brother in law, Ferdinand Leenhoff. It was also considered controversial because it illustrated the rampant prostitution in Paris at the time, which was a taboo subject just to mention, much less display in an oversized canvas. <http://www.wikiart.org/en/edouard-manet/the-luncheon-on-the-grass-1863>



3rd work of art: Manet 1878, The Cafe Concert, The Walters Art Museum

Parisian social life at the end of the nineteenth century, showing common people drinking a glass of beer at the *Cafe Concert*. In 1878-79, Manet painted a number of scenes set in the

Cabaret de Reichshoffen on the Boulevard Rochechouart, where women on the fringes of society freely intermingled with well-heeled gentlemen. Here, Manet captures the kaleidoscopic pleasures of Parisian nightlife. The figures are crowded into the compact space of the canvas, each one seemingly oblivious of the others. When exhibited at La Vie Moderne gallery in 1880, this work was praised by some for its unflinching realism and criticized by others for its apparent crudeness. <http://art.thewalters.org/detail/16473/the-cafc-concert/>

- *Setting the questions:* For each artwork the educator raises the set of 6 questions (see frame: The Process of NART) in order to help learners to eventually express their own truths.
- *Focusing on the emotions:* The educator is very sensitive to the emotional statements of the learning group. He is searching for the emotional statements throughout the process, he accepts them and he is trying to manipulate them through reflection.
- *Develop reflection:* Students take notes based on these questions and then communicate through rational discourse with their fellow students, in order to express themselves. The educator also forces them to listen carefully to the others' point of view (artist's, colleague's) and come to a broader consensus about the "Companionship" theme.

Example of hypothetical reflection of a learner influenced by the 2nd artwork: *The Lunch on the Grass*

Differences: My point of view differs slightly. A selfless relationship among people of the opposite sex can develop, but it's rather an exception to the rule. The gender may play a disorienting role in a friendship and add an erotic dimension.

Similarities: Taking into account my observation, I can notice that the naked woman does not affect the focus on the discussion. So I started thinking if in my life I was a member of a group of friends (companions) and I had a truly friendly relationship with the opposite sex, without any insinuation of erotic dimension. Certainly there have been such phases mainly in my college and professional years.

The woman in the background is different from everyone and everything. She is far away, she is half-dressed, and does not participate in the discussion. She is feeling well. The others seem to accept her decision for isolation. Both, the painter and I recognize the importance of accepting the diversity of others.

Taking into account the views of my classmates I realize there are more dimensions in the theme of companionship: a) it is nice to enjoy and accept it as something precious, to enjoy simple everyday moments, without stressing yourself, or worry about what people may say. B) A friend can be with you even if he is somehow isolated. He cares about you even from a distance. Companionship is not only for the exceptional moments of your life, it can be a part of your everyday experience. It is as vital as food is.

- *Develop proper time for observation and reflection:* The whole process can last from 4 hours up to 10, depending on the academic schedule.

The hypothetical example gave the opportunity for real implementation in a group of 10 teachers (between 30-40 years old), during an informal educational meeting, where new educational methods and ideas are tested and discussed. All partners find easy to express their opinions (What you like, or not, on this work of art), without hesitation. Furthermore at the end of the process they realized that although points of view can determine the way we think, they can also be tested and thoughtful consideration and can change for the benefit of the learner.

Conclusion

In this presentation a technique of observing artworks, based on transformational learning phases as specified by Mezirow (2000), has been presented. The basic characteristic of the technique is that the observer of the artwork is not faced with his/her own assumptions, as there is a high probability for him/her not being ready for such a mental and emotional adventure. By contrast, the technique highlights the artist's assumptions about life, which are then compared with the observer's assumptions. The whole process takes place in the framework of the adult students' group, in which a spirit of mutual trust and structure for dialogue has been developed.

Bibliography:

- Adorno, Th. (1970). "Towards a theory of Art Work" in *Aesthetic Theory*. Trans. R. Hullot-Kentor, Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, p. 176-199.
- Brookfield, S. (1995). *Becoming a Critically Reflective Teacher*, Jossey-Bass, San Francisco.
- Dewey, J. (1934). *Art as Experience*, The Berkley Publishing Group, New York.
- Freire, P. (1973). *Education for critical consciousness*, New York: Continuum.
- Freire, P. & Shor, I. (1987). *A Pedagogy for Liberation: Dialogues on Transforming Education*, Greenwood Publishing Group.
- Kegan, R. (1994). *In over our heads: the mental demands of modern life*. Harvard University Press.
- Kokkos, A. (2010). *Transformative Learning Through the Aesthetic experience: theoretical foundation and implementation*. *Adult Education*. 19:9-13.
- Kokkos, A. (2011). *Education through the arts*. Athens. Metexmio.
- Kokkos, A. (2015). *Report on the implementation of the method at the program "Education Through Art"*, *Bi-annual Journal: Adult Education*: July-December, 35, p. 16-45.
- Mega, G. (2011). "The arts in the formal education system", in *Education through the Arts*, Metexmio, Athens.
- Mezirow, J. & Associates (1990). *Fostering Critical Reflection in Adulthood*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.
- Mezirow, J. (1998). *On Critical Reflection*. *Adult Education Quarterly*, 48:185-198.
- Mezirow, J. (2000). *Learning as transformation: Critical perspectives on a theory in progress*, San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.
- Perkins, D. (1994). *The Intelligent Eye: Learning to think by Looking at Art*. L.A., Los Angeles: The Getty Education Institute for the Arts.
- Revans, R. (1982). *The Origin and Growth of Action Learning*, Cartwell-Gratt, Bickly Kent, U.K. in Mezirow, J. (2000). *Learning as transformation: Critical perspectives on a theory in progress*, San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.
- Rithhart, R. (2002). *Intellectual Character: What it is, Why it matters, and How to get it*. Jossey-Bass A Wiley Company San Francisco.
- Tishman, S. MacGillvray, D. & Palmer, P. (1999). *Investigating the educational impact*

and potential of the Museum of Modern Art's Visual Thinking Curriculum:
Final report to the Museum of Modern Art. New York: Museum of Modern
Art.

Internet bibliographic sources

Adorno, Th. (1970) *Aesthetic Theory: e-book*

<https://istifhane.files.wordpress.com/2012/04/aesthetictheory.pdf>

http://www.visiblethinkingpz.org/VisibleThinking_html_files/VisibleThinking1.html

<http://pzartfulthinking.org/>

https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Edouard_Manet_Bunch_of_Asparagus.jpg

<http://de.phaidon.com/agenda/art/articles/2013/october/21/could-this-manet-painting-relight-your-fire/>

<http://www.wikiart.org/en/edouard-manet/the-luncheon-on-the-grass-1863>

<http://art.thewalters.org/detail/16473/the-cafc-concert/>

Transforming stereotype perceptions through the emotional dimension of learning: A case study of the film “Entre les murs”

Maria Christou

Adult education and lifelong learning

Teacher at Primary School

Abstract

This experiential workshop aims to indicate the role of the emotional dimension of learning and the creation of a suitable emotional ambience in class in order to transform dysfunctional attitudes of the pupils, through the analysis of specific extracts of Laurent Cantet’s film “Entre les murs” (2008), which are used as a case study.

The learning process

Over the years, many scholars have approached the learning process and have launched many theories of learning. According to Illeris, every learning issue implies both the function of cognition, including the learning content, and the motivation function, combined with the individual’s interaction with its environment (Illeris, 2007). Therefore, three dimensions of learning are formed: *the cognitive dimension*, the dimension of the learning content, namely the knowledge and skills obtained through the learning process, *the emotional or psychodynamic dimension*, the pupils’ motivation, interest, engagement for learning, and *the social dimension*, the external factors which influence learning, such as the school environment and the society (Illeris, 2009). In our case, we will focus on *the emotional dimension of learning*, examining the factors that impact the learning process and its role concerning the transformation of stereotype perceptions.

Factors affecting the emotional dimension of learning

Nowadays, educators are called upon to work in difficult conditions: multicultural classes, with pupils belonging to uneven socioeconomic levels, with deficient edification in handling differentiation. In achieving to be efficient, educators are not just supposed to carry on with the context of a specific syllabus. They have to pay attention to all dimensions of learning aiming at developing their pupils’ personality.

In reference to the content of the lessons as well as the learning context, the degree of intervention of educators is low, taking into consideration the schools’ stable and preconceived logistical infrastructure, as well as the strict curriculum of education with preconceived aims, specific books and teaching hours for every subject. They have to contribute to creating an appropriate emotional ambience in class, offering their pupils the necessary support in order to develop the skills of empathy, self – awareness, handling of their emotions and of differentiation, aiming to the development of their personality (Goleman, 1995, 1998).

A basic factor that influences pupils’ attitude, interest and engagement according to learning is the different educational and cultural capital as they enter the educational system. Pupils that come from a privileged environment, whose parents have done higher studies, present linguistic comfort and have free educational

opportunities apart from school, adjust more easily to the demands of school reality, invest in their school life and they usually attribute better than pupils who come from an unprivileged family environment. The parents of the pupils who come from a disadvantaged environment present a different attitude towards education. This attitude is expressed through the choice of their children's school and the tolerance towards school failure, creating low expectations for those pupils, who accept this situation as irreversible. Additionally, educators' expectations for these pupils contribute to all the aforementioned, because even when they advise or address them, they take into consideration their social background, either willingly or unwillingly (Bourdieu, 1966).

Another important factor is the difference between the linguistic code used in the family and the formal linguistic code used at school, especially when the pupils come from a working class level. The limited vocabulary, the difficulty in using syntactic and grammatical rules, the reduced speech, create restricted combination of meanings, which leads to the limitation of the development of thinking of these pupils. On the other hand, the use of the formal language allows many combinations of words, syntactic structures and meanings, leading to the expansion of thought of speakers (Bernstein, 1961). However, pupils from lower social classes are unable to use this kind of language; they feel that they fail to meet the requirements and expectations of the school and gradually acquire a defensive and negative attitude towards it. This creates a vicious cycle of expectations and responses both on the part of educators, as representatives of the education system, and on the part of pupils. Whilst the former have limited expectations of their pupils regarding their academic and personal development and the latter come to confirm with their attitude and behavior the already formed impression concerning them (Cosden, Elliott, Noble, & Kelemen, 1999).

The aforementioned combined with the difference in pupils' cultural level, which most often acts as a deterrent for the acceptance of differentiation, create their negative feelings. Usually they do not participate in the educational process and obtain a "culture of silence" which ultimately leads to the isolation and the abandonment of any attempt to improve their self-image, because they feel that their needs are not taken into account. Consequently, we can find a huge gap in communication and interaction between the educator and specific pupils, as well as among their peers, creating an unstable emotional ambience in the classroom (Freire, P. & Shor, I., 2011).

Also, the recognition of pupils' personality by the educator is very crucial. Especially pupils from disadvantaged family environment need to be recognized from the people they consider important: their parents, friends and classmates, their educators. The latter need to create an appropriate emotional ambience during the educational act, so that the pupils feel safe to express their opinions and objections, to share their concerns, to listen to the views of others, to participate in democratic dialogue. When they feel that their opinion is respected and is not being rejected in advance, that their differentiation is accepted by the educator and their classmates, that the strong elements of their personality are recognized, gradually they acquire a stable emotional relationship with others, begin to develop a positive image of their abilities and gain confidence. This recognition constitutes the basis to proceed with the next level of recognition of their personality: self-respect and self-esteem. Otherwise, where the pupil experiences the rejection of his surroundings, he obtains negative feelings and expresses anger, disrespect, bullying, hate, factors inhibiting the development of his personality (Fleming, 2014).

Finally, the dynamics of the pupils' group play an essential role in creating good emotional ambience. Participating in the group process, students gradually shape their self-image and self-esteem, acquire understanding for others and the world around them, develop various horizontal skills, such as communication, empathy, collaboration, critical thinking, while they gain and simultaneously change values and attitudes, strengthen their personal responsibility for the proper functioning of the group. When the basic group rules are the free expression and substantiation of all opinions, the respect of all views and their criticism without offending personalities, an ambience of security is ensured in the way of expression and communication between the members of the group and simultaneously a specific context of its operation is created, which positively contributes to achieving its goal. The level of connection of the group, namely the strength of the bond that unites the members of the team, has to be high. This means that the confrontations and refusals to participate in the group should be limited and everybody is oriented towards a common goal, the agreement to achieve the aim and build a good ambience during the transaction of the members (Polemi – Todoulou, 2003). Basic factors that enrich the commitment of all group members with defined action towards achieving the common target are: the students' involvement in an educational process in which they participate actively, utilizing their pre-existing experience and initiatives, which leads to the formation of their desire for more learning (Dewey in Kokkos, 2005) as well as the connection between the subjects in school and the incidents in their real life. As Jarvis (1987, [2012]) mentions "*learning is not just a psychological process that happens in splendid isolation from the world in which the learner lives, but that it is intimately related to that world and affected by it*" (Jarvis, 1987, p.11). In conclusion, it is vital to be aware of the process that leads to the development of the pupils' group, which passes through various stages during which several issues to be resolved are brought out. Stage 1 is characterized by the orientation of the group towards the goal. The members begin to interconnect both with each other and with the educator and they try to make a first contract concerning their expectations. In stage 2 the members of the group begin to test whatever was agreed in stage 1 and start to clarify the group's potential and how they can offer to the group's development. Stage 3 is characterized by disagreements and confrontations which affect the emotional ambience. This stage is very crucial because the members reexamine whether they want to remain a member of the group, as they doubt on the synthesis and the goal of the group. Often some negative feelings related to the educator are expressed. If the group manages to pass through this stage, it moves to stage 4. The goal, the rules, the roles, the procedures are re-arranged and the members begin to synthesize their opinions in the basis of a new contract that expresses them. So, the group is ready to move on to the next stage (stage 5) where they can obtain new skills and attitudes feeling safer and happier. The members of the group manage to regulate several issues by their own, acting as a whole not as individuals. The progress of each team from stage 1 to stage 5 is spiral, because there may be an attempt of synthesis, but the group sometimes goes back to the confrontational phase. It is also important that the duration of each stage is unspecified because it depends on the relationships that are developed between the members and the educator, the degree of the commitment to the goal of the group, the roles that are shaped (Polemi – Todoulou, 2003). For this reason, the educator needs to properly support the group of pupils in order not to remain stagnant in the confrontation stage (stage 3), during which – as expected – everyone insists on his opinion, but to aim to the next stage (stage 4). This stage is related to the good emotional ambience of the classroom, as pupils with the aim of a final synthesis of

their opinions, need to exercise self-criticism in their views, to confront the opinions of others with respect, to accept criticism, to try to understand the views of their peers with empathy. Under these circumstances, the pupils may begin to transform their perceptions and their behavior, developing their personality as a whole.

Emotional dimension of learning and transformation of stereotype perceptions

All the aforementioned trigger the educators to approach critically the way pupils learn and as a result the way they teach. Research has shown that when the educator starts a basically internal dialogue giving particular emphasis on the emotional dimension of learning and on the cultivation of emotional intelligence of pupils, he creates appropriate conditions for challenging and transforming stereotype perceptions in relation to learning both the same students and teachers (Mezirow in Mezirow & Associates, 2000).

According to Habermas (1984) every learning process includes elements of both instrumental learning, whose goal is to improve the efficiency of the pupils, and communicative learning, the main objective of which is the understanding of others when communicating with us. Educators need to create the right conditions to promote the communicative learning in each educational event. This means that they need to communicate honestly with their pupils, to be authentic when they express their emotions, to provoke the fruitful dialogue and to create an emotional ambience where pupils feel safe to express their opinions, no matter how excessive they are. In this way, the educator and students will be able to point out the intentions, assumptions and possibly stereotype perceptions and they will be offered the chance to evaluate them critically aiming their transformation.

However, many educators focus on the simple transfer of knowledge to students, treating them as "containers to be filled by the teacher" with knowledge (Freire, 1970, p.70) than evolving personalities. They do not consider the needs, differentiations and difficulties that pupils face in relation to the strictly structured educational system and the already formed attitudes towards the institution of school and learning in general. They focus more on so-called informative learning, namely the enrichment of knowledge, and much less in transformative learning, which is associated with the critical confrontation of assumptions and changing the way in which students learn (Kegan in Mezirow & Associates, 2000). This banking concept of education, as Freire mentions (1970 [1993]), prevents the development of emotional bonds between educators and pupils and does not allow the cultivation of a productive, democratic and thoughtful dialogue.

For these reasons, it is necessary for educators to contribute to the creation of the emotional ambience that encourages dialogue and allows students and themselves, through mutual participation, to confront their stereotypes and try to transform them (Mezirow in Mezirow & Associates, 2000).

The role of aesthetic experience

The contribution of aesthetic experience, namely the systematic observation of works of arts, to the development of critical thinking, with the meaning of questioning the stereotype assumptions, is an issue that has concerned many researchers (Kokkos in Kokkos & Associates, 2011).

Dewey in his book *Art as Experience* (1934 [1980]) mentions that "*the work of art [...] is not only the outcome of imagination, but operates imaginatively rather than in the realm of physical existences. What it does is to concentrate and enlarge an immediate experience*" (Dewey, 1934, p. 273). Artworks raise our imagination which

is the only way our old perceptions meet and interact with the new, giving thereby meaning to experiences of the present. Also, as Perkins mentions the works of art act as *"an anchor for the senses"* (Perkins, 1994, p. 83), as a work of art allows the viewer to focus on a specific event which is a trigger for further analysis, deepening, speculation, justification of opinions, exchange of ideas.

Eisner (1993) mentions that the systematic contact with various works of art, gives the pupils the chance to broaden their perception of the world and gradually to avoid mainstream reactions about anything that is presented to them as given or new knowledge, because they learn to think comparatively and metaphorically. In addition, Gardner (1990) points out that the symbols of art have the characteristics of expressiveness, the rendition of reality, the life experiences or the artist's emotions and of metaphor, which allows the observer to interpret them in a unique way.

Particular is the contribution of Cornelius Castoriadis (2008) who mentioned that art is a means to get in touch with our deepest fears, worries, thoughts and our prejudices whereas the representatives of the Frankfurt School point out that art can be a vehicle for the development of critical thinking, as it displays images and situations of a life almost utopian, which differs from the real situations that we experience daily. It is this idealization of everyday life that offers the opportunity to each observer to develop an internal dialogue by comparing the reality experienced with an ideal reality (Adorno, Horkheimer, Marcuse, 1984). As Marcuse points out *"art challenges the monopoly of the established reality to determine what is "real", and it does so by creating a fictitious world which is nevertheless "more real than reality itself"*" (Marcuse, 1978, p. 22).

During this workshop we will try to highlight, with the support of all the aforementioned, and in an experiential manner, the role played by the emotional dimension of learning and the creation of an appropriate emotional ambience in the classroom for the transformation of pupils' dysfunctional behaviors, utilizing extracts from Laurent Cantet's film *"Entre les murs"* (2008) as a case study. We will focus on one particular pupil, Suleiman, and we will attempt to provide answers to questions such as:

- Which facts contributed to the creation of confrontations with Suleiman and of negative emotional ambience in the classroom?
- Could the educator have acted differently in order to avoid the disputes with Suleiman?
- Does the educator face his attitude critically? Is he trying to transform his attitude and create a supportive emotional environment for his pupils?
- How important is the educator's and the pupils' group role for Suleiman's transformation of behavior?

A brief reference to the content of the film extracts as well as a first approach of the questions to be discussed in the workshop will follow.

Extracts of the film *"Entre les murs"* as a case study

1st extract: The educator welcomes the pupils at the first day of school standing at the door, wearing a suit, indicating his different social class and economic level compared to those of his pupils. In his attempt to impose himself upon the pupils

and start the lesson, his first action is to hit his desk. He refers to teaching hours being lost due to students' lack of concentration, mentioning that in other schools something similar does not happen. Then, he changes the subject by asking them to write their names on a paper, explaining to a pupil who asked him the reason to do such a thing, that it is functional for everybody to know the names of the other classmates. Also he participates in this task by writing his own name on the blackboard, but not in capital letters, as it was requested by the pupils. These actions are considered positive as the students are encouraged to participate, however he offends them demanding to finish quickly a process that he thinks is so simple.

From the first extract we see that most of the educator's actions do not allow the creation of a spontaneous and sincere dialogue with his students, he debunks the possibility to create a sense of security and a free expression of opinion and generally he does not seem to be trying to create a good emotional ambience, which acts supportively to the development of the pupils' personality. Alternatively, he could initially present himself for those who do not know him and possibly express his expectations in relation to the educational process. Then, he could let the pupils to discuss in groups of two and present each other, giving them the opportunity to develop their communication and other social skills (Goleman, 1995). Finally, he could ask them to express their expectations for the course, which could have given him the opportunity to carry out a small research of the pupils' needs in order to identify any internal obstacles that may be associated with their educational capital (Bourdieu, 1966) and try to adapt his teaching to the pupils' needs.

2nd extract: In this extract the educator asks the pupils to look for words they don't understand and then, he helps them find the interpretations. He raises questions to the whole class and accepts all queries even when they seem to be very simple. He tries to use examples from pupils' daily life ("How are the Argentine players in a soccer match called?"), to challenge all the pupils to participate in the learning process, even if it's not voluntary, and he faces some situations with humor ("Thank you, Samantha, for acting as the prompter"). However, in his attempt to defend a pupil who did not know the word "Austrian", as one classmate is dismissive of his ignorance, he ends up saying that Austria is not an important country, because it is small. From the above it seems that the emotional ambience of the classroom has already been disturbed. It gets even worse when the educator is mocking and doesn't seem to trust the words of another student, Suleiman, who did not take notes and says that he will study on his own at home. So, as it is expected, when the educator tries to place the unknown words in sentences in order to make their meaning more easily understood and gives the example "Bill enjoys a juicy cheeseburger", he causes the pupils' attack. The reason of this attack is the use of a food foreign to the tradition of several children while he chooses an American name in this example, provoking students' rage as he is clearly not aware of the real needs and variations of his audience, something that is also welcomed by Suleiman. He disputes and discourages them and ultimately he refuses to change the name of the example and to switch to names like "Aishata" or "Fatou" as it was recommended by specific pupils.

From the aforementioned it is evident that the educator does not take into consideration basic factors that influence the emotional dimension of learning, such as the pupils' family and cultural background (Bourdieu, 1966), the difference in the language code used by pupils and the official linguistic code of school (Bernstein, 1961), the lack of empathy (Goleman, 1998) which leads to the expression of negative comments among pupils. Moreover, he does not seem to pay any special attention to the fact that some pupils do not feel safe to express themselves in front of their peers

and have adopted a "culture of silence» (Freire, 1970 [1993]).

Alternatively, he could have asked the pupils to work in groups and structure examples with the unfamiliar words through everyday experience. This would create fewer confrontations between himself and the pupils and would give them the opportunity to develop stronger bonds between them (Polemi - Todoulou, 2003). In addition, he could have accepted the request of the pupils to change the name "Bill" in the last example, showing that he recognizes their specific needs, their cultural background and their personality in general (Fleming, 2014).

3rd extract: In this part of the film, the pupils write an essay to present their personality. The teacher congratulates and encourages a pupil for his work, but he is ironical towards Suleiman, who believes that he does not need to write anything about himself, because he thinks he has nothing important to say. The educator does not accept his position and does not stop promptly the confrontation between Suleiman and a classmate, who challenges him both for his mental level and for his religion. Regarding the issue of religion, Suleiman is forced to show everyone a tattoo with words from the Koran, in order to defend his position. Despite the fact that the educator keeps calm, he fails to reconcile one student to the other and to restore the classroom serenity.

Observing this extract we can see that the proper basis for the creation of a good emotional ambience in the classroom has not been set, so the pupils do not feel the emotional security to freely express their opinions. The students are in dispute and it seems that the right conditions for the transition to the phase of composition have not yet been created (Polemi - Todoulou, 2003). Particularly, in regard to Suleiman, the educator does not make substantial efforts to reach him. When children bully Suleiman about his tattoo from the Koran, the educator does not notice the specific expression "if your words are more insignificant than silence, then stay silent", which would be a great stimulus for the pupil to compose a good essay and to feel that his personality is recognized by his classmates.

4th extract: The educator leads the students to the computer lab where every student depicts his personal portrait, using the essays written in class. He seems to make efforts to approach Suleiman, as he accepts his project, although it differs from those of other pupils. Suleiman did not write an essay but he creates his portrait with specific pictures from his life (his mother, his friends, his tattoo) adding captions. In the end, the educator posts Suleiman's portrait on the board despite Suleiman's objections, who believes that his project is not good. Then, the educator invites all pupils to see it, calling it "a masterpiece." Suleiman's satisfaction is obvious.

In this passage the emotional dimension of learning is essentially highlighted. It is the first time that the educator seems to have reflected on his attitude and tries to transform his behavior towards pupils. He makes efforts to approach all the pupils and uses humor when communicating with them. It is the first time we see some students working in groups and interact with each other, which shows that he has taken into consideration the role of the dynamics of the pupils' group (Polemi - Todoulou, 2003). Also, the educator shows that he recognizes the special talent of Suleiman in photography and finally he rewards him for his project. In this way he manages to boost his confidence and shows that he is not just trying to encourage him, but that he actually recognizes Suleiman's skills and personality (Fleming, 2014). Finally, he is making a first attempt to help Suleiman to identify stereotyped perceptions in relation to his abilities, making him think more critically about himself.

Discussion

These extracts from the film “Entre les murs” allow us to draw some insights about the role played by the emotional dimension of learning in terms of transforming stereotypical views of both pupils and educators. A first idea is that the creation of a good emotional ambience in the classroom is not easy, as each educator needs to consider the factors that affect it. Good knowledge of the family and socio-cultural background of pupils, the use of their experiences during the educational act, the recognition of their effort, depending on the possibilities and their educational capital, are basic elements that contribute to a good emotional ambience and influence the perceptions of pupils in relation to learning in general. Another idea is that the systematic work of pupils in groups, which is not presented in the extracts, increases the interaction between them and lays the foundation for building strong emotional bonds. Lastly, it is quite difficult both for the educator and the pupils to face their assumptions critically, especially if there is incomplete emotional context. The lack of empathy, the inability to manage personal emotions and differentiation do not allow the free expression of opinions and participation in a meaningful dialogue that reveals possible stereotype assumptions and gives the opportunity to transform them.

I think that the choice of this film, which is a kind of documentary, poses many questions that will concern us in this workshop. The fact that it presents real situations that we experience daily in classrooms, gives the observers the opportunity to exchange views on the way the various situations are approached by the educator. At the same time they can reflect and think about the way they handle similar situations. The "dialogue" that they will develop with this artwork, hopefully will turn into an internal dialogue, which would motivate the identification and possible transformation of stereotype perceptions concerning the role of the educator and the dynamics of the pupils' group while creating conditions that have an impact on the emotional dimension of learning and therefore the development of the pupils' personality.

References

- Adorno, T., Lowenthal, L., Marcuse, H., Horkheimer, M. (1984). *Art and mass culture*. Athens: Ypsilon.
- Bernstein, B (1961). Social class and linguistic development: A theory of social learning. In A.H. Halsey, L. Floud, C. Arnold Anderson, *Education, Economy and Society*. New York: The Free Press.
- Bourdieu, P. (1966). L'école conservatrice. Les inégalités devant l'école et devant la culture. *Revue Française de Sociologie*, VII-3.
- Castoriadis, K. (2008). *Window onto the Chaos*. Athens: Ypsilon.
- Cosden, M., Elliott, K., Noble, S., & Kelemen, E. (1999). Self understanding and self esteem in children with learning disabilities. *Learning Disability Quarterly*, 22, pp. 279-290.
- Dewey, J. (1934 [1980]). *Art as Experience*. USA: The Penguin Group.
- Eisner, E. (1993). Forms of understanding and the future of educational research. *Educational Research*, 22(7), pp. 5-11.
- Fleming T. (2014). Axel Honneth and the Struggle for Recognition: Implications for Transformative Learning. In Nicolaidis, A. & Holt, D. (Eds.). *Spaces of Transformation and Transformation of Space*. Proceedings of the XI International Transformative Learning Conference, (pp. 318-324) New York: Teachers College, Columbia University.

- Freire, P. (1970 [1993]). *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*. New York, London: The Continuum International Publishing Group Inc.
- Freire P., Shor I. (2011). *A Pedagogy for Liberation. Dialogues on Transforming Education*. Athens: Metaixmio.
- Gardner, H. (1990). *Art Education and Human Development*. Los Angeles, CA: The Getty Education Institute for the Arts.
- Goleman, D. (1995). *Emotional Intelligence*. New York, NY, England: Bantam Books, Inc.
- Goleman, D. (1998). *Working with Emotional Intelligence*. New York: Bantam Books.
- Habermas, J. (1984). *The Theory of Communicative Action*. Cambridge, UK: Polity Press.
- Illeris, K. (2007). *How We Learn: Learning and Non-Learning in School and Beyond*. London/New York: Routledge.
- Illeris, K. (2009) “A comprehensive understanding of human learning” in Illeris, K. (ed.), *Contemporary Theories of Learning. Learning theorists ... in their own words*. London/New York: Routledge, pp.7-20.
- Jarvis, P. (1987 [2012]). *Adult Learning in the Social Context*. London and New York: Routledge.
- Kegan, R. (2000). What «Form» Transforms? A Constructive-Developmental Approach to Transformative Learning. In J. Mezirow and Associates. *Learning as Transformation: Critical Perspectives on a Theory in Progress* (pp. 35-70). San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.
- Kokkos, A. (2005). *Εκπαίδευση Ενηλίκων: Ανιχνεύοντας το πεδίο*. Athens: Metaixmio.
- Kokkos, A. (2011). Transformative Learning Through Aesthetic Experience. In Kokkos, A. & Associates, *Education Through Arts*. Athens: Metaixmio.
- Marcuse, H. (1978). *The Aesthetic Dimension*. Boston, MA: Beacon Press.
- Mezirow, J. (2000). Learning to Think Like an Adult. In J. Mezirow and Associates, *Learning as Transformation: Critical Perspectives on a Theory in Progress* (pp. 3-33). San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.
- Perkins, D. (1994). *The Intelligent Eye: Learning to Think by Looking at Art*. Los Angeles. California: The Getty Education Institute for the Arts.
- Polemi - Todoulou, M. (2003). *Αξιοποίηση της διεργασίας της ομάδας στην εκπαίδευση ενηλίκων*. Athens: EKEPIS.

The Theatre of The Oppressed to promote Transformative Learning in a social-situated dialogue

Alessandra Romano

University of Naples Federico II, Teachers College, Columbia University, New York

Type of Proposal: Experiential Workshop

Abstract:

We would like to present an experiential workshop based on the methodologies of the Theatre of the Oppressed (TO) for promoting a transformation of meaning perspectives and create the conditions for the establishment of an authentic dialogue between people. This will be achieved through an action, which is a practice of transformation and change because it requires the audience to get personally involved.

Introduction

We would like to present an experiential workshop based on the methodologies of the Theatre of the Oppressed (TO) for promoting a transformation of meaning perspectives. This will be achieved through an action, which is a practice of transformation and change because it requires the audience to get personally involved. In the Theatre of the Oppressed, indeed, participants report episodes of oppression that may relate to all levels of society. They have to represent acting their stories of oppression. Taking the stage represents a moment of crisis for one's own certainties. For these reasons the TO expands awareness and reflexivity, which contribute to redefining the set of knowledge, beliefs, evaluative judgments and feelings that guide our actions. It can activate a critical examination of the common way of thinking, starting from a "disorienting dilemma," a problematic and doubtful situation which undermines established patterns of meaning. That gives rise to processes of exploration, analysis, and the assumption of new roles to try and to evaluate: critical reflection leads to transform and integrate meaning perspectives with new critical interpretations. In Freire's *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* (1970), education should allow the oppressed to regain their sense of humanity, in turn overcoming their condition. The oppressed individual must play a role in his or her own liberation. Likewise, the oppressors must rethink their way of life and to examine their own role in the oppression: "those who authentically commit themselves to the people must re-examine themselves constantly" (Freire, 1970, p. 60). Specifically, the Theatre of the Oppressed is understood as a practice consistent with Freire's approach to liberatory education — namely, aesthetic education that promotes a transformative model of learning based on dialogue.

The Conceptual Framework

The Theatre of the Oppressed is a formative praxis which leads participants to consciousness-raising, and our interest is to show how it could be a transformative practice under the aegis of transformative learning. The Theatre of the Oppressed offers the possibility of democratizing relationships between educator and learner, oppressor and oppressed, for future conscious global citizens. The Workshops of Theatre of the Oppressed (Vittoria, Strollo, Romano, Brock, 2014; Striano, Strollo,

Romano, 2014) are developed in four meetings, and follow the methodologies and techniques set forth by Boal (2005; 2011).

For more than forty years, the Theatre of the Oppressed, founded by the Brazilian cultural revolutionary and popular educator Augusto Boal, has been serving oppressed communities all over the world as a powerful tool for building sense of community and organizing for direct democracy (Picher, 2007). The TO embodies the concept of theatre as a political act — both a transfer of cultural power to the oppressed and a rehearsal for revolution (Boal, 2005). The aesthetic function of theatre is here dialectically connected to its pedagogical function. The TO highlights theatre as a learning process that fosters critical thinking. Specifically, the Theatre of the Oppressed is understood as a practice consistent with Paulo Freire's approach to liberatory education—namely aesthetic education that promotes a transformative model of learning based on dialogue. In the TO, this dialogue is brought about through the creation of a playful environment in which people express, analyze, and collectively change images of their reality according to their desires (Boal, 2011). Play structures are accordingly designed to activate a problem-posing learning process where participants examine and analyze their reality. First, they create acts based on their own direct experiences; then, they analyze the power relations and the etiological causes of the oppression expressed within those images; and finally, they act to transform the situation according to their vision of possible alternatives.

Throughout the history of humanity, from Aristotle to Boal, theatre was discussed as art for contemplation and art for transformation. Popular theatre is not an isolated performance or a cathartic experience, but part of an ongoing process of education, aimed at overcoming oppression and dependence, and at guaranteeing basic rights. «All the truly revolutionary theatrical groups», says Boal (2005), «should transfer to the people the means of production in the theatre so that the people themselves may utilize them» (2005, p. 122). An innovative approach to community dialogue, the Forum Theatre (FT) is rooted in the Brazilian social justice movements of the 1950s and 1960s. The FT analyzes situations of conflict involving objective, external (as opposed to internalized) oppression, in which the appropriate action to be taken is not immediately clear. Themes for development are suggested by workshop participants, who then tell their actual personal stories of unresolved conflicts stemming from political or social problems of no solution. Skits depicting these conflicts are improvised and presented to an audience. Each story represents the perspective of an oppressed protagonist actively engaged in implementing a strategy for the resolution of a conflict; the protagonist's original strategy to resolve the conflict, however, fails. When the skit is over, the audience discusses the strategy that has been presented, and then the scene is performed once more. However, this time, the audience members are invited to intervene by stopping the action, coming onstage to replace the actors, and enacting their own strategies to resolve the conflict. Thus, instead of remaining passive spectators the audience becomes a group of active “spect-actors” involved in creating alternative solutions and thus controlling the dramatic action. The aim of the Forum Theatre is not to find an ideal solution but to invent new ways of confronting oppression. A story of oppression is improvised, and the audience is invited to stop the action, replace the character that is being oppressed, and improvise a new ending. The Forum Theatre can be used to look at past or present situations, or it can be a rehearsal for the future.

The Theatre of the Oppressed has been exported to several Western countries, including Italy (Romano, 2016). In the Indian region of Calcutta, it was developed a broad movement of farmers and peasants, more than a dozen working groups, who

organized stage performances on anger problems, unemployment and collaboration (Picher, 2007, p. 86). In Paris there is a center of Theatre of the Oppressed working with immigrant communities on the rights of migrants and homeless. The Laboratory of Theatre of the Oppressed (TOPLAB), in New York, has maintained a strong working relationship with the Rio de Janeiro CTO group founded by Boal in 1990, and offers a spectrum of activity that arises to face social problems and oppression, such as housing, health care, abuses, spread of HIV, racism, sexism and gender stereotypes, and discrimination based on ethnicity. Those are forms of real oppression related to external forces and policies, even people internalized and reified oppression. Schutzman (1990, p. 80) recognizes that it is not possible to translate easily the semantic field of the words ‘oppressed’ and ‘oppressor’ from the system of cultural meanings of South-American culture, for example into the multicultural melting pot of Western, North American specifically, societies: this does not imply the impossibility to use the Theatre of the Oppressed, but its «pedagogical transitivity and usefulness» can be read according to simultaneously located perspectives, rooted in historical and political analysis for *that* experience and for *that* group of participants (Schutzman, 1990, p. 80).

In research conducted with Brazilian immigrants in a class of learning English as a second language in Everett, Massachusetts (Schaedler, 2010, p. 143), for a period of two months it was applied in class the educational curriculum of the Theatre Forum. The topic of the representations was the mistreatment of the local police against immigrant. The results showed that the adoption of the Theatre of the Oppressed allowed participants to acquire self-confidence and self-esteem in the process of integration with host communities (Schaedler, 2010, p. 145). Moreover the use of language in situations close to their contextual reality provided participants the possibility to develop situational and communicative skills, soft-skills (*Ibidem*). In another research conducted with a group of Swedish medical students (Nordström, Fjellman-Wiklund, Grysell, 2011, p. 1), the Forum Theatre was used for the development of professional skills, such as communication and health: the experience of the Forum Theatre with groups of 8-10 participants was called «Marathon of death» (*Ibidem*), and focused on the theme of death of patients and of the death notification to family members. Students spect-actors were interviewed and the results of the qualitative study showed that the educational course was perceived as an experience to practice before facing difficult tasks in future professional lives in a safe and controlled environment (Nordström, Fjellman-Wiklund, Grysell, 2011, p. 5) and to achieve a form of «simulation and contextual learning» (Nordström, Fjellman-Wiklund, Grysell, 2011, p. 6).

In South-Africa, was developed a movement of «Theatre for Development», a self-directed civic movement aimed at the pursuit of social change: it proposed the integration of experiential routes within curricula stemmed from the assessment of these activities on awareness processes and from the analysis of the form of political power in those communities.

The methodologies and the techniques of the Theatre of the Oppressed

Boal states that the TO has two fundamental principles: (1) to help the spectator become a protagonist in the dramatic action so that s/he can (2) apply those actions s/he has theatrically practiced in real life situations. The spectator must become the spect-actor. The theory of Theatre of the Oppressed rests on six basic tenets:

1. First, we as human beings are by definition creators; we are inherently artists and actors who organize and transform our surroundings (Boal, 2006).
2. For the second tenet, we are also inherently “theatre,” in terms of social

consciousness and social interaction. As conscious beings we play the roles of actor and spectator, or observer, of ourselves; we are also engaged in developing our innate capacity for dialogue with ourselves and with others. We thus engage in a dialectic of action and reflection, acting on and transforming our environment and simultaneously transforming ourselves, because we are part of that environment. Boal refers to this dimension of our humanity as “essential theatre” (Boal, 2002).

3. The third tenet introduces the responsibility of society to help all people to develop their innate capacity for creativity, consciousness, and dialogue. The use of direct participatory democracy is the most effective means to achieve this (Boal, 2006).

4. The fourth is concerned with the ethical poverty of capitalist society. The global market economy, which transforms natural resources and landbases into private property to generate monetary profit, destroys people and the environment.

5. The fifth tenet considers the hegemony of bourgeois ideology as a system of political positions, educational theories, attitudes, beliefs, and feelings.

6. The sixth tenet proposes that transforming images of reality according to our desires and dreams is in itself a transformative act. Boal conceives of Theatre of the Oppressed as a cognitive martial art, whose primary function is to serve simultaneously as a weapon of resistance against oppression and a tool for creating a transformative culture.

Participants not only dramatize the world as it exists, but also test out their ideas for its transformation. The FT is particularly suitable to promote reflection upon issues of communication and asymmetric relations of power within a formal pedagogical framework. It also allows the development of cognitive and meta-cognitive processes that are, by their very nature, collective and shared, never individual. He changes the spectator-actor relationship, as Paulo Freire as educator has done with the professor-student relationship, practicing a dialogic relationship, which is open, circular, and, therefore, with critical potentialities (Romano, 2016).

In recent decades, the transformative potential of popular theatre, and the Theatre of the Oppressed in particular, has made it possible to use this as an educational tool in difficult and fragile contexts, since it can support the creation of instruments of dialogue and solidarity. It allows one to imagine and simulate several action options and build a shared desire for social change. On this basis over the years we developed a series of empirical research projects (Vittoria, Stollo, Brock, Romano, 2014; Romano, 2014; Romano, 2016) involving university students from different part of the world (some groups were attending the course of Social Pedagogy at the University of Naples Federico II, few groups were taking part to the Certified Training Course for teachers at University of Naples Federico II, other groups were attending the doctoral program in Organization & Leadership at Teachers College, Columbia University) in order to foster the development of skills useful for the interpretation of the social environment through the narration and subsequent dramatization of significant events. We would like to show empirically, through an experiential workshop, how we may use the Theatre of the Oppressed within formal academic contexts and we will adopt two questionnaires by the end of the workshop, to investigate participants' perceptions.

The courage for Coming on stage

Everybody participates in the Forum Theatre sessions. The joker, who is the conductor, interrupts the scene during the performance and asks the audience to recognize the situation of oppression, and to try to identify an oppressed and an oppressor. He/she is conceptualized as a connector between the stage action, actors and spect-actors. His/her action allows a contemporaneous analysis of the stage

representation. Through questions, the participants speculate about the real situation represented and begin to encode and decode that reality represented in the stage action. It is not easy to say who is the oppressor and who is the oppressed; in a metaphor for the oppressor-oppressed dialectics it is known that the oppressed, as being oppressed, can oppress and, viceversa, the oppressor may be so because of his/her suffered oppression (Romano, 2016). The FT includes a discussion of possible solutions to the conditions of oppression. The audience is questioned: if you were the oppressed, what would you do? How would you react? What would you think of doing to resolve the conflict?

The aim is not to look for a “happy ending”, but for a critical reflection on the relations of power and of the tools for dialogue (of which also conflict is part) that could alter it. Taking the stage, however, represents a moment of an abrupt transition from words to action. For this reason the TO is a technique that, according to the perception of the majority of participants, produces change and transformation in the meaning perspectives of the subjects; that is why it has been conceived as an educational tool that can potentially promote a form of transformative learning in the participants, both in the role of the actors and in the role of the spect-actors. The changes and transformations (Mezirow, 1991) are achieved through the development of self-criticism, awareness and reflection on oneself and on others as well as through the development of a capacity of ethical behavior, and of reflective processes on the dynamics of oppression suffered by the participants, and the recognition of different and varied forms of oppression that act at all levels of the ecological metaphor. The change and transformation processes are promoted primarily by experience in all its complexity, and in all its phases.

In the facilitation of TO processes, the joker plays a crucial educational role regulating and shaping the discussions that take place as a response to the images and scenarios that the participants create. The joker should use these discussions and representations as stimuli for deeper discussions about how the dynamics of power and oppression operate in people’s everyday lives, and to open a dialogue on why oppressive conditions exist and how they can be changed. Thus consciousness-raising is not an end but a means towards taking sustainable action that nurtures reflection.

The fictional action of the theatrical mode forms a bridge between the critical consciousness of the participants and their taking action in the ‘real’ world. The Theatre of the Oppressed is a preparation for the implementation of cultural change to address injustice, inequality, and oppression. According to Mezirow, «Fostering these liberating conditions for making more autonomous and informed choices and developing a sense of self-empowerment is the cardinal goal of adult education» (2000, p. 26). The TO could be an emancipatory instrument to promote transformative learning and change, not only for students of all ages, but, above all, for everyone.

The guiding ethical imperatives expressed by Boal in his *The Aesthetics of the Oppressed* (2006) consist of

- rejection of the ideology of political “neutrality” that dominates education and the arts;
- affirmation of the inherent political function of art;
- action, the creation of an oppositional and emancipatory model of theatre based on democratic principles — theatre of, by, and for the oppressed who are fighting back and creating a new society.

Also in the work by John Dewey there’s an openness to some use of art and aesthetic experience, namely theatre, music, writing, as means of liberation, as practices of individuation in educational practice. The theatre facilitates experiential learning. So,

the Theatre of the Oppressed can be considered a vehicle of active learning (Dewey, 1938). Knowledge is the first type of investigation that arises from practical needs and from the transactions between people. The way in which we relate to reality is always a process of inquiry, aimed to problem-solving and derived from a deliberate search. Participants not only dramatize the world as it exists, but also test out their ideas for transforming it. Improvisation also brings out, often unconsciously, contradictions or constraints which had not been unearthed through a process of straight analysis. In effect it becomes a process of analysis - questioning, challenging and probing reality for deeper meaning. It is this malleable quality of theatre, its transformability, which makes it a potent tool to promote reflection. The real challenge is to use this powerful educational tool not only in social non-formal contexts, but also in university classrooms.

Forum theatre is designed to maximize participation of the audience in a performance by shifting the central focus of the dramatic event from the stage to the audience. This shift occurs through the spect-actor principle. The concept refers both to a social relation and to a protagonist function; rather than being installed into fixed roles, as in conventional theatre, the spectators and actors have dual functions, mobile and reciprocal, and the theatrical action becomes one that all participants — actors and audience — can exercise.

By taking on the role of protagonists of the dramatic action, audience members prepare to be protagonists of their own lives in the much broader social sphere. In forum theatre, the spect-actor role play is a vehicle for analyzing power and stimulating public debate. Participants explore the complexity of the individual-group relation at a variety of levels. They are invited to map out the dynamics of power within and between groups, and the experience and the fear of powerlessness within the individual. They explore rigid patterns of perception that generate miscommunication and conflict, as well as ways of transforming them. Forum theatre is useful as a means of helping participants prepare for effective social action intended to transform the objective social and political realities of their community.

In Theatre of the Oppressed, democracy is not only a vision but also a practice rooted in the daily life of oppressed people. This practice, however, takes different forms according to the social and political context of referring. The cultural practice and politics of Theatre of the Oppressed consists of promoting not only social, economic, and political democracy but also democracy as a way of life — a way of understanding and creating everyday human relations based on values and attitudes that foster direct democracy— and as a way to think and to reflect upon choices.

Inside school and formal educational contexts, the Theatre of the Oppressed and the Theatre Forum are group and collective pedagogical tools, which exercise and strengthen ability of self-regulation. According to the social cognition theory (Zimmermann, Bandura, 1994), self-regulation operates through a set of psychological subfunctions: these include self-monitoring of one's activities, applying personal standards for judging and directing one's performances, enlisting self-reactive influences to guide and motivate one's efforts, and employing appropriate strategies to achieve success. Thus, the aspect of self-regulated learning plays a central role in the Theatre of the Oppressed, also because this method mobilizes ability of self-directedness. Forum Theatre incorporates audience participation into a performance such that audience members make suggestions to actors in order to alter the outcome of a scene. Engaging in a performance can incite questions, experiences and issues that may otherwise be overlooked. In a broad meaning forum play is a simulation education because it is a simulation of a specific event with a specific goal.

Forum play may be a useful exercise in teaching course for future educators, teachers and psychologists in university contexts. Through games, exercises, improvisations, group works, using the body, voice and movement, the selected situation of conflict, discussed during the narrative phase, is reconstructed and acted. These stories might represent the oppression in human relationship, such as that between a young male and a young female through different levels of the ecological social metaphor.

Mirror neurons: Theatre of the Oppressed, Dialogue, Empathy through neuroscientific approach

Common sense suggests educators that the theater generally, and the Theatre of the Oppressed specifically, can be a tool to help people to overcome selfishness and to be more empathetic or simply more in contact each other. The mirror neurons are the neurobiological basis for human capacity to understand others as intentional agents, and this ability is highly dependent on the inherently relational nature of the action, which is expressed in two ways, as a relationship between agent and object of an intentional act and in the relationship between the agent and the observer of the action. The mirror neurons are an important element for creating empathic relationships between different individuals (Gallese, 2008). Functional architecture of Embodied Simulation seems to be the basic characteristic of human brain, which makes possible the inter-subjective experience. The embodied simulation proved in the neuroscientific research was also studied in relation to the understanding of literary language. For example, listening or reading metaphors active sensory simulations in human people. Although several studies on the comprehension of idiomatic phrases (Gallese, 2008; 2013) show that all human knowledge is deeply rooted in our physicality: the body is the basis for the development of abstract concepts. Wojciehowski and Gallese (2011) suggest that the phenomenon of mental imagery and simulation of feelings and emotions are both processes involved in the use of literary texts. The intentional mechanisms of resonance would allow the stories to live in us from carnal perspective. fMRI studies (Wojciehowski, Gallese, 2011) revealed the activation of a simulation process even when there are listening stimuli. Listening to a sound that identifies an action, is sufficient to activate a motor simulation of that action, even in the absence of visual stimulus. Thanks to the imaginary and intentional simulation mechanism our body is able to access instantly, pre-reflectively and pre-conceptually to others' actions. The simulation is highly dependent on intention and recognition of motor intentionality. In other words, the simulation is carried out exclusively in the case in which the end of the entire motor chain is already part of the motor knowledge baggage of the viewer or listener; and, especially, in the case where the motor chain is moved by an intention. The results of studies on mirror neuron systems (Rizzolatti, Sinigaglia, 2008; Gallese, 2008; 2013) were linked by neuroscientists with one of the themes dear to the phenomenology: empathy. The term *Einführung*, translated with the word empathy realizes the experience mimetic sharing, which is achieved and materialized in various forms of artistic expression. The art in general and in particular the performing arts, including the theater, are example of how man put his bodily and spiritual dimension in function of interpersonal communication.

In the art, in fact, the object loses its instrumental connotation to become symbolic. This is also what happens in theatrical performance, where actors' body is released from the everyday utilitarian purpose, making himself able to evoke the magic of the performance that the artist and the public in some ways share. So, for several years, neuroscience studies look with interest at the theater as a place of interpersonal relationships - between actor and spectator in the audience - based on empathy. As

pointed out by Gallese (2008), «in the theatrical acting is configured, in fact, a duality of relationships that, on one hand, bring into connection creator and audience and, on the other hand, transform the individual viewer in a member of a social group, the public. In both types of interpersonal relationship occurs identification mechanisms of mimetic phenomena, we assume based on resonance mechanisms - motor and not - not dissimilar to those exemplified by the mirror neurons» (Gallese, 2008, p. 13).

A crucial element of the aesthetic experience consists of the establishment of incarnate (*embodied*) mechanisms which include the simulation of gestures, emotions and bodily sensations contained in the artwork. Gallese and Freedberg (2007) conducted a series of experimental studies aimed at investigating the specific effect on the artistic image viewer, showing that when the image becomes artistic image, its aesthetic nature multiplies its power of attraction. One aspect related to the specific observation of artistic works is the unwitting embodied simulation in the viewer of the artistic gestures used to create the work of art. In the course of an experiment (Gallese, Freedberg, 2007) to a group of persons were shown high-resolution reproductions of famous slashed paintings by Lucio Fontana, alternating with control stimuli (edited images, where the cut was replaced by a line). Except for the dynamic aspect, control images were substantially identical to the reproduction of the artistic works, perfectly reproducing color, contrast, color effects. Observing the reproduction of the artistic works, all the subjects showed the same motor resonance, which instead has not occurred in front of the control stimuli. The reaction of the mirror neuron system is independent on the degree of cultural and cognitive mediation (half of the participants knew the artist). Since the motor response was observed only during the observation of original artistic works and was independent on familiarity that the subject has with the stimuli, considering that the cuts on the canvas are the signs of the motor acts, the team of researchers suggested that the artistic work is able to mediate the emotional motor resonance arisen between the artist and the viewer through embodied simulation. In this sense, the inter-subjectivity is constituted primarily as intercorporeity. The activation and the specialization of the mirror neuron circuits would require functional stresses which result in exposure of the individual to others' actions.

The mirroring mechanisms offers another perspective on the sociological concept of alienation: alienation is often represented in the scene of the Theatre of the Oppressed. Participants reflect on it thanks to the staging and the acting the alienated condition of individual in capitalistic society, oppressed by inequality of means and by the consumistic logic of the capitalism. The concept of alienation which emerges from the introduction of the mirror neurons mechanism to the theatre of the oppressed is quite different: thanks to the mirroring function, people can feel empathy towards the others and the oppressed, the same fact of acting constitutes the experimental field of assuming the perspective of the oppressed and of challenging the prior schemes, behaviors and beliefs about social justice. Alienation can become the road for the identification process that allows to overcome the narcissistic and selfish viewpoint, can become the way of bringing our mind out of ourselves to embrace and encounter others' and other perspectives, cultures and feelings. Those aspects impact not only on the theatre of the oppressed, but also on the opportunities of building an authentic dialogue between cultures and between nations for facing and managing the new social emergencies.

The endless possibilities of implicit sharing of moods through action, typical of the performing arts, could therefore be the principal instrument to promote the activation of neural networks underlying the mirroring processes in complex phenomena such as

identification, projection, empathy.

The art of theater is therefore the art of relating with the audience through the scene and via the body, the voice, the poetic words. A theatrical act in the strict sense is an act that meets the characteristics of authentic intersubjectivity, this quality of human presence in the scene. The methodology of the Theatre of the Oppressed (Picher, 2007, p. 81) is an aesthetic education: its basic steps are to see (and hear and feel), analyze and act. Each step embodies in its fulfillment the three propositions about the nature of the real world, diametrically opposed to the ideology of the dominant fragmentation:

1. in the real world, each person is an indivisible whole whose sensations, movements, ideas, emotions and «beliefs do not merely interact with each other but are intertwined with each other» (*Ibidem*). All the ideas and mental images are physically revealed, the mental and physical domains are connected and overlapped each other, and all five senses are connected, because the whole person enters the scene.
2. The amazing power of the Theatre of the Oppressed (Boal, 2005) resides in the most peculiar way this aesthetic phenomenon takes place: who bring the theatrical experience is a human being. In the Theatre of the Oppressed, the actor does not present a character to the public, but represents himself, his story and in some way someone else.
3. The Theatre of the Oppressed (Boal, 2005), as eminently relational experience, based on a generative relationship, is a journey that culminates in the encounter between the public and creative actors: it is the story of an encounter.

The theatrical event, in its authentic manifestations, has the uncanny ability to transport those who take part in another world: the world of the scene. The actor can bring to life the world of the scene and at the same time be the protagonist of the reality acted. Actor and spect-actor then choose to dwell together a different world, with different and converging roles at the same time. The Theatre of the Oppressed (Boal, 2005), like education, is a pact of generosity between the spect-actor and the audience, an act of faith in humanity than men, experiencing the beauty, getting in touch with what that transcends the sensible reality precisely starting from the sensitive reality. The Theatre of the Oppressed is therefore seeking the truth in the beauty; acceptance of one's humanity and need for transcendence; ability to marvel toward life and get away from oppression.

Conclusion

Very often people are convinced that we can do very little to change situations in life settings and in society in general. But taking an active role in building the dramatization that examines alternative social structures, they can be encouraged to adopt a more optimistic prospective on their potential participation in social change.

As Freire argued (Schaedler, 2010, p. 147), there is no way for the transformation, transformation is the way, and to seek transformation, we must begin to transform the world around us. The experience as a place of expression and actualization of a complex thought emerges, in fact, as a strategic response to the problems posed by the unpredictable experiential and problematic dimension (Knowles, 1980; 1996).

The Theatre of the Oppressed is a learning environment in which each actor, in his or her role, has a chance to learn how to consciously reflect on his actions and to seek alternative solutions to the problem (Romano, 2014; Striano, Strollo, Romano, 2014). The Theatre of the Oppressed in the formative moment encourages the sense-making activities and the ability to build visions and always multiple meanings, breaking the perceptual set and the meanings attributed to the events, promoting the construction

and the combination of other perspectives, more functional but always temporary. If we assume that every human action, whatever its nature, as a result of intentionality, implies a choice, the problem is to exercise our right to individual choice, to know explain and justify the reasons, take responsibility in first person, turning it into prior and preconceived structure. When we act must remember that what we see and understand is just a «small circuit arc» and that our action is just one of the infinite ways of operating in that context. We can then broaden our vision to other possibilities, to make the relational context as a learning opportunity. Working on the implicit and oppression implies a reflection on the conditioning exercised by formal knowledge, acquired in the course of institutional education, on cultural suggestions received from the context in which we are located, to understand how these elements have constituted the patterns by which to read the relational experience and current information. To unveil these influences means opening up the possibility of building meanings independently and plan new directions for action.

References

- Boal, A. (2005). *Il poliziotto e la maschera: Giochi, esperienze e tecniche del Teatro dell'Oppresso*. Bari-Molfetta: La Meridana.
- Boal, A. (2011). *Il Teatro degli Oppressi. Teoria e tecnica del teatro*. Bari-Molfetta: La Meridana.
- Dewey, J. (1938). *Experience and education*. New York, NY: Collier Books.
- Freedberg, D., Gallese, V. (2007). Motion, emotion and empathy in esthetic experience. *Trends in Cognitive Sciences*, 11, 5, 197-203.
- Freire, P. (1970). *Pedagogy of the oppressed*. New York: Herder and Herder.
- Gallese, V. (2008). Il corpo teatrale: mimetismo, neuroni specchio, simulazione incarnata. *Culture Teatrali. Studi, interventi e scritture sullo spettacolo*, 16, 13-38.
- Gallese, V. (2013). Corpo non mente. *Le neuroscienze cognitive e la genesi di soggettività ed intersoggettività*. *Educazione Sentimentale*, 2013, 20, 8-24.
- Gallese, V., & Wojciehowski, H. (2011). How Stories Make Us Feel: Toward an Embodied Narratology. *California Italian Studies Journal* [online publication], 2, 1.
- Iacoboni, M. (2008). *I neuroni specchio*. Torino: Bollati Boringhieri.
- Knowles, M. (1980). *The modern practice of adult education: From pedagogy to andragogy*. New York: Cambridge.
- Knowles, M. (1996). *La formazione degli adulti come autobiografia*. Milano: Raffaele Cortina Editore.
- Mezirow, J., & Associates (2000). *Learning as transformation: Critical perspectives on a theory in progress*. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.
- Nordström, A., Fjellman-Wiklund, A., Grysell, T. (2011). Drama as a pedagogical tool for practicing death notification-experiences from Swedish medical students. *BMC Medical Education*, 11 (74).
- Picher, M.L. (2007). *Democratic Process and the Theater of the Oppressed*. *New Directions For Adult and Continuing Education*, 116, 2007.
- Rizzolatti G., Sinigaglia C. (2008). *So quel che fai. Il cervello che agisce e i neuroni specchio*. Milano: Raffaello Cortina Editore.
- Romano, A. (2014). Promoting Reflexivity through Drama. *Educational Practices of the Theatre of the Oppressed*. *Educational Reflective Practices*, 1, 131-145, ISSN: 2240-7758, doi: 10.3280/ERP2014-001008.

- Romano, A. (2016). *Il palcoscenico della trasformazione. Processi di apprendimento nel Teatro dell'Oppresso*. Milano: FrancoAngeli.
- Schaedler, M.T. (2010). Boal's Theater of the Oppressed and how to derail real-life tragedies with imagination. *New Direction for Youth Development*, 125, 141 – 151.
- Schutzman, M. (1990). Activism, Therapy or Nostalgia? Theatre of the Oppressed in NYC. *The Drama Review*, 34 (3), 77-83.
- Striano, M., Stollo, M.R., Romano, A. (2014). The Theatre of the Oppressed: an Experiential Practice to Promote Transformative Learning?. In *Spaces of Transformation and Transformation of Spaces*. New York Teachers College Columbia University, 23-26 October 2014, New York: Teachers College, Columbia University, pp. 693-699.
- Vittoria, P., Stollo, M.R., Brock, S., Romano, A. (2014). Surveys as Praxis: A Pilot Study on Transformative Learning Assessment with the Laboratory Experience of The Theatre Of The Oppressed. In *Proceedings 8th International Technology, Education and Development Conference*. Valencia, March 10th-12th, 2014 INTED, p. 6147-6157, ISBN/ISSN: 978846168412.
- Zimmerman, B. J., & Bandura, A. (1994). Impact of self-regulatory influences on writing course attainment. *American Educational Research Journal*, 31, 845–862.

TRANSFORMATIVE LEARNING AND EDUCATIONAL PRAXIS

Mindfulness Practices as discover of Inner Transformative Dialogue

Romano Alessandra, Strollo Maria Rosaria

University of Naples Federico II, Department of Humanities

Abstract:

The experiential workshop we would like to carry out is based on the ACT Protocol (Baer, 2012), which aims to promote change and to increase the ability of listening to our inner world and consciousness flow. The workshops will incorporate the central elements of Transformative Learning Theory (Mezirow et. al, 2000), including: (1) Guided mindfulness practice as disorienting dilemma; (2) Critical reflection; and (3) Dialogue with the others in a non-judgemental openness.

Introduction

We would like to present an experiential workshop on Mindfulness practices for exploring their potential effectiveness on people. Mindfulness exercises cultivate the attention and favor experiences of sensorimotor integration, in a wholistic approach. These methodologies could lead to a transformation of meaning perspectives (Mezirow, 2000) thanks to the work on the ability to stay in the present time and to be aware of our own cognitive processes. If dialogue can be considered at the heart of transformative learning processes, mindfulness practices can promote inner dialogue to develop critical reflection and emotional regulation. We call mindfulness a set of actions that affect many aspects of mental functioning. The competition continues to play a key role in individual success among people, it can easily impede efforts to enter authentic dialogue across cultures, disciplines, values; the kind that simultaneously allows for ‘changing’ and ‘being changed’ collectively. To do so would be challenging precisely because achieving individual recognition is such an alluring motivation in society. Balancing individual recognition with our desire to be one with something greater, rather than casually a part of, requires attitudes such as: beginner’s mind, being non-judgmental, maintaining patience, and letting go. A time for the process of understanding, formally cultivating, and living-out these attitudes is the practice of mindfulness, defined as paying attention, on purpose, in the present moment, and without judgment, moment by moment (Kabat-Zinn, 2003). Research shows that regular mindfulness practice is associated with a substantial increase in brain matter associated directly with learning processes, emotional regulation, self-referential processing, and perspective taking (Holzel et al., 2011). Mindfulness practice is also shown to substantially reduce anxiety (Roemer et. al, 2008) and rewire our individual perceptions so that we might better remain open to new ideas (Carmody, 2009).

Conceptual Framework

The conceptual framework looks at constructive-development theory (Kegan, 1982)

within the context of mindfulness meditation while paying particular attention to the importance of emotions. Kegan's six stage theory of development starts at infancy and includes three stages of adult development (Kegan, 1982) beyond adolescence: the social mind (interpersonal), the self-authoring mind (institutional), and the self-transforming mind (interindividual). The stages are important because although they rely upon the concept of social development of consciousness, they also focus more heavily upon individual emotional development. The stages, or meaning perspectives, are stage 0 or incorporative (an infant), stage 1 or impulsive (a toddler), stage 2 or imperial (an adolescent), stage 3 or interpersonal (a completely socialized adult), stage 4 or institutional (a self-authoring adult), and stage 5 or inter-individual (a self-transforming adult). The stages show how individuals have the potential to progress from one stage to the next, and Kegan describes that type of change as transformational (Kegan, 1982). For example, a shift from being a socialized person to being a self-authored person is a «shift away from being “made up by” the values and expectations of one's “surround” (family, friends, community, culture) that get uncritically internalized and with which one becomes identified, toward developing an internal authority that makes choices about these external values and expectations according to one's own self-authored belief system» (Kegan, 2000, p. 59-60). The three stages of adulthood are interpersonal, institutional, and inter-individual and are likely to be the stages most commonly identified in the group of adult participants who practice mindfulness meditation. Clearly mindfulness practice is acted by adult people, even if some recent approaches try to experiment mindfulness protocol with children. This study is going to examine the process of moving from one stage, or sub-stage, to the other through the practice of mindfulness meditation.

Mindfulness practice has been defined as «an awareness that emerges through paying attention on purpose, in the present moment, and non-judgmentally to the unfolding of experience moment by moment» (Kabat-Zinn, 2003, p. 145). Mindfulness practice is a sustained form of awareness that can be accessed through formal meditation and utilized as a helpful way of being in relationship with the fetters of everyday life.

One of the most critical attitudes that may be developed through mindfulness practice includes beginner's mind. Dr. Kabat-Zinn, a trained scientist who is chiefly responsible for the recent popularity of mindfulness practice in the North-American countries, has cautioned professionals about the isolating nature of the expert mind, which we should take into account as we strive to be part of something greater than ourselves: «Too often we let our thinking and our beliefs about what we ‘know’ prevent us from seeing things as they really are... An open, ‘beginner's’ mind allows us to be receptive to new possibilities and prevents us from getting stuck in a rut of our expertise, which often thinks it knows more than it does» (Kabat-Zinn, 2009, p. 35). The connection of body and mind through the meditative act of breathing creates an «integral consciousness» (Wilber et al., 2008, p. 185), brings us into the present moment (O'Reilly, 1998), and enables deep listening (Rao, 2009).

However, we are not always able to commit to this seemingly simple task. We may be distracted by our own thoughts, anxieties, physical discomforts, insecurities, pride, egocentrism, the past, or the future, all of which, sometimes simultaneously, might be happening in our minds during the spontaneously creative, intimate, yet collaborative act of improvisation.

The notions of listening and becoming more inclusive are related to the transformative learning theory by Mezirow (1997). However, the acceptance and nurture of our self with love as a prerequisite for a potentially transformative process, may add a new

perspective to the part of the theory that encompasses listening. The transformative learning (Mezirow, 2000) is a process in which people's frameworks are transformed to be more inclusive, differentiating permeable (open to other viewpoints), critically reflexive on assumptions, emotionally able to change, and including experience (Taylor, Cranton, 2012, p. 84). The transformative learning literature emphasizes the importance of critical reflection (Taylor, Cranton, 2012) in the learning process. Reflection can cover three different patterns: the content, the process and the premises of the perspectives of meaning. Most people experience a 'reflection on the content', during which simply questioning what were their values. As a result, they are able to reaffirm their values and/or increase the level of awareness. The second type of thought is about 'process', which some people develop by reflecting on their values. This process of reflection helps people to reaffirm their values through a deeper understanding of the etiology from which they derive. Reflection 'on the premises', or critical, comes from asking certain questions, such as the importance of certain values, experience, or how to manage the experience, socially constructed on the assumptions, beliefs, or challenges. When you start a process of questioning of your 'habits of mind' (Mezirow, 2000), gradually increasing the awareness of your own values. Regarding our taken-for-granted assumptions, or our mental models, Senge (1990) questions if we are prisoners of the system or prisoners of our own thinking. In his book *The Fifth Discipline* he describes mental models as deeply engrained assumptions, generalizations, or even pictures or images that influence how we understand the world and how we take action. This information can help in appreciating the forces that are shaping reality and how we are part of those forces and therefore, can affect them. In this way, participants to the workshop can make that connection in order to change their paradigm through identifying their mental models. As we reflect, we better understand our "agentic" behavior (self-organizing, proactive, self-reflecting and self-regulating). Bandura (1986) describes "agentic" behavior in his social cognition theory perspective that views people as self-organizing, proactive, self-reflecting and self-regulating, not just as reactive organisms shaped by environmental forces or driven by inner impulses, which is in opposition to the conception of humans as governed by external forces.

The ACT Protocol

The Acceptance and Commitment Therapy (Baer, 2012), known as ACT, is one of the most known protocols of mindfulness of the cognitive-behavioral therapy. The ACT Protocol aims to promote change and to increase the perception of well being thanks to the ability of listening to our inner world and consciousness flow. It impacts on dysfunctional processes, which are responsible for psychological inflexibility, promoting the opposite "virtuous" processes. To be in touch with the here-and-now experience is a way of connection with our strengths and weaknesses, with our viewpoints from which it is possible to observe thoughts and feelings. Specifically, the goal of the ACT intervention is to increase the psychological "flexibility", allowing people to make conscious actions, which could be valuable and effective. Moreover, people can become more resilient in dealing with unpleasant emotions and thoughts. ACT is based on Relational Frame Theory (RFT), a comprehensive theory of language and cognition that is an offshoot of behavior analysis. ACT tries to teach people to better control their thoughts, feelings, sensations, memories and other private events, ACT teaches them to just notice, accept, and embrace their private events, especially previously unwanted ones.

The core conception of ACT is that psychological suffering is usually caused

by experiential avoidance, cognitive entanglement, and resulting psychological rigidity that leads to a failure to take needed behavioral steps in accord with core values. ACT views the core of many problems to be due to the concepts represented in the acronym, FEAR:

- **F**usion with your thoughts
- **E**valuation of experience
- **A**voidance of your experience
- **R**eason-giving for your behavior

And the healthy alternative is to **ACT**:

- **A**cept your reactions and be present
- **C**hoose a valued direction
- **T**ake action

The mindfulness-based approaches are gaining significant popularity in the training of psychologists, psychotherapists, and counselors and in the training for all the so-called helping professions. Mindfulness practices can promote self- and others-care. If people are not aware of them and are not able to listen to their inner speech, they would never be able to move from the monologue to the authentic dialogue with the others.

The workshop is inspired by the ACT structured protocol (Baer, 2012), which perceives some interesting psychological processes that can reduce noise and increase the feeling of well being:

- Decentralization, ACT helps the individual get in contact with a transcendent sense of self known as self-as-context-the you that is always there observing and experiencing and yet distinct from one's thoughts, feelings, sensations, and memories. Act protocol exercises promote cognitive defusion (learning methods to reduce the tendency to reify thoughts, images, emotions, and memories).

- Psychological flexibility: ACT commonly employs core principles to help people develop psychological flexibility, which are contact with the present moment (awareness of the here and now, experienced with openness, interest, and receptiveness) and committed action (setting goals according to values and carrying them out responsibly).

- Values, discovering what is most important to one's true self: ACT aims to help the individual in order to clarify their personal values and to take action on them, bringing more vitality and meaning to their life in the process, increasing their psychological flexibility.

- Emotional regulation, ACT promotes ability of observing the self (accessing a transcendent sense of self, a continuity of consciousness which is unchanging).

- Self-compassion, with acceptance, allowing thoughts to come and go without struggling with them.

- Spirituality, cultivating self-transcendence and acceptance.

Transformative Potential of the Mindfulness Experience

Since the nature of the mind is largely habit forming, our way of being at work and home are bound with our Habits of Mind, described as “a set of assumptions-broad, generalized, orienting predispositions that act as a filter for interpreting the meaning of experience” (Mezirow, 2000, p. 17). Therefore it is not enough to recognize how

our assumptions beget specific behavior, but also patterns in behavior. The result of examining these patterns can be a perspective transformation. Perspective Transformation is described as: «... a deep shift in perspective, leading to more open, more permeable, and better-justified meaning perspectives (Mezirow, 1978) – but the ways of getting there can differ depending on the person or people and the context or situation (Taylor & Cranton, 2012, p. 3). Mezirow (1998) states that one of the important ways of developing critical perspective is through changing the habits of the mind. Many of the respondents in this study reported that they had knowledge (and often) of some sort of mindfulness practice, but mostly did not use it; they hadn't developed the necessary habits of mind and body to use it as a tool. Offering a combination of yoga, silent meditation, noticing one's breath, walking meditation, and shared learning opens up the definition of what mindfulness is and what its purpose.

Transformation like this however, only reveals itself in observable fashion when a person's transformed habit of mind prompts in concrete action, thus genuinely reflecting a change of heart. Sometimes the disorientation can be prompted by a simple question. You might ask a person 'why' they work for instance: Why are you here? Why are you really here? Why are you really, really here? Do they respond with a narrative that suggests they work to live, live to work, or perhaps live through a greater sense of meaning in the work? These questions are inherently personal, cannot be approached scientifically, and require a form of attention that creates some level of existential yearning.

Through critical reflection, individuals develop a deeper and more meaningful understanding of what they are bringing out of their innate qualities. By encouraging a critical appraisal of the culturally determined stereotypes that people have internalized and defended, they open up new vistas for self-realization. Mindfulness program promotes consciousness rising, as its central educational mission. Mindfulness practices can offer new models for the dialogue with the oppressor, the abuser, and the racist, without violence and prejudices, suspending each reaction and cultivating openness to the others in a non-judgmental way (De Simone, Romano, Strollo, 2014).

The Mindfulness workshop

Mindfulness is a simple way of relating to our experience, which can have profound impact on painful, negative experiences we encounter. Mindfulness exercises involve 'Stopping', Paying attention, Becoming aware of present moment realities and assuming a Not judging way of being whatever is happening as 'good' or 'bad'. Critical reflection, reflective discourse, and testing-out (i.e. trying on) new ways of being mindful are competencies that require an advanced ability to practice awareness and be vulnerable in a society where performance is so highly valued.

Critical mindfulness practice can impact on sparking, supporting, and maintaining transformative learning. As a whole, the process utilized in this workshops can also deeply impact on the existential side because it focuses on the 'now' and experience of 'being' rather than solely 'doing.'

Mindfulness exercises we would like to propose create a "holding environment", give participants a safe "platform" from which to observe and to reflect about the spread of monologue instead of dialogue, creating new transformational possibilities in self as well as in the wider world for being present at the moment and real open to the others and to ask themselves the question as to why dialogue is often so difficult, and human connections get broken.

Mindfulness exercises we would like to conduct in the experiential workshop are not a relaxation exercise, nor a way to avoid difficulty, nor a way to by-pass personality

problems or about achieving a different state of mind.

Mindfulness exercises are about being present to our experience however distressing or upsetting it may be, bring people closer to difficulties but without becoming caught up in our reactions to difficulties. They are a slow, gentle coming to grips with who we are that and they can settle participants in to their current experience in a relaxed, alert, open-hearted way. If one of the aims of the Conference is to explore the difficulties of dialogue, and why we may not listen or accept another's point of view, Mindfulness exercises are helpful to invite gently participants to reflect about themselves and the others. These techniques are useful for bring mindfulness into the activities of everyday life. Mindfulness in action techniques include focusing awareness of an aspect of a physical habit that previously has largely been outside of conscious awareness, being aware of what happens to your breathing or voice tone in an argument, focusing awareness on the breath when a specified environmental cue occurs and on your thoughts when you are in a supposed dialogue with another person. The cues we might use include waiting for phone to be answered, being in a group conversation, walking. The Mindfulness exercises we would like to carry out are *Reflection on Your Morning Routine*, *It's your 80th Birthday*, *The Wind Blows*, *The Falls Exercises*, *The Mindfulness Exercise of Domestic Chores*.

The mindfulness practice can be based very closely on Transformative Learning Theory, particularly the three central components of critical reflection, reflective discourse, and change (Merriam & Caffarella, 1999). The disorientation that sparked this process is the meditation practice itself, as participants are quickly shocked by how quickly they are carried away by their thoughts and their ordinary talking.

Each meditation session is followed by quiet reflection time and then shared dialogue regarding the experience, connections to the inner values and thoughts, and the development of a 'real world' strategy to apply actionable mindfulness practice to teaching, research, and daily life.

The specific objectives of the workshop are to become familiar with the mindfulness practices and their application to creativity, innovation, and efficacy in managing anxiety and in be present in the actual moment; to develop a personal and individual system for recognizing symptoms of absentmindedness and implementing immediate mindfulness practice to re-center the mind in order to be more 'present' with students, colleagues and generally with the world. Another important aim of the workshop is to understand the role of mindfulness in dialogue with others as they will engage in mindful-listening activities, and to enjoy some of the many benefits associated with intensive mediation practice – such as reduced stress, increased clarity of mind, improved decision making, and overall sense of well-being.

Our experience is based on the workshops on mindfulness practices in the Laboratory of Educational Epistemology and Practices at University of Naples Federico II, during the last three years. The workshops on mindfulness adopts the ACT Protocol and lasts for six meetings. The participants of the Laboratory are students of the Bachelor's Degree in Psychology and students of the Master's Degree in Psychology. Through the use of all the exercises, students self-organize into the following areas with relatively even distribution: Grading and Assessment; Awareness of Students in the Classroom; Learning Mindfulness in and out of the Classroom; and Self-Awareness in Learning. Mindfulness into action facilitates in participants the identification of taken-for-granted assumptions and stereotypes that allows for a neutral ground where varied perspectives can meet to explore and move beyond the initial positions. New positions allow new solution to make new possibilities for the diversity issues at hand (De Simone, Romano, Strollo, 2014).

The workshop cannot be ordinary. It must be transformative in nature. It must also be penetrating in its effect, particularly during a time when too many people crouch in bunkers of expertise, shielding themselves from doomsday scenarios: pink-slips, slander, demotion, scapegoating, exclusion, and anything else the fearful mind can conjure. Perhaps the greatest protection of all is the work or the appearance itself. They start to notice the techniques of mindfulness and reflection translating subconsciously into other areas of their life. Instead of seeing mindfulness into action as separate mindful activities where they need to consciously remind themselves, they notice themselves being more mindful individuals in all areas of their life: relationships, work, school, and how they treat themselves.

We can qualify transformative dimensions of mindfulness practice by drawing from a notion suggested by Yorks and Kasl (2002), wherein those who facilitate adult learning initiatives might conceptualize experience as a phenomenological process that necessitates more of an affective ‘experiencing’ of a shared moment: «Casting experience as a verb instead of a noun - that is, conceptualizing experience phenomenologically instead of pragmatically – leads educators to examine how they can assist learners in sharing a felt sense of the other’s experience instead of reflecting on its meaning» (Yorks & Kasl, 2002, p. 186).

We will explore the use of mindfulness practices according to the ACT Protocol through exploring the embodiment of social, emotional, and communicative learning as meaning making and facilitating intuition and insight. We posit that Transformative Learning relies on the learner being emancipated from fragmented thoughts and distractions, while accessing an inquisitive, attentive, and reflective mind.

ACT mindfulness practice, which is essentially the type of ‘being with experience’ that Yorks and Kasl (2000) point to, is said to help participants re-enter life with something resembling a Beginner’s Mind, where they can practice seeing the world for the first time, moment by moment. Jon Kabat-Zinn (2009) has written much on the importance of developing a beginner’s mind: «Too often we let our thinking and our beliefs about what we “know” prevent us from seeing things as they really are...An open, “beginner’s” mind allows us to be receptive to new possibilities and prevents us from getting stuck in a rut of our expertise, which often thinks it knows more than it does» (Kabat-Zinn, 2009, p. 35). Beginner’s mind is just one of the many attitudinal dimensions cultivated through mindfulness practice. Others include being more flexible, patient, less judgmental, trusting, non- striving, and accepting (Kabat-Zinn, 2009).

The workshop may create the conditions for understanding the essence of self-transforming experiences with particular emphasis upon the emotional aspects of the change and investigation into possible epistemological and ontological changes identified as «the transformation in transformational learning theory» (Kegan, 2000, p. 53). The study will promote participants’ thoughts and feelings as they describe the self-transforming experiences within the context of mindfulness meditation. Key is what that kind of change feels like to the participant, and factors that influence it, which will hopefully be illuminated through the discussion after the workshop. In addition, it may show that one of the practical effects of mindfulness meditation is not only greater control of thoughts and emotions (Kabat-Zinn, 2009) but also greater complexity in the participant’s personality through a change in their level of adult development (Kegan, 1982). Furthermore, the context that will be used for the workshop, mindfulness meditation, is also more likely to change the emotions of the participants since it is designed to aid in observing and directing unruly thoughts

(Kabat-Zinn, 2009). The ability to exist/be in the present moment with openness and curiosity is essential to create an inner space for awareness which impacts the outer expression. How do we create mindfulness for transformative learning?

The purpose of this workshop is to describe the essence of the self-transformational change process with a special focus upon the emotion experienced by the participants. In this process, the context or space will be mindfulness meditation. Self-transformational change comes about because a person deliberately seeks to change some element of their life. They perceive a need in themselves and perform some actions that they feel that they will meet that need. What is a participant's experience of self-transformational change? What are the emotional aspects of the change?, and 2) What is the role of mindfulness meditation in this process?

What does it mean to make space for learning and expression of our intuition and embodiment? This presentation will examine the mind and body relationship, as well as the impact that mindfulness, and space/context plays on this phenomenon. The aims for the workshop of mindfulness are to address with participants their "taken for granted assumptions" around the definition of "dialogue and listening" and what it means to each of the individuals and group as a whole and to provide space for participants that takes them on a journey within to transform their underlying assumptions. Thus, participants are able to transform individually, in order to work as a collective.

The process of transformational change in the workshop acts in emotion (A), behavior (B), and cognition (C) in a nurturing and safe environment; i.e. the holding environment. The mindfulness meditation element is primarily concerned with emotion (A) and how it changes and matures. The transformative learning element is the behavioral (B) change as a result of learning through experience (Croswell, 1996). The transformational change element is about a change in cognition (C) as in a change in understanding how the world works (epistemology) and the nature of reality (ontology). The holding environment is the safe environment (meditation class) where one is supported and encouraged as one makes a transformational change. Altogether, they form a model which is an attempt at extending Kegan's constructive-development theory into emotional science within the context of mindfulness meditation. The workshop based on ACT Protocol may facilitate in participants the identification of taken-for-granted assumptions and stereotypes that allows for a neutral ground where varied perspectives can meet to explore and move beyond the initial positions. Immediately after the workshop, we will administrate a questionnaire in order to understand empirically participants' mind perspectives transformations.

Some instructions for facilitator

«Say something about what brings you here and what you hope to get out of the group. Paying attention to the purpose and to the present moment and nonjudgmentally. Bringing your awareness to the breath, to the inbreath and the outbreath – no need to control breathing in any way – simply letting the breath breathes itself. As best you can simply allowing your experience to be your experience without trying to change it. And as your awareness settles on the breath, bringing attention to the lower abdomen, noticing physical sensations there as the breath moves in and out of the body.

Sooner or later, the mind will wander away from focus on the breath to thoughts,

planning, daydreaming, whatever. This is ok. It is simply what minds do. It is not a mistake or failure. When you notice your awareness is no longer on the breath, gently acknowledge where it has gone, and gently escort your awareness back to the lower abdomen. Now shifting your awareness to the nostrils. Paying attention to the breath as it enters the body through the nostrils and as it leaves the body through the nostrils. Just noticing any sensations, perhaps feelings of warmth or coolness or itching, or no sensations at all.

And when the mind wanders, as best you can, gently acknowledging where it has gone, bringing the attention back to the breath. Now letting go of attention to the breath, and bringing your awareness to hearing, to noticing sounds as they arise, wherever they arise. As best you can, being aware of sounds as pure sensations, noticing patterns of pitch, tone, volume and duration, letting go of the urge to label what you are hearing.

No need to go searching for sounds or listening for particular sounds, simply opening to sounds as they arise – sounds that are close, sounds that are far away, inside the room, outside the room, outside the building, noticing spaces between sounds or perhaps no sound at all. First taking a few moments to get in touch with the movement of your breath and the sensations in the body, perhaps bringing awareness to the sensations of touch or pressure, where your body makes contact with the chair or floor.

Into the Present Moment . Coming into the present moment and anchoring attention to the breath, following each inbreath and each outbreath. And as you (*mention the activity*), shifting your focus to what really matters; revisiting your anchor as needed when your focus drifts from the present moment.

Take notice. Taking notice of your inner experience from your observer perspective (perhaps embodying your inner mountain or another observer image). Noticing physical sensations (e.g., sweating, blushing, rapid heartbeat). Noticing emotions (e.g., fear, anger). Noticing thoughts (provide examples relevant to the specific activity). Noticing urges to protect yourself with safety behaviours (provide examples relevant to the specific activity).

The Pain is gone now what? (Hayes, Smith, 2005, p. 14-15). Imagine that you woke up one morning and suddenly, for no reason, the social anxiety you've suffered all these years is gone. What would you do? And not just what you would do on that particular day but more broadly how your life course would change if your constant struggle with social anxiety was no longer an issue. Just go with your gut instinct. You don't have to hand this in or share your answers unless you want to. Group members are given 5 minutes to write down their responses and are then asked to share them with the rest of the group if they are willing. Typically, it is clear from the responses that for most people social anxiety has gotten in the way of living a full and vital life. *Coping Strategies exercise* (Hayes, Smith, 2005, p. 27-28) Group members are instructed to write down any control strategies they have used over the years to manage their anxiety and to rate each strategy on its short-term and long-term effectiveness. Typically, short-term effectiveness is rated much higher than long-term effectiveness. Allowing your experience to be exactly as it is. Bringing a gentle curiosity, openness, and compassion to your internal experiences. Deep down inside,

what is important to you? What do you want your life to stand for? What sort of qualities do you want to cultivate as a person? How do you want to be in your relationships with others? Values are our heart's deepest desires for the way we want to interact with and relate to the world, other people, and ourselves. They are leading principles that can guide us and motivate us as we move through life.

Conclusion

In a parallel vein, Mezirow talks about integration as important for perspective transformation in Transformative Learning (2000, p. 50). It is the combination of the shared embodied experience, shared silences, shared conversations and emotions, and shared learning that make the “mashup” of mindfulness modalities so powerful and successful. The encouragement of and training by combining the physical, intellectual, emotional, and spiritual domains allows participants to truly make the changes they need in their life. All the modalities simultaneously lead to developing habits of the mind and body. In TL literature, this is referred to as holistic orientation, which encourages and believes in the engagement with other ways of knowing—the affective and relational, and even the embodied. While TL’s roots are in rational discourse, lately there is recognition that other ways of learning and knowing are important as well. Thus the relational, intuitive and physical aspects of learning have become recognized as an important piece of the endeavor (Taylor, 1998). As Brown (2006) concludes, learners rarely change through a rational process (analyze-think-change). Instead they «are more likely to change in a see-feel-change sequence» (p. 732). Affective knowing developing an awareness of feelings and emotions in the reflective process is inherent in critical reflection.

The expected outcome in participants of this experiential session may be Mindfulness. Langer, often describes mindfulness as a state of constant awareness (1992). This state of neutrality is a moment-to moment consciousness that prevents individuals from engaging in automatic responses (Capel, 2012). Participants will be able to observe the behavioral patterns that are unintentionally sabotaging their lives. Once participants will be able to observe this behavior, they will be able to move into action to correct it. When an individual operates in a state of mindfulness they are able to identify underlining meanings and relevant information to solve current issues, resulting in an increase in productivity and peace of mind.

References

- Baer, R.A. (Eds.) (2012). *Come funziona la mindfulness. Teoria, ricerca, strumenti*. Milano: Raffaello Cortina Editore.
- Bandura, A. (1986). *Social foundations of thought and action: A social cognitive theory*. London: Sage Publications.
- Brown, K. M. (2006). Leadership for social justice and equity: Evaluating a transformative framework and andragogy. *Educational Administration Quarterly*, 42(5), 700-745.
- Capel, C. M. (2012). Mindlessness/mindfulness, classroom practices and quality in early childhood education. *International Journal of Quality & Reliability Management*, 29(6), 666-680.

- Carmody J. (2009). Invited commentary: Evolving conceptions of mindfulness in clinical settings. *Journal of Cognitive Psychotherapy*, 23, 270–280.
- Cranton, P. & Taylor, E.W. (2012). Transformative learning theory: Seeking a more unified theory. In E.W. Taylor, P. Cranton and Associates, *The handbook of transformative learning*. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.
- Croswell, C.V. (1996). *Organizational learning in nonprofit organizations: A description of the action patterns of a professional association's governing network and leadership role in turbulent times*. Ann Arbor, MI: UMI Company.
- De Simone, M., Romano, A., Stollo, M.R. (2014). Mindfulness In University Education: A Pilot Study. ICERI 2014 Proceedings, 7th International Conference of Education, Research and Innovation, 6036-6044.
- Harris, R. (2011). *Fare act. Una guida pratica per professionisti all'Acceptance and Commitment Therapy*. Milano: FrancoAngeli.
- Hayes, S.C., Smith, S. (2005). *Get out of your mind and into your life: The new Acceptance and Commitment Therapy*. Oakland, CA, New Harbinger Publications.
- Hölzel, B., Carmody, J., Vangel, M., Congleton, C., Yerramsetti, S., Gard, T., & Lazar, S. (2011). Mindfulness practice leads to increases in regional brain gray matter density. *Psychiatry Research: Neuroimaging*, 191 (1) 36-43.
- Kabat-Zinn, J. (2003). Mindfulness-based interventions in context: Past, present, and future. *Clinical Psychology: Science and Practice*, 10 (2), 144–156.
- Kabat-Zinn, J. (2009). *Letting Everything Become Your Teacher: 100 Lessons in Mindfulness*. New York, NY: Bantam Dell.
- Kegan, R. (1982). *The evolving self: Problems and process in human development*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.
- Kegan, R. (1994). *In over our heads: The mental demands of modern life*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.
- Kegan, R. (2000). What “form” transforms? A constructive-developmental approach to transformative learning. In J. Mezirow and Associates (Eds.). *Learning as Transformation*. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.
- Langer, E. J. (1992). Matters of mind: Mindfulness/mindlessness in perspective. *Consciousness and Cognition*, 1(3), 289-305.
- Merriam, S., & Caffarella, R. S., (1999). *Learning in adulthood: A comprehensive guide*. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.
- Mezirow, J. (1978). Perspective transformation. *Adult Education*, 28, 100-110.
- Mezirow, J. (1997). Transformative learning: Theory to practice. *New Directions for Adult and Continuing Education*, 74, 5-12.
- Mezirow, J., & Associates (2000). *Learning as transformation: Critical perspectives on a theory in progress*. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.
- O'Reilly, M.R. (1998). *Radical presence: Teaching as contemplative practice*. Portsmouth: Boynton/Cook Publishers, Inc.
- Rao, D. (2009). Feminine perspectives on conducting and teaching choral music. In Conlon (Ed.), *Wisdom, wit and will: Women choral conductors on their art*

- (pp. 233-267). Chicago: GIA Publications.
- Roemer L, Orsillo SM, & Salters-Pedneault K. (2008). Efficacy of an acceptance-based behavior therapy for generalized anxiety disorder: evaluation in a randomized controlled trial. *Journal of Consulting and Clinical Psychology*, 76, 1083–1089.
- Senge, P. M. (1990). *The fifth disciple: The art & practice of the learning organization*. New York, NY: Doubleday Publications.
- Taylor, E.W. (1998). The theory and practice of transformative learning: A critical review. Information Series No. 374 (pp. 90). Office of Educational Research and Improvement (ED), Washington, DC: ERIC Clearinghouse on Adult, Career, and Vocational Education, Columbus, OH.
- Taylor, E.W., & Cranton, P. (2012). *The handbook of transformative learning: Theory, research and practice*. San Francisco, CA: John Wiley & Sons.
- Taylor, E.W. (2008). Transformative learning theory. *New Directions for Adult and Continuing Education*, 119, 5-15.
- Wilber, K., Patten, T., Leonard, A. & Morelli, M. (2008). *Integral life practice: A 21st century blueprint for physical health, emotional balance, mental clarity, and spiritual awakening*. Boston, MA: Integral Books.
- Yorks & Kasl, (2002). Toward a theory and practice for whole-person learning: Reconceptualizing experience and the role of affect. *Adult Education Quarterly*, 52 (3) 176-192.

“Classroom incident”. A stimulus to Dialogue for promoting Transformative Learning through Art.

Panagiota E. Tsentourou and Dimitris S. Patronas

Adult Educators

Abstract

The workshop, inspired by recent research, uses different Dialogue forms (art, brainstorming, exercises, interviews, discussion) aiming to reveal different views of a classroom incident and generate questioning stereotypes and trainers/trainers behaviours. Overall aim is to present a good educational practice leading to a possible start of a Transformative Learning procedure.

Need and importance of studying and examining the subject

Today's world is characterised by rapid changes in most, if not all, sectors that humans are active. As early as the mid-1980s scientific research has proven that organisations, in the business environment, were attempting strategic change in order to survive from competition or gain competitive advantage (Barney, 1986).

The authors, both being active in the field of professional education in the business environment, experienced first-hand that one of the instruments to instigate change while enabling people to cope with new situations and ensure that they will function effectively within the newly adopted set of parameters, is *education*. Education through specifically tailor-made professional training, which: “leads to change-changes in the amount of knowledge people have, changes in skills and competencies, changes in the way we communicate and understand each other, changes in our sense of self, and changes in our social world” (Cranton, 1994, p. 160), thus enhancing the possibilities of transformative learning. On the other hand, transformative learning can be achieved only after the individual reaches the point of identification and questioning of hers/his own preconceptions and possible modification of specific parts of individual value system, through *critical thinking*.

Mezirow's discussion on critical thinking leads to the value of *different perspectives* on transformative learning as the number of interpretations that are available for a belief, is directly proportional to the likelihood of finding a more dependable interpretation or synthesis. (Mezirow, 1997, p. 6).

Grabove, being an educator herself, concludes that as learners during the transformative process *use imagination and emotion* “rely on analysis to make sense of their feelings, images and intuitive descriptions”, new and *different perspectives* can be discovered within each and every one of the previously identified perspective. The author also states that as a practitioner she has come to know that there are many dimensions to transformative learning. Regarding to her role as an educator Grabove states that she does not presume to know the one process that would suit all her students. At the same time, she points out that it seems impossible to anticipate that there will be only one available process that would be able to suit all different learning contexts. (Grabove, 1997, p. 95).

Given the constantly changing environment of the present era, it is important to investigate methods and techniques that can practically facilitate educators to use imagination and emotion and to explore different perspectives in order to develop themselves and then support their learners in the process of critical thinking. The overall perspective is to support the arrival at the ultimate stage of transformational learning, thus enabling them to adapt to the new situations and challenges that daily arise.

Description of the experiential workshop

The present experiential workshop is based on past training sessions conducted by the authors and uses art and dialogue in order to stimulate critical thinking and facilitate the process of Transformational Learning. The authors' (practitioners' – educators') aim is to "walk through" the procedure with the participants in order to facilitate them in having the relative experience and then discuss it with them together, adding the findings that arose from a previous experience, in the hope that the above exercise will prove to be a good educational practice and a useful tool for the participants.

The workshop is using different approaches to dialogue (systematic observation of a work of art, brainstorming, critical thinking exercises, interviews, discussion) to approach different views of a classroom incident, to stimulate critical thinking and generate dialogue on classroom situation interpretations, stereotypes and trainers/teachers behaviours.

The workshop is actually divided into three parts:

Part a

1. Work of Art Observation

Painting "Newcomer at school", Emily Shanks.

Observation by using Harvard Graduate School of Education's "Artful thinking" routine "See, think, wonder". This tool will help participants make careful observations and develop their own ideas and interpretations questioning their stereotypes

2. Brainstorming on different viewpoints to the classroom incident the painting is representing.

3. Participants' further exploration by using Harvard Graduate School of Education's "Artful thinking" routine "Circle of Viewpoints".

4. Interpretation of "Classroom incident". Participants are asked to further interpret the incident the painting is representing from the viewpoint of an educator/teacher who is experiencing it in his/her classroom, question their stereotypes and propose possible actions.

Part b

Presentation of Teachers', Pupils' and Adult Educators' interview results as other viewpoints on interpretation of the incident and proposed actions

Part c

Reflection on the experience - discussion – conclusions

Previous scientific work basis

The workshop is inspired by "Transformative Learning through Aesthetic Experience" method, as it was presented by professor Alexis Kokkos (Kokkos, 2010) in his academic work and adult teaching practice.

This method is suitable in serving training goals such as for learners to develop critical thinking by overcoming assumptions, while becoming more receptive to change and able to manage it, during everyday life, because:

- It belongs to the transformative learning theoretical framework and namely on Mezirow's theory, having as a basic learning element the motivation of the trainees' critical thinking in a way that allows them to re-evaluate their assumptions
- It uses works of art which, as observed during our training practice, did indeed function as triggers in trainee participation
- It involves trainees in several stages of the design and implementation

The workshop uses work of art observation techniques based on D. Perkins' (Perkins, 1994) technique on the systematic exploration of works of art. The technique of D. Perkins is an extended and well-articulated idea about how we can observe a work of art. It consists of four phases:

1. Time for observation
2. Open and adventurous observation
3. Detailed and profound observation
4. Reviewing the process.

However, there are other simpler, flexible alternative approaches for critically observing works of art. Several of them are included in Projects Visible Thinking (<http://www.visiblethinkingpz.org>) and Artful Thinking (<http://www.pzartfulthinking.org>). Both Projects are linked to Harvard University Project Zero. Visible Thinking emphasises several ways of making learners' thinking visible to themselves and to one another, so that they can improve it and Artful Thinking helps the educator to use works of art in ways that strengthen learner thinking and learning. Both projects are dealing with "learning routines". Routines are simple structures, a set of questions for example, that can be used across various content concerning discussion about works of art, in order to extend and deepen learners' thinking. Almost all the learning routines from Visible and Artful Thinking can be applied for observing a work of art. Several of them have been used in adult education successfully, e.g.:

- "What Makes You Say That?": Interpretation with justification routine (Visible Thinking, Artful Thinking)
- "Think, Puzzle, Explore": A routine that sets the stage for deeper inquiry (Visible Thinking, Artful Thinking)
- "See, Think, Wonder": A routine for exploring works of art and other interesting things (Visible Thinking, Artful Thinking)
- "Circle of Viewpoints": A routine for exploring diverse perspectives (Visible Thinking)

The workshop also cultivates critical thinking by using different viewpoints and supporting participants to actually provoke the evaluation and questioning of assumptions, in order to reassess beliefs on the specific subject. Mezirow has stated that: "Critical self- reflection of an assumption involves critique of a premise upon which the learner has defined a problem (Mezirow, 1998).

Exploring dialogue as a way to critical thinking and transformation

The above described experiential workshop is actually encompassing a number of dialogue's key elements.

Dialogue within ourselves

As an educator, one has practice dialogue between different parts of one's self in order to fine-tune the basic preconceptions under which she/he perceives the relative role, as the personal reflections can lead to transformative learning (Mezirow, 1990, p. 18). Changes that occur consciously as a result of this critical discourse, are the ones that will affect subsequently the learning outcome of one's learners.

Dialogue with people not like us

Learners are by definition a group of people that can be like us, educators, or can differ in substantial ways, as fortunately, there is no filter applied in education programmes that would ensure the learners' conformity to their educators. Even during in house professional training sessions the participants may share the organisational culture, in general, but they are certainly mature individuals who differ from one another in their way of thinking and behaving and this could very well be the case with their trainer as well.

Dialogue with an artistic and diverse form of a creative experience

The workshop is based on the in depth and repeated observation of a work of art. During this observation the participants are actually conducting a dialogue within themselves as well as between themselves and the messages that they can identify on a first level. As the observation deepens they come up against the critical question or questions that need to be answered by them in the first instance and then discussed in plenary. The answers of this or these, depending on the case, critical questions will become the stimuli which may lead to the reevaluation of personal preconceptions, which in turn may end up in a transformative learning situation.

Dialogue between theory and praxis

The present workshop has run with a number of groups as participants: teachers, trainers, pupils, and educators during their self-development session. Not all group members were familiar with critical thinking or transformative learning theories as such, yet they all have gone through transformation of themselves, probably on an unconscious level rather than a conscious one, due to the education and training they have received or are still receiving. The conference workshop will give participants the chance to position theory face to face with praxis and will hopefully give them the chance to enrich their views through the dialogue.

Dialogue as a basic component of good communication and transformative learning

As both the authors of the present paper are practitioners in the field of professional training and education, they will focus on walking the participants through the experiential workshop using apart from the specific tool of art observation, the dialogue. Apart from the present participants' viewpoints and opinions, the points that were raised from the previews groups will also be discussed.

Exploration of the difficulties of dialogue

Having a dialogue which includes on the one hand the present participants' views and on the other the views of previous participants' group, as they have been recorded, creates a multiplier effect. It highlights the difficulties of dialogue emerging both from the discussion of a subject that has to be interpreted from a plethora of persons who are active in the field of education, though constituting separate and distinct communities with specific characteristics. One has also to take into account that a major difficulty contributing factor is the quality of questions asked during a dialogue. As Cranton puts it "asking questions about what we read is central to transformative learning" (Cranton, 2016, p. 85), even more so during a dialogue with others.

Inspired from previous work

There is a number of educators around the world who are designing and structuring their training and education programmes with the objective of enabling their learners to transform. A substantial number of recent researchers is also examining in depth the methods, techniques and tools of transformative learning in real situation applications. Thus, they offer practitioners a wider range of choices from which to select those which best suit the learning objectives that we set as educators, when designing

training experiences, including the learning objective of stimulating critical thinking and transformation.

Such examples are:

Investigating how Colours Influence Learning” (ICIL)

During the project “Investigating how Colours Influence Learning” (ICIL) that ran from 2012 to 2015 in Molins de Rei in Catalonia the participating students reached an empowerment level that allowed them to behave as autonomous learners and examine through critical thinking the choice of their actions and decisions (Ruiz-Mallén et al, 2016, p. 8). During this citizen science project, they managed to reframe their attitudes and perceptions of science and at the same time they were able to change the way they thought about themselves as competent and knowledgeable actors. Apart from the empowerment of the students which was demonstrated through the above mentioned changes, what the ICIL project showed is that understanding the answer’s construction is as important as the findings themselves. The belief that observing thoroughly, examining and understanding both the answers of the critical questions as well as their structure provides one with a path that leads to the preconceptions’ discovery and identification is shared by the authors as well.

Reflection process THiNK

The reflection process THiNK ran in Norway and was based on the reflective journals of participating student nurses, in order to allow them to develop the skills that would enable them to understand complex situations. As there is a high degree of complexity in their professional life due to the fact that apart from the number of technical parameters the element of relationship with people is also present to a great extent, in their daily reality, understanding complex situations is of paramount importance.

The teaching programme ran for a period of three years and both the reflection guidelines as well as the guided reflection groups were designed to accommodate the needs of a nursing programme (Dahl and Eriksen, 2016, p. 401). The participating students were assigned to four focus groups and their teachers formed a fifth one, each of them having the same persons in the roles of moderator and co-moderator in order to facilitate the process. All participants were expected to choose examples and bring them for discussion at the focus groups, using a reflection guide that was produced by the educators and disseminated to all participants, while following the process of the guided reflection group that was established at the beginning of the programme (Dahl and Eriksen, 2016, p. 403).

While the specific paper (Dahl and Eriksen, 2016, p. 405), supports earlier research by others, such as Schön (Schön, 1987) and Bolton, (Bolton, 2010) it clearly concludes that the tailoring process that was elected for the programme reminded leaders and teachers as well, that a substantial number of possibilities are opening up when the educators use reflecting learning. Regarding the ensuing dialogue it is stated that: “Requesting feedback from students could promote a sense of cooperation and reciprocity between students and teachers” (Dahl and Eriksen, 2016, p 405). Dahl and Eriksen conclude that further research is needed in order to explore how the learners’ reflective attitude can be reinforced by finding the most appropriate process to be incorporated to the professional training programmes.

The element of tailor made programme that will cater for the needs of the specific characteristics of the learners finds the authors in absolute accord. It is also their view that in professional training and development it is imperative that learners are given the chance to reflect on real life situations which when analysed and reflected upon will further their knowledge, allowing them to ameliorate their problem solving

and decision making skills.

Programme of music learning at the Community Music School of Macaíba

Frames of reference are constituted of meaning schemes (points of view) and habits of mind (Mezirow, 1985). The first ones constitute one's beliefs and concepts, while the second group is formed by one's broader assumptions. Both meaning schemes and habits of mind are the basis for people's interpretation of particular events and interactions with the world. Qi and Velben have researched a number of case studies from Brazil, which use music learning as a tool to promote transformative learning (Qi and Velben, 2016).

They state that transformative music learning is based on the next three premises, regarding music: a) it can act as a tool for social justice, b) it can empower learners to become active agents in their life and c) it can be an important lifelong activity. Music learning has enabled the subjects of their research to understand better their own world and relate this understanding to their personal experience (Qi and Veblen, 2016, p. 102).

One of the examined case studies concerns the after school programme of music learning at the Community Music School of Macaíba (Escola de Música de Macaíba - EMMA). The municipality is an underprivileged town in Northeastern Brazil characterised by a Human Development Index of 0.640 in 2012 (United Nations Human Development Reports) which takes into consideration: 1) life expectancy at birth, 2) mean years of schooling, 3) expected years of schooling and 4) gross national income per capita. In terms of crime rate Macaíba rated at a total of 20 homicides per year in 2012 which more than doubled in 2013 making young people see violence as a natural part of their everyday life. The city's youth seemed to accept passively their environment's limitations, while most of them, due to their personal perspectives, believed that it would not be possible to achieve any ambitious life goal. By providing its approximately 200 students a three year course, that can be used to enter university for some, as well as participation to the available instrumental or voice lessons, theory classes, orchestra, chorus and popular music ensembles, EMMA has provided technical knowledge as well, such as learning an instrument. Apart from that though, students were able through music, to socialise with others, perform in front of large audiences, relate to their teachers (only few years their seniors) and most probably face disorientating dilemmas while thinking about themselves, their abilities and the life objectives they would desire to set for themselves.

The research demonstrated that the students were empowered to take control of their life actively. This was a major transformative learning outcome for them under the circumstances of the disadvantaged community they live in and it will serve further as a tool for social justice. Furthermore, "music had become an essential activity to them something that they could not stop doing, even as they pursue other paths in their lives" (Qi and Veblen, 2016, p. 105).

The use of art in a learning programme is currently past the point of a "nice, handy icebreaker characterised by originality". Careful observation of works of art can lead to interpretations according to the individual meaning schemes and habits of mind that through the dialogue of the participants in a learning event, can make them face disorienting dilemmas. Critical thinking of these dilemmas may guide participants to the route of transformative learning.

Conclusion - Contribution

The workshop is formulated based on the scientific dialogue, recent research –

applications, former participants' conclusions and the dialogue with present participants in order to allow them to experience a real life application which can hopefully become the starting point of a course leading to a good practice.

References

- Barney, J. B. (1986). Organizational culture: can it be a source of sustained competitive advantage? *Academy of management review*, 11(3).
- Bolton, G. (2010). *Reflective Practice: Writing and Professional Development*. Los Angeles: Sage.
- Cranton, P. (1994). *Understanding and Promoting Transformative Learning: A Guide for Educators of Adults*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.
- Cranton, P. (2016). The Art of Questioning. *Journal of Transformative Education*, 14(2), 83-85.
- Dahl, H., Eriksen, K. (2016). Students' and teachers' experiences of participating in the reflection process “THiNK”, *Nurse Education Today*, 36.
- Grabove, V. (1997). *New Directions for Adult and Continuing Education*, 74, San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.
- Kokkos, A. (2010). Transformative Learning through Aesthetic Experience: Towards a Comprehensive Method. *Journal of Transformative Education*, 8, 153-177.
- Mezirow J. & Associates (1990). *How Critical Reflection Triggers Transformative Learning*, 1, *Fostering Critical Reflection in Adulthood*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.
- Mezirow, J. (1985). Concept and action in adult education. *Adult Education Quarterly* 35 (3).
- Mezirow, J. (1997). *New Directions for Adult and Continuing Education*, 74, San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.
- Mezirow, J. (1998). On Critical Reflection. *Adult Education Quarterly*, 48, 3.
- Perkins, D. (1994). *The Intelligent Eye*. Harvard: Graduate School of Education.
- Qi, N. and Veblen, K. (2016). Transformative learning through music: Case studies from Brazil, *Action, Criticism, and Theory for Music Education* 15 (2), 101–25.
- Ruiz-Mallén, I., Riboli-Sasco, L., Ribault, C., Heras, M., Laguna D., and Perié, L. (2016). Citizen Science: Toward Transformative Learning. *Science Communication*, 1-12.
- Schön, D.A., (1987). *Educating the reflective practitioner*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.

Internet Resources

- Visible Thinking <http://www.visiblethinkingpz.org>
- Artful Thinking <http://www.pzartfulthinking.org>
- United Nations Human development Reports: <http://hdr.undp.org/en/content/human-development-index-hdi>

Launching a process of self-reflection through educational biography

(Experiential session)

Aikaterini Pazoni – Kalli & George A. Koulaouzides
Hellenic Open University

Abstract

This paper describes the theoretical framework and the structure of a workshop (experiential session) that aims to introduce the educational biography as a method that may facilitate a internal dialogical process of critical self-reflection to adult educators.

Introduction

The experiential session presented herein is based on the assumption that seeking understanding of our life course could enhance learning and could potentially be a transformative force on both individual and social levels. Deepening the understanding of oneself requires an internal dialogue, a critical self-reflection process which may become “...*the essential medium through which transformation is promoted and developed*” (Mezirow, 1991, p. 77). Since human beings do not reside in vacuum, hierarchical structures, ideologies, relations of power and communicative ambiguities render the process of dialogue a difficult task and, sometimes, an elusive procedure. However, “*time spent on dialogue should not be considered wasted time [...] it presents problems and criticizes, and in criticizing, gives human beings their place within their own reality as the true transforming subjects of reality*” (Freire, 1974, p. 107).

It appears that Mezirow’s and Freire’s theoretical underpinnings, in conjunction, contextualize the merits of educational biography, for the latter “*provides a safe space for a group of people to nurture dialogue and mutual understanding [...] it promotes critical (self-)reflection on assumptions; it offers an opportunity to revisit one’s own past in order to interpret the roles of previous life experience, including disorienting dilemmas; it also provides an opportunity of confrontation of heterogeneous ways of knowing that may produce new disorienting dilemmas*” (Alhadeff-Jones, 2010, pp. 9-10).

In the following sections we will support our experiential session proposal by presenting the concepts of educational biography, critical reflection and by providing a brief theoretical approach of the life history research approach. Moreover, we will present the structure of our experiential session and we will justify our choices concluding with some thoughts for future exploration.

Educational biography, critical reflection

In the literature of adult education, the term educational biography is understood as an oral or written testimony of a person in relation to the sum of his/her learning experiences, either within or outside the education system. The term, originally introduced by Pierre Dominicé (2000), indicates that our biographies – our life stories – highlight learning processes which are the result of interpersonal trajectories within and across the dimensions of gender, class, religion and ethnicity.

These processes are very complex and cannot be described by any specific scientific quantitative model which eventually leads to generalizations. So, when learning is viewed in a life history perspective, the outcome is no single factor analysis or one result. For example, for some learners, societal demands and labor market situations range high in their consciousness; for others, the societal demands constitute merely a vague horizon of the subjective learning process. And most often in some people's 'reality', the job and the labor market are complex motivations; something to be achieved and guarded, as well as resisted and transcended.

A life history perspective in adult education and learning comprises understandings of subjectively processed elements; deeply set in the actual life of the individual as well as social, societal and – in a sociological sense – structural elements e.g. the gendered dimensions or the shift of modernity. As Geertz (1973, p. 5) comments “*man is an animal suspended in webs of significance he himself has spun*”.

According to Plummer (2000), educational biographies are thematic documents of life where the data are organized around the life stages or other categories of an individual's learning experiences and, most importantly, they highlight the frame of reference of the learning process through which individuals construct their lives and acquire their skills. The educational biography of an individual and, notably, teachers' educational biographies eloquently and uniquely highlight the way people interact with each other and with their educational environment (Dominicé, 2000). The narration of their life-histories construct the path that leads to the development and preservation – but also sometimes subversion – of their perception of professional identities and actions.

The recognition and examination of an educational biography that has as a consequent result the illumination of these learning paths by an individual is to our understanding the internal dialogical process defined as *critical reflection* and even more specific as *critical self-reflection*. Critical reflection as a component of adult learning, as well as the ways of facilitating *critical self-reflection*, is considered as an element that differentiates adult education and, ultimately, supports its distinct position in the field of education (Koulaouzides, 2016).

It seems that Freire's approach to the notion of conscientization (which is much more than simply awareness-raising) and Brookfield's to radical learning (and teaching) are more accurate to define critical reflection as a process of total rethinking of past worldviews, of acquisition of a more alert attitude toward already accepted and

verbalized beliefs, as well as the analysis of that process and its consequences to everyday reality. This urges adult teachers and learners to stand firmly against old and new doctrines (Brookfield & Holst, 2011, p.2) and to question the structural assumptions that constitute an individual frame of reference (Koulaouzides, 2016).

Biographical research or “seeing yourself through someone else’s eyes”

Biographical research is a form of qualitative research methods – some would call it methodology – and covers a family of terms with various combinations, such as i.e. “auto/biography” (Armstrong, 1987), “personal narrative” (Clandinin and Connelly, 2000; Riessman, 1993; Ricoeur, 1984), “biographic narrative” (Wengraf, 2001), “documents of life” (Plummer, 2001; Dominicé, 2000), with each term to display its own specific features (West *et al.* 2007). Biographical research may take the form of investigation into the lives of others, or of reflection on one’s own experience, history or identity, or a mixture of both (Roberts, 2002). Researchers using a biographical approach may use a variety of ways of data collection, including interviews and observation; they may choose to analyze texts in the form of diaries, letters or web sites. The subjects of the research choose to write, draw or paint their life histories or to produce narratives in multimedia form.

Common to all researchers who use a biographical approach is a preoccupation with people’s stories, with lives and selves and the sense that people make of their experience. Often this approach to research is characterized by a concern with the political nature of the research process and a commitment to the advancement of social justice through research activities; biographical methods may help to render audible the voices of people from groups often under-represented in conventional research.

Narratives gathered in biographical research reveal complex contexts (cultural, psychological, social, and educational) of problems through subjectively treated life stories. This kind of approach enables us to uncover a uniqueness of people’s experiences that can be analyzed within various disciplines and with various moral or value aspects as well. Notably, the key-concept of all kinds of biographical inquiry is ‘reflexivity’ through which people’s life is interpreted. However, Fine (1994, p. 72) warns us that “*the search for the complete and coherent is a delusion; we produce a snapshot of transgressions in process when we write up a life history work*”.

With that said, the biographical approach has now achieved considerable prominence both pedagogically and in educational research. It seems to be ideally suited to revealing experience-based learning and in tracking the development of the self as learner. In this sense, life-history becomes an educational biography drawing on people’s learning experiences. Then, how people learn or construct knowledge and make meaning of their experiences becomes a very important enterprise, and as such people’s biographies offer an appropriate frame of interpretation. An educational biography examines issues through the eyes of those who have experienced them – how they perceive, interpret, and address the nature of their experience, its multiple aspects, and the ways people develop to cope with. In this respect, their accounts provide an understanding of the journeys they traveled and the experiences they lived to bring us new insights (Pazioni-Kalli, 2006).

Naturally, as in any other sector of academic or pedagogical theorizing, the key-concepts of this presentation are contested endeavors. Different actors have

contrasting and most often contradictory interpretations. However, no matter what the setting of learning, the core element that may result in changing the perception of the world and may bring harmony between individual biography and the actual situation is critical (self-)reflection, which appears to be a uniquely adult quality (Koulaouzides, 2016). Then it would remain a fundamental question, to “*bring about a kind of society ... that best fosters creativity and compassion ...*” (Brookfield & Holst, 2011, p.6).

Description of the experiential session

Having all of the above in mind we designed a self-reflection workshop through the use of educational biography, aiming to (a) familiarize the participants with the biographical research approaches and (b) introduce a self-reflection methodology that may assist them in recognizing a particular part of their frame of reference: *their assumptions about the role of the adult educator*. We argue that such an experience may become the stimuli for the initiation of an internal dialogical process that may lead individuals and more particular individuals in the educational profession to become reflective practitioners.

This experiential session was implemented in the past during a conference which was mainly addressed to educators for the primary and secondary levels of education (Koulaouzides & Pazoni, 2014). That application was experimental and the feedback we received from the participants gave us the opportunity to adjust its structure and its content. From the comments we received, it was apparent that the participants showed an increased awareness regarding the relation between their biographical paradigm and their assumptions about the role of the teacher in the aforementioned levels. The structure of the session is as follows:

First part

We divide the group of the participants in smaller groups and we implement a short acquaintance exercise using a series of especially prepared bookmarks. The bookmarks have on them quotes that relate to the theory and practice of adult education from various scholars. The bookmarks are prepared in duplicates to give the participants the opportunity to create randomly formed couples. We then ask every couple to proceed with short interviews of each other and to discuss the quote found on their common bookmark. As a next step we ask every participant to introduce to the rest of the group his/her couple and then to share with the group thoughts regarding the quote. In this part our aim is on the one hand to create a familiar environment and on the other hand to offer a first indication about the content of the session (biographical information – theory and practice of adult education). At the same time implicitly the whole group acquires an idea of the existing assumptions about adult education during the commentaries of the participants.

Second part

In the second part, we distribute to each participant two pages that contain two different exercises. The pages are colored differently and each group has its own color. We ask the participants to start with the first page where we invite them to think and write a short educational biographical accounting explaining to them that they

should include as many educational experiences as they can, from any level of education.

Once this part is over, we prompt the participants to take a break for 1-2 minutes and perform the second exercise which is asking them to write in one to two paragraphs their opinion regarding the role of the adult educator based on their own experiences. We then invite them to attach the two pages together and to place both pages in a folder.

Third part

We collect the folders from each group and we distribute them so that each group receives the collected forms from a different group. We then invite the groups to open the folders and place the documents upside down. Then we ask each member of the group to pick randomly one set, to read the first the biographical account carefully and then to read the accompanied statement about the role of the adult educator and to discuss it. The discussion is at the beginning an individual exercise and then a collective activity within each group. We urge the participants to comment the relation, if any, between the educational experiences described and the stated assumption about the role of the adult educator. We also encourage them to discuss as thorough as possible all the cases in their folder and to decide on their way of presenting each case to the rest of the group.

When all the groups are ready, we start presenting each account and the related statement about the role of the educator and the associated comments that took place from the discussion within the group. We ask the participants not to react when they hear their own biography but to keep notes and wait for the completion of the presentations. Once all the presentations are over we ask the participants to share on a voluntary basis with us their reactions (agreements, disagreements, emotions and so on) and to comment about the content of the whole process.

Forth part

When the third part is concluded we present for a short period some theoretical elements about educational biography and its potential use a tool for the initiation of an internal dialogue, as means for critical self-reflection. We then distribute a blank page to the participants asking them to illustrate the whole experience with a paragraph, a phrase, an image or anything their find appropriate. We urge to participants to post their appraisal on a board. This last activity concludes the experiential session.

Epilogue

The presented experiential session is based on the concepts of educational biography and critical reflection. We believe that educational biography is a useful instrument that may foster critical self-reflection and facilitate the dialogue of a person with himself/herself and the others. For those who are in the education professional field the practice of educational biography may found to be of extreme importance since the educational biography of a teacher, not only includes issues of educational and professional experiences but also encompasses aspects of family life, school life,

personal characteristics, values, worldviews, and special features that are essential influences to career choices, i.e. to the teaching profession (Atkinson, 1998; Koulaouzides, 2010).

Through the proposed workshop we intend to foster critical self reflection but at the same time we are aware that there is no way to bring such a hard internal and external dialogical process successfully into the life of an individual through a stand-alone one day workshop. At best, a short workshop like ours can do three things: 1) amplify the awareness of educators to the challenge of bringing critical reflection into their professional reflection and practice, 2) introduce a strategy for up-grading the effectiveness of critical reflection, and 3) lay a good start for follow-up similar workshops. We know that to develop a deep understanding of the fundamentals of critical self-reflection involves a long-term approach to critical learning and, especially, an open minded process of viewing the “self” as a multifaceted, ever changing, sometimes contradictory entity.

We strongly support the idea that educational biography is a powerful tool that is able to make people aware of their meaning-making process. Human beings have a rich and highly varied mental and social life reflected in all their relationships and institutions in which they live (Hughes and Sharrock, 1997). Thus, recognizing and understanding of the ‘biographical experience’ (on which meaning-making is based) has a key role in educational theorizing, practice and research. The educational biography seen as a particular set of experiences of the self, is a source of knowledge and a valuable pedagogic resource which can be utilized for learning, personal development and the liberating provision of ‘voice’ (Usher, 1998).

References

- Alhadeff-Jones, M. (2010). *Transformative Learning, Life History and the Temporalities of Learning*. Keynote lecture given at the Hellenic Adult Education Association, 2010 September Meeting, Athens, Greece. Retrieved from [http://www.academia.edu/343377/Transformative Learning Life History and the Temporalities of Learning](http://www.academia.edu/343377/Transformative_Learning_Life_History_and_the_Temporalities_of_Learning)
- Armstrong, P.F. (1987). ‘Qualitative Strategies in Social and Educational Research. The Life History Method in Theory and Practice’. Kingston upon Hull: The University of Hull-School of Adult and Continuing Education. *Newland Papers*, n° 14.
- Atkinson, R. (1998). *The life story interview*. Sage University Papers on Qualitative Research Methods, Vol. 44. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Brookfield, S. & Holst, J. (2011). *Radicalizing Learning: Adult Education for a Just World*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.
- Clandinin, J. and Connelly, M. (2000). *Narrative Inquiry: Experiences and Story in Qualitative Research*. New York: Teachers College Press.
- Dominicé, P. (2000). *Learning from our lives: Using educational biographies with adults*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.
- Fine, M. (1994). ‘Working the hyphens: reinventing self and other in qualitative research’. In N. Denzin and Y. Lincoln (eds) *Handbook of Qualitative*

- Research*. London: Sage. pp. 70-82.
- Freire, P. (1974). *Educational for Critical Consciousness* [1st ed.]. London, New Delhi: Bloomsbury.
- Geertz, C. (1973). *The Interpretation of Cultures*. New York: Basic Books.
- Hughes, J. and Sharrock, W. (1997). *The Philosophy of Social Research*. London: Longman.
- Koulaouzides, G. (2010). 'Educational Biography as Research Evidence in the Field of Adult Education'. In D. Vergides & A. Kokkos (eds.) *Adult Education: International Approaches and Greek Trajectories*. [In Greek]. Athens: Metaixmio, pp. 192-211
- Koulaouzides, G & Pazoni-Kalli, K. (2014). Educational biography as a tool for the self reflection of teachers. [In Greek]. Seminar Proceedings, "Innovative Practices in Schools", Athens, 29/11/2014.
- Koulaouzides, G. (2016). *Critical thinking makes the difference or what is different in adult education*. 2nd Panhellenic Conference on Lifelong Learning, Community Empowerment and Education, Chania, 3-5/6/2016 (to be published in the conference proceedings).
- Mezirow, J. (1991). *Transformative Dimensions of Adult Learning*. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.
- Pazoni-Kalli, K. (2006). 'Looking through her eyes' – Life History/Biography as a transitional space for exploring women's learning. In the Proceedings of Life History and Biography Network-E.S.R.E.A. Conference, on *Transitional Spaces, Transitional Processes and Research* - Volos, Greece, 2-5 March 2006.
- Plummer, K. (2000). *Documents of Life – An Invitation to a Critical Humanism*. London: Sage.
- Ricoeur, P. (1984). *Time and narrative*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Riessman, C. (1993). *Narrative Analysis*. California: Sage.
- Roberts, B. (2002). *Biographical research*. Buckingham, Philadelphia: Open University Press.
- Usher, R. (1998). 'The Story of the Self: Education, Experience and Autobiography'. In M. Erben (ed.) *Biography and Education: A Reader*. London: Falmer Press.
- Wengraf, T. (2001). *Qualitative Research Interviewing - Biographic Narrative and Semi-Structured Methods*. London: Sage Publications.
- West, L., Alheit, P., Anderson, A.S., Merrill, B. (eds.) (2007). *Using Biographical and Life History Approaches in the Study of Adult and Lifelong Learning: European Perspectives*. Frankfurt, New York and London: Peter Lang.

Dialogue and Transformation in ELF-Aware Teacher Education:

A Case Study

Nicos C. Sifakis

Hellenic Open University

Stefania Kordia

Hellenic Open University

Abstract

This paper aims to discuss the significance of transformative learning in teacher education. It presents a case study from a professional development programme that aims at helping teachers of English as a foreign language raise their awareness of issues related to English as an international lingua franca.

Introduction

The rapid spread of English as a lingua franca (ELF), namely as the preferred language of communication among speakers with different mother tongues, has brought about several changes in the nature of this language, as more and more so-called ‘non-native speakers’ (NNSs) employ it to interact with each other. This fact has serious implications for a range of aspects surrounding the teaching and learning of English as a foreign language (EFL), including syllabus design, materials development and language testing. Nevertheless, instead of attempting to respond to the implications arising from the function of English as the world’s lingua franca, EFL teachers remain, for the most part, devoted to their tried and tested ways of exposing their learners only to native-speaker English, or the so-called Standard English varieties (mainly, the prestigious varieties of BBC English or General American).

In this paper we address the issues underlying the ELF phenomenon and the challenges for EFL teachers. We show that there is a great need for infusing EFL teacher education (in-service and pre-service) with elements of ELF, to the effect that EFL teachers become more knowledgeable about the use of English around the world today and more capable of making informed decisions about their instructional practices. We term this awareness-raising process ‘ELF-aware’ (Sifakis & Bayyurt, in print) and explain that modifying one’s views and practices in response to ELF essentially involves identifying, evaluating and, if necessary, re-constructing one’s frames of reference with regard to using and teaching English. In this light, we argue that ELF-aware teacher education programmes can significantly gain by integrating Mezirow’s theory of transformative learning and, more specifically, by engaging teachers in reflective discourse with their self and with others and in formulating, implementing and reflecting upon ELF-aware action plans in their classrooms. In order to illustrate the significance of transformative learning in this context, we present an overview of the professional development of Stefania (the second author of this paper), who has participated in such a programme and discusses her transformative experience.

Challenges and implications of ELF

The problem

The unprecedented dominance of English as an international language has concerned applied linguists for quite some time. The spread of English kick-started in the late 1970s with the emergence of business English, but, with the growth of the Internet in the 1990s and the information and communication technologies (ICT) of the 2000s, it turned into a global ‘epidemic’ (Phillipson, 1992) that took the world by storm.

One of the key characteristics of the global spread of English has been the extremely rapid growth of NNSs using it. This means that, over the years, NNSs have appropriated English to an extent that, to date, there are non-native ‘varieties’ of English that merge features of local languages and dialects in very creative ways—cf. Leimgruber (2012) on Singapore English, or Kosciielecki (2006) on Japanized English. Applied linguists and discourse analysts study NNSs’ creativity in using this lingua franca in different communicative contexts and highlight the importance of interactional skills such as the development of a shared understanding between NNSs, the preserving of comprehensibility and intelligibility during interaction (Jenkins, 2011), or the recourse to any other languages or varieties mutually known to interactants (also known as ‘translanguaging’ – cf. García & Wei, 2014). At the same time, as NNSs emerge in their vast numbers as the apparent appropriators of English, the role of native speakers (NSs) as the ones providing the ‘golden standard’ against which successful communication is gauged is inevitably downplayed. Thus, there are various examples in the literature of NS discourse being much less, if at all, intelligible or even useful in interactional contexts involving NNSs (Davis, 2003).

It goes without saying that the implications for EFL teachers are enormous. ELF is not “a monolithic version that should be taught in all contexts”, but an opportunity for providing “insights into the heterogeneous nature of English as it is used in contact situations” (Jenkins, Cogo & Dewey, 2011, p.305). This implies that EFL teaching should aim at educating learners to develop as ‘skilled English users’, namely as users who have “acquired the pragmatic skills needed to adapt their English use in line with the demands of the current lingua franca situation” (Jenkins, 2011, pp.931-2).

However, EFL teachers are professionally trained to teach Standard English to their (non-native) learners and, by and large, to regard a ‘skilled English user’ as the user who is able to imitate the linguistic behavior of a NS, irrespective of the nature of the communicative situation he or she participates in. This deep-rooted assumption, in fact, permeates various highly popular EFL approaches and methods (like Communicative Language Teaching – cf. Jenkins, 2006) which most pre- and in-service training seminars revolve around, and is reflected to a great extent in the curricula and courseware they are encouraged to use in their classrooms (cf. Andreou & Galantomos, 2009). Furthermore, it is reinforced by the dominant narrative in EFL contexts which favours learners’ preparation for sitting high-stakes proficiency exams that are predominantly NS-oriented (Sifakis, 2009). Inevitably, all the ‘errors’ made by learners are judged with reference to native-speaker norms rather than to their inherent quality as potentially appropriate discourse in relevant interactional contexts. Worse still, countless teaching hours are spent forcing learners to ‘acquire’ the ability to pronounce certain phonemes (or sounds of the phonology of English) that (a) will never be mastered by these learners because they run contrary to their own native language phonology and (b) may not play that important a role in producing intelligible discourse (Jenkins, 2000). This obsession with native-speaker norms has

come to be known as ‘nativespeakerism’, a term that denotes “a pervasive ideology” within the English Language Teaching (ELT) field according to which the native speaker is the only legitimate ‘owner’ of the language and, therefore, its ideal user and teacher (Holliday, 2006, p.385).

At the same time, learners, who are exposed to the nativespeakerist ideology in their EFL classrooms, are transformed into *users* of English when they leave the classroom, as they go online to engage in interactive multi-player games or chat with people from around the world at social media websites. In a sense, as these learners make the best of modern-day ICT to hone their skills in communicating in English (or ELF), their teachers insist on exposing them to norms and biases, some of which are necessary and useful but some may be irrelevant, unnecessary or even harmful in the contexts within which they currently use English and those they may do so in the future (Seidlhofer, 2008).

In this respect, research has shown that, even when teachers appreciate the need for learners to become competent communicators in an age when NNSs dominate, they still hold very strong convictions about prioritizing the teaching of NS varieties (Sifakis & Sougari, 2005). Having been bombarded by the nativespeakerist discourse within the field of EFL both as prior learners and as teachers of the language (through, as we have seen, NS-oriented curricula, courseware and training courses), they tend to act as custodians and gatekeepers of ‘proper English’ and view themselves as the official representatives of the ideal native speaker in their EFL classroom (Sifakis, 2009). These convictions have indeed been instilled in them to such a degree that, more often than not, they take for granted the answers to crucial questions like ‘what I teach’, ‘why I teach it’ and ‘what I intend to achieve through it’. This is reinforced by the fact that, while the domain of EFL is replete with materials (courseware, dictionaries of NS varieties of English, grammar books etc.), this is not the case with the domain of ELF, where research is still at the level of delineating what constitutes successful NNS discourse. As teachers need specific professional training and guidance in key areas like instructional design, this guidance is impressively abundant within EFL but virtually non-existent within ELF.

Transformative learning as the proposed solution

In the light of the above considerations, ELF-aware teacher education, which is a relatively new yet rapidly developing area in the field of applied linguistics, aims primarily at empowering teachers to modify their teaching practices in response to the challenges posed by ELF. To do so, though, as illustrated in the previous section, they first need to “question some of the more deeply rooted assumptions [they] hold about language” (Park & Wee, 2011, p.368) and, then, replace their ‘normative mindset’ (Seidlhofer, 2008, p.33.4). This is precisely where the significance of Mezirow’s transformative learning theory (TLT) lies with regard to ELF.

In 2007, Sifakis put forward a comprehensive proposal for integrating TLT in the education of teachers of English as a lingua franca, highlighting its pertinence to the need to transform teachers’ deep convictions about the *a priori* and *de facto* appropriacy of English native speaker norms in relation to virtually all aspects surrounding the use, learning and assessment of English (Sifakis, 2007). The supremacy of TLT over other, more “traditional” teacher training methods was identified in that:

- (a) it can be applied to subvert the dominant nativespeakerist ideology that permeates a great deal of the EFL ecosystem;

- (b) it can prompt participant teachers' reflective thinking with reference not only to ELF research and theorizing but also to their own context;
- (c) it urges teachers to actively engage in the development, implementation and (self- and peer-) evaluation of lesson plans tailored to their own learners;
- (d) it can be used to involve participants in a reflective discourse that is essentially creative and therefore potentially emancipatory, in the sense that it scaffolds their self-confidence and autonomy;
- (e) it can ultimately foster participant teachers' professional development (Sifakis, 2014).

Since 2012 onwards, the TLT proposal for ELF-aware teacher education is being implemented at the University of Boğaziçi, in Istanbul, Turkey (Bayyurt and Sifakis, 2015). The project, which is accessible online (at <http://teacherdevelopment.boun.edu.tr>), engages in-service and pre-service EFL teachers in exploring the issues raised in the ELF literature and is explicitly designed to empower them to determine the implications of these issues for their own teaching context and modify their teaching practices accordingly.

More specifically, the project includes two broad phases. The participants are initially asked to keep an electronic reflective journal and therein to respond to a series of progressively more demanding reflective questions based on selected articles and book chapters they have to read and a number of ELF-related videos they have to watch. These reflective questions play a crucial role in terms of raising the participants' ELF awareness; by engaging them in *content*, *process* and, more importantly, *premise* reflection (Mezirow, 1991) on their past and current experiences as users, learners and teachers of the language, they actually challenge them to identify their established viewpoints about ELF-related issues (such as the ideal speaker of English), confront them and, eventually, assess their validity in relation to new information about ELF (Mezirow, 2000). The participants are thus engaged in constant reflective dialogue not only with their educators (while responding to their questions) and the readings or videos they reflect upon (while discussing their relevance to their own personal experiences) but, more importantly, with their self, while examining their normative assumptions and trying to “externalize their reflective experience” in their journal (Taylor, 2009, p.9).

On this basis, at the second phase of the project the participants are prompted to “make an informed and reflective decision to act on [their] reflective insight” (Mezirow, 2000, pp.23-24). Taking into account the particular requirements of their context, they are prompted to engage in action research by designing, implementing and evaluating original ELF-aware lessons for their classes, illustrating their own understanding of ELF and, if this is indeed the case, their altered or enriched perspectives about English and English language teaching. This phase is actually more than significant so as to help them explore, try out and build self-confidence in new roles as teachers of English as a lingua franca (Mezirow, 2000, 2009) and, eventually, develop as “autonomous, responsible thinkers” (Mezirow, 1997, p.8).

In order to offer an insight into ELF-aware transformation, Stefania, who has participated in this project, discusses, in the following section, her experience, providing, in this way, “a perspective about [her] own perspective” (Mezirow, 2003, p.61).

Stefania's transformative journey

Taking into account that metacognitive awareness of one's frames of reference

and of the way they change over time is an essential condition for transformative learning (Mezirow, 2003), in this section I am presenting a concise overview of my own development as an ELF-aware teacher while participating in the project described above. For the purposes of this paper, careful analysis of the data included in the reflective journal I kept since its beginning, in September 2012, and for approximately nine months, has been carried out along the lines of TLT, which has been included in my research interests after the completion of the project. These data indicate that transformation has indeed occurred with regard to various convictions of mine pertaining to my roles as a user and a teacher of English. In this respect, while all of the ten phases of transformative learning as originally defined by Mezirow (2000) are illustrated therein, the process has been found to be “more recursive, evolving, and spiraling in nature” (Taylor, 2000, p.290). Due to space constraints, my ELF-aware transformation is explored here with reference to three main issues, namely challenging nativespeakerist assumptions, re-defining the ‘skilled English user’ and implementing ELF-aware teaching, the significance of which has been highlighted in the previous sections. These issues are discussed from the perspective of both the researcher and the researched.

Challenging nativespeakerist assumptions

Considering that age and education are crucial as far as transformative learning is concerned (Mezirow, 2003), it should be highlighted that, when embarking on this journey at the age of 32, I had already had a 10-year-old teaching experience and completed a master’s degree on education and various professional development programmes which, along with raising my self-confidence as a teacher to a great extent, had significantly enhanced my ability to engage in critical self-reflection. This ability, combined with a natural inclination to question myself as a person, allowed me to participate freely in reflective discourse from the very beginning, based on the materials and the questions I had to work on.

An introductory video I was invited to watch before learning about English as an international lingua franca proved highly important in terms of initiating the transformative process. In this video, emphasis was placed on that radical changes in education always come from grassroots movements, namely from teachers themselves rather than from policy-makers, a view which was fairly new to me and made me wonder whether I was indeed part of such a movement. In fact, even though, at that point, I could relate educational change only to a shift towards more modern teaching methods as had often been highlighted in the seminars I had attended, the idea that, as a teacher, I might not be as successful as I thought was quite unsettling. Signifying the emergence of a *disorienting dilemma* which would eventually bring me into conflict with several of my prior convictions, it was this thought that made me consider the possibility of looking at my knowledge and experience from a different angle. Regarding my role as a possible agent of change, I wondered:

Why hadn’t I thought about that before? Perhaps I should [...] start thinking about what exactly I have done to make things better... I should be ‘part of the solution, not the problem’, but what exactly does this entail? [...] The obvious answer is that the ‘problem’ arises from adopting traditional teaching methodology and its ‘solution’ entails adopting more communicative child-centered approaches. Is that all?

While reading several articles and book chapters on the spread of English as a

global language and responding to questions which asked me to determine the validity of the arguments raised therein, the nature of the ‘problem’ with regard to my own role as an English teacher in our era became more and more obvious to me. In this regard, the information about the vast number of NNSs using English today and the implications of this number, as illustrated in the literature, concerning the traditional definition of a NS as the speaker who is responsible for the evolution of the language, seemed so striking, and, at the same time, so reasonable to me that led me to embark on a process of *critical assessment of the assumptions* I held about the image of the NS and a simultaneous *recognition that my discontent* over them was shared by the authors whose work I read:

The language does not belong any longer only to its native users [...]. It is remarkable [...], if I was asked to define a ‘native speaker’ before, I would have included almost all of the features which are traditionally associated with this term [...]. I can’t but agree with [the authors’ criticism on] assumptions related to the alleged superiority of native speakers.

Challenging and, eventually, abandoning nativespeakerist convictions necessarily involved *self-examination* with regard to the factors that had possibly given rise to them or had somehow reinforced them. My answers to reflective questions asking me to think about the ways I had been trained as a teacher and, earlier, as a learner of the language, included the following about the ELT courses I attended at the University and, then, the native-speaker teacher who taught me when I was young:

As part of [a] course, we were involved in ‘learning’ how to pronounce English words ‘properly’ and I remember that I kept asking myself questions like “If I can’t have a correct pronunciation, how can I teach it?”. [Later on] I tried to ‘adopt’ some of the ELT methods I had been studying about [...]. To my mind, that was the modern way to teach, the way that people ‘who knew better’ taught, and above all, I used the very same materials (published in the UK) which they used.

She seemed ‘exotic’ to my eyes [...], she was the ‘representative’ of the culture which I could only have a taste of through books, pictures, and her of course. I even tried to imitate her behavior [...] because, I guess, I thought that was part of the process of learning the language.

The realization that my educational background had actually promoted a ‘normative mindset’ was indeed highly shocking and, in a sense, liberating, evoking feelings of enthusiasm and optimism. Nevertheless, as far as teaching and learning were concerned, the dialogue I had engaged in with the materials I reflected upon and, more importantly, with myself, generated, at this point, a crucial question which I could not yet answer:

As most, if not all, of my colleagues, I think I have been brainwashed with the idea that, no matter what we do, we can never become as good as native speakers [...]. I find it pretty amazing; long, well-established, traditions [...] are being challenged here and, most importantly, it feels

that they deserve to be challenged. [However], what the target model would be [now, in teaching and learning]? I remember Sharifian asking [in one of the videos] whether we do need a target model. If we do, then the image of a ‘native speaker’ in the traditional sense is certainly no longer appropriate.

Re-defining the ‘skilled English user’

Finding an appropriate answer to the question about the target model of language use I should be adopting in my classroom essentially entailed reframing the concept of the ‘skilled English user’. In this respect, studying the findings of empirical research on ELF was significant not only in terms of *acquiring knowledge* about what being a competent communicator meant in today’s globalised world (as regards, for instance, the negotiation strategies that one could employ) but also in terms of *exploring options for my new roles and actions* as an English teacher:

I am VERY surprised and OF COURSE there are implications for teaching. The results of [empirical research] show that our approach to teaching [pronunciation], grammar and vocabulary should be redirected if our aim is to prepare students to communicate effectively in lingua franca contexts. [We should] take them into consideration when determining teaching objectives and selecting/adapting/producing [teaching] materials.

Nevertheless, the more knowledge I gained about the features of ELF discourse, the more evident it became that there was a striking discrepancy between my own teaching practices and the current realities in English language use. The nature of the ‘problem’ and its possible ‘solution’ which had puzzled me at the beginning of this journey had thus now acquired new dimensions:

What kind of ‘real life communicative situations’ have we been talking about? BBC world news? That’s exposing [the learners] to native-speaker contexts of use alone, when 80 or so percent of communication nowadays takes place in lingua franca contexts. [...] I think I have ‘suppressed’ my students’ creativity to a large extent by insisting on conventional use of language reflecting NS norms.

In fact, exploring the consequences of my nativespeakerist convictions and, more specifically, the extent to which my prior definition of a ‘skilled English user’ matched the profile of a competent ELF speaker, was definitely not an easy task. It involved, probably for the first time throughout my transformative journey, *self-examination with feelings of anger, guilt and shame* which resulted in an honest and candid admission of the need to transform myself as an EFL teacher:

Even though I always considered my teaching to be aiming at developing communicative competence, I never really helped my students [...] communicate effectively with either native or non-native speakers of English, which, as I see it now, is quite disappointing, if not unprofessional. [...] I think that a transformation in my [teaching] is necessary; that would be highly beneficial not only for my students, given that [...] they will need to communicate effectively in lingua

franca contexts in the future, but also for myself [...] in terms of the ethical satisfaction associated with ‘doing your job right’. [Nonetheless] I am not yet sure how I can do that.

As illustrated in the quotation above, my self-confidence had been considerably shattered and, although I did appreciate the need to integrate an ELF component in my teaching, confusion as to how this could be done in practice prevailed.

Implementing ELF-aware teaching

Focusing on the pedagogical implications of ELF research as described in the literature and trying to determine their relevance to my own teaching situation played a crucial role in helping me *plan a course of action* so as to bring about change in my teaching. While preparing myself, therefore, for the action research which the second phase of the project involved, various ideas came to me pertaining to the implementation of ELF-aware teaching in my own classroom:

[The author suggests] providing the opportunity to negotiate meaning [...] the way that speakers do in real life. This is indeed a very interesting idea; I could give it a try. [Moreover] I could expose [my learners] to various NSS-NSS interactions and [...] elicit the various negotiation strategies that successful communicators use.

In this regard, the close examination of the characteristics of my context, including the current and future needs of my learners, led to the conclusion that another significant parameter had to be taken into account in order for true change to occur; based on my own experience as a learner, raising the learners’ awareness of their own assumptions and, if necessary, helping them transform them were considered essential. After several months of dialogic, self-reflective learning, I had thus found the ‘solution’ to the real ‘problem’ that was caused by perceiving myself as a custodian of NS English:

The way I see it now, the very first step involves [...] determining what exactly my students think about all this. [...] I feel that most of them also regard native speaker competence as the benchmark of perfection, [and] this is one of the most important challenges: being able to adapt your teaching [...] both according to your specific teaching situation, as well as in response to the status of English as an international language.

Being, therefore, aware of the challenges, as well as the opportunities, of ELF-aware teaching, I proceeded to explore my learners’ worldviews and, then, to design and implement two ELF-aware lessons as part of my action research (for more information on this, see Kordia, 2015). It was actually this *provisional trying of my new role* as a teacher of English which not only helped me *build competence and self-confidence in this role* but also realize that developing into an autonomous and responsible ELF-aware thinker is, in essence, a never-ending process:

As for my own transformation [...], no matter how uncomfortable, and even painful at times, that experience was, it was worth all the while.

Moreover, I don't think it's over; you can never claim that you have utterly and completely been transformed into a successful ELF-aware teacher – it's a journey with a very clear destination but also a journey without ending, much like education itself.

Conclusion

The purpose of this paper has been to discuss the significance of transformative learning in ELF-aware teacher education. To this end, after briefly describing the function of English as a lingua franca, it was highlighted that, in order for teachers to modify their teaching practices in line with the current realities in language use around the world, they need to become aware of and replace some of their deepest nativespeakerist convictions. On this basis, we argued that integrating Mezirow's theory of transformative learning in ELF-aware teacher education is highly essential and we described the overall aims and structure of a programme which has been designed along these lines.

Aiming at illustrating the effects of this programme in her professional development, the second author of this paper provided at the second section an overview of her own transformative experience. Her discussion demonstrates that the reflective dialogue she was engaged in was crucial in terms of determining what her old and her new role as an English teacher involved and thus in raising her competence and self-confidence in implementing ELF-aware teaching. Her experience also highlights that ELF-aware teacher transformation needs to be viewed as a recursive, on-going process which may involve the transformation of learners' nativespeakerist convictions as well.

References

- Andreou, G. & Galantomos, I. (2009). The native speaker ideal in foreign language teaching. *Electronic Journal of Foreign Language Teaching*, 6(2), 200-208.
- Bayyurt, Y. & Sifakis, N. (2015). ELF-aware In-Service Teacher Education: A Transformative Perspective. In H. Bowles and A. Cogo (Eds.), *International Perspectives on English as Lingua Franca: pedagogical insights* (pp. 117-135). Basingstoke, Hampshire: Palgrave MacMillan.
- Davis, A. (2003). *The native speaker: myth and reality*. Clevedon: Multilingual Matters.
- García, O. & Wei, L. (2014). *Translanguaging: language, bilingualism and education*. Houndmills, Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Holliday, A. (2006). Native-speakerism. *English Language Teaching Journal*, 60(4), 385-387.
- Jenkins, J., 2000. *The phonology of English as an international language*. Cambridge University Press, Cambridge.
- Jenkins, J. (2006). Points of view and blind spots: ELF and SLA. *International Journal of Applied Linguistics*, 16(2), 137-162.
- Jenkins, J. (2011). Accommodating (to) ELF in the international university. *Journal of Pragmatics*, 43, 926-936.
- Jenkins, J., Cogo, A. & Dewey, M. (2011). Review of developments in research into English as a lingua franca. *Language Teaching*, 44(3), 281-315.
- Kordia, S. (2015). From TEFL to ELF-aware pedagogy: lessons learned from an action-research project in Greece. In K. Dikilitaş, R. Smith and W. Trotman

- (eds) *Teacher-Researchers in Action* (pp. 235-261). Kent: IATEFL Research Special Interest Group.
- Koscielecki, M. (2006). Japanized English, its context and socio-historical background. *English Today*, 22(4), 25-31.
- Leimgruber, J. (2012). Singapore English: an indexical approach. *World Englishes*, 31(1), 1-14.
- Mezirow, J. (1991). *Transformative dimensions of adult learning*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.
- Mezirow, J. (1997). Transformative learning: Theory to practice. In P. Cranton (Ed.), *Transformative learning in action: Insights from practice. New directions for adult and continuing education*, No.74 (pp. 5-12). San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.
- Mezirow, J. (2000). Learning to think like an adult: core concepts of transformation theory. In J. Mezirow and Associates (Eds.), pp.3-34.
- Mezirow, J. (2003). Transformative learning as discourse. *Journal of Transformative Education*, 1(1), 58-63.
- Mezirow, J. (2009). Transformative Learning Theory. In J. Mezirow, E.W. Taylor & Associates (Eds.), 18-31.
- Mezirow, J. & Associates (Eds.) (2000). *Learning as transformation*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.
- Mezirow, J., Taylor, E.W. & Associates (Eds.) (2009). *Transformative Learning in Practice*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.
- Park, J. S.-Y. & Wee, L. (2011). A practice-based critique of English as a Lingua Franca. *World Englishes*, 30(3), 360-74.
- Phillipson, R. (1992). *Linguistic imperialism*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Seidlhofer, B. (2008). Of norms and mindsets. *Australian Review of Applied Linguistics*, 31(3), 1-7.
- Sifakis, N. C. (2007). The education of the teachers of English as a lingua franca: a transformative perspective. *International Journal of Applied Linguistics*, 17(3), 355-375.
- Sifakis, N. C. (2009). Challenges in teaching ELF in the periphery: the Greek context. *English Language Teaching Journal*, 63(3), 230-37.
- Sifakis, N. C. (2014). ELF awareness as an opportunity for change: a transformative perspective for ESOL teacher education. *Journal of English as a Lingua Franca*, 3(2), 317-335.
- Sifakis, N. & Bayyurt, Y. (in print). ELF-aware teacher education and development. In J. Jenkins, W. Baker & M. Dewey (Eds.), *The Routledge handbook on English as a lingua franca*. London: Routledge.
- Sifakis, N. C. & Sougari, A.-M. (2005). Pronunciation issues and EIL pedagogy in the periphery: a survey of Greek state school teachers' beliefs. *TESOL Quarterly*, 39(4), 467-88.
- Taylor, E.W. (2000). Analyzing research on Transformative Learning Theory. In J. Mezirow & Associates (Eds.), 285-328.
- Taylor, E.W. (2009). Fostering transformative learning. In J. Mezirow, E.W. Taylor & Associates (Eds.), 3-17.

Dialogue and Transformation in ELF-Aware Teacher Education:

A Case Study

Maria (Melina) Laina

3rd Gymnasium Vyronas/University of Athens

Maria Lambiri

Kalamos Gymnasium/University of Athens

Modern approach to lifelong learning German as a foreign language

This paper discusses the integration of the experimental theory of knowledge (Dewey 1938), the theories of transformative learning (Mezirow 2007) and Andragogy (Knowles 1984) and their implementation into lifelong learning and particularly in learning German as a foreign language.

It is a common assumption that the experience is a key ingredient that leads to adult learning and critical thinking. Learning does not mean unilaterally obtaining information, but it is a continuous process of resolving cognitive concerns and internal conflicts of the adult beings. These concerns and conflicts are created and resolved in the light of the individual's interaction with the natural and social environment. John Dewey (1938) pointed out the relation between education and experience and declared the belief that each form of education is based on experience. According to the experimental theory of knowledge education, everyday life and social reality are in constant interaction. Rogers (1999) includes the theory and the assessment of experience of other people, namely the importance that has for the individual learning experience is not personal, but occurs in the light of others. Finally, Jarvis (2004) gives another dimension to the experience in the circle of learning by placing it into the socio-cultural environment of origin, where all learners are encouraged to be free and reflecting upon on their own experiences. In addition, the Andragogy (Knowles 1984) is based on four principles that are applied to adult learning. Specifically:

1. Adults need to be involved in the planning and evaluation of their instruction.
2. Experience (including mistakes) provides the basis for the learning activities.
3. Adults are most interested in learning subjects that have immediate relevance and impact to their job or personal life.
4. Adult learning is problem-centered rather than content-oriented (Kearsley 2010).



http://leanlearning.wikispaces.com/instructional_design

Knowles gave adult learners 5 characteristics:
(<http://www.infed.org/lifelonglearning/b-andra.htm>)

1. Self-concept: As a person matures his self concept moves from one of being a dependent personality toward one of being a self-directed human being.
2. Experience: As a person matures he accumulates a growing reservoir of experience that becomes an increasing resource for learning.
3. Readiness to learn. As a person matures his readiness to learn becomes oriented increasingly to the developmental tasks of his social roles.
4. Orientation to learning. As a person matures his time perspective changes from one of postponed application of knowledge to immediacy of application, and accordingly his orientation toward learning shifts from one of subject centeredness to one of problem centeredness.
5. Motivation to learn: As a person matures the motivation to learn is internal (Knowles 1984:12, in Smith, M. 2002)

This fact makes the task of every leader of adult groups real, specific, and clear: Every adult group, of whatever nature, must become a laboratory of democracy, a place where people may have the experience of learning to live co-operatively. Attitudes and opinions are formed primarily in the study groups, work groups, and play groups with which adults affiliate voluntarily. These groups are the foundation stones of our democracy. Their goals largely determine the goals of our society. (<http://infed.org/mobi/malcolm-knowles-informal-adult-education-self-direction-and-andragogy>)

So we come to the use of "transformative learning", which according to the theoretical inspirer Jack Mezirow (2007) "refers to a process by which we transform data reference frameworks (mental habits, antisense sets) so that they become more comprehensive, open, thoughtful and emotionally ready for change in order to produce new beliefs and opinions and be ready to take action". Mezirow concludes that transformative learning is not accidental learning. Instead, resulting from its participation in a fruitful dialogue built on the experience of others aims at new action and activation.

According to Mezirow transformative learning consists of 10 phases:

Phase 1 A disoriented dilemma

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

Phase 3 A critical assessment of epistemic, sociocultural or psychic assumptions

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

Phase 5 Exploration of options for new roles, relationships, and actions

Phase 6 Planning of a course of action

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

Phase 8 Provisional trying of new roles

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

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

It is obvious that this is not an easy process because it treats learning as a change from the inside. As Rogers (1998) states, each time you learn something new, that does not mean that a change occurs. On contrary to personal change, learning needs:

- a dynamic rather than a passive process,

-be personal, since only individual changes can be made in real learning and, finally,

-to be voluntary, not obligated to it, but to seek ourselves and we make ourselves on the way to discovery (Rogers 1998).

What is needed in order to say that we have changed through learning, is to bring substantial change not only to our knowledge but also to our skills and attitudes. Learning is a continuous process of change on thinking, feeling and activation. Constant repetition, constant stimulation and facilitation of an open learning process are required where all learners contribute as to bring social change and through this also personal change (Κόκκος 2005).

A first essential weapon for the adult educator against this "dynamic of the old" is to seek to recognize any short 'movement' and initially insignificant it may seem. This recognition is the foundation to build the further expansion. We owe it to ourselves and to our trainees that recognition (Τοδούλου 2011), one small step at a time that will allow each one provoke past experiences. Thus, transformative learning is a liberating process in which the adult trainer simply facilitates learners to raise awareness regarding autonomy of thinking, to activate for continuous trading and ultimately act reflectively against ideological and material forces affecting us.

The pursuit of modern education for active participation and engagement of learners in the learning process ensures adults self-action capabilities in thought and action, culture of accountability and ripening progress. The development of cognitive, social and moral autonomy in teaching adult learners in a class are items as important as getting the same information content in an educational environment, which in most cases is not homogeneous. Collective practices and attitudes developed support the role of Lifelong Learning Centres as centers with social target under the view that knowledge is a social construction, a rather accurate representation of reality (McCarthy/McMation 1995).

The implementation

The didactic implementation is achieved under the aforementioned theories and inspired by their common points, being combined harmoniously and even supplementary to one another, which recognize the potential for positive personal change of each one, while giving emphasis on learning through trainees' experience

and critical reflection, especially seen and indicated mostly in two teaching phases. This way the approach to teaching and learning German connects to wider lifewide struggles. We should also take the following into consideration: The fact that adult learners are members of the educational community with specific objectives that are part of professional or social life, and utilize their experiences as learning sources, have the capacity for active and self-directed learning and education. On the other side we should not omit the fact that at the same time and they have strong defense and waiver mechanisms, as indicated by Κόκκος (2005).

The purpose

We want to show that detailed lesson designs based on compiling learners' experiences and education transform the knowledge of the trainees and their attitude toward the foreign language, also pointing out the significance of the first and the last meeting. Furthermore, we want to show the way the transformation occurs and how it is presented and represented during the process of learning.

The target group of this lesson are adult male and female, high school graduates and/or university graduates, unemployed and/or employees, regardless of age, who attend the program. Main purpose of the program is to develop communication skills in oral and written German language so as to be able, after the completion of the program to:

- understand a routine, short and very simple questions, instructions, information and brief conversations,
- understand and say numbers, quantities, time and prices,
- complement simple personal information in various forms,
- present themselves during a conversation and answer simple questions about themselves,
- make everyday common questions and requests and respond accordingly in places such as shop, restaurant, cafeteria etc.

To construct the analytical unity content utilized both by the standards of the European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR) and particularly for German as a foreign language and of the findings of the investigation needs such as those resulting from the wording of the expectations of the trainees' group during the introductory meeting. The proficiency level of learners is A1 defined as "Basic knowledge of the foreign language." European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR) lists the following activities:

- Auditory Perception
- Visual Perception
- Oral production (Speaking)
- Written production (Writing)
- Oral interaction (chat)
- Written interaction (Conventional and e-mail)
- Oral mediation
- Written mediation

Valuable for structuring the detailed content of the module was the information obtained from the first introductory meeting with the trainees and involved the

educational level of the trainees, the reasons and motives for them to attend the program and their expectations from this. In these first two teaching hours were followed steps of "group configuration" (Τοδούλου 2011). The group has been seen as a dynamic "whole" so as to achieve the most effective function between the group members, create a positive environment and thus achieve the intended goals. The use of the experience and the emphasis on the positive ones are during this process important components in order to form a functional group. The group cooperation teaching dimension follows the position that the content and the teaching process in order to gain knowledge are on the same level of significance.

The students were divided into groups by the criterion of less intimacy. Initially in pairs, then in fours and in the final stage back to plenary for reflection and closure. The content of the conversation between them concerned an initial acquaintance and basically the exchange of experiences and expectations for the Program. The questions posed by the educator at this step were: "What brings me here today?" and "What are my expectations?" A high percentage of the group was faced with a disoriented dilemma towards the German language (regarding a negative attitude) at this first phase according to the transformative learning theory.

In addition they exchanged perceptions about factors or circumstances that helped to produce a positive climate in a group. This meeting aimed at further to "melt the ice", to familiarize team members with each other, to clarify the expectations of the group and the conclusion of a contract for the operation of the Group during the course (Mezirow's Phase 3 and Phase 4).

Finally were taken into account the available means and resources to implement the program set and frame flexibility within which the instructor was able to act. All the above made the trainees to have at this point more concrete expectations concerning the German language after their training (Phase 5).

The educational goals of the module are divided into objectives seeking to acquire knowledge, skills and objectives that seek to develop attitudes and are directly related to the lesson objectives and the structure of:

a) level of knowledge:

With the completion of the module the students are able to:

- understand the general meaning of a very simple text as well as individual messages expressed with simple words and grammatical structures, texts related to personal data, familiar everyday practice simple social situations and needs.
- Understand the main idea and identify specific information of short oral texts that are simply structured and short dialogues with high frequency vocabulary and standard phrases.
- respond to simple and directly asked questions about personal information and daily activities and listing events or acts by putting them in a certain order (such as time).

b) Skill level:

- To prepare a complete text message using simple sentences/proposals and vocabulary.
- Use the appropriate vocabulary and make dialogs to meet daily communication situations in speech.
- Read a text and/or a dialogue using the rules of voice and accent of the German language.
- To change details of phonemic system into writing.
- Use numbers, quantities, costs, simple directions and the concept of time.

c) To attitudes' level:

- Demystify "difficult" German as a foreign language and to feel comfortable in use it in everyday communicative situations.
- To adopt a positive attitude towards the German language and degrade any stereotypes.
- To mobilize people to seek other sources of obtaining information about German culture, as in the arts and cinema.

In the context of this module were used instructional techniques and methods that promote participation, teamwork and ownership. Also, emphasis was placed on experiences and prior knowledge of the group. Such techniques and methods include group work, exercises which enable peer- and self-assessment and formative assessment, brainstorming with construction of cognitive maps, dialogues in pairs, enriched presentation and experiential activities.

These educational techniques aim to achieve the active participation of learners in the learning process, the development of collaborative climate among members of the group, strengthening the ownership of learners, to activate and motivate learners searching different solutions to problems and exercises. Most important though by using these techniques supported by learners' experiences in the learning process is transformative learning. By the above mentioned alternative methods and techniques used learners get actively involved in different forms of dialogue with themselves, with the other and with the "foreign" by providing access to other ways of thinking, of being and interacting in the world.

Finally, the choice of educational techniques used within the module was based on the characteristics of the trainees' group combined with the knowledge, skills, attitudes and behaviors that are expected to develop. Furthermore those criteria taken into account activated the participation of learners covering the individual and collective needs. Important role in the choice of educational techniques played the available resources, the infrastructure and the available time both trainer and trainees had - according to the teaching hours set by the program and the individual time constraints of trainees, the specific period of the educational program. More specifically, the choice of educational techniques based on:

- The educational purpose and learning objectives of the module and the whole program.
- The educational level of the trainees and their potential learning needs.
- The particular characteristics of learners, their experiences and the overall relationship and attitude towards the subject.
- The educational experience and familiarity of the instructor in the use of specific educational techniques
- The time available for the implementation of the module
- The availability of resources and infrastructure

Presentation of the unit:

UNIT – COMMUNICATIVE TASK	METHODS AND TECHNIQUES	SKILLS
7. At the doctor's 7.1 Parts of the body	VIDEO WORKSHEET FLASHCARDS	LISTENING SPEAKING WRITING

	<p>GROUPWORK WHITEBOARD PAIRWORK – DIALOGUE ROLE PLAY DISCUSSION</p>	
--	--	--

This module was the content of the 11th meeting with the students. In order to activate students' concentration and to gain a first contact with the vocabulary they were shown a Video. At the same time they were given a Worksheet to complete -in second View- with basic information concerning the content of Video, matching exercises, true/false and multiple choice exercises. The results discussed in the group, in pairs and then in plenary. First activity, Duration: 25min, Video projector.

In the second activity it was requested by a student, as an artist, to design on the whiteboard two bodies as the instructor placed in the center of the board three coloured tags to identify the gender of the substantive with words-parts of the body. Having designed the objects on the board and having the tags in front of them they were asked to move one by one to the board and stuck the cards next to the corresponding part of the body which they consider it fitted.

This activity was followed by an evaluation plenary debate and vocal performance, in which the instructor asked the group to repeat after him the on board posted words one by one and to express in second time the words themselves whenever the trainer looked at one card. The second activity lasted 15 minutes.

After a 10-minute-break exploited from the Video phrases on board to the method of this paper to learn within the syntax and grammar of recognition the use and operation of the auxiliary verb-Modalverben in the sentence. Shared on relevant worksheet, which worked in pairs. The third activity lasted 15 minutes.

The last activity of the individual module aims to consolidate the new information with their use in a short written and spoken text production. Trainees get a worksheet in which they are being asked to work with their next order with the help of expressions given on it to draw up a short dialogue and then submit it to the plenary dramatized. The scene will be part of a visit to a doctor as they watched in the original Video. The trainees worked and presented the product of this cooperation to the Group. The duration of this last activity was 25 minutes.

The last ten minutes of the meeting was a reflection of the team for all the activities that preceded it. The instructor asked the students to talk about what they felt they learned and experienced during this two-hour-drawing as well as important feedback for selected activities, techniques and instruments was given in form of a plenary debate.

After having completed the training, the trainees commented on the development of their skills and on the grade of utility not only of the newly gained knowledge, but also of the methods. From the feedback that was attempted at the end revealed that the students learned the vocabulary of the unit and they felt that they could respond in a communicative situation related to the topics in the German language, which is noted in the presentation of their collaborative work during the last activity. They became more confident, they moved to the area exceeding initial hesitation, exchanged positive thoughts and feelings of joy for the experiential part of

the activities.

Feedback session is the session where the critical thinking of the trainees is mostly being developed. The trainees react and reflect on the subject of their training, in this case on developing their skills in learning German as a foreign language. They realize the power relationships between the “normal” and the “alternative” way of presenting new teaching materials. Reflecting critically on the way they have enriched their knowledge and the methods and practices in order to achieve this, this has a great effect on transformative learning. Learning in an intense reflective environment they are being automatically introduced to transformative learning theories and methods.

Both meetings, the first and the closing up meeting, open the transformative learning processes by using many forms of dialogue. Dialogue within and with the other is taking place by the moment that students are experiencing a self negotiation about intentions and purposes of their decisions and exchange their opinions with others during the introductory meeting. Also at the end of the lesson they actually realize the transformation occurred by having changed their attitude towards learning and experiencing a new language that is no more being seen as a foreign one.

Literature

Κόκκος, Α. (2005). Εκπαίδευση Ενηλίκων: Ανιχνεύοντας το Πεδίο. Αθήνα: Μεταίχμιο.

Mezirow, J. (2007). Μετασχηματίζουσα Μάθηση. Αθήνα: Μεταίχμιο

Τοδούλου, Μ. (2011). Αξιοποίηση του άξονα σχέσεων στο Διδακτικό Σχέδιο, Μείζον Πρόγραμμα Εκπαίδευσης, Αθήνα: Παιδαγωγικό Ινστιτούτο.

Jarvis, P. (2004). Συνεχιζόμενη Μάθηση και Κατάρτιση. Αθήνα: Μεταίχμιο.

Rogers, A. (1999). Η Εκπαίδευση Ενηλίκων. Αθήνα: Μεταίχμιο.

Dewey, J. (1938). Experience and Education. New York: Macmillan

Kearsley, G. (2010). Andragogy (M. Knowles). *The theory Into practice database*.

Retrieved from <http://tip.psychology.org>

McCarthy, S., McMation, S. (1995). From conversation to intention. In R. Hertz-Lazarowitz, N. Miller (eds), Interaction in cooperative learning. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Smith, M. K. (1996; 1999). 'Andragogy', *The encyclopaedia of informal education*. Retrieved from: <http://www.infed.org/lifelonglearning/b-andra.htm>

Smith, M. K. (2002) 'Malcolm Knowles, informal adult education, self-direction and anadragogy'.

The encyclopedia of informal education. Retrieved from: www.infed.org/thinkers/et-knowl.htm

Online

<http://www.adulteduc.gr/2015-02-21-07-48-45>

http://leanlearning.wikispaces.com/instructional_design

<http://infed.org/mobi/malcolm-knowles-informal-adult-education-self-direction-and-andragogy>

No Distractions!

The Possibility of Transformative Learning When We Engage Nature in Dialogue

Janet E Groen
University of Calgary

Abstract

This paper offers preliminary findings of retreatant experiences of dialoguing with nature whilst attending spiritual retreats primarily at the Ignatian Jesuit Retreat Centre, Guelph, Canada. Analysis of their experiences reveal that the transformative potential their experiences is based upon the intertwining of a retreatant's previous connection with nature, as well as the centre's level of engagement in offering programming in eco-spirituality.

Introduction

As I step onto this sacred place of retreat, it feels as if the ground under my feet is speaking to me. It is inviting me to slow down, to set-aside the outside distractions of my busy life, and to pay attention to what is offered right now; the wind moving through the trees, the rustling of the leaves, the squirrels rushing about, and the slowly setting sun. This is just a glimmer of the dialogic space that nature offers us, if we are willing to be present and to pay attention: no distractions! When we open ourselves up to the possibility of an intentional dialogue with nature, we also open ourselves up to the possibility of being transformed; of seeing ourselves not apart from nature, but deeply intertwined with and part of her. Indeed, a dialogue stance requires that we hold an I-Thou (Buber, 1970) stance with nature, as opposed to our harmful anthropocentric understanding of nature; an I-It (Buber, 1970) stance that “separates mind and body, subject and object, culture and nature, thoughts and things, values and facts, spirit and matter, human and nonhuman; a worldview that is dualistic, mechanistic, atomistic, anthropocentric” (Wilber, 2000, p. 20). One such place that offers the possibility of engaging in dialogue with nature is a spiritual retreat center, typically located within a beautiful natural setting.

In this study, funded by the Canadian Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council, I am exploring the role of religion, particularly Christianity, in cultivating environmental citizenship through their spiritual retreat centers; sites of adult learning owned and operated by many church affiliations. Specifically, do spiritual retreat centers, based upon a religious/spiritual orientation, cultivate a deeper environmental citizenship in their retreatants and in turn, what are the long-term outcomes in terms of individual and societal changes/benefits? I am particularly interested in these spiritual retreat centers as spaces of transformative learning because what is required of all of us, during this deepening environmental crisis, is a profound change in how we relate to our natural world. I align myself with scholars (e.g. Hithuizen, 2006, 2012; McFague, 2013) who have indicated when many fields of study, including religion, have devised their deepest and best solutions to our crisis, the over-riding conclusion is that this is fundamentally a spiritual problem that requires the changing of hearts and minds about our relationship to the earth so we begin to live differently.

For this paper, I present a small sample of findings of retreatant experiences of dialoguing with nature whilst attending spiritual retreats, primarily at the Ignatian Jesuit Retreat Centre, Guelph, Canada: in essence what happens when nothing stands between you and nature? What activities do retreatants engage in during a retreat and is there a dialogic engagement with the natural setting? If so, what does this engagement look like and is there a shift in one's relationship with nature? How is that experience translated into daily engagement with the environment after leaving the spiritual retreat centre? First, I offer a brief overview of the role religion and spirituality could play in shifting our relationship with the natural world, as well as a brief description of my theoretical frameworks: a model of environmental citizenship developed by Hungerford and Volk (1990) and extended by Hitzhusen (2006, 2012) and a transformative approach to learning informed by social-emancipatory and spiritual understandings (Taylor, 2008) of adult learning. I then narrow my focus to describe the Ignatian Jesuit Centre and how they have taken up a particular set of contemplative exercises, the Ignatian Spiritual Exercises, as a potential vehicle for transformative learning toward developing environmental awareness and collective environmental action and citizenship.

Theoretical Underpinnings

While the tradition of the spiritual retreat centre is centuries old, in recent years they have increased in number and have attracted a growing pool of retreatants, beyond those associated with religious orders. I believe this reflects a growing interest in religion and spirituality; confirmed by Bibby (2004), in tracking Canada's religious development over the past 30 years, who indicated, "the findings point to a religious and spiritual renaissance in Canada – new life added to old life, sometimes within religious groups but often outside" (p. 40). As Bibby referred to both 'religious' and 'spiritual', it is important to highlight the overlap and the differentiation between these two terms. Briefly, religion is based on both individual and collective relationships, belief systems and practices, while spirituality usually focuses on the individual and the quest for meaning and purpose, connection to a higher being and being interconnected with others and nature (Groen, Coholic, Graham, 2012). However, it is important to recognize that it is too simplistic to totally separate religion and spirituality into separate and distinct categories, as that is often not the reality for many of us: "rather some people express their spirituality through religious practice (i.e. in more formalized and institutional ways) and others through alternative means" (English, 2012, p. 18). As well, I also acknowledge the potential and important role that religion and faith based groups can assume in social justice causes (O'Sullivan, 1999) as evidenced through various adult education initiatives as Mondragon, the Antigonish movement and Frontier College (English, 2012). Therefore, this particular study narrows its gaze to nest individual spirituality, with a particular interest in the aspect that focuses upon our quest for an ongoing and deeply interconnected relationship with the natural world, within the confines of a particular religious setting: the religiously affiliated spiritual retreat centre.

As mentioned previously I am drawing on two key theoretical frameworks in this research study: a model of environmental citizenship developed by Hungerford and Volk (1990) and extended by Hitzhusen (2006, 2012) and a transformative approach to learning informed by social-emancipatory and spiritual understandings. Turning first to environmental citizenship, Hungerford and Volk (1990) recognized that, as learners, we move through phases of understanding about the environment, from initial awareness or sensitivity, to a basic understanding of the environment, on

to developing the motivation to acquire skills to solve environmental problems and finally the desire to actively engage in working toward solutions to the environmental crisis at an individual and possibly a societal level. Hungerford and Volk (1990) also suggested critical education components to foster environmental citizenship, such as teaching significant ecological concepts and providing opportunities to develop environmental sensitivity and citizenship skills. Utilizing Hungerford and Volk's (1990) model, Hitzhusen (2006, 2012) made a compelling case for the inclusion of religion and spiritual approaches to learning as we move through the stages beginning with environmental awareness onto engagement and finally activism; specifically arguing that drawing on a religiously and spiritually based sense of a moral imperative, calling, sacred awe and a position of love for the planet and for each other can be powerful and deep motivators for both personal change and contributions to societal change.

Transformative learning theory, the second component of this study's theoretical framework, then offers the needed process to help us support the deep change often required in developing environmental citizenship as proposed by Hitzhusen (2006, 2012). At a basic level, transformative learning has been conceptualized as; a shift in the way people see themselves in relation to the world around them (Clark, 1993). A pre-requisite to such a shift would be a new set of experiences that challenges people's experiences and assumptions. In this *case*, the learning that occurs in a natural setting at a spiritual retreat would be the experience. Environmental education scholars (Clover & Folleen, 1998; Crowe, 2013; Lange, 2012; O'Sullivan, Morrell, & Connor, 2002; Sterling, 2010) recognizing the need to cultivate deep change, have turned to a socio-emancipatory approach to transformative learning to create spaces of learning that not only encourage individual change (Mezirow, 1991, 2000), but also address societal structures of injustice in order to create "a more livable, just world" (Lange, 2009, p. 196); namely, environmental citizenship. In addition, as previously argued, transformative learning approaches undergirded by spirituality (Tisdell, 2003) would support Hitzhusen's (2006, 2012) spiritually based approach to environmental citizenship as it intentionally taps into holistic learning processes that explore how deeply interconnected we are with each other and to the natural world.

The Context

This 600-acre retreat centre is located on the edge of the City of Guelph in Southern Ontario, with Walmart and other big box stores pushing up against its southern boundary. Its origins go back to 1913 when Jesuits arrived to create a training centre for young men who wished to become Jesuits. While there was just a farmhouse on the property when they arrived, more housing and classrooms were built to accommodate the increasing demand for the training of Jesuits. At first the Jesuit brothers cultivated the surrounding farmland, but they eventually hired a farm manager to manage the complex 200-acre operation that involved dairy cattle, orchards and crops. Since the later part of the 20th century, the centre has contracted substantially in size and altered its farming practices. Specifically, the college building that was devoted to training Jesuits closed and the building is now leased to businesses that share the values of the centre, such as Wildlife Preservation Canada, The Ontario Beekeeping Association and an Outdoor Early Childhood Program. What remains is Loyola House, in operation since 1964, a centre that offers retreats based on Ignatian Spirituality (elaborated upon later) and training programs for spiritual directors. Turning to the land, over the past 20 years, the Ignatius Farm has

shifted their focus to become a model for organic agriculture and to mentor organic gardeners through several initiatives: renting garden plots so those in the nearby city of Guelph can grow organic produce; growing and distributing organic produce through a Community Shared Agriculture Program where individuals can pick up their portion of the produce on a weekly basis; and offering an internship program for those interested in organic gardening. As well, an ecological restoration initiative is devoted to restoring 100 acres of its land to an old growth forest. Finally, walking paths have been created that meander through the property, with chairs and benches placed in such a way as to invite retreatants to linger.

Retreats at Loyola house, mostly silent, are based on the Ignatian Spiritual exercises, which were developed by Ignatius Loyola, five centuries ago, and the Society of Jesus, otherwise known as the Jesuits. The exercises, practiced in much the same way they were half a millennial ago, involve four phases. Briefly, the first phase is a “time of reflection on our lives in light of God’s boundless love for us” (The spiritual exercises, n.d.). Time is spent reflecting on one’s life, seeing where God has been part of our life and where we have rejected God. During the second phase, the story of Christ on earth and his teachings is revisited in a quest to become closer to Christ. The third phase dwells in the suffering of Christ, culminating in his death. Finally, the fourth phase focuses on the resurrection story and the challenge to love Christ and serve him in concrete ways. During all phases, retreatants spend time in contemplation and meditation, with specific exercises given to them in a daily meeting with a spiritual director. They are encouraged to spend a significant portion of their time outside in nature.

Almost twenty years ago, John English, a Jesuit, and two members of the newly formed Ecology Project at the Centre, built upon these exercises to emphasize our connection to nature; in other words, greening the exercises. They believed that these exercises “can further our contemplative experience of Creation while addressing the underlying causes of the ecological crisis and in so doing, enable humans to act in a hope-filled, healing way” (Profit, 2004, p. 6). The development of these exercises signaled a larger shift that was going on at the centre, based on a deepening conviction that they needed to respond to the harm we were inflicting on the natural world. The Ecology Project was created and spear headed by Jim Profit, a former director of the Ignatian Centre who died in 2014, and it has now morphed into a focus on Eco-Spirituality.

Research Methodology and Design

A life history approach (Cole & Knowles, 2001, West, Alheit, Anderson & Merrill, 2007) was used to explore the experiences of retreatants; a particularly helpful approach as it situates retreatant experiences at a retreat centre within a holistic understanding of their broader life history. Specifically, how is environmental citizenship is interpreted and practiced within their daily lives, both before and after their experiences at a spiritual retreat centre. Life history assumes an “individual subject ... is constituted in a social context” (West et al, 2007, p. 14) and seeks to make sense of “personal, psychological and social experiences through life history” (Miller, 2007, p. 168).

I recruited retreatants who had participated in at least three retreats at the Ignatian Centre for a minimum of three to four days. I interviewed 8 voluntary retreatants from this particular centre, engaging each participant in the links between their spiritual story and environmental awareness and citizenship, (using Hungerford and Volk’s (1990) and Hitzhusen (2006, 2012) approach as a guide), prior to their

retreat experiences; their reflections on their experiences at the retreat centre and finally, the impact of these retreat experiences on their spiritual journey, their understanding of their place in the natural world and examples (if any) of environmental citizenship in their daily life. Interviews (60 to 90 minutes duration) with each volunteer participant typically took place via tele-conference or Skype. After interviews were audio-recorded and transcribed, participants had the opportunity to review their transcripts.

Data analysis of the life history interview transcripts extended throughout and beyond the collection of data. Initially, categories were developed based upon the identified topics (noted above) for the life history interviews, my research objectives and data that emerged from my field notes, while on-site at each centre. Moving beyond these initial categories, I then went deeper into the data to develop themes (Rossman & Rallis, 2003, p. 15). For this particular paper, I offer portraits and an analysis of the experiences of two retreatants who participated in retreats at the Ignatian Jesuit Centre: John and Francine.

Findings

Retreatant Profiles

John is a retired Protestant church minister who lives in Guelph. His love of nature has been a constant all his life, as evidenced by his ability to draw on multiple memories of being outdoors during his childhood. “I have very clear childhood memories of particularly being in a row boat or a sail boat and just particularly loving the wind”. John also indicated that these memories of a deep early connection with nature had been buried until intentional retreats became part of his life as an adult. “Then it flooded back, of going outside at nine or ten o’clock at night to go to the bathroom, and all I could see was the stars and I had this sense that whoever or whatever was responsible for those stars was responsible for me”. His association with the Ignatian Retreat Centre began several decades ago when he moved to Guelph. As he was seeking something different “there was something about their spirit that I couldn’t quite put my finger on, but I knew it was certainly not part of the United Church tradition “. One of the Jesuit priests invited him to come to the centre: “He asked me if I’d be willing to come for a morning or an afternoon, and he would reserve a bedroom in the Ignatius College ... so that’s when I started to do retreats. Obviously these were very short, just a few hours, but they were out in the country. I returned to my first love (nature) as a child.” He continued his retreat practice at the centre, expanding the length: “I did the Ignatian exercises, began doing yearly eight day silent retreats, which I still do and much of that time was both kind of an introspective kind of process, but it was also walking, walking the land”. While John has continued his eight-day silent retreat practice, he no longer conducts them at the centre. “I got fed up with being in a Roman Catholic Centre ... I think it fundamentally comes down to I just have enormous problems with all the authority being placed in a male figure.” Instead he returns to the cottage that he went to as a child, still within his family: “I discovered that I can be there on a holiday, but I can also be there in retreat and it’s the intention with which you take into the experience and it was as if I was returning to that land and that water that had provided those early childhood experiences of awe and wonder”.

Francine, also retired, did not have a strong connection with nature during her childhood. “My mother didn’t grow vegetables. We didn’t have plants in the house. All the emphasis was on church and school; it was all papers, it was all in the head ... I didn’t connect with nature or with the natural world. I cannot believe how separated

I was”. Francine was exposed to the Ignatian Centre during her adult years, attending a few weekend retreats, but the connection to nature was not apparent to her at that point. It was not until she was 40 years old and deep into her university Theology Studies that she “woke up to see that she had never really paid attention to the spiritual in the natural world at all”. She was invited to attend at weekend retreat at another retreat centre, The Holy Cross Centre for Ecology and Spirituality in Port Burwell, also located in Southern Ontario. Father Dunn, a professor of Moral Theology at the University of Toronto, also the director of this centre, had began exploring an emerging interest in the relationship between theology and its response to the ecological crisis, drawing significantly on the work of geologist Thomas Berry. She was succinct in describing how transformative this weekend was for her “I became a different person” and she became to deeply engage in the writings of Thomas Berry. In turn, she was somewhat frustrated with the retreats offered at the Ignatian Centre during the 1980s and 1990s, “well, I can see it was a really good retreat, but they didn’t give me enough cosmic, universal contexts ... scriptures have been around for a few thousand years. The universe has been around for billions of years and we need to realize that as our context.” She conceded that her ongoing retreat practice after her “Port Burwell experiences” were more intellectual until Jim Profit began to offer eco-spiritual retreats at the Ignatian Centre in 2000, pointing to one particular weekend retreat entitled *Spirituality in a Compost Heap* as an example. Francine has continued her connection with retreats and retreat centres in Windsor, where she now lives, offering one-day eco-spiritual retreats at a nearby small religious order. As well, in 2004, she and her husband helped found Elderberry Connection, a Christian Spirituality Group that organizes annual eco-spiritual retreats based primarily on the writings of Thomas Berry, mostly held at the Ignatian Centre.

Retreat Experiences

As I considered how John and Francine described their experiences of ‘being on retreat’, I could see a connection between the types of activities they each engaged in whilst on retreat with the level of their earlier childhood associations with nature. For John, already deeply interconnected with nature since childhood, I found his experiences, mostly solitary, reinforced this already existing strong association. His spiritual practices, well honed over several decades, no longer need the guidance of a retreat centre or spiritual director. “For the last two years at the Cottage I, when I get up I will do some sort of exercise, some kind of ritual to begin the day ... come back for breakfast and then get myself over to whatever, however the Spirit leads me. In the monastic tradition work is part of an ordered day so I might do some work, that might be reading work or it might be actual cutting some work or it might be making something”. For Francine, especially prior to her “Port Burwell” experience, she focused on the “classic Ignatian retreat”; meetings with her spiritual director and studying the scriptures. The beautiful setting of the Ignatian centre wasn’t central to her recollections of these experiences. It took a directed eco-spiritual retreat at another centre where she was asked, as part of the experience, to find something meaningful on the beach – in her case a piece of driftwood - to share in the circle of retreatants, to wake her up. It was a sudden transformation. “I woke up to see that I had never really paid attention to the spiritual in the natural world at all”. Since that particular retreat, she spoke about the importance of other directed retreats that had an eco-spiritual theme as offering helpful and ongoing support in nurturing her love of nature and her deepening realization of our interconnectedness with her.

Dialogue In and With Nature

When one goes on retreat, self-directed or led, typically a large portion of time is devoted to spending time on your own outdoors. When I asked what that was like, both John and Francine indicated how complex this experience was. Francine indicated that while nature evoked a sense of peace, it also unleashed things, both solicited and unsolicited, from within, that needed to be worked through. “Nature – it relaxes me, it lets me breathe, it gets me to return to the perspective that I know is the foundation for everything ... It was always a time away when I would journal or I might be dealing I’d be going through. Maybe after my mother died or considering a new direction about working freelance or whatever”. John elaborated on the hard work of dialogue in silent retreats. “There’s this inner conversation going on that, that is happening in a retreat setting, with other people or on your own ... they’re potentially scary”. In considering the link between this natural setting and the act of going of retreat, John suggested, “that’s a consequence of just being and noticing and taking your thoughts and intuition seriously”.

Out in the World

While John indicated that “the connection with the natural world has become for more direct and overt for me with all of these retreats”, I wanted to know the role these experiences in retreat – both at the Ignatian Centre and on his own – had in cultivating environmental citizenship. John stated that “they can be potentially be places of resurrection, places where one can come and see the sacredness of nature and have a new mind-set. Then they return home and realize that the air they breathe in their home and that is outside is as sacred as those retreat centres that they were just at, that’s the transformation that’s possible by going to these centres”. In his personal life, John has switched to renewable energy sources to heat his house and he walks and cycles in town. “Those kind of little decisions that get acted out every day because the retreat experiences have given a new glimmer of a new vision.” That new vision also includes involvement in local initiatives to protect the wildlife habitat. Francine also believed that retreat centres can unleash the possibility of cultivating environmental citizenship, but, mirroring her own experiences, she emphasized the need for overt programming. “If I was at a retreat centre and I felt this profound shifting inside of me, and I was given the facts, I have a feeling I would hear the facts beyond the head ... it is undergirded by the heart stance ... you can’t just impose behavior on people”. As she reflected on how she lives “they have changed my life and to a certain extent changed the way I do things, interact and how I run my home”. As she considered her involvement in the realm of more community engagement, she mentioned her own work, already mentioned, in offering eco-spiritual retreats, as well as her participation in the Catholic Organization for Development and Peace. “I was very happy when they moved to environmental concerns”.

Discussion

As I look at John and Francine’s journeys toward environmental citizenship and the role of dialogue with nature, through their retreat experiences, their stories diverge and the role of the retreat centre differs. John was already deeply interconnected with nature and his early experiences in retreat served to resurrect that sacred relationship that he already as a child. Indeed, as time went on, John was able to move into dialogue with nature without the support of a retreat centre; going on self-directed retreats at his cottage. In contrast, Francine, experienced a dramatic transformative learning experience when she was directed to pay attention to nature on an eco-

spirituality retreat. While she had engaged in numerous self-directed retreats at the Ignatian Centre and had likely walked the land, she really had not paid attention to what was around her. She needed a specific and direct invitation – go and find something on the beach that is meaningful to you – to wake her up to nature. Through the lens of transformative learning theory, this was a profound moment of disjuncture in her life and she moved into that the initial stage of environmental engagement referred to by Hithuizen (2006) – awe and appreciation of the sacredness of nature. She continued to learn about the environment, modeling fairly closely the progression toward environmental citizenship described by Hithuizen (2006) as she deepened her understanding of environmental issues and the role that faith and spirituality can play, particularly through the work of Thomas Berry, on her own and by ongoing engagement at eco-spiritual retreats.

As I return to the question - What happens when one dialogues with nature? – I see the possibility for transformative learning in changing our relationship with nature. However, the potential for such a change through a dialogue is wrapped up in our pre-existing relationship and experiences with nature. For centres of retreat, sensitive environmental adult education programming would need to discern when to step back and let the land speak for itself and when to step in and lead someone to a dialogue with nature. It is in the leading where there is tremendous possibility to play an important role in cultivating environmental citizenship.

References

- Bibby, R. (2004). *Restless gods: The renaissance of religion in Canada*. Toronto: Novalis.
- Buber, M. (1970). *I and thou*. New York: Scriber Classics
- Clark, M. (1993). Transformational learning. *New Directions for Adult and Continuing Education*, 57, 47-58.
- Clover, D.E., Follen, S. (2003). The nature of transformation: Developing a Learning resource for environmental adult education. In D.E. Clover (Ed.), *Global perspectives in environmental adult education*, pp. 193-213, New York: Peter Lang Publishing Inc.
- Clover, D. (2003). Environmental adult education: Critique and creativity in a globalizing world. *New Directions for Adult and Continuing Education*, 99, 5-15.
- Cole, A. & Knowles, G. (2001). *Lives in context: The art of life history research*. Walnut Creek CA: AltaMira Press.
- Crowe, J.L. (2013). Transforming environmental attitudes and behaviors through Eco-spirituality and religion. *International Electronic Journal of Environmental Education*, 3(1), 75-88.
- English, L. (2012) For whole purposes? Examining the spirituality agenda in adult education. In J. Groen, D. Coholic, & J. Graham, J. (Eds.) (2012). *Spirituality in education and social work: Theory, practice and pedagogies*. Pp. 17-33. Waterloo, ON: Wilfrid Laurier Press.
- Groen, J., Coholic, D. & Graham, J. (Eds.) (2012). *Spirituality in education and social work: Theory, practice and pedagogies*. Waterloo, ON: Wilfrid Laurier Press.
- Hitzhusen, G.E. (2006). Religion and environmental education: Building on common ground. *Canadian Journal of Environmental Education*, 11, 9-25.
- Hitzhusen, G.E. (2012). Going green and renewing life: Environmental education in

- faith
communities. *New Directions for Adult and Continuing Education*, 133, 35-44.
- Hungerford, H. R. & Volk, T. L. (1990). Changing learner behavior through environmental education. *Journal of Environmental Education*, 21(3), 8-21.
- Lange, E.A. (2012). Transforming transformative learning through sustainability And the new science. In P. Cranton & E.W. Taylor (Eds.), *The handbook of transformative learning: Theory, research, and practice*, (pp. 195-211), New Jersey: Jossey-Bass.
- McFague, S. (2013). *Blessed are the consumers: Climate change and the practice of restraint*. Minneapolis: Fortress Press
- Mezirow, J. (1991). *Transformative dimensions of adult learning*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.
- Mezirow J. & Associates (2000). *Learning as Transformation: Critical Perspectives*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.
- O'Sullivan, E. (1999). *Transformative learning: Educational vision for the 21st century*. New York: Zed Books, in association with the University Toronto Press.
- O'Sullivan, E., Morrell, A. & O'Connor, M. (2002). *Expanding the boundaries of transformative learning*. New York: Palgrave.
- Rossman, G. & Rallis, S. (2003). *Learning in the field: An introduction to qualitative research*, 2nd ed. Thousand Oaks: Sage Publications.
- Sterling, S. (2010). Learning for resilience, or the resilient learner? Towards a Necessary reconciliation in a paradigm of sustainable education. *Environmental Education Research*, (16), 5-6, 511-528.
- Taylor, E. (2008). Transformative learning theory. *New Directions for Adult and Continuing Education*, 3rd Update on Adult Learning Theory, 119, 5-16.
- Tisdell, E (2003). *Exploring spirituality and culture in adult and higher education*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.
- West, L., Alheit, P., Andersen, A.S. & Merrill B. (2007), *Using Biographical and Life History Approaches in the Study of Adult and Lifelong Learning: European Perspectives*. Frankfurt: Peter Lang.
- Wilber, (2000). *Sex, ecology, spirituality: The spirit of Evolution*. (2nd ed., revised). Boston: Shambala Publications.

In-between the Educator/Learner Role within the Context of Lifelong Learning: A qualitative study

Efthymiou Georgia & Panitsides A. Eugenia

Hellenic Open University

Abstract

The present article investigates the experience of the alternating educator/learner role within the lifelong learning context, through a qualitative study. Results have depicted that the specific experience triggered critical reflection, largely transforming many of the participants' perceptions regarding the roles of educator and trainee, as well as their professional practice.

Introduction

It is widely accepted that nowadays individuals are called to adapt to an ever-changing environment and balance between rapid technological advancement and obsolescence of knowledge, so as to be able to respond to the multiple roles they undertake during lifetime. According to Cross (1991:xxi), lifelong learning is not merely another privilege or right, but a necessity for all individuals regardless of age, in order to cope with the escalating changes occurring in the family, work environment and in society at large. Yet, in being self-reliant and able to respond to the growing complexity of the times, a lifelong learner should also be able to reflect critically on his/her assumptions, reassessing and redefining them (Mezirow, 2007).

Adult educators do not remain uninvolved in, or unaffected by these developments. On the contrary, encountered with constant challenges at professional or personal levels, they often find themselves in the role of a lifelong learner. Hence, according to Brookfield (1995), adult educators should embrace the chance to think critically on their beliefs and reassess their practice for fulfilling their demanding role while moving in-between the educator and the learner roles. On these premises, the present study attempts to investigate the experience of the alternating educator/learner role that adult educators often go through within the context of lifelong learning.

Educational practice and critical reflection

In the field of adult learning, the critical role of experience in the learning process has long been common ground among scholars (see Rogers, 1999; Jarvis, 2004; Merriam & Caffarella, 1991). Furthermore, it is widely agreed that making sense of and giving coherence to our experiences largely takes place through critical reflection, although other types of learning are not excluded (Papastamatis & Panitsides, 2014).

In the present study, the alternating educator/learner experience has been examined in the light of the theory of transformative learning (see Brookfield, 1995; Mezirow, 2007). Within this framework, critical reflection lies at a centre-point, considered crucial in inducing radical changes in learners' beliefs, as well as behavior (Van den Berg & Dichaba, 2013). However, to effectively respond to their multifaceted role and reinforce their trainees' emancipation, adult educators should first and foremost be able to reflect critically on their own assumptions.

Brookfield (1995, 1998) has thoroughly studied the impact of critical reflection on educational practice, emphasizing on its importance and its beneficial role in educators' practice. As he characteristically claimed, "*critically reflective practice is a process of inquiry involving practitioners in trying to discover, and research, the assumptions that frame how they work*" (Brookfield, 1998:197). Furthermore, regardless of their experience, educators should get insight into themselves as learners in order to derive meaning from their educational experiences and reinforce the process of self-reflection on their assumptions (Taylor, Marienau & Fiddler, n.d.). Along the same lines, Schön (1987) claimed that professional training should not be separated from practice, as it constitutes an inexhaustible source of learning, whilst professionals may resort to reflection, either in action or on action, whenever they are called to react creatively to unfamiliar situations (Schön, 1987).

Brookfield (1995) has further suggested that in their effort to reflect critically on their practice in order to improve their work, educators should take some distance and examine their practice through four lenses which offer a differentiated image of who they are and what they do. In his book "Becoming a critically Reflective Teacher" (1995:28-29) he defines these lenses as follows: a) their autobiographies as learners and educators, b) the "eyes" of their students, c) the experiences of their colleagues and d) the bibliographical sources. According to Brookfield (2006), examining classroom choices through these lenses keeps educators alert and increases the chances their actions to be grounded on assumptions that are valid and accurate, namely "informed". Furthermore, a critically reflective stance has the dynamic to reenergize their teaching and to develop awareness of things happening in the classroom that had previously escaped their notice (Brookfield, 2006:28).

The first lens of critical reflection, our autobiographies as learners and educators, focuses on the fact that the factors affecting educators' actions constitute a complex of memories and experiences, albeit rarely encountered in empirical studies (Brookfield, 1995:49). The autobiographies that make up the personal story of each educator are considered a valuable source of information about his/her educational practice. Nevertheless, in relevant research personal experience is dismissed as "*merely anecdotal*" and "*hopelessly subjective*" (Brookfield, 1995:31· Brookfield, 1998:198). Consulting our autobiographies as educators, however, is often the first step in the critical path, in order to gain awareness of the paradigmatic assumptions underpinning our work (Brookfield, 1995:29-30). Moreover, delving into our autobiographies as both educators and learners helps enter the role of the "other", observe an educator's practice from the other side and connect to what students are experiencing (Brookfield, 1995: 29). As Gagne (1971, cited in Brookfield, 1996:2) observed, "*every adult's stock of prior learning and experience coheres into a unique idiosyncratic mediatory mechanism through which new experiences and knowledge are filtered*". On these grounds, Brookfield (1995) has urged educators to enter the role of the "student" every now and then and to reflect critically on this experience.

It is thus evident that learning during adulthood is a powerful experience that substantially affects teaching, requiring further investigation. Despite the fact that in relative research there has been reference to teachers' assumptions and the influences on their teaching, studies on adult educators' views and perceptions, and specifically on the impact of the quite often alternating educator/learner role, are rather limited. The only study we identified, drawn upon in the present investigation, is that by Taylor (2003) who examined how prior school experiences of 16 practicing adult educators relate to their present beliefs about teaching adults. The main findings of this qualitative research revealed that (a) past positive teacher role-models mirror

participants' descriptions of ideal educators, as well as of themselves as educators, and (b) past experiences as students reflect their expectations from adult students. Actually, teaching beliefs of adult educators tend to be rooted in their school experiences as children or young adults. This fact, according to Taylor (2003), contradicts the assumption that teaching of adults differentiates from that of children. On these grounds, the purpose of the present study has been to delve into the experience of the alternating educator/learner role through recording the views of adult educators who took part as trainees in educational programs within the framework of lifelong learning, making use of the first scope described by Brookfield, that of critical reflection. Has this experience triggered critical reflection that raised participants' awareness of the paradigmatic assumptions underpinning their work? Has this experience brought about any transformation of their assumptions and/or their teaching practice? These are some indicative questions that guided our study. Our findings could motivate adult educators to incorporate critical reflection in their teaching practice and especially reflection on the experience of the alternating educator/learner role, as a powerful tool for reinforcing their teaching efficiency.

Methods & tools

Our research followed a qualitative approach, providing for in depth investigation of all aspects and perspectives through which people experience and perceive events (Bird & et al., 1993:320). Data were collected through semi-structured interviews, catering for the freedom and flexibility demanded in order to thoroughly examine the experience of the alternating roles, as well as to depict aspects or factors that had not been predicted (Cohen & et al., 2008; Faulkner & et al., 1999).

Participants were selected via purposeful sampling, namely through a deliberate selection based on ensuring the necessary information and easy access (Creswell, 2011:244). It should be noted, however, that a purposeful sample represents only itself and as a result findings cannot be generalized to larger populations (Cohen & et al., 2008: 170). In total, ten interviews were conducted with adult educators, who participated as trainees in educational programs within the framework of lifelong learning. More specifically, the sample consisted of five men and five women that came from a considerable different background regarding their field of studies, their experience as adult educators, as well as their experiences as adult learners. A pilot interview with one adult educator, not included in the sample, preceded data collection. The ten interviews were conducted from 01/03/2015 to 31/03/2015, ranging from 30 minutes to an hour and recorded upon participants' consent.

Interview data were transcribed and underwent content analysis, which enabled the identification of the various issues of interest, as well as the categorization and organization of the large amount of data (see Bird & et al., 1999). During the collection of data and before proceeding to the final analysis, a preliminary analysis took place with the aim to detect important points and bring to light common issues. Codification of primary data came next, during which the transcribed text was divided in smaller sections. Each of these sections formed a recoding unit and was either a single word or a set of words that conveyed a self-contained meaning, constituting, thus, a semantic unit. This unit, in turn, corresponds to a code. Similar codes were grouped together, while those related to an important notion formed the categories, which constitute the major concepts of the present study.

Results

Interviewees were asked to reflect critically on their experience of both as learners

and educators within the framework of lifelong learning. In this section we present the major findings by research question, based on the thematic units and the different aspects that were identified while processing the data.

1) Which are the reasons that force adult educators to participate in educational programs in the context of lifelong learning?

All participants agreed that the main reason is to “**update knowledge**”, underlining that this has actually become a necessity given the rapid rate of advancement at all levels. At the same time, they pointed out a number of other crucial factors, such as the impetus to “**increase qualifications**” and to “**pursue personal development and improvement**”. In some cases they are motivated “**clearly by personal interest**” in a field, or by an effort to get “**new ideas for their work**” so as to avoid “falling into a monotonous routine”. Furthermore, some participants view it as an opportunity “**to socialize**”, while others as “**a necessity of the job market**”. As I1 has characteristically mentioned:

I1: *“lifelong learning has by necessity become a way of life...things tend to be a bit uncertain, that is what we do today may never be put into practice, we may even change our professional orientation”.*

What is more, I10, driven by the need for constant learning, expressed a different aspect, considering participation in educational programs “**something like an addiction**”:

I10: *“I think that all this is an addiction...I don’t doubt that, on the one hand, it is my choice; I don’t know to what extend it really is my choice and based on free will or to what extend the present situation has brought me to the point of believing it is my choice”.*

2) How did participants experience the alternating of educator/learner role and to what extend did they reflect critically on it?

In order to delve into the educator/learner experience, it was examined through two lenses, both from the stance of an adult educator and an adult learner. When attending the educational process from the “other side”, the side of the learner, the first emotional response of participants in the study seems to vary from positive to mixed or even to negative. Here are some indicative quotes:

I1: *“I felt joy, as if there hadn’t been a long time since when I was a student myself”*

I5: *“is it a waste of time?”*

I8: *“an anxiety to learn, or an anxiety to see how this will turn out”*

I9: *“from the very beginning I liked this role”*

An important point referred by all participants is the fact that they compare themselves as an adult educator to the educator they have in front of them and reflect critically on their own practice. They characteristically reported:

I4: *“of course this is something that happens on both a conscious and an unconscious level...you think ‘What would I have done in his place?’ “*

I5: *“I always do this...it is normal to place yourself in and out of the role”*

I10: *“how I could have done things and what I do not like about the educator;”*

Thus, comparison with the adult educator appeared to be in a way inevitable, occurring as a natural consequence of the alternating roles. The points of focus in this comparison are “**to what extend the basic principles of adult learning are observed**”, the “**teaching methods/techniques**” used, the “**proficiency of knowledge in the relative field of study**”, “**how safe one feels in the role of the educator**”, the “**consistency between words and actions**” and “**to what extend the experiences of**

the learners are valued". Another noteworthy aspect pointed out by I8 is "**the attitude towards 'the different'**", observing whether "*the educator accepts disagreement as a valuable contribution by the group or results into an argument*".

The comparison of participants as adult learners to past memories as students, however, was not often reported. A number of the interviewees stated clearly that they do not interconnect these two experiences, as "**they are not comparable**", claiming that "**they have gained a strong theoretical background by now**" or that "**learning in adulthood overrides learning in childhood**". Therefore, they don't enter a comparison process:

I2: "*the feeling was not the same like when I was a student*"

I5: "*I have obtained a theoretical orientation by now and I know why I am doing what I am doing, and I do not try to find what my trainer did*"

On the contrary, I9 mentioned that comparison always takes place, accompanied by negative feelings, usually when "**the trainer's approach is teacher-centered**":

I9: "*it always depends on the educator; when he behaves in a teacher-centered manner, he makes me feel as a school girl and this is always negatively loaded*"

Some more points that were illuminated through this kind of comparison are the following: "**as a student, I sought for knowledge, while as an adult learner I seek for meta-knowledge**", "**in the past it used to be something we had to do, while now it is a conscious choice**", "**as an adult one has to be involved more energetically and critically**" and "**demands are raised**". Essentially, one of the main effects of the alternating roles for interviewees was the fact that they practically realized some of the characteristics of adult learners, which differentiate them from underage learners. Some relative quotes are the following:

I1: "*when I was a student, it was a chore that was imposed on me...now you demand more from the educator*"

I3: "*now you want to get the knowledge, not just the degree*"

Only one participant mentioned that he compared himself as an adult learner to his experience as a university student, basically due to the teacher-centered approach used. He did not connect this experience, however, to his expectations from trainees today.

As regards the second lens, interviewees' role as adult educators, what was highlighted by all participants is their conscious attempt to reflect critically on their practice. They claimed that this is something that happens on a constant basis offering useful information that can be used to reassess their work, when necessary. As I1 highlighted, "*you may change your views on the spot, which means you need to be flexible*". The critical examination of the teaching practice may take place in three steps: **before teaching**, in order to get adequately prepared having taken into consideration the particularities and needs of the trainees, **during teaching** and when **the teaching process is over**. As the participants reported:

I5: "*to me the most important part is the preparation and this consumes most of my time*"

I7: "*when you see that the trainees participate actively...this is the main criterion of evaluation of the whole procedure*"

I8: "*the first thing I check when I am done with something, is the feeling I have inside; if it is a "heavy" feeling, I believe that something went wrong*"

As already highlighted, in moments of crisis or embarrassment, participants did not report to recall past memories as students in order to react, except for one interviewee whose experience as an adult educator was quite limited. The majority of the interviewees claimed that in such cases, they refer to a "**tactics reservoir**" built

through the experience they have accumulated both as trainers and as adult learners.

I5: *“I recur to my own previous experience as a learner...to my general experience in various environments”*

I7: *“when you have faced such incidents once or twice, you gain experience, so in the following years, namely now, I resort to similar experiences in case something happens”*

I10: *“I did not seek into the past; it was just that every experience developed a tactic, so I did not refer to a specific example. Instead, with the continuously growing experience as an educator, I constantly reassessed my views...in this way, I had built a bank of tactics”*

The interviewees also reported that they tend to consult **“colleagues they appreciate”**, as in the case of I3 who referred to *“you call a colleague and ask whether he has faced a similar incident and how he has dealt with it”*, or they **“resort to theory”**.

Furthermore, respondents defined a set of factors considered to affect their way of teaching, the most important of which are: **“other adult educators whose classes they have attended”**, **“the experience accumulated through time”**, **“the personal effort for improvement”**, **“the theoretical background”**, **“colleagues they think highly of”**, **“the characteristics and experiences of the trainees”**, as well as **“the biological maturity”**. The determining role of experience is evident in the following statements:

I1: *“I believe that experience affects the way you evaluate people you have met and have been your trainers...this also impacts how you act as a trainer...this is an evolving process, not something fixed”*

I8: *“numerous small moments that sum up and make every one of us who he is”*

Finally, the participants were asked to identify the characteristics of the educators that formed positive role-models or models to avoid, as well as the basic traits that, in their opinion, a good adult educator should have. Among the characteristics related to negative role-models were the use of teacher-centered methods, bitterness and tendency to punish, injustice, authority and lack of respect towards different opinions. Conversely, educators who had a good sense of humor, were fair, created a sense of security and inspired trust, allowed for different voices to be heard and were not authoritarian, were classified as positive role-models. It should be mentioned though that, although in general the characteristics attributed to the educators who were considered positive models coincided with the traits of the good adult educator, such identification was not observed in the answers that the same interviewee provided on these two issues. That is, some of the traits related to the positive educator role model were not mentioned by the same interviewee as traits of the good adult educator.

3) To what extent has the experience of alternating educator/learner role transformed participants' assumptions regarding the two roles and their practice as adult educators?

The majority of respondents reported that moving in between these two roles has been determinant for transforming their assumptions. Only two of the interviewees stated that their assumptions could not be transformed as they have not yet built a firm view about the role of the adult educator. They felt that their self-concept as adult educators was still under formation. One of them stated with regards to the role of the adult learner:

I4: *“I have not cancelled anything; instead, little by little I created the image of the trainee and attempted to adjust to it as a trainer”*

The way participants perceived that their ‘student’ experience has affected their role as educators is related to the following points: they realized that the role of the adult educator “**is finally more difficult**” and “**it is different compared to what they initially thought**”. In addition, it helped them admit that “**the educator is a learner himself**”. The following extracts are typical of such perceptions:

I6: “*after all these years at school, we had formed a very specific view on the process of learning and education in general...however; both as a educator and as a learner you can see that adult learning is quite different*”

I8: “*in the past I used to believe that the boundaries between the ‘transmitter’ and the ‘receiver’ were quite clear... however we all have to learn something*”

Getting into the learner shoes, participants’ beliefs changed in that they now recognize that learners “**should be active in the learning process**”, “**they should take into consideration the obstacles they will probably need to face**”, it is necessary that “**their cultural background is recognized and respected**” and that “**an adult learner’s role is more demanding than they had previously thought**”. Moreover, some interviewees noted that their assumptions were initially influenced by their professional experience in secondary education “**confusing adult learners with students**”. For instance, I10 mentioned:

“*as a learner in lifelong learning I realized that the adult learner differs from the student at school with its simplistic power relationships between teachers and students; ...the educator is not an authority*”

In addition, it was pointed out that the experience of the alternating roles contributed to “**accepting diversity more easily**” and to “**facing the educational process more responsibly**”. Precisely, I9 claimed that:

“*as an adult learner myself, I became more tolerant towards other views, towards diversity*”

It was further noted that the alternating roles actually transformed their way of teaching, with changes ranging from “**the utilization of more active techniques**” to “**providing more freedom of expression to their learners**”. Furthermore, it was reported that they now “**take into consideration the specific characteristics of the learners**” and “**aim at individualized instruction**” utilizing “**their personal experiences a lot more than in the past**”. In their own words:

I6: “*in the beginning we enter a classroom and think that all the teaching is done by us...in time we realize that our role may even be secondary*”

I8: “*my anxiety to provide with a great amount of information has been reduced; now I just follow the flow more easily*”

I5: “*now my attitude towards people depends on who they are, while earlier they all seemed the same...I just had to follow the curriculum*”

Finally, some of the interviewees acknowledged that the experience of the alternating roles resulted in “**feeling more confident towards the learners**” and in “**developing a detailed learning contract**”.

4) Has the experience of the alternating roles had a positive effect on the work of adult educators?

All participants admitted that they gained considerable benefits through the alternating roles, highlighting the importance of the experience and highly suggesting that all colleagues should occasionally go through it. The following extracts are indicative:

I1: “*Yes...I believe I haven’t got out of the learner role...but I am in a constant training in one way or the other*”

I3: *“Yes, it has definitely helped me; I am not sure whether it helped me more as a trainer or as a trainee”*

The participants also considered this experience as extremely crucial for the **“efficiency of the work of an adult educator”**:

I4: *“passing from the role of the learner to the role of the educator makes you a better educator”*

I5: *“it allows you to view things from a different perspective and this is of paramount importance for one’s professional development”*

Moreover, it was highlighted that **“both the educator and the learner learn from each other”**, implying that the two roles are mutually supported:

I2: *“you can never claim that you have reached a point where you are only a trainer”*

I8: *“the role of the trainer and the trainee go together; if they are detached, there is something going wrong”*

In effect, some interviewees reported that only through the alternation of roles can the educator **“understand the needs of the learners better”**, as well as **“become aware that his role does not constitute an authority”**.

Discussion & conclusions

Based on the perceived views of participants in the study, our results have revealed that the alternating educator/learner roles, as experienced by interviewees, actually provided an incentive for critical reflection and had a positive influence on their work. All participants acknowledged that within the contemporary context the constant update of knowledge and skills has become a mandate for all individuals and professionals, including themselves. This is in line with Jarvis (2009), who claims that, due to the rapid rate of changes taking place in society, learning is but a continuous lifelong and life-wide process. Interviewees stressed that they actually participate in educational programs having specific targets, such as their personal and professional development and improvement of their status (see Kokkos, 2005a·2005b). An interesting remark by a participant was that the repeated involvement in the learner role has become *“something like an addiction”*, which confirms Cross’s (1991: 15) assumption that the more training individuals receive, the more they seek to participate in educational processes.

Interviewees’ first emotions when they entered the learner role were reported to range from positive to negative or partly positive, or partly negative. According to Brookfield (1995), facing a learner’s anxieties and fears is something extremely important for the educator, as it is something that we usually forget when we become more experienced. Hence, the alternation of the roles can increase empathy, so that educators will better understand learners’ needs. Our findings suggest that the experience of the alternating roles has indeed enabled educators to come in contact with different perspectives, to exercise self-criticism and to reflect on their practices as they continuously evolve.

As Schön (1987) posits, professional practice constitutes a valuable source of learning. Actually, all participants in our study stated that they highly benefited from the alternating roles, that they compared themselves to their adult educators and that they gained a better understanding of learners’ needs. In addition, they reported that they intend to continue attending educational programs and strongly suggested that their colleagues should do the same. This comes in line with Brookfield (1995), stressing that it is through critical reflection on their autobiographies that educators may gain significant benefits and reinforce their work.

Finally, there has been identified some divergence between the characteristics of the

educators that served as positive role-models and the characteristics reported to be prerequisite for an effective adult educator. This however needs to be further investigated, as it contradicts Taylor's (2003) findings, according to which, positive teacher models from school experiences are reflected in educators' descriptions of the ideal educator and in the way they behave as learners themselves.

Interviewees also appeared to perceive their adult educator role as a non authoritarian one and to acknowledge that they also learn from their learners. This is aligned with Freire's (2006) work, supporting that modesty, the notion of non authority and respect to the learners' cultural background are some major traits of a good "teacher".

It should be noted though that there were several significant limitations to the present exploratory study, due to the purposeful sampling and the subjectivity of the data. As a consequence, our results cannot be generalized, but are meaningful only for the specific sample, as they reflect the views expressed by the specific participants at the given time. It would be interesting to investigate at a later time whether critical reflection was further incorporated in the practice of the adult educators who participated at the survey.

References

- Bird, M., Hammersley, M., Gomm, R. & Woods, P. (1999). *Εκπαιδευτική Έρευνα στην Πράξη. Εγχειρίδιο Μελέτης*. Πάτρα: ΕΑΠ
- Brookfield, S.D. (1995). *Becoming a Critically Reflective Teacher*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass
- Brookfield, S.D. (1996). *Understanding and facilitating adult learning: a comprehensive analysis of principles and effective practices*. Buckingham: Open University Press.
- Brookfield, S.D. (1998). Critically Reflective Practice. *The Journal of Continuing Education in the Health Professions*, 18, 197–205.
- Brookfield, S.D. (2006). *The skillful Teacher: on technique, trust, and responsiveness in the classroom*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.
- Cohen, L., Manion, L. & Morrison, K. (2008). *Μεθοδολογία εκπαιδευτικής έρευνας*. Αθήνα: Μεταίχμιο.
- Creswell, J.W. (2011). *Η έρευνα στην εκπαίδευση. Σχεδιασμός, Διεξαγωγή και αξιολόγηση της ποσοτικής και ποιοτικής έρευνας*. Αθήνα: εκδόσεις ίων.
- Cross, P. (1991). *Adults as Learners. Increasing Participation and Facilitating Learning*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass
- Faulkner, D., Swann, J., Baker, S., Bird, M. & Carty, J. (1999). *Εξέλιξη του παιδιού στο κοινωνικό περιβάλλον – Εγχειρίδιο Μεθοδολογίας*. Πάτρα: ΕΑΠ
- Freire, P. (2006). *Δέκα επιστολές προς εκείνους που τολμούν να διδάσκουν*. Αθήνα : Επίκεντρο.
- Jarvis, P. (2004). *Συνεχιζόμενη εκπαίδευση και κατάρτιση. Θεωρία και πράξη*. Αθήνα: Μεταίχμιο.
- Κόκκος, Α. (2005α). *Μεθοδολογία Εκπαίδευσης Ενηλίκων. Τόμος Α: Θεωρητικό Πλαίσιο και Προϋποθέσεις Μάθησης*. Πάτρα: Ελληνικό Ανοικτό Πανεπιστήμιο.
- Κόκκος, Α. (2005β). *Εκπαίδευση Ενηλίκων: Ανιχνεύοντας το πεδίο*. Αθήνα: Μεταίχμιο.
- Merriam, S.B. & Caffarella, R.S (1991). *Learning in Adulthood: A comprehensive guide*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.
- Mezirow, J. (2007). *Η μετασχηματίζουσα μάθηση*. Αθήνα: Μεταίχμιο.
- Papastamatis A. & Panitsides, E.A. (2014). Transformative learning: Advocating for a

- holistic approach. *Review of European Studies*, 6(4), 74-81.
- Rogers, A. (1999). *Η Εκπαίδευση Ενηλίκων*. Αθήνα: Μεταίχμιο.
- Schön, D. A. (1987). *Educating the Reflective Practitioner. Toward a New Design for Teaching and Learning in the Professions*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass
- Taylor, E. (2003). The relationship between the prior school lives of adult educators and their beliefs about teaching adults. *International Journal of Lifelong Education*, 22(1), 59-77.
- Taylor, K. Marienau, C. & Fiddler, M. (n.d.). Developing Adult Learners. *Εκπαίδευση Ενηλίκων*, 26, 42-45.
- Van den Berg, G. & Dichaba, M. (2013). Real-Life Experiences during Teaching and Learning: Three South African Teachers' Narratives. *Mediterranean Journal of Social Sciences*, 4(3), 471-478.

Promoting transformative learning at the intersections between formal and informal learning: the case of the virtual Communities of Practices

Romano Alessandra, Stollo Maria Rosaria, Maura Striano

University of Naples “Federico II”, Department of Humanities

Abstract:

This paper describes the pilot and descriptive study on the processes of learning and of knowledge construction occurring within the virtual community of practices. The aim of the research is to discuss the idea of the potential transformative impact of virtual community of practices on university programs.

Introduction

All cognitive processes should be understood as contextually situated, deeply determined by time constraints, distributed because they are co-determined by factors, environmental resources and tools. Their products in terms of (tangible and intangible) support resources are deposited in external environments, in order to use them to support further cognitive processes.

This paper describes a research on learning processes and knowledge construction occurring in on-line groups within the university contexts. The aim of the research is to discuss the idea of the potential transformative impact of virtual community of practices on university students. The study explores strengths and weaknesses linked to educational practice that support the situated, constructed, relationally tacit, and distributed knowledge that constitute the on-line groups. Theories that support this research focus on *community of practice* (CoP) (Lave & Wenger, 1991; Wenger, 1998) and *transformative learning* (TL) as articulated by Cranton (2006), Marsick and Watkins (1999), and Mezirow (1991, 2000). In this framework, the construct of CoP represents: (1) an interpretative scheme to describe the situated nature of the learning that the on-line interactions are able to produce and, at the same time, (2) a methodological device which outlines the possibility to promote, develop and cultivate VCoPs. The focus on the situativity emphasizes a markedly social dimension of the learning and opens the opportunity to promote educational interventions interested in supporting the local dynamics of learning, wherever they happen. The on-line devices are virtual intersections between formal and informal learning. According to Wenger (1998), «We all belong to CoPs. At home, at work, at school, in our hobbies –we belong to several CoPs at any given time. And the CoPs to which we belong change over the course of our lives. In fact, the CoPs are everywhere» (1998, p. 6).

1. Conceptual Framework

As revealed in advance, the theoretical underpinnings that legitimate this research refer to the constructs of community of practice (CoP) (Lave & Wenger, 1991;

Wenger, 1998) and of transformative learning (TL) as articulated by Cranton (2006), Marsick and Watkins (1999), and Mezirow (1991, 2000, 2003).

Wenger, McDermott & Snyder define the CoPs as «groups of people who share a concern, a set of problems, or a passion about a topic, and who deepen their knowledge and expertise in this area by interacting on an ongoing basis» (2002, p. 4). So far, learning has been characterized in terms of the uptake of information or the development of mental structures through interaction in the environment and the development of ideas through interaction with more knowledgeable others or developing ideas conjointly with others. More recently the notion of learning has been taken to include participation in and becoming part of a community. A community of practice (Lave & Wenger, 1991; Wenger, 1998) occurs when people jointly engage socially in a common enterprise or activity, and through this learn together.

Communities of practice can arise in a variety of ways, including taking part in everyday life. However, in the above respect ‘community’ is more than working proximity, or an organised group for a given purpose; its social fabric develops over time around things that matter so that it is possible to gain a sense of trust and belonging. Through this, a community of practice develops a ‘shared repertoire’ of resources, such as vocabulary, routines, understandings and artefacts, over an extended period. Rather than being an individual pursuit or academic exercise largely confined to the classroom, learning is ‘situated’ within the framework provided by the community of practice through which participation can take place. Through this learning can be acquired incidentally rather than intentionally.

The virtual community of practice is thematized as a system characterized by an inherent capability of learning and its members as epistemic subjects who develop knowledge and activity systems functional to deal with the open-endedness of the situations in which they move. In the age of Web 2.0, users not only receive knowledge online but also create and transmit contents. A VCoP is such an online community for like-minded individuals in geographically dispersed areas. A VCoP is an emergent online community where students in academia share and seek knowledge related to their practice. In accordance with the characteristics of a conventional community of practice, it is a place where a rich shared repertoire community identity (i.e., common interest, theme, organization) and individual member identity (i.e., moderators, experts) are developed through social interactions. Different from online commonplaces, a VCoP is as much a space for knowledge creation as for knowledge sharing. VCoPs are particularly celebrated for the generation and dissemination of tacit knowledge.

Virtual communities of practice (VCoPs) are defined as «online social networks in which people with common interests, goals, or practices interact to share information and knowledge, and engage in social interactions» (Chiu, Hsu & Wang, 2006, p. 1873). Traditional VCoPs organize knowledge into themes. Topics are grouped together into a theme hierarchy. Posts and their threads on similar topics are organized in chronological order. Members typically browse the theme hierarchy, identify the theme of interest, find an interesting topic, and follow its threads. Alternatively, a member may search with keywords to find interesting posts or directly delve into a topic that is promoted to the front page because of its quality or recency. Internet forum technology is the typical underlying technology that provides all these functionalities for VCoPs. Because members of a common interest are drawn together

by topics, such a community can be regarded as a theme-oriented community.

A further hermeneutical key that allows the enrichment of the educational perspective learning and knowledge processes in the virtual communities of practices is traceable in transformative learning theory as articulated by Cranton (2006), Marsick & Watkins (1999), and Mezirow (1991, 2000, 2003). This theory describes how adult learners, struggling with critical passages of existence, may help themselves to overcome the constraints on learning that occurred during childhood through a transformative experience. In other words, the authors investigate how adults construct meaning systems through elaboration processes of their own experiences. The transformative theory is a constructivist theory of adult learning: it outlines a perspective that emphasizes the centrality of a critical-reflective thinking able to validate the ways in which individuals interpret and symbolize the experiences that characterize them. The focus is on what happens in the apical events of the existence and on the possible connections between adult life and disorienting dilemmas that may mark this course. «Perspective transformation can occur either through accretion of transformed meaning schemes resulting from a series of dilemmas or in response to an external imposed epochal dilemma such as a death, illness, separation or divorce, children leaving home, being passed over for promotion or gaining a promotion, failing an important examination, or retirement. A disorienting dilemma that begins the process of transformation also can result from an eye-opening discussion, book, poem, or painting or from efforts to understand a different culture with customs that contradict our own previously accepted presuppositions» (Mezirow, 1991, p.168).

The need to connect the human issues around online, text-based communication, the teaching issues associated, was a significant part of the impetus to create a new research framework to investigate educationally important issues around all educational media. Garrison, Anderson and Archer (2010) described the experience of conducting higher education using online communications media. The Community of Inquiry framework they adopted was characterized by Social Presence, Cognitive Presence, and Teaching Presence. It is important to emphasize that this framework emerged in the specific context of computer conferencing in higher education—i.e., asynchronous, text-based group discussions—rather than from a traditional distance education theoretical perspective assumed that students worked independently from each other. The CoI framework is generic in that it is conceptually grounded in theories of teaching and learning in higher education: «it has been stated that the two constituting notions of community and inquiry form a pragmatic organizing framework of sustainable principles and processes for the purpose of guiding online educational practice» (Garrison, Anderson, Archer, 2010, p. 6).

2. Collaborative and Cooperative Learning in virtual community of practices

An environment that allows interactive dynamics between the group members, which contribute to increase knowledge for everyone, promotes a collaborative learning process in the sense that it is based on shared experiences, identifying traded practices and mutual help. Collaboration and learning interactions can occur, at or around or in relation to the computer. However, these can also occur through computers (Crook, 1994).

Collaborative learning is substantially teamwork to reach a common goal and can be seen as overcoming the behaviorist view according to which learning is an individual activity. Collaborative learning moves from the traditional model of the

information transmission, to that learning means to be able to gain knowledge and objectively measurable skills, to a communicative-dialogical model of learning, for which social and cultural learning is focused more on the subjective will to follow a customized knowledge route and to engage oneself in paths of creation and joint development of meanings. The conversation, confrontation, debate and discussion among students, peers, colleagues, experts or professors allow a significant learning, a deep understanding and help to develop problem solving strategies, to consider different opinions, explaining to others own his/her in order to build knowledge together. Collaboration is a philosophy of interaction and personal lifestyle where individuals are responsible for their actions, including learning and respect the abilities and contributions of their peers; cooperation is a structure of interaction designed to facilitate the accomplishment of a specific end product or goal through people working together in groups.

Cooperative learning, otherwise, is defined by a set of processes which help people interact together in order to accomplish a specific goal or develop a final product, which is usually, content specific. It is more directive than a collaborative system of governance and closely controlled by the teacher. The fundamental approach is teacher centered whereas collaborative learning is more student centered. The structural approach to cooperative learning is based on the creation, analysis and systematic application of structures, or content-free ways of organizing social interaction in the classroom.

The ‘places’ of learning (Striano, 1999) can not be considered only physical locations, but should be also virtual spaces: the adjective virtual refers to the mind as an extended place of learning, and to formal, non-formal and informal educational settings. In the era of the cyber-culture, widespread during the first decade of the twenty-first century, there was a multifaceted extension of the human mind, thanks to chips and networks systems. In many educational institutions participation in learning could occur through digital networks such as virtual learning environments (VLEs) and the Internet. In our research, virtual community of practices can act as a forum for reciprocal teaching or peer collaboration; learners can help each other to solve a problem more effectively than if they had worked alone.

3. The research on virtual community of practices

The study explores strengths and weaknesses linked to trajectories of educational practice that support the situated, constructed, relationally, tacit, and distributed knowledge that constitute the virtual community of practices in a digital environment. This is a pilot and descriptive empirical study, whose interest is to propose the basis for the investigation of a model of the processes of transformation that happened in the virtual community of practices.

The On-Line groups are schematized as systems characterized by an inherent capability of learning: their members, students and the administrator, who works as facilitator of the on-line interactions and exchanges, are epistemic subjects who develop knowledge to deal with the open-endedness of the situations through which they move. The On-line groups evolved from an existing semester course on learning processes that explored theory and practice, analyzed strategies, and considered opportunities and challenges in the field of adult education. Participants are 80 Bachelors’ Degree students in Psychological Sciences and Techniques at University of Naples “Federico II”: their on-line community is a constellation of dimensions,

concerning the meanings that people attribute to the daily experiences in which they participate, the practices of construction and reproduction of activity systems in which they are involved and the reflexivity processes that are promoted in person and virtually. Exploring the virtual community through these constructs solicits to bring into focus a constellation of dimensions, concerning the meanings that persons attribute to virtual life, the daily experiences in which they participate, the practices of construction and reproduction of activity systems in which they are involved and the reflexivity processes that are backed (or less) within this community. The virtual community activities lasts for four months and at least once per week the facilitator posts questions-stimuli on the group page.

Merriam and Bierema (2014) point to a continued gap in the literature regarding transformative learning in on-line environment. We share Cranton's (2006, p. 8) view that transformative learning online can be fostered as it is in other contexts, «through meaningful interactions among learners in which people feel free to express divergent points of view and feel supported and challenged by their peers and their teacher». Garrison and Kanuka (2004) argues that a source of transformation in learning «stems from the ability of online learners to be both together and apart—and to be connected to a community of learners anytime, anywhere, without being time, place or situation bound» (p.96).

Assuming that virtual groups respond to the criteria of the VCoPs, it is interesting to take into consideration the indications that this perspective provides on how learning occurs and on what is needed to do for promoting it in reference to formal and informal learning experiences. VCoPs leverage various information technologies for knowledge sharing, including blogs, wikis, forums, chat rooms, and question-and-answer systems. In our study, we use a typical technological infrastructure of VCoP, such as Facebook groups as forum, whereby content is organized into topics, and topics comprise threads that include posts and discussions raised by these posts. Members typically post information to a suitable thread, and other members can respond to or comment on the post.

We adopt a structured questionnaires with multiple choices of answers in order to understand the perception of the experience of taking part to the virtual community of practice in participants. The value of such a device lies in its ability to pose stimuli-questions where participants can feel free to interrogate the implicit and explicit epistemic structures underlying their practices, to deconstruct and reconstruct, to produce forms of knowledge and meanings that can be recognized as a framework common and expendable for new actions taken critically and responsibly. The purpose is to put people in a position to recognize their problems, to define them as objects, to question and experiment with possible changes with respect to themselves, that is, to contribute to developing participants' reflective identity.

The questionnaires has open-ended answers and is divided into four sections: in the first sections, the items explores the individual perceptions of the virtual community of practices, asking people if they had experienced before the tool of the virtual community of practice and which features this tool has. In the first sections are explored also the educational potentialities of the instrument, the interdependence between personal reflection and shared discourse, the critical questioning of beliefs and assumptions, the social presence for creating a secure environment for critical discourse, and the teaching presence that bridges these worlds effectively. Our

hypothesis is that increased interactivity that can exist in online groups structured as virtual community of practices points to greater potential of creating transformative learning experiences of the students. The second section of the questionnaire interrogates the role and the impact of the group within the virtual community of practice, while the third section investigates the mechanisms that emerge thanks to the participation to the virtual community, the connections between formal and informal learning, eliciting metacognitive skills in people who respond it.

The fourth section of the questionnaire looks into the weaknesses and the strength points of the virtual community of practice, inviting participants to express what they would like to change for the future virtual communities.

The adoption of the questionnaire allows, through processes of metaphorical creating, access to assumptions and worldviews otherwise hidden (Hoggan, Simpson, Stuckey, 2009). The use of such device inspires the ability to trace the daily routines, the emotional tonalities, the interaction modes, that characterizes the social acts of the participants. Using metaphors makes possible a gradual approach to explicit models, but particularly to implicit models, subtended to the ways in which people involved perceived, understood and interpreted their own virtual environment experiences.

Two key concepts, then, may be drawn from the idea of a community of practice: learning as situated and learning as participation. Those characteristics are present also in our virtual community of practices, where learners participate in the social practices of the community, have the opportunities to develop enquiry and learning skills and to create the dialogue to facilitate learning.

In our experience of the virtual community of practices, knowledge creation and exchange are identified as hallmarks of VCoPs. During specific sessions, generally after the in presence classes, typical knowledge creation activities in VCoPs include writing initial and creative posts and providing constructive comments to a discussion. Knowledge exchange typically occurs in the form of question-and-answer. Another typical form is post-and-comment. An initial post is often detailed, and a comment is often brief. The knowledge exchange process is also a part of the knowledge creation process. The discussion among members, including approvals and disapprovals, manifests a knowledge co-creation process that is beyond individual creativity.

In our experiential virtual sessions, with social networking support, a friend list makes an easy entry for a VCoP member to find and consult her friends: the member can read a friend's posts in one place and be informed of new posts from the friend, becoming easier to know a friend's expertise in a topic area, and one can show support for friends to strengthen interpersonal relationship.

The model of e-education proposed by Jung and Rha (2004) can fit with the framework approach that undergoes the virtual community of practices. We can use this model in order to stress how during the development and the evolution of the virtual community of practices a process of transformation occurs. Jung and Rha (2004) considered learner-centred, interactive and experiential e-learning and proposed that extended learning space was needed for three essential learning activities: acquisition, application, and construction.

1. Acquisition: in the extended learning space, learners can acquire knowledge,

information and skills through a vast repository of multimedia resources available on the Web.

2. Application: the learners, individually or collaboratively, plan and carry out research, manage projects, and solve problems using digital tools and resources. In our virtual community of practices, connected to others, learners' ideas, knowledge and findings can travel beyond the confines of their classes for resolution, confirmation and application. Throughout this process, the participants apply previously learned ideas and methods to new areas, critically examine sources and evidence, develop hypotheses, make judgments, and arrive at conclusions with broaden perspectives.

3. Construction: the extended learning space of the virtual community of practices enables the learners to work in teams, to create original ideas, products and processes, to identify trends and predict possibilities.

4. Between mirroring and virtuality: VCoP participants' story

The reflections that the participants formulated in respect to the virtual community experience show that learning process considered most relevant occurred in relation to seeing themselves in a context that legitimized questioning processes that are able to unlock the imagination to meaning prospects more inclusive, discriminating, open, permeable and reflective.

The reflection and critical-dialectical discourse are the conditions that allow involved actors to (begin to) explain, recognize and validate the perspectives and schemes of meaning underlying their actions and to gain awareness about the tacit structures of their knowledge. Participants take on a function of critical mirror that allow them to try to recognize and rediscover themselves through the eyes of the other.

Of the original 80 participants to the virtual community, just 20 responded to the questionnaire. Here following there are their answers.

The first question is 1.1. *Before the experience have you ever experienced the Virtual Community of Practice as an educational tool?*. 20% (N=4) of the participants answered Yes, while 80% (N=16) answered Never. For the Item 1.2 *Which are the characteristics of the Virtual Community of Practices?*, participants recognize those elements:

1. Sense of belonging to the group
2. Shared and mutual knowledge and exchange
3. Interactions and reciprocity
4. Active participation and collaboration
5. Group working
6. Confidence into the community
7. Learning by doing

8. Educational and transformative aims

One participant says: *Virtual Communities of Practices and learning are social groups with the aim of producing organized and high quality knowledge, to which each member has free access. In these communities, individuals aim for a continuous learning through awareness of their own and others' knowledge.* Another participant adds: *A Virtual Community of Practices must initially be a heterogeneous group that is formed for the achievement of an objective, which usually concerns the production (of an artifact, a task, a cultural product etc.). The VCoP is thus a kind of new living beings environment that tends to perfection and autonomy thanks to synchronous operation of each member and their exchanges of informations. [...] The need for recognition of each individual member allows to better know each other until they see them as partners regarding a specific practice.* Participants confirm the idea that the virtual world, and specifically the virtual learning environment, can evoke profounder forms of learning, and at the same time can reinforce the group dynamics that facilitate the process of questioning personal prior assumptions.

About the third item, I.3. *How did you connect the formal/ non-formal/informal learning testing the Virtual Community of Practices?*, all participants answer that they connect their formal and informal learning *Through group situations, through pedagogical laboratory, in which alternate moments of lectures in presence to virtual interaction and mutual exchanges, and moments of reflection in which we find the actual items that emerge from our works, that in the experimentation of Virtual Community of practices they understand how the border among three three areas of learning (formal, non-formal and informal) can be thin and malleable: the knowledge that one is to set up in these areas constitute the knowledge of the individual. And all knowledge is always in connection with other forms of knowledge. These connections have been made apparent from the virtual knowledge construction.*

All of them agree to indicate as common thread the lived experience: they say that it is thanks to the experience that they can connect and put in circulation their formal, non-formal and informal knowledge. Virtual Community of practices, according to participants, preserve the experiential dimension, even if it is mediated by technological devices. In this case, the prior knowledge and acquisitions are broaden thanks to the belonging to the virtual community of practices, *Knowledge, although initially thought static, becomes more and more connected to other cognitions. Thanks to the groupal work my cultural background has been enriched by comparisons, experiences, thoughts etc ... which helped to make me more open-minded.* Starting from this scenario, it is possible to recognize in the virtual world shared stories of learning characterized by an evolution and by the construction of knowledge, where the relationship between participants is bound by a previous story and open to future stories. The virtual communities of practices, at least in the early steps of their development, are the outcome of the encounter between learning styles that each participant developed through his/her original story of learning. Habits, value horizons, beliefs and expectations, more or less consciously, pass through each member of the nucleus.

For the promotion of an experience of transformative learning within the contexts of the virtual community of practices, it seems to be necessary the dialogue, the reflection and the mutual authentic listening, which can be riched also in an on-line learning environment. *I think it is essential listening and being predisposed to it.*

Instead in my virtual community, as well as I feel at ease, I felt just the desire to speak and express myself and at the same time the desire to listen to my colleagues. Further element of important value is respect for others, avoiding each instance to prevaricate, openness and mutual interests to understand the others. This consideration is shared by all participants to the virtual community of practice that answer to the open-answers questionnaire.

The repertory of the Virtual community of practices is consisting of sharing the same laboratory experiences, the same age and the same degree, the same languages and the same academic program. Those components facilitate the identification process with the other members of the virtual community, and also the process of critical reflection. Thanks to the virtual community of practices, people unveil the implicit community of practices in which are daily involved, like family, friendship, social networks: they acquire, or maybe they reinforce their ability to learn other's viewpoints, putting in questions their ones, the impact of social roles also in virtual contexts (who is the leader, who is the communicative leader and who is the task leader, who posts more contents on the platform, who tries to carry out the interactional exchange). They improve their metacognitive knowledge about their learning processes, according to the competence of learning to learn established by the guidelines for the lifelong learning drawn out from the European Community, but they foster also their intersubjective metacognitive skills, understanding how other members learn and which are their weaknesses and their strenghtnesses.

About the relationship between formal and informal learning, participants state that informal learning is a practical knowledge that should be integrated with formal learning, which is directed to a global holistic individual formation, and which is sort of *learning from and by the experience*. The sessions of the virtual community is not free from difficulties and hard moments: *The session into the virtual Community of Practice, at first, was not easy: the experience was new and no one seemed to be ready to share and to build new experiences based on shared participation. Subsequently, the dialogue has become increasingly easy and automatic, based on listening to the other and the sharing of knowledge.*

No one of the group acknowledges that the virtual dimension can be an obstacle for promoting critical thinking in the virtual community of practices. Furthermore, even if in digital on-line environments, the members of the virtual community feel very strong the facilitation of the group, to the extent that they say that *without a group, it is not possible to have the community, also a virtual community, and that the group create the conditions for processing a personal thought about the task, for collaborative and cooperative learning, for exchange and for the development of empathetic resonances among people.*

The community is the space to create connections, links between formal and informal learning, to support self-disclosure and to share not only knowledge contents but personal memories, experiences, emotions, and feelings .

What about the transformative dimension of learning within the contexts of the virtual community of practices? *Surely the experience of the virtual community of practices allows you to develop a transformative process of formation, as it allows you to explore an issue and to arrive at a proposal for a solution. It also allows you to be in the process and to develop thoughts on their thoughts.*

Without the virtual community of practice, students would work alone by themselves, they would never be confronted with others' perspectives on the same topic, maybe they would understand and learn less, however, something in the process of learning by the experience would be lost. All people agree in telling that their perspectives of meaning would never be open and broaden as they are thanks to the session of the virtual community of practices. Some of them (25%, 5 people) say that they understand really what means the community of practices theory thanks to the experimentation of the virtual community of practices.

Participants compare the experience of taking part to the virtual community of practices to interactive and positive learning processes focused on the group belonging and on the collaborative learning: *the virtual community of practice is like a set of drops of water that form a river flowing to the sea ... the river needs the participation of all the drops of water to achieve the common goal, the achievement of openness and freedom from the riverbanks into the sea.*

Also the virtual community made me understand what a group is, a dynamic system subjects affect and influence each other in a dialectical process that tends to bring the community and the practices lead in it more and more towards autonomy and evolution.

Virtual communities repertory is characterized by critical events or disorienting dilemmas -using the Mezirow language- that may be expected and predictable or unpredictable and unexpected. The critical aspect of the event resides in the fact that it is open to uncertainty, calls for a change and throws up new objectives that may either promote development or constitute an obstacle and a blockage for the community growth.

Within this framework, the transformative paradigm pushes us to wonder how the learning processes in virtual community systems -in their multi-contextual connections and compared to the dimensions of change- may facilitate or hinder transformative trajectories. The interest, by an educational viewpoint, is focused on the development of training devices able to accompany growth processes involving virtual formal educational contexts. In particular, the work done helps learners gain insight into their life experiences, engages learners in critical reflection on fundamental assumptions, values, beliefs and world views and supports dialogue within oneself and with others.

We can say that the virtual community of practices creates a virtual space for making all participants to the community itself, even if the most part of the participants refuse to reply to the questionnaire. What happened for those people? Did they have a process of transformation? Are they resisting against the instrument, which can be implemented, or against the virtual community of practices itself? Our hypothesis, based on the answers of the other 20 participants, is that they could be involved in the repertory and in the operative task and goal of the virtual community of practices until they were involved also in the class in presence. Once finished the class, they began to drop out of it.

Conclusion

This paper presents the first outcomes of the testing study with the virtual community

of practices. Those outcomes should be considered as trial for adjusting the virtual sessions for the virtual community of practices, but we would like to offer an opportunity to reflect about on-line digital contexts and transformative learning. How can we modulate virtual environments in order to create the conditions for promoting transformative learning? Which are the needed characteristics of the virtual community of practices? And specifically, how and where can we apply those laboratory sessions for creating the dialogical conditions for questioning prior assumptions in formal and informal learning processes? The outcomes we find for the answers to the questionnaire suggest that all people who respond to the questionnaire are enthusiastic participants of the virtual community of practices, who describe the process of questioning of their learning processes but also of their perspectives about collaborative and cooperative learning. This reminds us the first two criteria of the transformative learning. Our proposal could be the beginning for creating, testing and validating a quantitative tool to assess participants' level of change and transformation thanks to the virtual community of practices, but also to formalize a model of interaction processes within the virtual community of practices in which we can recognize the steps of the transformative learning. The analysis of the communicative exchanges among participants, posted on the wall of the virtual community, shows the process of questioning prior assumptions and of opening mind psychological, sociolinguistic and epistemological perspectives to renovate and more inclusive ones.

We would like to elicit the dialogue and the reflection of the scientific research community on TL about the new Web 3.0 dialogical applications to the didactic contexts. Transformative learning theory, in fact, is a social constructivistic theory of situated learning, and we can not anymore ignore the spread and the omnipresence in our life and in our learning contexts of the digital technologies.

So, we could question our prior and maybe traditional way of conceiving the experiential session for creating the opportunity to live a transformative learning experience, in order to understand how can we facilitate and manage process of transformation in mind perspectives thought and by and in digital virtual communities.

Our findings should be interpreted with the limitations of the study. First, this study focuses on the quality of knowledge exchange and of participants' perception for the virtual community of practices. The limitation is the lack of a robustness check with other time spans and with other samples of participants. The sample size is too small for statistical analysis.

Would the integration of VCoP benefit knowledge exchange in the community within formal and informal contexts? This study provides an answer to these questions, suggesting that social networking support will enhance knowledge exchange in VCoP and empirically confirm the effect of enhancing social capitals in VCoP, providing a rationale for the adoption of the virtual community of practice model in promoting transformative learning.

References

- Chiu, C. M., Hsu, M. H., Wang, Eric T. G. (2006). Understanding Knowledge Sharing in Virtual Communities: An Integration of Social Capital and Social Cognitive Theories. *Decision Support Systems* (42:3), 2006, pp. 1872-1888.

- Cranton, P. (2006). *Understanding and Promoting transformative learning: A guide for educators of adults* (2nd ed.). San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.
- Cranton, P. & Taylor, E.W. (2012). Transformative learning theory: Seeking a more unified theory. In E.W. Taylor, P. Cranton and Associates, *The Handbook of Transformative Learning*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.
- Crook, C.K. (1994). *Computers and the collaborative experience of learning*. London: Routledge.
- Garrison, D.R., Anderson, T., Archer, W. (2010). The first decade of the community of inquiry framework: A retrospective. *Internet and Higher Education*, 13, 5-9.
- Garrison, D.R. & Kanuka, H. (2004). Blended learning: Uncovering its transformative potential in higher education. *The Internet and Higher Education*, 7(2), 95-105.
- Hoggan, C., Simpson, S., Stuckey, H. (Eds) (2009). *Creative Expression in Transformative Learning: Tools and Techniques for Educators of Adults*. Malabar, FL: Krieger.
- Jung, I.S. & Rha, I. (2004). *Distance education*. Seoul: Educational Science Publications.
- Lave J., Wenger E. (1991). *Situated learning: Legitimate Peripheral Participation*. Cambridge, MA: Cambridge University Press.
- Marsick, V. J., & Watkins, K. E. (1999). *Facilitating learning organizations: Making learning count*, England: Gower.
- Merriam, S.B., & Bierema, L.L. (2014). *Adult learning: Linking theory and practice*. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.
- Mezirow, J. (1991). *Transformative dimensions of adult learning*. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.
- Mezirow, J. & Associates (Eds) (2000). *Learning as Transformation: Critical Perspectives on a Theory in Process*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.
- Mezirow, J. (2003). Transformative learning as discourse, *Journal of Transformative Education*, 1 (1), 58-63.
- Striano, M. (1999). *I tempi ed i luoghi dell'apprendere. Processi di apprendimento e contesti di formazione*. Napoli: Liguori Editore.
- Wenger, E. (1998), *Communities of Practice, Learning, Meaning and Identity*, Cambridge, MA: Cambridge University Press.
- Wenger, E., McDermott, R.A., Snyder, W.M. (2002). *Cultivating Communities of Practice: A Guide to Managing Knowledge*. Boston, MA: Harvard Business School Press.

Critical reflection and dialogue on student teachers' practicum

Natassa Raikou

Teaching Staff, UP & Tutor, HOU

Niki Liodaki

Preschool Teacher & PhD Candidate

Thanassis Karalis

Associate Professor

Department of Educational Science and Early Childhood Education, University of Patras

Abstract

According to the findings of our research, one of the basic factors that empower transformation in student teachers' education is the interaction between the student teacher and others (colleagues, professor, and children) on practicum. In this paper we attempt to study this interaction, focusing on dialogue.

The present paper is based on a series of researches that were applied in the Department of Educational Science and Early Childhood Education of the University of Patras in Greece. The analysis and processing of each research led to the next research, focusing each time on the findings and conclusions that emerged. The first research took place in 2011 and focused on the exploration of transformative learning and educational activities that lead to perspective transformation. The second and the third research took place in 2015 and 2016 respectively and were held in the framework of students' practicum. As detailed below with the presentation of the most important points of each research, the interaction and dialogue emerge as crucial points of critical reflection and, furthermore, on perspective transformation.

First research: Student teachers and perspective transformation

This work is an expansion of the research that was conducted in 2011 (Liodaki & Karalis, 2013, 2013a). The aim of Liodaki & Karalis (2013, 2013a) was to explore the perspective transformation and the educational experiences involving students as well as identify which of those had contributed to their perspective transformation. The research involved 417 undergraduate (3rd and 4th year of study) and graduate students from the Department of Educational Sciences and Early Childhood Education at the University of Patras, Greece. Out of students, 96.6% were women and 3.4% were men, 48.9% were under 21 years, 38.1% were between 21 and 24 years of age, 7.2% were between 25 and 29.

The research was census-type with a response rate of 91.6%. For the data collection the tools used were the Learning Activity Survey (LAS) and interviews developed by King (2009). The survey explored the educational experiences which contribute to perspective transformation. Especially, LAS can help the adult educators to identify

the perspective transformation and also to encourage the learning towards this direction (King, 2009). LAS has been rated as a valid research tool by many studies (Bradshaw, 2008; Brock, 2007; Gliszinski, 2005; Handron, n.d; Harrison, 2008; Kitchenham, 2005, LaCava, 2002; Lemma, n.d; Wansick, 2007; as cited in King, 2009). Additionally, interviews give more information and were supplementary to the questionnaire.

In the 2011 research, first we explored whether and how many of the students who attended the department of Educational Sciences and Early Childhood Education experienced perspective transformation and which educational experiences contributed to that fact. Following a part of this research is presented and especially the findings that refer to learning activities in which students participate more frequently during their studies as well as those which influence their perspective transformation.

As we mentioned above, students initially chose (from a list) the learning activities in which they participated during their studies. "Term papers/essays" (51.1%), "class activities/ exercises" carried out (64.5%), "practicum or co-op" (57.3%), "the support of a classmate" and "lab experiences" (58%) accumulated the highest percentage. The following percentages regard the "verbally discussion of concerns and interests" (46.2%) and "assigned readings" (48.2%). In contrast, the lowest percentage gathered: "challenge from a teacher" (13.9%) and activities that regard "the support from all the classmates" (13.4%).

, Learning activities in which students participated and, influenced their perspective transformation were the "class activity/exercise", "practicum or co-op" (43.6%) and "class/group projects" (40.6%). At this point we should highlight the fact that according to the students who participated in the interviews, learning activities such as "activities or exercises" and "projects" are considered part of practicum. Thus, the real percentage of students who were influenced from the context of practicum may be higher than the 43.6% shown from quantitative analysis.

Practicum and interaction

The results of qualitative research showed that students prefer to participate more in learning activities based in experiential learning (e.g. practicum). During the preparation and the design of learning activities which occurred in the context of practicum or co-op, student teachers have the opportunity to interact with the other members by working in small groups. Within the team, students can exchange ideas, and they can either contradict with their frames of references, or they can validate them. In particular, this kind of interaction helps develop them both as individuals and as future professionals. As Cranton (2006) claimed, the support of the team is a very important factor for the perspective transformation.

In addition, in the context of the practicum, students utilize the accumulated knowledge gained from the theoretical classes and feel more responsible as professionals by designing and implementing a daily school program. All of the students that refer to the practicum or co-op as a transformative experience claimed that they changed their views and perceptions regarding their role as teachers.

Although "the verbally discussion of concerns and interests" gathered 37.5% in the quantitative research, the results from the interviews showed that discussion is a part of all learning activities. Dialogue either in a formal or informal form within the

educational process, seems to take an important role and affect the visual transformation of students.

Additionally, lower percentages were gathered by learning activities such as: "lab experiences", (34.5%), "deep- concentrated thought", (21.8%), "personal reflection", (28.5%), "personal learning assessment" (22.5%), "assigned readings" (27%), "term papers/essays" (20.3%), "personal journal"(3%), "nontraditional structure of a course" (35.3%), "self-evaluation in a course" (18.79%).

Based on the findings of the 2011 research, it was considered appropriate to explore more extensively the interaction and dialogue (particularly the forms of dialogue that influence the students' transformation) developed in the context of practicum during the design and implementation of activities in practicum. For that reason, we designed and applied the next two researches that were held in the frame of students' practicum.

Practicum and teacher education constitutes an integral part of teacher education in many countries. According to literature, student teachers gain knowledge concerning children's learning and development and they are familiarized with the nature of curriculum and subject-based approaches. Furthermore, they develop communication skills and they learn how to manage classroom behavior, time and materials. They are also trained on designing educational activities and implementing teaching strategies. But above all, they are encouraged to practice assessment and reflection.

Practicum can help students teachers understand educational processes and develop the ability to reflect and use research skills in order to trace a wider range of factors that affect the pedagogical context and educational practice. Reflection is considered necessary not only to help student teachers realize the connection between theoretical frameworks, certain practices and results of teaching practice but even more importantly it may strengthen the examination of personal assumptions related to certain issues and the planning of future actions that will change and improve teaching (Raikou, 2012; 2014a; 2014b; 2016).

The Department of Educational Science and Early Childhood Education of the University of Patras in Greece offers a series of courses and teaching experience in public kindergartens (2nd, 3rd, 4th year of studies). During practicum, the importance and usefulness of reflection are pointed out and student teachers are encouraged to reflect on their practice using written reports. The main objective of these reports is to evaluate their points of views on practicum or even their pedagogical assumptions.

The analysis of these reports gives us useful results on the level of reflection among student teachers. The core element of this analysis is the emergence of the factors that influence and foster self-reflection procedures during practicum. The utilization of this research is vital not only for improving and upgrading the practicum and teacher education, but mainly for cultivating a supporting environment for student teachers to become reflective teachers.

Second research: The role of practicum

Students who had completed one year of practicum in a school were given reflection sheets in 2015, in order to investigate the effect of specific factors that facilitated and contributed to their critical reflection. The reflection sheets were completed by 178 students. The first question concerned whether or not the students reflected on the meaning of their studies during their practicum. Almost all the students answered

positively, regarding practicum (165 students: percentage 93.8%), while only 11 students reported that practicum did not function as a spark to reflect on the meaning of their studies.

Afterwards, four aspects of rethinking were given, that is to say four factors on which their reflection was focused: the role of the teacher, the relationship between schoolteachers and students, the relationship between classmates and the connection between theory and practice – with the possibility to choose all factors if applicable. From the students that answered positively, most focused on the role of the teacher (106 answers), as well as on the connection between theory and practice (102). The relationship between schoolteachers and students (90) also proved to be an important issue for reflection, while the relationship between classmates was not selected by a large number of students (46).

From the processing of answers it resulted that practicum functioned as an incentive in order to reflect on their choice to work in the future as preschool teachers, with most students declaring that their choice was vindicated. Regarding the connection of theory to practice, the significant variations between what they had learned in the theoretical courses and their experience in school was underlined.

Afterwards, seven factors were selected in order to determine the effect of practicum on reviewing decisions and behavior as well as on the general meaning the students attribute to their studies. These factors were: the interaction with the in-service teacher of the kindergarten where practicum took place, the interaction with classmates that worked together in practicum, the interaction with the children in the kindergarten, the contact with certain professors of the Department, the experience in the kindergarten, the relevant course of practicum that was taught in the Department and finally the particular activities that they implemented with the kindergarten children. The students were asked to rank the above factors, marking with 1 the factor with the highest effect and with 7 the factor that affected the least. The results of this research are presented in the Tables 1 and 2 (It is noted that not all factors were selected by all the students; in some cases they only selected the first two or three choices).

Table 1: Influence of factors for reflection on choices relevant to practicum

Factor	Ranking of choices						
	1 st	2 nd	3 rd	4 th	5 th	6 th	7 th
Interaction with in-service teacher	25	27	27	26	24	15	8
Interaction with classmate(s)	6	13	31	23	27	28	11
Interaction with children in school	64	45	25	18	7	5	0
Contact with professors	5	8	13	11	22	24	49

Experience in school	51	38	26	17	12	10	3
Course	15	19	18	30	29	26	5
Specific learning activities	12	10	11	16	13	22	47

As we can observe in Table 2, the factors that are presented most as first and second choice are the interaction with the children in the school (64 recordings as first choice and 45 as second) and the total experience of practicum (51 and 38 recordings respectively). The same factors present only a few recordings as last choices (that is to say in the 6th and 7th choice). An important factor is also the interaction with in-service teachers at school, while it should be pointed out that the relevant course in the Department and the contact with the professors do not result as a considerable influence for the reflection of students' decisions and behavior during practicum. It is obvious from the above mentioned data that the kindergarten and the experience in this educational area, as an element of one community of practice, affect the students to a large extent and constitutes the main incentive for reflection during practicum, acquiring autonomy in comparison to theory that is taught during their studies in the Department (Karalis, 2010; Karalis, Sotiropoulos, & Kampeza, 2007).

Table 2: Influence of factors for reflection on choices relevant to studies

Factor	Ranking of choices						
	1 st	2 nd	3 rd	4 th	5 th	6 th	7 th
Interaction with in-service teacher	22	22	26	30	27	19	5
Interaction with classmate(s)	2	7	24	31	31	25	11
Interaction with children in school	69	45	28	5	6	6	5
Contact with professors	9	7	8	12	18	26	47
Experience in school	51	54	21	16	7	4	2
Course	17	24	20	23	24	24	5
Specific learning activities	4	9	17	18	17	22	46

Similar is the ranking of factors for reflection on the meaning of studies. However, we

believe that certain differentiations should be highlighted. The experience of contact with the workplace, thus the kindergarten environment, has a slightly higher effect regarding the students' reflection on their studies, while the same also happens with the course of practicum.

The findings of the 2nd research urged us to further explore the interaction between student teachers and others, as well as their thoughts on the validity of dialogue.

Third research: Interaction and dialogue

According to Mezirow (Lintzeris, 2007), there are two basic pillars of transformative learning: critical reflection and rational dialogue. In order to have reflection, feedback and reflective discussion are necessary, what Mezirow calls “rational dialogue”. It is the exchange and the sharing of one's experiences in a group. This activity leads to ways of knowing that help the individuals to include themselves in the social and mental life of their community.

Without this exchange the individuals remain isolated from the others and from themselves, provided that they do not have the tools in order to present their experiences (Belenky, Clinchy, Goldberger & Tarule, 1986, p. 26). Consequently, the moment when the individual cannot achieve something like that only by himself/herself, the role of the educational process is rendered critical, because it offers the suitable context for the culture and growth of critical reflection.

In a research that took place in the last semester of the 4th year, regarding the interaction and the role of dialogue in practicum, 85 students participated. From their answers it appears that the interaction with all persons that are involved in the practicum framework is very high. The highest is with the children (75 out of 85) and the in-service teacher of the class (54 out of 85), meaning the individuals connected to their practicum at the school (Table 3).

Table 3: Level of influence of interaction with others.

Influence of interaction with..	VERYMUCH	SOMEWHAT	NEUTRAL	NOTMUCH	NOTATALL
In-service teacher	54	15	13	2	1
Classmate	32	20	17	4	12
Children	75	5	4	1	0
Classmates and professor in courses	38	22	20	5	0

Another important point is that the interaction with the individuals involved in the educational framework has the highest influence when students combine observation

with dialogue. Generally, dialogue (either combined with observation or not – columns 3 & 4) is mentioned by the majority of students (76 out of 85, for dialogue with children & 75 out of 85, for dialogue with the in-service teacher of the class) as a decisive point of influence (Table 4).

Table 4: Preference for observation and dialogue with others in school.

Influence of interaction with...	Observation of her/them	Dialogue with her/them	Combination of observation & dialogue
In-service teacher	10	15	60
Classmate	16	24	38
Children	9	2	74

Concerning the practice of dialogue during courses, 74 out of 85 students consider it an important point of influence, while 49 prefer dialogue in small groups first and then collectively⁴ (Table 5).

Table 5: Preference for observation and dialogue with others in course.

Greater influence in the course...	Just listening	Dialogue collectively	Dialogue in small groups and then collectively
	11	25	49

To the question if dialogue helps them in the context of practicum, 84 out of 85 students answered YES. From the students' answers it appears that dialogue mainly supports them the development of the way of thinking and the possibility of acquisition of an overall perception for the subjects that process, as well as a more open thought, more receptive in different optical (80 out of 85). Another positive aspect of dialogue is that it offers the possibility for revision of their points of view (72 out of 85). A very important finding is that 49 out of 85 students declare that dialogue may change their way of thinking and their pedagogic opinions, as well as their practices in the educational environment (Table 6).

Table 6: Students opinions on benefits of dialogue.

⁴ Here we should point out that in each course a large number of students participates (roughly 60 individuals). This fact constitutes an objective difficulty in the application of methods that strengthen dialogue. Consequently, working in smaller groups appears to facilitate and is preferable by the students.

Points that dialogue promotes according to students' opinions	Number of Students
More lens / open thought / enrichment of thought	80
Re-evaluation/reflection on my own points of view	72
Change of my way of thinking and acting	49
Resolution of questions & problems / Detection and correction of mistakes	13

Final thoughts

The results of the first research (2011) showed that practicum is a very important factor that can lead to perspective transformation. The following researches (2015, 2016), highlighted the interaction between student teachers and significant others (colleagues, professor, and children) and also pointed out the important role of dialogue which seems to be a crucial element for transforming their perceptions and beliefs.

Especially, in this paper we attempted to study this interaction, focusing on dialogue. According to Mezirow's theory (1991), rational dialogue is one of the basic elements of transformation. We claim that, if our main objective is to create a supportive environment for interaction, we have to focus on communication skills and foster dialogue.

The dialogue in the context of practicum developed both in a formally and informally. The typical form of dialogue developed in the context of the course through organized activities and designed techniques of the teacher. The non-formal form of dialogue developed in the kindergarten, between students and (a) the responsible kindergarten teacher, (b) their classmate, and (c) the children. This type of dialogue involves, also, the dialogue which is developed between the students and their classmate in the context of preparation and assessment before and after their visiting in the school.

Especially, the formal type of dialogue can be a means for the transformation of existing perceptions and beliefs. Dialogue in conjunction with reflection can lead to perspective transformation.

Although the benefits of dialogue are obvious and conscious from the students, the promotion of dialogue in the class is not feasible because of the educational framework (large number of students). Consequently, the need for promotion of dialogue constitutes a central issue as well as the integration of techniques and methods that promote rational dialogue.

References

- Cranton, P. (2006). *Understanding and promoting transformative learning. A Guide for educators of Adults* (2ed). Higher and adult education series. San Francisco: Jossey-- Bass.

- Belenky, M. F., Clinchy, B. M., Goldberger, N. & Tarule, J. (1986). *Women's ways of knowing: The development of self, voice and mind*. New York: Basic Books
- Karalis, T. (2010). Situated and Transformative learning: exploring the potential of critical reflection to enhance organizational knowledge, *Development and Learning in Organizations*, 24(1), 17-20.
- Karalis, T., Sotiropoulos, L., & Kampeza, M. (2007). La contribution de l'éducation tout au long de la vie et de l'anthropologie dans la préparation professionnelle des enseignants : réflexions théoriques, *Skholê, hors série 1*, 149-155.
- King, K. (2009). *Handbook of the Evolving Research of Transformative Learning. Based on the Learning Activities Survey* (10th anniversary edition). USA: Information Age Publishing.
- Kokkos, A. (2011). Transformative Learning Through Aesthetic Experience: Towards a Comprehensive Method, *Journal of Transformative Education*, 1-23.
- Lintzeris, P. (2007). *The significance of critical reflection and discourse in Jack Mezirow's theory of transformative learning*. Athens: Hellenic Adult Education Association.
- Liodaki, N. & Karalis T. (2013). Educational experiences and Transformative Learning in Higher Education in Greece. A case study with Student Teachers. *International Journal of Education*, 5 (2), 75-85.
- Liodaki, N. & Karalis T. (2013a). Transformative Learning Theory in Higher Education: Perspective Transformation For Students of A Department Of Education In Greece. *International Journal of Research in Education Methodology*, 3(3), 316-322.
- Mezirow, J. (1991). *Transformative dimensions of adult learning*. San Francisco: Jossey--Bass.
- Raikou, N., & Karalis, T. (2011). Exploring the potential of Transformative Learning in Higher Education: the development of students ' critical thinking through aesthetic experience, 9th International Conference on Transformative Learning, Athens, 28-29 May 2011. In M. Alhadeff-Jones, & A. Kokkos (eds.), 2011, *Transformative Learning in Time of Crisis: Individual and Collective Challenges* (261-267). Athens: Columbia University and Hellenic Open University.
- Raikou, N. (2016). Development of critical thinking through aesthetic experience: the case of students of an educational department. *Journal of Transformative Education*, 14 (1), 53-70.
- Raikou, N. (2014a). Promoting critical reflection through teacher's education. *Educational Journal of the University of Patras UNESCO Chair*, 1 (1), 11-19.
- Raikou, N. (2014b). Preparing critical teachers in University: The role of practicum in teachers' education. *Journal of Social Science Research*, 4 (2), 485-488.
- Raikou, N. (2012). Can University be a Transformative Environment? Fostering Critical Reflection through Art in Higher Education. *Journal of Literature and*

Art Studies, 2 (3), 416-421.

Investigating Group Dynamics in adult education: A qualitative study

Skorda S., Panitsides E.A. & Kalogridi S.
Hellenic Open University, School of Humanities

Abstract

The purpose of the present study was to highlight the factors that influence group dynamics in adult education, as these were shaped through the perceived views of educators and trainees in Parent's Schools in Greece. It followed a qualitative approach, whilst the data underwent content analysis.

Introduction

Kurt Lewin in 1951 was the first scholar to use the term "group dynamics" to describe the way in which groups and individuals act and interact in changing conditions (Pasmore, 2006). Since then, the importance of group dynamics has been systematically investigated by a plethora of researchers, as, according to Ellemers, Kortekaas and Ouwerkerk (1999), it is actually through participation in groups that our social identity develops and our self-perceptions are formed. In this context, a number of factors affecting group dynamics have been identified, such as member characteristics - sex, age, social status, attitudes, abilities, learning styles - relations among members, as well as emerging roles (Thornbury & Slade, 2006).

Relevant research has indicated that the most effective groups are those that foster a supportive atmosphere which ensures the emotional security of their members, whilst it is the trainer who mainly contributes to it (Dionyssopoulos, Karalis & Panitsides, 2014; Walumbwa & Schaubroeck, 2009). Indeed, as Zohar and Tenne-Gazit (2008) point out, effective groups need trainers that may build a dynamic, yet safe context, for the educational team to interact and transform throughout a collective change process.

In this context, based on both trainers' and trainees' views and perceptions, the present study delved into the parameters that may affect group dynamics in adult education. Our research was conducted with trainers and trainees at the Parents' Schools program run by the Greek Institute of Youth and Lifelong Learning. Parents' Schools serve both counseling and educational purposes focusing on prevention and aim to help parents cope with their role and the difficulties inherent to it (Chourdaki, 2000). The educational process is mainly carried out through groupwork, offering thus an excellent context for studying group dynamics.

Group dynamics

Kurt Lewin initiated force-field theory, positing that human behavior is manifested within the life space of the individual, which constitutes a dynamic field of coexisting alternatives that either encourage or discourage certain actions (Johnson & Johnson, 2009). When for instance an individual attempts to solve a problem or achieve a goal within a group, certain forces may affect the outcome either facilitating or hindering

change (Thelen, 1992). Such driving or restraining forces may be influenced by psychological factors, individual needs and motives.

Lewin put emphasis on the context and the dynamics emanating from the interaction between social and psychological aspects. According to his works (Lewin, 1935; 1944), the reconstruction of life space is influenced by perceptive and cognitive processes at both individual and group levels. Hence, group behavior can be interpreted only when taking into account all life-space parameters. Furthermore, it should be noted that when an individual joins a group he/she bears former experiences, norms and rules acquired within other groups previously joined (Gershenfeld, 1986).

Another theory associated with group dynamics is that of Foulkes, who focused on the relationships developed within groups and the role of communication in their consolidation (Ward, 2010). Individuals are interconnected through communication and thus they cannot be studied independently of their context. Within groups, communication networks are developed wherein participants are expressed individually. However, their expression acquires meaning only through collective interaction. Networks incorporate the past, present and future of their members, the conscious and the unconscious, verbal and non-verbal interaction. All these elements contribute to group dynamics, while the sharing of experiences was regarded by Faulkes as the core parameter that may induce significant changes in a group (Ward, 2010).

Finally, Bion drew on the notion of the group as a whole (Sutherland, 1992). Yet, the aggregate cannot be discerned and studied unless in connection to the group, just as personality is integral to the individual. Beyond the conscious level, Bion specifically identified three basic assumptions in the group sub-conscious greatly influencing group dynamics: dependency, fight-flight, and pairing. Dependency is associated with a subconscious inferiority of group members and the assumption that their safety in the hands of the leader. In fight/flight the group behaves as though it has met to preserve itself, remaining 'closed' to the environment. This often entails running away from someone or fighting someone or something, which can be characterized by aggressiveness and hostility. Finally, pairing is associated with the assumption that two members will pair to carry out the work of the group through their continued interaction and help the group avoid the two previous situations (Sutherland, 1992). Turquet 1974 (cited in Skolnick & Green, 2004) added a fourth assumption, that of 'unity', which occurs when group members feel afraid of losing their identity through their participation in the group, remaining thus passive and reinforcing, in some peculiar way, group cohesion. All these are considered defenses related to the non-conscious communication developed within the group and the anxiety arising.

Review of relevant research

Lewin extensively experimented with educational groups (T-groups) back in the 1940s, recording member behaviors, trends and reactions (Klein & Astrachan, 1971). The results of these studies indicated that groups fostered the maturing and development of their members, a rather unexpected finding as regards the initial aim which was to study the phenomenon of group dynamics. Further, Lewin, in 1944, conducted experiments on the role of leadership style upon groups and its influence on the behavior of their members. In the first experiment the behavior of two groups of 10-year-old boys involved in handicraft activities was examined – the first group was led by an authoritarian leader and the second by a democratic leader. The results showed that in the second group, members were more open and friendly to each other,

their behavior was also more unrestricted and on an equal basis towards the leader, whilst everyone was more focused on the work that had to be carried out (Klein & Astrachan, 1971).

On these grounds, it has been assumed that the groups that function most effectively are those wherein the prevailing atmosphere can ensure the psychological security of their members (Dionyssopoulos, Karalis & Panitsides, 2014; Walumbwa & Schaubroeck, 2009). This is indeed closely interrelated to the role assumed by the trainer, who should be able to exert his/her influence in a manner that does not restrict the sense of security, whilst at the same time he/she remains open and trustworthy.

In this vein, Thomas (2007) investigated the role of the trainer in group dynamics through interviews with seven instructors-facilitators in Australia and New Zealand. The results indicated that group effectiveness largely depends on the knowledge and skills of the trainer in four facilitation fields: i) learning techniques, ii) objectives setting, iii) student-centered learning, and iv) critical learning.

With regard to cooperative learning, Deutsch (1949a, cited in Ashman & Gillies, 2003) studied the interaction among individuals and the processes developed within a group as a result of cooperation and competition. To this end, he experimented with 50 volunteers divided in 10 groups, seeking to explore how productive were the groups as a whole. The results of scientific observation demonstrated that the members of the group wherein cooperation was primarily important were more focused on the team and had a strong sense of teamwork. Additionally, they communicated better with each other, were more friendly, had better relationships and stronger incentives, whilst they were also more productive.

In a number of relevant studies, Johnson & Johnson (1994, 2009) also examined the effect of cooperative, competitive and individual learning in achieving specific learning objectives, with similar results. Specifically, the results of their research demonstrated that cooperative learning enhances by far learning effectiveness and team productivity, compared to competitive and individual learning. Furthermore, Slavin (1985), in 12 out of the 14 studies conducted to investigate cooperative learning in groups, found a positive correlation between cooperative learning and interpersonal relations. The positive effects identified were related to self-esteem enhancement, better integration in social groups and learning effectiveness.

Finally, Saavedra (1995) drew on transformative learning within groups. Working with a group of six teachers on weekly basis, she delved into the teaching methods, the impact on student learning, as well as teachers' own learning and development. Her results indicated that when teachers as team members realized through critical reflection their own learning and the social context within it occurred, their assumptions were greatly transformed, essentially as regards their conscious perceptions about students, themselves and their knowledge.

In the Greek context, studies on group dynamics tend to be rather limited in the field of adult education (Vergidis & Kokkos, 2010). In an exploratory survey by Tsiboukli and Wolff (2003a), regarding mental health professionals' training in addictions, there was identified a significant decline in participants' prejudices as a result of teamwork. In a subsequent study (Tsiboukli & Wolff, 2003b), the researchers conducted focus group discussions with mental health professionals. Among their results, it was highlighted that educators often find it difficult to express their feelings, they fear of rejection and have difficulty in understanding the dynamics of the group. In the light of these findings, a training program on group dynamics was implemented, addressed to mental health professionals. The findings from the assessment of the specific program made it evident that applying experiential approaches can be particularly

helpful for trainees to understand group dynamics (Kokkos, 2005).

Aim of the research

The purpose of the present study was to highlight the factors that influence group dynamics in adult education, as these were shaped through the perceived views of educators and trainees in Parent's Schools in Greece. The objectives underpinning the research were the following:

1. To highlight factors influencing group dynamics with regard to the relationships among learners, as well between learners and the trainer.
2. To identify parameters related to the role of the trainer within the group.
3. To identify convergences and/or divergences in the perceptions of the two focus groups – trainees and trainers.

Methods & Tools

A qualitative research approach was followed, so as to enable the in-depth investigation of participants' views and perceptions, as well as an informed interpretation of their experiences and behaviors. Furthermore, it allowed researchers to obtain ample information within a short time and to highlight participants' multiple perspectives and personal meanings, which could not be recorded by quantitative methods (see Cohen & Manion, 1994; Kedraka, 2008). The data underwent content analysis, whereby they were coded into categories, analyzed and interpreted.

Focus groups discussions were conducted, as a tool that gives emphasis to the interaction among group members and allows the emergence of participants' values and beliefs (see Cohen & Manion, 1994). The data of the two focus groups that took place were recorded, transcribed, analyzed and compared to each other in order to identify any convergences and/or divergences.

A discussion guide was built based on relevant literature, in order to ensure content validity of the research (see Kidd & Parshall, 2000). This enabled the discussion to move around some general axes, whilst it also provided the participants with the chance to expand on issues critical to them. The discussion guide comprised two parts: a) demographic characteristics, and b) debate questions, divided into transition questions, central questions and closing questions. The first helped to initiate the debate, central questions set the context, whilst closing questions provided an opportunity for participants to add and/or recap the most important issues for them. Central questions comprised the following variables based on research objectives: a) individual factors, b) factors regarding the interaction among group members, c) factors related to the role of the trainer.

Purposeful sampling was conducted, whereby the sample was selected under the criterion of accessibility from the Parents' Schools program run by the Greek Institute of Youth and Lifelong Learning. In detail, a call was addressed to trainers and trainees of Eastern and Western Thessaloniki Parents' Schools. Those who responded to the invitation were included in the sample, which consisted of 5 trainees and 4 trainers. The sample was homogenous, a parameter that contributed to group cohesion and reinforced discussion. Data collection took place during March 2015. All participants were informed in detail about the purpose and objectives of the research and their permission was granted to record the discussions. Furthermore, to ensure the validity of the data, besides the thorough briefing of all participants on research aims and questions, there was provided sufficient time for discussion, whilst the venue was prepared in advance with circular arrangement of chairs and tables. This fostered visual contact among participants and between the researcher and participants and

enhanced the interaction.

It should be noted however that this was an exploratory study, presenting significant limitations, such as the inability to generalize the results due to the small and purposeful sample. Moreover, we need to outline the subjectivity of the opinions and perceptions of both the researcher and participants, as well as existence of further factors related to the social background of participants which are difficult to control (see Cohen & Manion, 1994). Furthermore, social phenomena are multidimensional and are subject to constant change, making thus the results of relevant research hardly generalizable (see Patton, 1999).

Results

The data from the focus group discussions were transcribed and underwent content analysis, drawing on the concepts inherent in discourse. The phrase was designated as the categorization unit (see Tzani, 2005). Thus, a set of words that conveyed a self-contained meaning constituted a semantic unit, corresponding to a code. Similar codes were grouped together forming categories and subcategories, which constituted the central concepts of the study. The overarching categories were in line with the objectives of the research, focusing on factors influencing group dynamics with regard to a) the individual b) the interaction among group members c) the trainer.

On a second level, the categories and subcategories that emerged from the two focus group transcripts were compared in order to identify any convergences and/or divergences in the perceptions of trainees and trainers. The categories and subcategories having emerged from the analysis of the trainers' focus group discussion are presented in Table 1:

Table 1. Summary table of categories and subcategories: trainers' group

Individual factors	Interaction factors	Trainer factors
Overall expectations	Educational context	Educational context
Expectations regarding the educational context	Member acquaintance	Stereotypes
Lack of expectations	Group expectations	Personality traits
Personality traits	Cooperation	Skills & competences
Feelings & emotions	Confidentiality	Expectations
Personal experiences	Communication	Conflict management
Views on the role of the trainer	Roles in the team	Class management
Stereotypes	Feelings & emotions	Constant feedback
Readiness for change	Conflict management	Expression of emotions & feelings
	Balance between boundaries and free expression	Educational background
	Equality of members	Teaching techniques
	Self- assessment	Age

The categories and subcategories having emerged from the analysis of the trainees' focus group discussion are presented in Table 2.

Table 2. Summary table of categories and subcategories: trainees' group

Individual factors	Interaction factors	Trainer factors
---------------------------	----------------------------	------------------------

Personality traits	Mutual respect	Educational approach
Expectations	Group synthesis	Teaching expertise
Personal experiences	Group expectations	Personality traits
	Previous group experiences	Skills & competences
	Feelings & emotions	Life experiences
	Group climate	
	Experiential nature of the program	
	Collaborative learning	
	Common interests	
	Different background	
	Roles in the team	
	Collective rules	
	Time	
	Conflict	

Discussion

Among the results of our research, there have been recorded several convergences and divergences in the views and perceptions expressed by trainees and trainers. It should be noted though, that at individual level, both trainers and trainees outlined expectations, personality traits and personal experiences as those factors that significantly affect and positively contribute to group dynamics in adult education. Indeed, adult learning may effectively take place when there is an explicit need to be addressed, emerging from the daily routine of the individual (Knowles, 1970). However, the integration of the individual in the educational group may often be hindered by negative attitudes, usually associated with previous unpleasant educational experiences (Ringer, 2002). In this vein, in the present study trainers focused on emotional factors too, namely on the fear of being exposed in the group, as well as on the stereotypes inherent to the individual. Along the same lines, trainees drew on factors related to one's dispositions, willingness, as well as trust and sincerity among group members.

As regards the interaction within the group, both trainers and trainees highlighted the importance of common goals and interests among members as a critical parameter for enhancing group cohesion. Moreover, both parties emphasized the need for confidentiality as a central factor greatly influencing the relationships among members, as well as for setting common rules, respecting the learning agreement, and ensuring equity and equality in the group for all participants, including the educator. As Cranton (1996) interestingly posits, the adult educator must act as a facilitator of learning at an equal basis and not as someone who imposes his knowledge on others. Furthermore, trainers' focus group put emphasis on the necessity for a jointly built educational context by both the trainer and trainees, on ensuring balance between certain boundaries and free expression, and on dealing with conflicts in a positive way. Trainees instead focused on the positive climate in the group and especially on the necessity to feel valued and respected. They also emphasized the importance of flexibility so as to adjust the educational process to the needs of the group, a necessity extensively highlighted by Kokkos (2005), as well. At the same time, they reported that conflict and different roles within the group should be wellcomed, as they provide participants with multiple perspectives, whilst they help them recognize the crucial role of boundaries, and the need for mutual respect. An interesting finding was

that interviewees regard the fact that they did not previously know each other as an important factor for the positive atmosphere in the group reporting that it helped them feel comfortable and express more openly. Yet, this is a point that needs further investigation in future research.

Finally, regarding the role of the trainer in group dynamics, both groups indicated that all group interaction is significantly influenced by the characteristics of the trainer, his cognitive background, his experiences, and his communicative ability. The trainers' group in particular focused on features, such as the willingness to act as an equal member in the group, as well as opposing to the existing stereotype of 'perfection'. Additionally, they extensively referred to issues related to education and training in adult education, mainly as regards teaching techniques, conflict management skills, self-control, self-knowledge, self-assessment, as well as the ability to effectively address challenges, not perceiving them as a threat. Finally, once again they highlighted the need for respecting learners, their learning style, and their disposition for change or not, parameters which have been widely discussed by Kokkos (2005), too.

On the other hand, trainees' group focused on the trainer's ability to set limits and keep the balance within the team, as well as to establish and preserve a positive atmosphere. They also highlighted that adult educators should refrain from acting as experts and the only source of knowledge in the group, which actually comes in line with Noyé and Piveteau's (2002) assumption about the need to combine free expression of trainees with the promotion of collective goals.

Conclusions

The present study attempted to highlight the factors that influence group dynamics in adult education, as these were shaped through the perceived views of educators and trainees in Parent's Schools in Greece. Despite the research limitations, mainly related to the subjectivity of the data and the limited generalizability of results due to the small and purposeful sample, there have been reported quite interesting views by both focus groups. It should also be noted that we sought to investigate a complex concept, whilst allowing participants to freely express their views. Hence, it was difficult to control subtle factors that may have influenced the views expressed, for instance dominant ideologies and stereotypes inherent to participants, or negative previous experiences which subconsciously emerged and influenced the discussions conducted. Furthermore, group discussions restricted to some extent personal expression and in depth investigation of individual views and perceptions.

In conclusion, regarding the individual factors that may influence group dynamics, both groups highlighted individual expectations, stereotypes, dispositions, feelings and emotions as important parameters. These findings could be useful to adult educators who might seek to record such factors at the beginning of a program so as to build a more comprehensive learning contract. Also, the structure of the program could focus more on feelings and emotions and their expression, in order to foster smooth resolution of conflict without negatively affecting group dynamics.

Regarding the interaction factors that were outlined in the study, we observe that great emphasis was put on promoting equality and equity in the group, with trainers focusing on jointly forming the educational context, and with trainees drawing on issues related to the positive climate in the group, namely issues of acceptance, respect, safety and communication. Once again, these findings could be useful to adult educators, in the sense that more time should be allocated to developing a friendly climate in the group, along with making use of teaching techniques that may

promote positive feelings and 'warmth', so as to strengthen cohesion. An important point highlighted by both groups is also the modesty that should prevail in both parties, accepting that they come to learn cooperatively and with trainers setting aside their 'expert' role. This is also an important point for the educators to keep in mind, as often in an attempt to preserve their prestige in the eyes of the trainees, they appear alienated without leaving any room for expression to the other side.

Finally, with regard to the factors associated with the role of the trainer in group dynamics, both groups emphasized the importance of his/her educational background, personal characteristics and teaching skills. Trainers mainly focused on the fact that an adult educator should be willing to 'expose' him/herself as an equal member of the group, whilst trainees also highlighted the fact that they do not want an 'expert' trainer, but somebody who is willing to learn and develop alongside them. These findings are also crucial for adult educators, suggesting that they should continuously critically reassess their role within the group.

Therefore, based on the results of the present study, it becomes evident that there is a necessity to launch training programs for adult educators on issues of emotional intelligence and group dynamics. This could greatly facilitate educators to fully understand the processes taking place within the group and acquire the appropriate skills for building and guiding educational teams.

It is thus crucial to further investigate the field of group dynamics in adult education. Based on the findings of the present exploratory study, suggestions for future research include:

- Large-scale research including other factors, such as communication which is a catalytic factor in group dynamics.
- Research in various settings and programs, besides parents' schools.
- Investigation of learners' preferred learning styles and their potential role in group dynamics.
- Investigation of the role of perceptions and stereotypes in group dynamics and their potential transformation.

References

- Ashman, A., & Gillies, R. (Eds.). (2003). *Cooperative learning: The social and intellectual outcomes of learning in groups*. London: Routledge.
- Bion, W. R. (2013). *Experiences in groups: and other papers*. London: Routledge.
- Cohen, L. & Manion, L. (1994). *Μεθοδολογία εκπαιδευτικής έρευνας*. Αθήνα: Μεταίχμιο.
- Corbin, J. M., & Strauss, A. (1990). Grounded theory research: Procedures, canons, and evaluative criteria. *Qualitative sociology*, 13(1), 3-21.
- Cranton, P. (1996). Types of Group Learning. In S. Imel (ed.) *Learning in Groups: Exploring Fundamental Principles, New Uses, and Emerging Opportunities. New Directions for Adult and Continuing Education* no. 71 (p.p. 25-32)..San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.
- Dionyssopoulos, A., Karalis, Th. & Panitsides, E.A. (2014). Continuing Medical Education revisited: Theoretical Assumptions and Practical Implications. A qualitative study. *BMC Medical Education*, 14: 1051, DOI 10.1186/s12909-014-0278-x.
- Ellemers, N., Kortekaas, P. & Ouwerkerk, J. W. (1999). Self-categorisation, commitment to the group and group self-esteem as related but distinct aspects of social identity. *European journal of social psychology*, 29(2-3), 371-389.
- Foulkes, S. H. (1973). The group as matrix of the individual's mental life. *Group*

- Therapy: An Overview*. New York: Intercontinental Medical Books.
- Gershenfeld, M. K. (1986). Kurt Lewin: *Intergroup Relations* and Applications in Current Action Research. In Strivers, E. & Wheelan, S. (eds) *The Lewin Legacy: Field theory in current practice*. Berlin: Springer.
- Johnson, D. W., & Johnson, R. T. (1994). *An overview of cooperative learning. Creativity and collaborative learning*. Baltimore: Brookes Press.
- Johnson, D. W., & Johnson, R. T. (2009). An educational psychology success story: Social interdependence theory and cooperative learning. *Educational researcher*, 38(5), 365-379.
- Κεδράκα, Κ. (2008), *Μεθοδολογία Λήψης Συνέντευξης*, Πάτρα: Ελληνικό Ανοικτό Πανεπιστήμιο.
- Kidd, P. S., & Parshall, M. B. (2000). Getting the focus and the group: enhancing analytical rigor in focus group research. *Qualitative health research*, 10(3), 293-308.
- Klein, E. B., & Astrachan, B. M. (1971). Learning in groups: A comparison of study groups and T groups. *The Journal of Applied Behavioral Science*, 7(6), 659-683.
- Knowles, M. S. (1970). *The modern practice of adult education* (Vol. 41). New York: New York Association Press.
- Κόκκος, Α. (2005). *Εκπαίδευση Ενηλίκων: Ανιχνεύοντας το πεδίο*. Αθήνα: Μεταίχμιο.
- Lewin, K. (1935). *A Dynamic Theory of Personality*. New York: McGraw Hill.
- Lewin, K. (1944). The dynamics of group action. *Educational leadership*, 1(4), 195-200.
- Μπελλάλη, Θ. (2006). Κριτήρια και διαδικασία αξιολόγησης των ποιοτικών ερευνών στο χώρο της υγείας. *Αρχ Ελλ Ιατρ*, 23, 298-307.
- Νογέ, D. – Piveteau, J. (2002). *Πρακτικός Οδηγός του Εκπαιδευτή*. Αθήνα: Μεταίχμιο.
- Pasmore, W. (2006). Action research in the workplace: The socio-technical perspective. *Handbook of action research*, 2, 38-48.
- Patton, M. Q. (1999). Enhancing the quality and credibility of qualitative analysis. *Health services research*, 34(5 Pt 2), 1189.
- Ringer, M. (2002). *Group action: The dynamics of groups in therapeutic, educational and corporate settings*. London: Jessica Kingsley.
- Saavedra, E. R. (1995). *Teacher transformation: Creating text and contexts in study groups*. Unpublished doctoral dissertation, University of Arizona: Tucson, AZ.
- Skolnick, M., & Green, Z. (2004). The denigrated other: Diversity and group relations. *Women*, 48, 846-850.
- Slavin, R. E. (Ed.). (1985). *Learning to cooperate*. New York: Plenum Press.
- Sutherland, J.D. (1992). Bion Revisited: Group Dynamics and Group Psychotherapy. In Pines, M. (ed). *Bion and Group Psychotherapy*. London: Routledge.
- Thelen, H.A. (1992). Research with Bion's concepts. In M. Pines (ed.), *Bion and group Psychotherapy* (pp. 114–138). London: Routledge.
- Thomas, G. J. (2007). *A study of the theories and practices of facilitator educators*. Unpublished EdD Thesis. Melbourne : La Trobe University.
- Thornbury, S., & Slade, D. (2006). *Conversation: From description to pedagogy*. Cambridge: University Press.
- Tsiboukli, A., & Wolff, K. (2003a). Staff training in Greek Therapeutic Communities for drug addicts: an experiential approach. *Therapeutic Communities*, 24(1), 63-76.
- Tsiboukli, A., & Wolff, K. (2003b). Using focus group interviews to understand staff

- perceptions from training in the therapeutic community model. *Journal of drug education*, 33(2), 143-157.
- Τσιμπουκλή, Α. (2012). *Δυναμική Ομάδας και Επικοινωνία στην Εκπαίδευση Ενηλίκων*. ΙΝΕ/ΓΣΕΕ: Αθήνα.
- Τσιμπουκλή, Α. (2010). *Δυναμική της Ομάδας στην Εκπαίδευση Ενηλίκων*. Στο Βεργίδης Δ. & Κόκκος Α. (Επιμ.) *Εκπαίδευση Ενηλίκων: διεθνείς προσεγγίσεις και ελληνικές διαδρομές*. Αθήνα: Μεταίχμιο.
- Τζάνη, Μ., (2005). *Μεθοδολογία Έρευνας Κοινωνικών Επιστημών*. Αθήνα: Εθνικό & Καποδιστριακό Πανεπιστήμιο Αθηνών.
- Walumbwa, F. O. & Schaubroeck, J. (2009). Leader personality traits and employee voice behavior: mediating roles of ethical leadership and work group psychological safety. *Journal of Applied Psychology*, 94(5), 1275-1286.
- Ward, M. (2010). *A group dynamics perspective of the experiences of adult learners taking part in a learnership program*. Master's thesis. Australia: University of Pretoria.
<http://upetd.up.ac.za/thesis/available/etd02152012114353/unrestricted/dissertation.pdf>
- Χουρδάκη, Μ. (2000). *Οικογενειακή Ψυχολογία: Εξελικτική -Νηπιακή -Σχολική - Εφηβείας -Τρίτης ηλικίας, Θεματολογία για τις "Σχολές Γονέων"*. Αθήνα: Leader Books.
- Zohar, D. & Tenne-Gazit, O. (2008). Transformational leadership and group interaction as climate antecedents: a social network analysis. *Journal of Applied Psychology*, 93(4), 744-757.

A Museum Exhibition on Migration as a Framework for Developing Intercultural Dialogue and Transformative Learning

Vlachaki Maria
University of Thessaly

Magos Kostas
University of Thessaly

Abstract

In the present research, adults, parents and relatives of school age children, native and of different ethno-cultural descent created a museum exhibition on the migration history of their homeland. The dialogue during the conceptual and the development phase of the museum exhibition contributed to the critical reflection and transformative learning of the participants, concerning their initial prejudices against immigrants.

1. Introduction

Changes in the contemporary societies' population due to the presence of people with different ethno-cultural identity has constituted a new challenge for museum organizations, which is closely linked to their social orientation. According to a holistic intercultural aspect of diversity, strategies and practices are sought which are related not only to the function of education but also to collecting and exhibiting. Museums aim at an unmediated and effective approach of different cultural communities by providing opportunities for their active participation in cultural activities (Message, 2006, p.194). The representation of cultural heritage diversity, of each local society's experience and knowledge and the protection of its distinct value systems such as language, traditions, narratives concerning the living culture is associated with the implementation of a new museology which doesn't assimilate, but tends to incorporate different contexts and perspectives (i.e. inclusive museology) in terms of ethnicity, language, color, gender, age, class (ICOM, 1997; ICOM, 2006; ICOM, 2008). Furthermore, giving diverse communities the chance to collect and exhibit their own culture constitutes an important step for participating in the public creation of history. An equally serious dimension of the adopted intercultural approach was the challenge of providing chances for cooperation and interaction among individuals and groups with different cultural capital and in doing so to promote the function of the museum as a framework of creative dialogue (NEMO 2016; NEMO, 2015; Bodo, Gibbs & Sani, 2009).

It has been acknowledged that museum experience is not confined to the dual relationship among the visitor and the presented exhibits. The construction of meanings is not solely dependent on a visitor's experiences, culture, individual expectations, but it is a social issue, because it stems from a communication and exchange process at a collective level, in the context of "interpretive communities" (Hooper-Greenhill, 2007). Postmodern museum doesn't promote the values of objectivity and **unassailable** accuracy of knowledge but intersubjectivity, negotiation, multi-perspectiveness, mutuality in interpretation. Those principles also

ascertain the shift of interest from materiality to the ideas which are born through interaction and allow for the continuous renewal of the museum narrative. A combination of materiality and multivocality in museums can be conducive to handling difficult matters such as identity making of “source communities” (Silven, 2010) Furthermore, it can promote self - reflection and cross cultural communication. Specifically, identity is constructed through social interaction and the emergence of cultural similarities and differences.

Dialogue constitutes an important condition for raising awareness of the "other" and the discovery of ourselves. Respectively, it is that type of dialogue which is not intended to develop arguments for the support or proof of the validity of a position but to reinforce the approach and understanding of a different way of thinking and different perspectives (Tannen, 1998). It fosters the formation and the promotion of more grounded and validate beliefs as a result of a more participative, communicative and interactive learning process (Mezirow, 2009, p.128). Dialogue can incite critical reflection individually and collectively. It can question our own attitudes, values, meaning schemes, habits of mind that stand as obstacles to alternative or different interpretations and approaches. A reflective discourse which comprises a plurality of views and reinforces synthesis through dissension can even lead to elaborate and transform our frames of references and incites common action. Critical reflection is in a dialectic relationship with action. It incites action (Mezirow, 1990) and receives feedback from action (Kitchenham, 2008). This kind of action can foster undertaking new roles, including the roles of "others" and contributes to the empathic understanding of individual perspectives and different angles and subsequently to better awareness of reality.

In the described case study which was conducted in a primary school of a Greek island region parents and relatives of school age children were involved in a reflective action. As members of a distinct interpretive community parents in cooperation with pupils and school teachers participated in the creation of a museum collection and an exhibition on the migration history of their homeland. They contributed to a collection of tangible and intangible testimonies and suggested ways to develop an educational environment, which promoted dialogue, equal interaction and reflection and even provoked deeply rooted stereotypes about newcomers in the local community.

This article aims to describe the main characteristics of the museum environment as a context for dialogue and to present the transformation in perceptions and attitudes of the adults, who participated in the particular museum project. The presented changes are due to the dialectic and reflective process during the conceptual and the development phase of a museum exhibition and pertain to the following dimensions:

- a. Exercising self-criticism in relation to their own beliefs and values and admitting their prejudices and racist attitudes.
- b. Revealing “covered narratives” concerning discrimination issues, racism, difficulties of adapting to Greece as the host country.
- c. Recognizing their migration past and its "integration" in the history of the region.
- d. Perceiving the culture of “self”, in comparison to the culture of the "other" and discovering similarities between them.
- e. Understanding of individual culture as a result of each person’s specific life path.

- f. Promoting universal values and the development of intercultural awareness.
- g. Acting as a distinctive interpreting community and community of practice, which formulated specific criteria in order to discern the cultural value of the oral testimonies and the objects used in the museum exhibition.

2. Description of the research

The present case study was conducted in a Greek island in 2008 in the context of a doctoral research. The main criteria for the selection of the particular research field were the following specificities of the region:

- a. The multicultural composition of the local community because of immigration mainly during the last two decades.

- b. The emigration past of the native members of the local community.

The main objective of the particular research was the transformation of the participants' frames of reference in the matter of migration in their region. This change assumed to be achieved through adults' participation in the creating a museum exhibition, which would promote the dialectic communication, the negotiation of meanings, the individual and the collective reflection.

An important finding of the research, which was functioned as a “disorienting dilemma” and changed the prior habits of mind of the native participants for immigrants was the disclosure that their ancestors were immigrants too. They had migrated from Greece to the United States of America during the first Transatlantic Migration, from the 1890s until 1910s.

In this research 28 parents and close relatives of schoolchildren participated. With regard to their origin, 13 of them were native Greek, 11 had migrated from Balkan countries and countries of Eastern Europe and the former Soviet Union and 4 of them came from western European countries and were married to natives.

As for their prior museum experience, only 9 of them, all of native descent, had visited more than three museums especially historical and archaeological, before this research. Most of the adults who took part in the research stated that they would not visit a museum in their spare time.

The main research strategy was action research, especially participatory action research which placed emphasis on collective inquiry based on experience and social history (Noffke & Somekh, 2009; Greenwood & Levin, 2008). Action research promoted the investigation of family and local history by facilitating continuous reflection and feedback of the research process due to the direct connection with the community, its members and their concerns about the issue of immigration (Vlachaki & Magos, 2015). Additionally, the democratic, open and argumentative nature of the research process enabled the active participation of the members of the interpretive community in making decisions about both the research objectives and the ways of representing their culture in the context of the museum exhibition.

Specifically, the research programme included the following five main, interlinked circles:

Circle A: Investigation of prior perceptions and attitudes of the participants towards migration. Emergence of stereotypes produced and amplified in the family and local community, such as the negative association of immigrants with a deficit in culture and education and defiance of law.

Circle B: Collecting life stories of immigrants and descendant of emigrants, involving children, their parents and members of the local community as informants.

Circle C: Selecting tangible and intangible testimonies and making suggestions for presenting them in a museum environment in reference to texts, exhibits organization

and space organization. Discussion with informants, members of different ethno cultural communities, who had migration experiences. Circle D: Creating of the museum exhibition on immigration by exhibiting the selected material and immaterial evidence. Taking the role of the mediator facilitating dialogue among informants and visitors. Formative evaluation of the exhibition through interaction among the participants, especially between native informants and those who belonged to different ethno-cultural communities. Circle E: Continuous enrichment of the museum collection on immigration with new objects and stories. Summative assessment of the exhibition and the whole programme by all the participants in the research through their group diaries and the visitors' book. (See Diagram 1).

The researcher and educator in the particular programme cooperated with the participants in order to promote the inquiry of the family and local history as a “co-learner” (Freire, 1970). In addition, she stimulated critical reflection and empowered individual change through encouraging participants to consider alternative perspectives and cultivate empathy as “provocateur” (Mezirow, 1991:206).

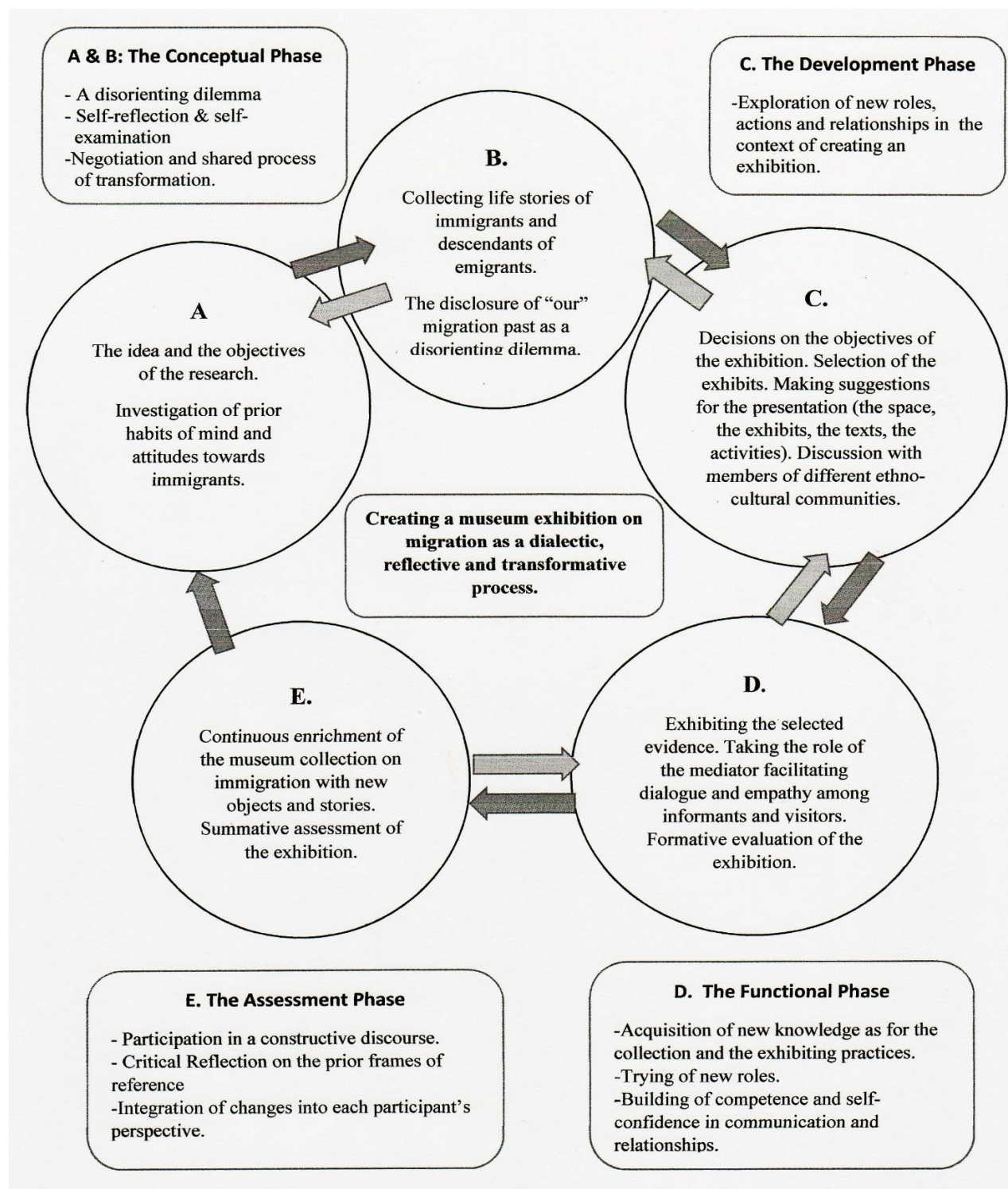


Diagram 1. The process of creating a museum exhibition on migration

The results of the research were drawn through content analysis of the following:

a. Parents’ perceptions on the migration issue recorded in semi-structured interviews, which were held during the first (A) Circle and the second (B) Circle of the research programme.

The interviews revealed prior attitudes and habits of mind of the natives towards immigrants and the relationships among them in the particular community. During the second (B) circle immigrants and native participants were asked to narrate as informants the migratory past of their family and their region. They also expressed

their views on migration.

b. Parents' suggestions made about the exhibits and practices that could be applied in the museum exhibition during the third (C) Circle and the fourth (D) Circle of the research. In addition to, their comments during the formative and the summative evaluation of the museum exhibition in the fourth (D) Circle and the fifth (E) Circle of the research.

3. The transformation of the frames of reference

Changes in attitudes, meaning perspectives and habits of mind of the adult participants happened gradually and are presented below as results of each circle of the research.

In the first circle of the research adult participants stated their expectations about the programme. Also, aspects of the relations and attitudes between natives and those who had recently immigrated to the area were revealed. Most of them were initially reluctant to take part in the research, because aspects of their personal and family history would become known. Their resistance was reduced when the objectives of the research were clarified and all the participants had the opportunity to express their own views and even their concerns about the implementation of such a research in their area.

They were encouraged to participate on equal terms as parents who could contribute to an educational program in their children's school. It was a common characteristic of theirs which enhanced familiarity within the group: Thus, power relations because of the social status and the different descent of the participants were eliminated (Mezirow & Associates, 2000, p.31).

Native participants had negative attitudes towards immigrants. According to their interviews which were conducted during the first phase, they associated immigrants with violence and delinquency, lack of cleanliness, cultural deficit, lack of knowledge of the dominant language and culture. A preconception deeply rooted in the local community which derived from the past was that immigrants could threaten the order and the homogeneity of the local community. The process revealed "covered narratives" concerning discrimination issues in the local community. As a native participant stated: "They want to impose their own laws. They act in different manners and they provoke other people."

Respectively, participants with migration past considered that locals had prejudices towards them, because they had migrated to their country. One of them remarked: "We are expected to work without objections. We have rights but not the right to argue".

During the second circle of the action research the process of collecting oral histories and objects was carried out. The initial questionnaire of the interviews was formed with the contribution of the adult participants and it focused mainly on the living conditions in the origin countries of immigrants and on the migration journey. The active listening to the informants, as it was proved by the sequence of the questions asked and the answers that followed, showed aspects of immigrants' personality, which were hidden under the generalized property of being immigrants such as their high educational level, the devotion to their family, their interests and spare time activities, the prior occupation and the way of living in their origin countries. As a consequence, the second questionnaire was modified in order to include questions relevant to the above aspects.

Immigrants were given the opportunity to narrate their life stories and to participate in equal terms in the discourse. That chance allowed for the presentation of more significant and specified information on immigration and its motives. In addition, the

individual and distinct culture of each immigrant was brought out and perceived as a result of each person's specific life path.

An adult stated during the second phase of interviews: "It's true that some people became poor because of the economic crisis in their homeland and the only solution to that problem was migrating, especially when they didn't have any relatives to support them." "He decided to leave his country because he was unemployed. He couldn't find any work. He had different jobs and acquired many skills."

The prejudices which native people had towards immigrants about namely cultural deficit, low educational level and lack of honesty, were challenged. A considerable number of locals exercised self-criticism in relation to their own beliefs and values and admitted their biased habits of mind and attitudes. Relatively, equal communication and interaction fostered self-esteem of the participants with migration past. During their narrations they didn't hesitate to criticize behaviors of people in the host community referring to education, the organization of the local society and problematic attitudes in economic field. A woman coming from Russia stated: "We used to respect our teachers. In greek schools older pupils are disrespectful to their teachers."

Genealogical and family history research revealed the migration past of many native participants. The particular disclosure constituted a "disorienting dilemma" for them. It didn't fit with their pre-existing meaning structures. Consequently, the term "immigrant" wouldn't carry negative connotations. Their interest in the programme was reinforced. They contributed to the research by narrating their family history. Also, they sought other informants and tangible testimonies from the 1890s until 1910s. Migration past of the local community was acknowledged and integrated in the history of the region. Native participants were acquainted with different perspectives and their frames of reference became "more open, reflective, and emotionally able to change" (Mezirow, 2009). A native participant noticed: "We didn't know that our grandparents were immigrants too. Otherwise, we would look at immigrants in a different way."

The parallel stories of modern and former immigrants in the area generated the idea of the exhibition. The co-presentation of those stories would not lead to labelling the contemporary immigrants or intensifying the stereotypical attitudes towards them. In contrast to, it conduced to a comparison among different narrations, the emergence of new aspects of migration and the reflection on pre-existing meaning perspectives and schemes.

During the third circle of the research the tangible and intangible exhibits were selected according to the criteria of promoting dialogue between the individual and the collective perceptions and of seeking common ground for the interpretive process.

In specific, the collection had the following objectives:

- a. Giving prominence to the individual history and culture of each informant, his/her distinctive meaning schemes, values, frames of mind. Therefore, personal memorabilia, letters and heirlooms were exhibited.
- b. Presenting the culture of the origin country such as customs and tradition, legends, photographs of significant historical monuments. Respectively, photographs of important public buildings and memorial structures were exhibited, which were erected with the donations of native emigrants.
- c. The emergence of contemporary issues which provided the discourse with new divergent assumptions and interpretations and facilitated intercultural communication and awareness. Furthermore, it resulted in critical reflection, an agreement on new shared values and the transformation of the pre-existing restricted meaning schemes.

Thus, it ascertains that “learning is profoundly social” (Mezirow, 1994, p.230).

4. The museum exhibition as a context for dialogue

The adults who participated in the program pointed out that the dialectic communication and interaction, which characterized the process of creating the museum collection should be the main features of the museum exhibition too. Significant part of the exhibition space was devoted for dialogue and cooperation among visitors and co-creators of the exhibition. The artefacts were fewer than in a traditional exhibition and they were selected as stimuli to provoke reflective discourse. Because of that parameter, it appeared as an ‘alternative’ exhibition space (MacDonald, 2006, p.234). It indicated in practice the shift of interest from objects to ideas and the emphasis on the social dimension of the museum experience.

The particular features of the suggested museum environment are described in detail below:

a. Immediacy of communication and participation

The presentation of familiar tangible and intangible exhibits, which came from the family and social environment of the adults - co-creators of the exhibition reinforced “self-disclosure” of participants and visitors. Significant aspects of their identity, regardless of their descent, were revealed and similarities were pointed out. Talking about commonalities proved to be one way of promoting communicating immediacy (Richmond, McCroskey & Hickson, 2012). Furthermore, immediacy encouraged the process of constructing and adding new meanings to the exhibits and proved to be an important quality feature of the museum exhibition (Janes and Conaty, 2005).

b. Orality

Most of the immigrants who came to the particular island and participated in the programme, or descendants of local people who emigrated to the United States of America hadn’t kept artefacts or mementos from that period of their life. Instead of the tangible items, the adults who cooperated in the creation of the exhibition suggested that more oral testimonies, either live interviews or recorded once, should be exhibited. Specifically, the presence of informants, who narrated their own experiences and expressed their views on migration promoted dialogue between visitors and themselves and encouraged participation in the produced museum narrative. It was a kind of two-way communication, which incorporated the knowledge construction (Witcomb, 2006, p.357). In addition, the discussion of the adults – cooperators and visitors of the exhibition with the immigrants was a positive experience, which challenged their prejudices against people of different origin. It supported the understanding of their intentions, expressions and feelings. It was part of the so called communicative learning according to Habermas (1984). Besides, when extracts of interviews were presented, they were long enough to provide accurate information about the migration experience and promote understanding. This practice ensured that the informants could be heard sufficiently (Pes, 2004, p.43).

Furthermore, in contrast to the traditional practice of presenting information in written texts, which usually functions in favor of audiences with a high educational level (Merriman, 1989), oral testimonies facilitated equal involvement in the dialectic construction of knowledge, especially for immigrants participants, in view of their difficulties in reading. Likewise, as speaking plays an important role of life beyond the museums’ walls, it contributed new updated perceptions and strengthened

exchange of meanings in the interpretation process as a proof of the social dimension of the museum visit (Falk & Dierking, 2000).

c. Variability of the museum narrative

The adults who participated in the particular museum project suggested the coexistence of different views on migration in the exhibition. Thus, the dominant social prejudices against immigrants, which emerged during the A Circle of the research as well, were exhibited in contrast to immigrants' views and stories. The dynamic interplay among opposite aspects incited a more meaningful dialogue and it promoted the better awareness of each side. Both differences and similarities emerged and new common concepts were formed. Oppositions proved to be complementary (Montgomery, 1993), providing a sense of an interactive unity (Altman, 1981) in the process of interpreting and creating meanings.

d. Representation of migration as an individual and social issue

Discovering family and local migration past incited active involvement in the research process and acquaintance with new, different experiences and stories. The dialectical relationship between the individual and the collective was strengthened. The movement between the social structure and the personal history empowered the impression of a whole life (Plummer, 2000, p.125). Respectively, each individual through social interaction was empowered to imprint on the public history.

In addition, the meaning scheme of connecting migration only with newcomers in the contemporary local society was challenged by a wider perspective that immigration is a continuous movement of people from and to the particular region which is not only confined to specific periods of time or a few ethno-cultural communities.

e. Comparative representation of migration stories

The adults who participated in the program as co-creators of the exhibition suggested the presentation of parallel migration stories, which differed in the period of time and the descent of people who migrated. However, they were similar in reference to the motives of the informants for migration, the difficulties they confronted in order to adapt themselves to the new living conditions in the host countries and their emotions, such as fear of the unknown, loneliness, nostalgia of their homeland and close relatives. In some cases, questions which were posed or dilemmas which were written in the end of the explanatory texts conduced that made visitors realize that they have more commonalities than they thought with the informants. Besides, emotions which were aroused by listening to narratives made the visitors more favourably disposed towards the informants of different origin and willing to get to know them better. Furthermore, the participation in the discourse became more effective, because emotions were recognized and empathized as an indication of emotional competence and intelligence (Mezirow & Associates, 2000, p.11).

The combined presentation of the immigrants' experiences and the evoked emotions incited the discourse between the native visitors and visitors of different ethno-cultural descent and contributed to innovative perspectives and significations. Also, shedding light on personal experiences fostered the empathetic understanding of the people who had migrated and the broadening of visitors' frames of reference. The comparative approach allowed to penetrate further the description of migration and emphasize on the causes and the positive effects of it at individual and collective level too. It provided the chance of critical reflection on the initial beliefs, of the wrong perceptions and of making new associations and frames of minds.

f. The thematic and multifocal organization of the exhibition

Through the discussion among participants during the second Circle of the action research different aspects of migration were highlighted, involving the decision to migrate, the racist attitudes in the host country, the longing for their homeland, the immigrants' expectations for the future. In addition, reflective discourse revealed new aspects of the informants' identity, which had remained till then hidden such as their education, family customs, interests and spare time activities and the way of living in the country of their origin. Respectively, in contrast to the traditional linear and chronological presentation of the exhibits the created exhibition followed a thematic, contextual and multifocal organization. Visitors could select alternative paths during their visit. Furthermore, as they were encouraged to contribute with their own stories and views on migration to the collection's content, the continuous enrichment of the museum narration was achieved. Indicatively, visitors and co-creators of the exhibition referred to unemployment, difficulties in using the dominant language, equality before the law, the need for religious expression, the means which old immigrants and newcomers use to communicate with their relatives. New stories and views were recorded and included in the exhibition providing dialogue with more stimuli for negotiation and reflection.

g. Multivocality

The described exhibition constituted a context for listening to various voices. It gave the chance to people who differed in their gender, age, descent, cultural or financial background, to present their own life stories and perspectives, which are usually omitted from the official history (O'Sullivan, 2008). Especially, the participation of pupils' mothers in the particular action helped to shed light on the women's role and contribution to their families' migration movement. Thus, it was decided to exhibit items accompanied with short descriptive texts and even with questions, which were intended to be answered by visitors according to their own experiences, their multifaceted identity as a result of their different path of life. Co-creators of the exhibition and visitors were given the chance to achieve greater autonomy in contributing to the exhibition with new objects, stories and suggestions of presentation. Autonomy allows better awareness of the context of the interpretations and beliefs and fosters self-esteem of the participants in discourse and reflective learning process (Mezirow, 2000).

Conclusions

Critical autobiography and family history inquiry led to the emergence of the migration past of the local community and the motivation of natives and immigrants to participate in the research. Transformation was promoted, as the museum collection and exhibition were developed in terms of community and cooperation rather than in terms of the hierarchy of cultures or discourses. The adult participants undertook different roles such as the roles of co-researchers, mediators and co-organizers in order to create a museum exhibition as a context for dialectic communication, negotiation, self-reflection and interpretation. They sought to change not only the content but also the concept and the form of the museum environment by suggesting practices which fostered the challenge of the dominant structure and narrations and supported the critical evaluation and the reconstruction of the pre-existing meaning perspectives and frames of reference.

References

- Altman, I. Vinsel, A. and Brown, B. (1981). Dialectic Conceptions in Social Psychology: An Application to Social Penetration and Privacy Regulation. *Advances in Experimental Social Psychology*, 14 (C), 107-160.
- Bodo, S., Gibbs, K., & Sani, M. (Eds.) (2009). *Museums as places for intercultural dialogue: selected practices from Europe*. Published by the MAP for ID Group (Museums as Places for Intercultural Dialogue), Retrieved from http://www.mapforid.it/Handbook_MAPforID_EN.pdf
- Falk, J.H. & Dierking, L.D. (2000). *Learning from Museums. Visitors Experiences and the Making of Meaning*. CA: Alta Mira Press.
- Freire, P. (1970). *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*. New York: Herder and Herder.
- Greenwood, D. J. & Levin, M., (2007). *Introduction to action research*. Second edition. California: Sage.
- Habermas, J. (1984). *The Theory of Communicative Action*. Vol.1: Reason and the Rationalization of Society. Boston: Beacon Press.
- Hooper-Greenhill, E. (2007). Interpretive Communities, Strategies and Repertoires. In Watson, S. (Ed). *Museums and Communities*. New York: Routledge.
- Janes, R. & Conaty, G. (2005). *Looking Reality in the Eye. Museums and Social Responsibility*. Alberta: University of Calgary Press.
- Kitchenham, A. (2008). The Evolution of John Mezirow's Transformative Learning Theory. *Journal of Transformative Education*, 6, (2), 104-123.
- ICOM. (1997). **Museums and Cultural Diversity: Policy Statement**, Report of the Working Group on Cross Cultural Issues. <http://icom.museum/diversity.html>.
- ICOM. (2006). **Mission Statement for ICOM-Europe**. Retrieved from <http://www.icom-europe.org/>.
- ICOM. (2008). Proceedings of the International Conference “**Migration in Museums: Narratives of Diversity in Europe**”, 23-25/10/ 2008, Berlin. Retrieved from <http://www.network-migration.org/workshop2008/>.
- Macdonald, S. (2006). *A Companion to Museum Studies*. Blackwell publishing.
- Message, K. (2006). *New Museums and the Making of Culture*. New York: Berg.
- Mezirow, J. (1990). *Fostering Critical Reflection in Adulthood*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.
- Mezirow, J. (1991). *Transformative Dimensions and Adult Learning*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.
- Mezirow, J. (1994). *Understanding transformation theory*. *Adult Education Quarterly*, 44 (4), 222-232.
- Mezirow, J. & Associates, (2000). *Learning as Transformation. Critical Perspectives on a Theory in Progress*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.
- Mezirow, J. (2009). An overview on Transformative Learning. In Illeris, K. (Ed). *Contemporary theories of learning. Learning theorists... in their own words*. (p.p.90-105). New York: Routledge. (Greek edition, Athens: Metechmio, 2009, 128-146)
- Montgomery, B. M. (1993). Relationship Maintenance Versus Relationship Change: A Dialectical Dilemma. *Journal of Social and Personal Relationships* 10, 205–224.
- Network of European Museum Organisations Deutscher Museumsbund - NEMO, (2015). *4 Values for Museums*, Berlin, 9. Retrieved from

http://www.nemo.org/fileadmin/Dateien/public/NEMO_documents/NEMO_four_values_2015.pdf.

Network of European Museum Organisations Deutscher Museumsbund - NEMO, (2016). *Museums, Migration and Cultural Diversity. Recommendations for Museum Work*. Berlin. Retrieved from http://www.nemo.org/fileadmin/Dateien/public/NEMO_documents/Nemo_Museums_Migration.pdf

Noffke, S. & Somekh, B. (Eds.) (2009). *The SAGE Handbook of Educational Action Research*.

London: SAGE.

O'Sullivan, E. (2008). Notes for a Transformative Education. In Gardner, M. & Kelly, U. (Eds).

Narrative Transformative Learning in Education. New York: Palgrave Macmillan.

Pes, J. (2004). Oral history: introduction, *Museum Practice*, 43.

Plummer, K. (1983). *Documents of Life-An Introduction to the Problems and Literature of a Humanistic Method*. London: Unwin Hyman. (Greek edition, Athens: Gutenberg, 2000)

Richmond, V.P., McCroskey, J. C., & Hickson, M. L.(2012). *Nonverbal Behavior in Interpersonal Relationships*. Boston: Allyn & Bacon.

Silven, E. (2010). Difficult matters. Museums, Materiality, Multivocality. In Swanberg, F. (Ed). (2010). *The Museum as Forum and Actor*. (p.p.133-146). Stockholm: Statens Historiska Museum.

Tannen, D. (1998). *The Argument Culture*. New York: Random House.

Vlachaki, M. & Magos, K. (2015). *The contribution of the action research method to a museum*

exhibition on migration with preschool and school age pupils as co-researchers. Action

Researcher in Education, 6, 25-47.

Witcomb, A. (2006). Interactivity: Thinking Beyond. In Macdonald S.(ed). *A Companion to Museum Studies*. (p.p.353-361). Oxford: Blackwell Publishing

Transformative Learning Processes in Practical Trainings?

A reconstructive study on Swiss students' way to becoming primary teachers

Anna Laros & Julia Košinár

University for Applied Sciences and Arts, Northwestern Switzerland

1. Introduction

Teacher trainees at the University of Applied Sciences and Arts Northwestern Switzerland complete three years of study, which include four phases of practical training during 16 weeks. During each of these practical trainings two teacher trainees work with one experienced teacher's classes. After obtaining a Bachelor of Arts degree, most of the graduates start teaching at primary schools (only some of the graduates continue with master's studies). Therefore, field experience plays a major role in the professional development of future teachers.

Currently, there are three main approaches to professionalism and professionalization (Terhart 2011): 1. The structural theory approach looks at the specific structure of the teacher's profession and its antinomous conditions (Helsper 2007), 2. The competence theory approach, defines standards and competencies as well as cognitive dispositions of teachers (Baumert/Kunter 2011) and 3. the biographical approach. Here, teachers' professional development is seen as a lifelong experience-based progress.

In the following, we focus on professionalization using an occupational-biographical perspective to analyze experiential learning (Combe 2010, Košinár 2014). According to this view, irritations and crises can trigger (future) teachers to change their pedagogical habits and develop a more integrated and inclusive perspective (Mezirow 1991). Therefore, it can be assumed, that conflict plays a central role for initiating professionalization by means of the development of habitual and pedagogical skills. Based on this theoretical framework, we consider a crisis as "mastered" if changes on a habitual level have occurred and new competencies are put into action. For this professional development, reflection on how (future) teachers cope with uncertainties plays a significant role. In contrast, according to our understanding, professionalization cannot take place if a crisis is devalued; conflict must be managed head-on in order to be "mastered".

For some years, qualitative educational research has focused on the reconstruction of developmental processes in various occupational-biographical phases (Hericks 2006, Dietrich 2011, Pille 2013). Within the project "Challenges for Future and Beginning Primary Teachers" (PH FHNW 2014-2017) we identify how primary teacher-students perceive and cope with challenges during practical training/after career entry. Our goal is to shed light on the process structure of professionalization during practical training/after career entry in relation to specific personal development. The longitudinal study investigates the professional development of teacher trainees/young professionals (the data collection begins shortly before graduation and ends approximately 15 months postcareer).

The case reconstructions are based on the heuristic model of professionalization (Košinár 2014), and as an additional theoretical lens, we use the theory of transformative learning (Mezirow 1991, 2000). Also, within Mezirow's model, learning starts with a pronounced crisis (a disorienting dilemma). While Mezirow's theory is highly cognitive, Košinár's model is based on a holistic (including the

performative) level. However, both theoretical approaches share the assumption that crises play a central role in initiating learning processes that result in the change of teaching habits.

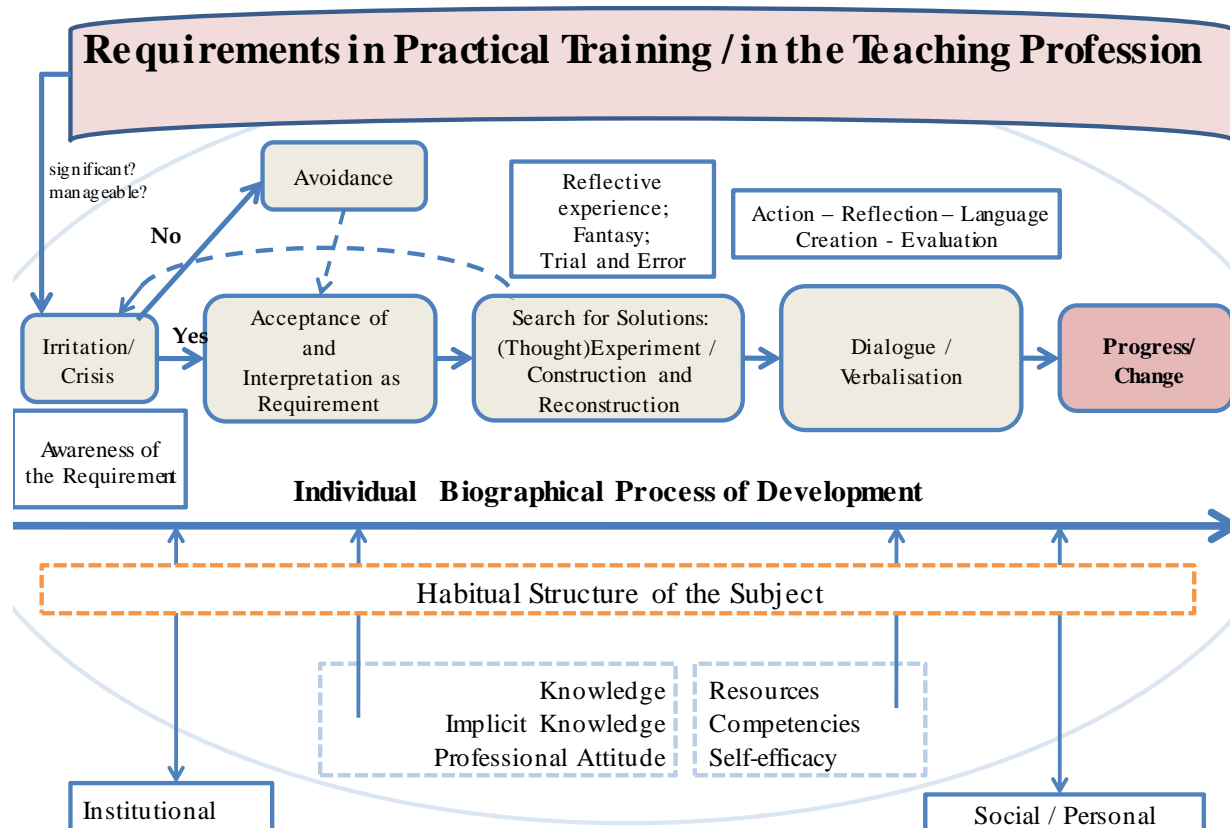
In our contribution, we will give an overview of the theoretical background of our study (2), followed by a description of our research design (3), and the methodology (4). We will outline the four different types of professionalization (5a) we have reconstructed out of our data using the documentary method (Bohnsack 2010, Nohl 2013). Furthermore, we are going to outline critical incidents that students describe as central challenges they have experienced during their practical trainings (5b). The occurrence of crises hints at eventual processes of experiential learning or of transformative learning. We shed light on the strategies students develop to cope with crises. In our discussion (6), we analyze the role of the mentioned crises for students' learning processes through the theory of transformative learning. The students' management of crises hints at the antecedent steps of transformative learning. Students reassure their existing orientation and seem to prepare for a more profound learning experience, which typically happens postcareer entry (Košinár 2015). We conclude with an outlook (7) and highlight further research gaps.

2. Theoretical background of the study

In the following, we will present both theoretical lenses that frame the analyses: the heuristic model of professionalization (Košinár 2014) and the theory of transformative learning (Mezirow 1991).

2a. Heuristic model of professionalization

In addition to the concept of requirements (Keller-Schneider & Hericks 2011) (which defines requirements of future teachers such as role-taking, classroom-management, cooperation and instruction), as a theoretical frame for the analysis, we have integrated the theory of experiential learning (Dewey 1994, Combe 2010). This concept enables reconstructing the steps from perceiving critical incidents up to eventual progress. For our analysis, we use the heuristic model of professionalization that Košinár (2014) created in her project “requirements of second-phase teacher trainees”.



Mastering challenges or requirements can be described as an experience dependent on subjective awareness of the situation and its handling. The assessment of the situation is based on personal resources but also on institutional and social conditions.

According to Combe (2010, 2015) the process leads through different phases:

1. The awareness of the challenge or requirement.
2. This is followed by acceptance or avoidance. If the person rejects the process (“no”), no professional development is possible and the person keeps his or her existing beliefs and habits.
3. The acceptance of the irritation or crisis (“yes”) is followed by a search for solutions, which can happen in an experimental way like “trial and error”, or through a reflective experience based on implicit knowledge and former experiences. The process of searching for a solution is a process of construction and reconstruction. It can be circular and might include further irritations.
4. The experience of the process is reflected on and communicated.
5. As a result, new knowledge structures allow for progress and change.

2b. Transformative Learning

According to Mezirow (1991, 2000), in a transformative learning process, individuals triggered by a crisis (disorienting dilemma) become irritated in their existing meaning perspectives. They find their existing perspectives to be insufficient in interpreting a new experience. This is usually paired with negative emotions, such as guilt or shame. Consequently, individuals start searching for alternative interpretation frames. Within this search, they start an exchange with others and explore and try out new roles, which accompany “new” framings, gathering competence and self-confidence along the way. Eventually, they integrate their new perspective into their worldview. After this integration, individuals’ tend to internalize the change, and their future action is guided by their new perspective. In other words, transformative learning has occurred.

Mezirow (2000, 22) has described an ideal-typical transformative learning process as one that happens within 10 phases. The 10 phases are:

1. Disorienting dilemma;
2. Self-examination with feelings of fear, anger, guilt, or shame;
3. A critical assessment of assumptions;
4. Recognition that one’s discontent and the process of transformation are shared;
5. Exploration of options for new roles, relationships, and actions;
6. Planning a course of action;
7. Acquiring knowledge and skills for implementing one’s plans;

8. Provisional trying of new roles;
9. Building 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 new perspective.

Mezirow distinguishes between two facets when examining meaning-perspectives (or frames of reference): abstract habits of mind and concrete points of view. A habit of mind becomes concrete through a bundle of points of view. Transformation processes can either involve habits of mind or points of view, while the transformation of the first includes more comprehensive learning. Further possible ways of learning, which Mezirow considers non-transformative, include differentiating existing habits of mind and learning new points of view.

Our two theoretical approaches can be summarized as both seeing crises as the starting points of learning processes. Košinár as well as Mezirow use phase models with a sequence of several steps to describe how habitualized orientations /or meaning perspectives are being changed. Košinár's model implies that a person has to go through all aforementioned steps for a profound personal development. Later studies that work with Mezirow's model outlined that transformative learning processes do not necessarily include all 10 steps and that the steps' logic tend to be circular rather than linear (e.g., Laros 2015).

Košinár's model includes performative aspects; context and communities of experience can play an important role. In contrast, Mezirow's model is highly cognitive, individualistic, devoid of context, and prioritizes rationality. Since Mezirow's model has a history of over 30 years, all these mentioned characteristics — which are part of his criticism — have been further elaborated by following studies (for an overview e.g., Laros 2015).

3. Research design

At three different points in time — 2014 (t1), 2015 (t2) and 2016 (t3) — teacher trainees and later: young professionals participate in guided and narrative-generating interviews. The first phase of data collection consists of 25 interviews with teacher trainees (t1), the following ones include 15 (t2) and 12 (t3) interviews with the same former students postcareer entry. The selection of the sample is based on highly contrastive characteristics of the interviewees on the one hand and on their decision to start teaching after finishing their studies on the other. Data used for the following paper are based on t1. The following research questions were central for reconstructing types of professionalization:

1. What are the main experiences of the teacher trainees (such as critical incidents, key moments)?
2. How did they try to handle challenges (e.g., by using strategies or social resources)?
3. What elements influence their process of professionalization? (e.g., environmental conditions, professional attitudes, their teacher trainers)?

4. Methodology

Our longitudinal study is based on qualitative parameters. The “documentary method” (Bohnsack 2010, Nohl 2012) is used for empirical data analysis. The goal of our analysis is to reconstruct types of professionalization in a longitudinal section along

diverse dimensions that were found in the data.

Within the documentary method, the “relational typology” developed by Arnd-Michael Nohl (2013) is an approach that fits our purposes adequately. This method allows the researcher to reconstruct the implicit meaning of interviewees’ narratives and descriptions regarding their field of practice. The implicit meanings are so-called “frames of orientation”. They can be described as the inner structure or habitus of a person. The terminology “frame of orientation” and what Mezirow calls “meaning perspective” are synonymous. Due to biographical events (e.g., critical incidents) the frame of orientation can (partly) change. Processes of professionalization can be reconstructed by tracing steps of development.

5. Findings

In our study, we reconstructed the frames of orientation by three topics that were identified as the main comparative dimensions:

1. The meaning of the field experiences (as a part of teacher trainees’ study)
2. The constitution of and handling with requirements
3. The role of their school-mentors

These dimensions represent central elements of experiential learning in the process of professional development according to the heuristic model of professionalization (Košinár 2014).

First, we will highlight four types of professionalization we have reconstructed from the data. The typology consists of frames of orientation that are related to one another in a typical constellation for each type. They are, therefore, found in several cases along three comparative dimensions. In a second step, we give a deeper insight into temporary modification of orientation frames.

5a. Identification of four types of professionalization

By the three comparative dimensions we identified four types which are guiding the students’ processes of professionalization. We labelled them “personal fulfillment”, “avoidance”, “development” and “probation”.

The aforementioned four types were formed by frames of orientation in all three comparative dimensions and their relation to one another.

Comparative dimensions \ Type	Personal Fulfillment	Avoidance	Development	Probation
1. Significance of practical trainings	Space for personal development / creation possibilities	Examination period	Space for professional development	Probation period
2. Constituting requirements / handling of the requirements	Establish personally suitable conditions	Fulfill external expectations	Master profession-related challenges / requirements	Work off profession-related deficits
3. Role of mentors	Enabling or preventing	Assessors	Source for development	Evaluating profession-related deficits
Main frame of orientation	Positioning in the field of practice	Overcome practical trainings unharmed	Thrives for professional development	Meet demands for professional development

1. The personal fulfillment type

The personal fulfillment type enters practical training with own ideas and expectations. These are forced through whenever possible. The field experiences are seen as a space for personal development and creation of possibilities. The role of the corresponding mentor is interpreted as to either prevent or enable the student's ideas. Faced with hindrance, the personal fulfillment type enters into negotiation in order to establish personal and suitable conditions. Once matching conditions are established, the personal fulfillment type enters at least in part the flow state. In contrast, if personally suitable conditions cannot be reached, a typical reaction is either to avoid the requirements whenever possible or to fulfill them without any ambitions of achieving professional skills.

2. The avoidance type

Similarly, the avoidance type has specific ideas and expectations regarding practical training. But in contrast to the personal fulfillment type, the avoidance type will not push own mindsets through at any cost. This type would rather adjust to given conditions and requirements in order to avoid challenges. Formal duties requested by mentors as well as external expectations are fulfilled, but this does not accompany any ambition to improve professional skills, because this avoidance-type feels pressure from the corresponding mentor. The mentor is seen as assessment instance and the practical training is interpreted as an examination period. The goal of this type is to get through the practical training unharmed.

3. The development type

The development type interprets practical training as a space for professional development and is eager to shape it in cooperation with others. This type actively searches for own profession-related challenges and tries to master them autonomously. Mentors' ideas and expectations are welcome as a source for development; their opinion and advice as experts are actively sought in order to satisfy individual needs and to promote long-term professional development. The

development type interprets mistakes as an opportunity to grow. Tasks and challenges providing risks are, therefore, accepted or even searched out. Similarly, criticism by mentors is helpful to bring forward professional knowledge. The main frame of orientation of this type is to thrive for professional development.

4. The probation type

For this type, practical training signifies a kind of probation. Two subtypes of probation have been found within this category: On the one hand, some enter practical training in order to discover whether they can prove themselves as a teacher. They undergo substantial self-doubts and experience many stressful situations during practical training. On the other hand, some interpret practical training as a chance to prove themselves a perfect fit for the profession. For both subtypes it is important to be evaluated by their mentors in order to know whether they have met their professional skills. Ridding themselves of profession-related deficits is the primary concern of the probation type

5b. Temporary modification of orientation frames

As mentioned above, conflicts and crises play a central role for processes of professionalization. Therefore, after constructing the four types, we decided to further investigate critical incidents that teacher-students experienced during their practical trainings that they describe as profound and meaningful.

We discovered that the dialogical exchange and the relationship with people related to their practical trainings — e.g., their mentor or another teacher-student they are cooperating with — can play an important role for these crises. It can be other people who trigger the crises, and it can as well be other people that help students overcoming the crises. On their way of coping with crises, students develop different strategies. However, after overcoming the crises, they have not transformed their general orientation frame (or meaning perspective) but reflected upon and reassured their existing perspectives. It seems that they only have temporarily modified their orientation frames through learning new points of view (Mezirow 1991). Looking at their whole learning process from the beginning of their practical training up until their career entry, our findings highlight precursor steps of transformative learning processes (Taylor 2006, Laros 2015).

In the following, we will give some insight how students temporarily modify their orientation frames using two examples from our interviews:

Case One: Giulia Botta

Giulias orientation frame belongs to the developmental type. In the following excerpt, we are looking at the role she attributes to her mentor. According to her attributed type, she sees her mentor as her adviser. Therefore, she expects constructive feedback about her teaching. She experiences a crisis as the mentor is not giving her any feedback. The cooperation with her co-trainee she cooperates with during her practical training helps her to overcome the challenge.

Giulia Botta: In my ideal-image or the experience we have made in other [practical trainings] is that the mentor ... has the lead in the sense of leading the preliminary meeting and the debriefing. ... And that wasn't the case at all during P2 [second practical training] ... We did ask her, of course. It should be coming a little bit from both sides. That the mentor offers something [constructive feedback] and that we can take it but not that we have to try to take but she is not giving us anything. Yes... we

[her and her co-trainee,] gave each other feedback, observed each others' teaching because we have tried it several times and ... the mentor didn't want to take that up. Every now and then she gave us some feedback, but we did profit a lot more from each other. I benefited from her teaching and she benefited from mine, yes. That became very important. And that was actually satisfying, yes.

Giulia has clear expectations concerning her mentors' role (*"In my ideal-image ... the mentor ... has the lead in the sense of leading the preliminary meeting and the debriefing"*). During her second practical training, she experiences a crisis of her assumptions. During the described practical training, she does not receive constructive feedback — even though she and her co-trainee explicitly request it (*"wasn't the case at all during P2 ...we did ask her, of course"*). Consequently, she assesses her expectations and holds on to wanting feedback and advice. As a strategy for coping with the crisis, she disconnects her expectations from her mentor's personality and starts a mutual mentorship with her co-trainee (*"gave each other feedback, observed each others' teaching because we have tried it several times and ... the mentor didn't want to take that up"*). This way, Giulia's co-trainee is replacing the mentor's counselor function. During the practical training, Giulia has learned the new point of view that the feedback for her teaching can be disconnected from the mentor's personality (*"I benefited from her teaching and she benefited from mine, yes. That became very important. And then was actually satisfying, yes"*). At the same time, she keeps her habit of mind and further reasserts that she is generally expecting the feedback from her mentor — she calls this her *"ideal image"* of a mentor.

Case Two: Chris Mahler

Chris' orientation frame belongs to the personal fulfillment type. This type entails practical training being seen as a space for personal development and creation of possibilities. Due to the challenging personality of his mentor, Chris experiences a crisis concerning his orientation in how he views the practical training. Focusing on passing through helps him to cope:

Chris Mahler: Yes, the last practical training, the fourth one, that was very difficult for me ... During the first weeks I have had a real fight with [the mentor] ... I wrote an email to the professor that I find her extremely deficit oriented ... She exposes the kids, she constantly put the kids down ... For me, a point was exceeded that I somehow could not tolerate it any longer... I even thought about whether I want to continue or whether I want to drop out of the practical training after this first week, after we have had this fight ... After a long conversation with her, I have decided to stay the three more weeks, of course, somehow ... (I) took the path of little resistance. Because I had the feeling, now so shortly before the end of my studies... maybe have to repeat the practical training ... I do not want to. ... Now, I did accomplish it ... Looking at her humanity, I still have the same opinion of her that I have had during the first week. There, nothing has changed.

Chris experiences a crisis, because — as opposite to his orientation frame — he does not experience his practical training as a space of personal development (*"It was very difficult for me... I have had a real fight with [the mentor]... a point was exceeded that I somehow could not tolerate it any longer"*).

Acting according to his orientation frame — where personal development and creation of possibilities are central — would include him dropping out of this kind of

practical training (*“I even thought about how I want to continue or whether I want to drop out of the practical training, after this first week, after we had this fight”*). But this would mean that he would extend the time of his study (*“maybe have to repeat the practical training ... I do not want to”*). Another way of coping with the crisis would entail giving up his orientation concerning his expectations from the practical training for the duration of the practical training, what he calls the “path of least resistance”: This is what he chooses to do: In coping with his crisis, he temporarily modifies his actions and, concerning the role of his practical training, acts according to the avoidance type that views the passing through as the integral aspect of practical training (*“I did accomplish it”*). On a long-term basis, he holds on to his existing orientation and only learns a new point of view that fits to the situation he finds himself in: In cases when he does not get the opportunity to personally develop, the passing through is his only goal. One detail proves that even during this temporary modification of his orientation, he does not give up his assumptions: the fact that he contacts the professor to report on the respective mentor. Furthermore, he maintains the opinion he has had of her from the beginning (*“I still have the same opinion of her that I have had during the first week. There, nothing has changed.”*).

6. Discussion

In the narrations cited above, students report about crisis they encountered during their practical training. In transformative learning theory, there exists a research gap in delineating what kind of crises lead to transformative learning.

The way students report about their crises gives hints that a process of learning or change could have happened: They discuss profound crises that still resonate as major challenges they had to overcome during practical training.

In the following, we will outline the ways these processes can be interpreted with the theory of transformative learning and the ways the findings shed a new light on the theory.

Triggered by a profound crisis, students start to look for a differentiation of their existing frames and for alternative frames that help them understand their new experiences. During this learning process, they start to act differently. It seems as though they are experimenting with new orientation frames: They either act according to a different orientation frame (Chris) or modify their existing beliefs (Giulia). Basically, they only learn new points of view and/or differentiate existing ones, and do not go through any transformation of their meaning perspectives. Therefore, the experienced crises have not (yet) triggered transformative learning processes. In their acting, students only seem to be temporarily guided by modified orientations. To a certain extent, they seem to assess their existing beliefs but reassert them despite the crises. After coping with the crisis, they go back to acting according to their old, established frameworks of orientation.

The students do not cope with the crises in the sense of experiential learning in a way that sustainable changes can be recognized. They rather develop compensation strategies that help them to overcome the challenging situation.

Looking at the whole professional learning experience of students becoming primary school teachers, further studies (Košinár 2015) highlight, that the most profound learning, which includes the change of habitualized orientations, happens after career entry. Also our recent data analysis of data with students after their career entry (t2; t3) gives hints that this is when the transformative learning experience is eventually catalyzed and when the former students start to cope with crises by running through the different steps of experiential (see 2a) and transformative learning (see 2b).

Having this context in mind, our findings shed further light on precursor steps of transformative learning with a special emphasis on professional development. Taylor (2006) has described such precursor steps as “setting the stage”. Our findings reaffirm what Laros (2015) called “predisorienting experiences” within her study on female immigrant entrepreneurs. She analyzed how a transformative learning experience can be (unconsciously) prepared by processes in which existing beliefs are further strengthened instead of questioned after the occurrence of a crisis.

7. Outlook

At first, it appears that students leave their existing orientation frames when triggered by critical incidents. The situational necessity of the crisis experienced within their practical training presupposes their movement through transformative learning processes. On closer inspection, however, it becomes obvious that they instead balance their crises. It never seems to be necessary for them, to create an entirely new situation (which would have been the case if Chris had dropped out of training or if Giulia had confronted her mentor about the missing feedback). They do not start to critically assess, and consequently transform, their existing meaning perspectives. Therefore, it can be assumed that students’ orientation frames remain static in the long-term.

For the short stint of the practical training, students face a compulsion to act. Any noticeable changes last only for the duration of the situational necessity, in this case, four weeks. This temporarily modification of perspectives helps students to pass through crises. It proves that they are adaptable and forces situational creativity (see Combe & Passeka 2012).

In sum, students acquire new points of view as they manage the experienced crises — as opposed to transforming existing ones. In fact, no changes have occurred on a habitualized level and therefore no transformative learning has occurred; we theorize two reasons for this:

1. The frame of their studies: Students are not fully self-responsible; they always work with a co-trainee and intensively cooperate with and are taken care of by their mentor. The responsibility stays with the mentor.
2. The practical training is a limited period of time (four weeks) that is defined as tolerable.

Hints of the two aforementioned framework conditions can be found in all of the students’ narrations. They seem to be responsible for the fact that no transformative learning has occurred. In the presented examples, students use the crises to reassure their existing perspectives.

Our findings suggest that the practical trainings work as special probationary phases during which transformative learning processes do not occur. This raises the questions: How do students/young professionals cope with later crises in their professional life when the framework conditions are different, such as for example after their career entry? What do processes of transformative learning look like when young professionals have to be self-responsible in front of a class on a long-term basis? When do young professionals start questioning existing perspectives and consequently transform them? What exact role do the outlined precursor steps of transformative learning play for the actual transformative learning processes? We have started to work on these questions by analyzing interviews that were conducted after career entry (t2, t3).

However, a study of young teachers concerning crises during the second phase of teacher training in Germany outlines that — depending on which of our four types of professionalization a person's orientation frame can be attributed to - processes of transformation can accompany processes of professionalization even before students enter teaching. Reasons for the transformation processes seemed to be the long-term basis of this second phase (18 months) as well as the fact that students had to act self-responsible to a certain extent. Interestingly, only the development-type experienced processes of transformation. Others, such as the avoidance-type, only acquired new points of view during this longer phase of teacher training (Košinár 2014). Looking at our present findings, the following questions arise: During students' studies, do only precursor steps of transformative learning (as in the present contribution) occur, or are there cases where transformation processes already start during this early phase of professional development? As for the present contribution, we could only use data that were gathered retrospectively at the end of students' studies; we assume that to answer this question, we'll need data that are gathered at several points in time during students' studies. Therefore, to shed further light on these processes that happen during students' entire studies, we are planning a real longitudinal study where data are gathered at several strategic times.

References

- Baumert, J. & Kunter, M. (2011): Das Kompetenzmodell von COACTIV. In: M. Kunter, J. Baumert, W. Blum, U. Klusmann, S. Kraus & M. Neubrand (Eds.): *Professionelle Kompetenz von Lehrkräften. Ergebnisse des Forschungsprogramms COACTIVE*. Münster
- Bohnsack, R. (2010): *Rekonstruktive Sozialforschung. Einführung in qualitative Methoden*. Opladen.
- Combe, A. (2010): Wie lassen sich in der Schule Erfahrungen machen? Lernen aus Sicht der Erfahrungstheorie. In: *Pädagogik* 62 (7-8), pp. 72-77.
- Combe, A., & Passeka, A. (2012): Und sie bewegt sich doch? Gedanken zu Brückenschlägen in der aktuellen Professions- und Kompetenzdebatte. In: *Zeitschrift für Bildungsforschung* 2 (2), pp. 91-108.
- Dewey, J. (1994): *Erziehung durch und für Erfahrung*. Stuttgart.
- Helper, W. (2007): Eine Antwort auf Jürgen Baumerts und Mareike Kunterts Kritik am strukturtheoretischen Professionsansatz. In: *Zeitschrift für Erziehungswissenschaft* 10 (4), pp. 567-579.
- Hericks, U. (2006): *Professionalisierung als Entwicklungsaufgabe*. Wiesbaden.
- Hericks, U. & Keller-Schneider, (2012)
- Košinár, J. (2014): *Professionalisierungsverläufe in der Lehrerbildung. Anforderungsbearbeitung und Kompetenzentwicklung im Referendariat*. Opladen.
- Košinár, J. (2015): *Professionalisierungstypen und ihre Wandlung in den Bildungsräumen Referendariat und Berufseinstieg*. Unpublished paper presentation at the congress of the German Educational Research Association (GERA), Kassel, 14.3.2016
- Laros, A. (2015): *Transformative Lernprozesse von Unternehmerinnen mit Migrationsgeschichte*. Wiesbaden
- Mezirow, J. (1991): *Transformative dimensions of adult learning*. San Francisco.
- Mezirow, J. (2000): Learning to Think Like an Adult. Core Concepts of Transformation Theory. In: J. Mezirow and Associates (Eds.): *Learning as Transformation*. San Francisco, pp. 3-33

- Nohl, A.-M. (2013): *Relationale Typenbildung und Mehrebenenvergleich*. Wiesbaden.
- Pille, Th. (2013): *Das Refrendariat. Eine ethnographische Studie zu den Praktiken der Lehrerbildung*. Bielefeld.
- Taylor, E.W. (1994): Intercultural competency: A Transformative Learning Process. *Adult Education Quarterly*, 44, (3), pp. 154-174
- Terhart, E. (2011): Lehrberuf und Professionalität: Gewandeltes Begriffsverständnis - neue Herausforderungen. In: W. Helsper & R. Tippelt (Eds.): *Pädagogische Professionalität. Zeitschrift für Pädagogik* (57. Beiheft), pp. 202-224.

Educational Relationship And Dialogue Through Autobiographical Methods

Gabriella Aleandri

Department of Education, Roma Tre University, Italy

Vincenza Russo

Nowadays, geographical distance shortening, physical barriers blasters and time-reducing communication forms (e.g. telematics) are available. On a hand these forms of communication facilitate the interactions and the exchange of messages among individuals, on the other hand, they could create a virtual space in which the individual tends to isolate him/herself, relegating human relationships within that space. In contemporary society, the preponderant role of the media (TV, PC, smartphone) leads to social forms of change and transformation, regarding to a kind of communication that is increasingly interconnected. These forms of communication, although useful in the process of acquiring new knowledge, use contracted and immediate forms, keeping people from carving out a space to stop in and think about one's own existential path. You must be aware that the relationships, as well as the dialogue among human beings, can be built if you consider the others. The impact of modernity has given rise to radical changes as to the way of thinking and seeing of peoples' cultural, value and religious differences, opening, on one side, to the inter- and trans-cultural communication and, at the same time, making the dialogue difficult on the other side.

The continuous migrations of peoples going to different geographical areas, especially to the West, fuels the debate about the sharing of a system of values and beliefs that does not belong to a particular culture, making it one of the most debated issues in recent times. Among the many reasons underlying the lack of dialogue, there is undoubtedly the cultural and sacred sphere exploitation, causing disorder at national and international level. Moreover, poverty, political instability and civil wars are powerful push migration factors. Sometimes, people involved in these processes are set in a sort of deconstruction and disorientation, up to a real loss of identity in some cases. So we wonder how we can face these problems, deriving also from the lack of values and belief systems sharing, in order to achieve a dialogue and constructive social relationships.

How can you achieve a deep and intimate dialogue with yourself and with the others, avoiding to hide behind a virtual world where an artificial "I" and "You" prevail? How to establish a dialogic relationship with people who have different views from yours? A possible way to accede to a confrontation in dialogue lies in enlarging the cultural exchanges circle. We have to respect the other, in a dimension (that it is still not achieved) of equality among peoples, States, individuals: freedom of thought, solidarity and knowledge of the others in a "dialogue" form, without any kind of discrimination, will be the main guidelines. One of the great challenges man is called to face is to enhance the experience through the encounter with the other. The key task is therefore to choose the solidarity and cooperation path instead of indifference.

Through dialogue, we open ourselves to the other, we confront, overcoming the ego / selfishness barriers, thus activating a critical and thoughtful spirit starting from ourselves and projected to the others. One of the educational objectives will therefore be to promote effective and efficient means through a dialogical relationship based on

respect for the others, their ideas, thoughts, feelings, increasing an as authentic and constructive as possible relationship.

In the new educational horizons, the importance of relationships and dialogue grows exponentially, also for transformative learning purposes. Dialogue is a form of communication that links each other and represents a possibility, among individuals, to grasp the deeper, hidden aspects and the sense of existence. From this awareness and these communicative and social interactions transformative actions and learning paths will be built. It is evident that man, in relationship with the others, will manage to know the depth of his being, to turn it into something that will improve his knowledge, his ideas, his thoughts and events.

Paulo Freire said that if we want to better understand ourselves we have firstly to understand the world in which we live. We must be as much aware that each person is a “world”, each person is unique, but, through targeted and specific pedagogical actions, we can have the opportunity to be part of a context in which the word is promoting historical, social and cultural "transformation.

In fact, Freire starts from the concept of “consciousness-ization” indicating that: “the authentic relational-dialogic identity of human beings should induce them to overcome the walls of silence, full literacy, and definitely to become social and historical beings, who think, communicate, transform, create and that realize dreams, who can to be indignant because they are able of loving”. (Freire, 2004, p. 35). He also argued that, by associating the action with reflection, the word becomes dialogue: “Dialogue is a meeting of men, through the mediation of the world, to give it a name, and that does not end in the I-You relationship” (Freire, 2002, p. 107). From this point of view, the dialogic education considers men as ongoing education beings, to whom must be given the opportunity to express their potential and their best side, sharing values, passions, concrete social, political and cultural commitments with the others.

Influenced by Khun’s paradigm, Freire’s consciousness-ization concept, and communicative action theory by Habermas, the American sociologist Jack Mezirow argues that “transformative learning refers to the process by which we transform our taken-for-granted frames of reference (meaning perspectives, habits of mind, mind-sets) to make them more inclusive, discriminating, open, emotionally capable of change, and reflective so that they may generate beliefs and opinions that will prove more true or justified to guide action” (Mezirow, 2000, pp. 5-8).

So the transformative learning theory becomes a process in which past experiences are revised in light of new learned concepts, turning into new patterns of action in order to deal with new experiences. According to this perspective, the idea that learning means basically attributing meaning to the perception and understanding data becomes crucial.

Individuals, especially in adulthood, in particular stages of their lives, are facing uncertain times, characterized by anxieties and fears. Frequently new situations generate concern; in this case the man tends to maintain his values, ideas, beliefs and opinions system, but not to change them. The transformative learning theory developed by Mezirow indicates three types of learning domains and tries to solve the problem about the discovery of new solutions by individuals, in order to overcome, or rather, to adapt to new situations.

He distinguished three types of learning: instrumental or technical, dialogic or practical and self-reflective or emancipatory. “Instrumental learning focuses on

objective empirical knowledge derived from the scientific method and is concerned with” learning to control or manipulate the environment or other people, as in task-oriented problem solving”- more simply, how to do something or how to perform” (Mezirow *et al.*, 2000 p. 8).

In this case the man acts on the environment, according to his aims and objectives that will be pursued, manipulating it and following technical rules. “Communicative learning involves dealing with the ideas of others and thus it frequently, requires us to confront the unknown” (Mezirow, 1991, p. 82).

Such a type of learning contemplates the relationship among adults and the involvement of emotions and value systems. Indeed, when confronted with unknown people we assimilate new schemes, new points of view, and internalize them in order to achieve a strengthened sense of the self, a more critical reflection of the way in which social relations and culture have influenced our beliefs and feelings and, finally, we adopt more functional strategies and resources for future actions. “Emancipatory learning involves critical reflection and is the domain of learning where we learn to free ourselves from constraints placed on us by our uncritically assimilated assumptions and expectations” (Mezirow, 1991, p. 72). So Mezirow recognized critical self-reflection as crucial element to achieve transformation.

This assumption leads to a critical and flexible reflection about the world around us and ourselves, learning to consciously accept the other's point of view, freeing us from the constraints and the rigid patterns we believed taken once and for all.

The transformative learning theory describes the way in which men seek new solutions when they live critical times of their existence and seek new solutions. In this way, they manage to outdo themselves, their fears and their anxieties accepting and understanding the “new”.

Thus they become more aware individuals, suited to the uncertainty that characterizes their existence. The attribution of meaning we give to the world is meaningful and the communication among human beings is effective when is not solipsistic and arbitrary. In fact, we continuously negotiate and validate communication with the other. Habermas, in his *Theory of Communicative Action*, explains that social life is not only determined by the fact that man can act and transform the surrounding environment through technical and instrumental patterns, dictated by the will of strategically manipulating the man, tying him to constraints and ideologies.

“The concept of communicative action presupposes the use of language as a medium for a kind of reaching understanding, in the course of which participants, through relating to a world, reciprocally raise validity claims that can be accepted or contested” (Habermas, 1985, p. 99).

He therefore argues that the intersubjective relationships are key to social behavior. Language is the constitutive mechanism of any social activity, being also a tool that allows you to challenge or validate specific topics.

Habermas, moreover, argues that “it serves the symbolic constitution and reproduction of common knowledge convictions and valuations (culture) the formation of legitimate orders by means of which the communicating parties establish and secure their solidarity (society) and the cultivation of subjects capable of speaking and acting” (Idem, p. 136).

Habermas, in his philosophical conception, stresses the importance of a society that

abandons the image of the subject caught in his solitary consciousness, and embraces the idea of a society made up of several persons who, through language, think and act as socialized and vital world integrated individuals.

AUTOBIOGRAPHICAL METHOD IN EDUCATIONAL RELATIONSHIPS

In this conceptual framework, the dialogue becomes a fundamental element for building educational and training processes, overcoming the difficulties arisen from confrontation moment. Among the different approaches that substantiate and fuel the educational / training relationships, there is the autobiographical method.

In recent decades, pedagogical research has widely used this method, attributing significance to it for its educational, learning, self-education and therapeutic value.

This method, in fact, turned out to be crucial to its multi-functional, efficient and effective being. Its popularity in the anthropological, sociological, psychological and pedagogical is witnessed by many studies and research conducted by several national and international authors who stressed emphatically the educational and formative value of the autobiography.

Pineau, Le Grand (1993), Dominice (1991), Josso's (1995) studies in France; Merrill and West's studies (2012) in England; Alheit *et al.*' studies (1995) in Germany; Demetrio (1999), Cambi (2004), Alberici (2002), then Formenti and Bergamini's studies in Italy, were fundamental. Also, we remember the "epic" work of Thomas and Znaniecki related to the experiences of Polish immigrants in the USA, entitled "The Polish Peasant in Europe and America", published in 1918-1921.

But only from the Nineties, autobiographical approaches in both training and research has been promoted and cultivated in pedagogy. "Storytelling is an important dimension of human communication in all societies: useful for generating and conveying meaning and to give guidance on what could have been a chaotic brutal, unpredictable and world" (Merrill, West, 2009, p. 25).

In such a setting, autobiography is proposed as a self-reflective, meditative and self-training practice, as individuals, through the narration of its history, can leave oral or written testimonies that make him/her a participant in a one's own identity construction and reconstruction process; it is also proposed as a stimulus to dialogue with the self and with the others. "The autobiographical approach in education falls within the qualitative methodological paths, whose scientific strategy is embedded in the concrete factual educational action" (Demetrio, 1992, p.86) In addition, a new awareness of us and a new communicative dimension addressed to confrontation, firstly with ourselves and then with others, allows us to open up transformative learning approach, opening the door to flexibility, continuous growth and change.

Through this method you can establish relationships with people, trying to understand their experiences, their views and how they experience and interpret their situation. Hence, the autobiographical method fit into different areas; it is spreading exponentially in almost all contexts from the formal one to non-formal and informal one: in schools, for example, through studies aimed at understanding the interactions between the various actors involved (primarily investigating the quality of the educational relationships between teachers and students), among community and entertainment services, in street education, in prison, in prevention initiatives, enabling tools that facilitate the understanding of the identity construction process.

Children, adolescents, adults and elderly people without any distinction of sex, gender, ethnicity or culture may be involved. Each person is inevitably the undisputed main character of his/her own story. Self-reflection allows a fuller awareness of one's own existence, facilitated through memories, sensations, feelings, suggestions, trying to recover what was believed might be lost. "Even the cognitive dimension of the autobiographical work, should not overshadow the emotional affective. Feelings and emotions that play a role into making autobiography, need special attention by educators" (Moroni, 2006, p. 24)

The autobiographical method is also based on the assumption that to know a social phenomenon such as immigration, stories of drug addicts in communities, deviance, alcoholism, abuse, etc. collecting data on a statistical level is not enough, but you have to know close the reality to better understanding facts phenomena, in order to raise awareness of the relationship between the actors and dialogue, to help them recognize themselves primarily identity and history holders and then as memory and words keepers, with the view to remember the facts and the most significant events, through verbal and non-verbal communication.

Alberici (2000) stressed that the use of autobiographical practice is presented as a way of empirical research, whose purposes relate to specific cognitive objectives, to qualitative hypothesis testing, to the understanding of problems and situations on the basis of subsequent interventions. From many stories, collected with specific tools like the questionnaire or the autobiographical narrative interview, we can build not only stories or pieces of them, but we can also see glimpses of social reality, so comparing it to other stories, in order to search for similarities, differences, patterns and structures.

In times like these, characterized by acceleration, immediacy and fragmentation because of the rapid social changes and the advancement of new technologies, because of the incessant race to a time when the subject is no longer a private space holder but is the creator of many areas where the self is likely to become fragmented and lose its identity, it's easy to get lost and do not have very solid reference points.

Reflecting on one's own life, on the most important events of the past, become crucial for the individual, overwhelmed by the multiplicity of commitments that daily life holds for him/her. Relations allow us to establish relationships with the others to share positive and negative moments. We reflect on our lives through forms of communication that put us in relationship and dialogue to the ourselves and to the others, sharing thoughts and experiences.

"The contact with the most authentic self, arise from a more and more refining and careful writing, which researches the depth and the inexpressible, using different languages that help to go beyond the limitations of words" (Formenti 2009, p. 30). The dialogue, therefore, is a crucial element for individuals; without it we could not establish relations and moreover there would be the risk not to deeply understand ourselves and the neighbors, reducing everything to individualistic mere existence.

THE RESEARCH PROJECT

Basing on these assumptions, we developed a research project, currently in progress, entitled "Education, rehabilitation and care through storytelling and autobiographical writing", in prison, of which we intend to present some significant results. The importance of communicative and relational aspects, through the dialogue, becomes

even greater in a context like that of the prison and the use of different instruments (the autobiographical writing and storytelling) is used to facilitate and encourage as much as possible communicative and educational processes. The research project had pursued at two different prisons contexts: “Common Inmates Department” and “High Security Department”, which are located in the same region in South Italy.

METHODOLOGIES

The research project has been structured in the following steps: presentation and explanation of the project and of the functions of autobiographical methods to detainees, distribution of an autobiographical writing format, storytelling semi-structured interview, a cognitive / evaluative final questionnaire.

The autobiographical writing format is the result of an original designing and it had been already used in many of our pedagogical and educational research projects. It composed of five “frameworks that allow flashbacks into the past of one's experiences through writing terms chosen to identify, concisely but full of meanings, facts, events, people, etc., within a structured/flexible framework which acts as a plot outline. Through these stresses, the author / actor of autobiographical writing is guided, supported and facilitated not only bring out memories in recording, but also in giving meaning and significance to their own experiences” (Aleandri, 2012, p. 76).

Therefore, this model is divided into a series of stimuli that help participants to recall the main events of their lives. It offers cognitive, perceptive, olfactory and emotional / affective stimuli. In the five tabs available it allows marking certain stages of life: birth / childhood, adolescence, early working experiences, today and how I imagine myself in ...

The functions of autobiographical writing have enabled us to activate the depth of the educational and training process, knowing the main events that contributed to the growth and development of each protagonist and plus we had the opportunity to understand facts, experiences and social events, cultural, and also political and economic.

Participants in the autobiographical writing project, through their memories and their stories, they managed to project in a time dimension expanse, which stimulates reflection and self-awareness and about the others.

Through the stimuli offered in autobiographical writing format, memory and records are stressed. In this way, we can access the identity of each one, finding it or rebuilding it. Jervis (2011) argues that our sense of identity depends on our social dimension. If we are deprived of it, our own consciousness falters and tapers.

The time allowed for reflecting, in silence and in their intimacy, returned to the subject memories that he thought he had lost forever, by awakening the senses of smell nature, perceptual, sensory, that pervaded his mind. In such a circumstance, the prisoner, through writing, he wanted to express his feelings, his emotions and events both positive and negative, because he is stimulated and guided by a form of storytelling that proved to be full of meaning.

“The protagonist of the autobiography is the writing, which allows us to explore our inner world, but it is a writing that has a social destination too: to communicate, to let know and to make known to others, leaving a trail of us and of our individual story that is intertwined, however, the social and cultural history of the context in which we

have lived and / or we are living” (Aleandri, 2012 p. 62).

The dialogue with oneself, in this case by writing, also has the function to reinterpret his own world and to review his own identity in a different way, perhaps new. This process also urged discovering or rediscovering important values that we thought we had lost. Precisely through this rediscovering, the subject is able to regain guide of the process of identity construction.

So autobiographical writing serves several functions: first, a person can leave a trace of himself telling his story and communicating it to others, maintaining its authenticity and also as "self-care" for its potential cathartic / liberating. Writing, thus understood, becomes “fertile place to invent or discover other ways to feel, observe, scrutinize and record the world inside and outside of us ...” (Demetrio, 1999).

In addition, dialogue and retrieval of memories of the most significant experiences in life they facilitate and also an attitude of openness towards others, towards interpersonal and positive social relationships. The autobiographical methods, then, help to open up to the procedural dimensions, diachronic and synchronic, by managing to overcome moments of stalemate and impasse experiences toward open to change, flexible, sensitive to transformative learning.

After completing the autobiographical writing format, participating inmates were involved in the story-telling semi-structured interview to access, through direct conversation, the many details that have enhanced our research project. The biographical interview allows you to speak and understand the life of the people, in a diachronic dimension. It allows, that is, to understand their paths, their experiences and everything had deeply marked them.

The choice of that investigative / educational tool was made because, when persons are stimulated through dialoguing face-to-face and the creation of an empathic relationship, those people are stimulated to communicate attitudes, feelings, perceptions and expectations. They can also understand in more in depth and consciously their experiences and so open up to a new stage of life characterized by flexibility and by transformative learning.

Interactional nature of the story-telling interview allows to know each other, initially between the interviewee (the prisoner) and the interviewer (member of the research team). “Telling experiences is considered a social situation, in which takes place the construction, reproduction and communication of forms of sociality” (Bichi, 2002, p. 39).

Such a process experienced by the teller allows to explain and argue, giving meaning to own experience and own lived. The dialogic relationship has strengthened the confidence in the interviewee, when the interviewer proves an attitude of openness to others, listening and understanding toward him.

All the feelings, the emotions, the sensations, the suggestions, while being told, have gone without any filter, as the narrative interview *proprium* is the “authentic relationship” between the actors involved.

Being able to listening to the other is an important feature for those who need to be able to establish a dialogue. Listener also knows that an educational relationship has based on reciprocity. A key element is certainly empathy, that is, be prepared to drop himself in the experience of others, understand and accept all that is narrated and especially not to judge, then reflect and look for new solutions.

In the prison inmates have a strong need to talk, talk, express themselves and tell and make it through all forms of communication, both verbal and nonverbal, to be understood, listened to, but mostly accepted.

After the narrative interview, it was distributed a cognitive / evaluative final questionnaire. The latter allows the subject to focus on the autobiographical experience lived and informs us on his approval / evaluation rating. It was asked subjects even if writing was helpful in stimulating to project themselves into the future through the reflections on their life path. It was also asked which were the emotions they felt at the beginning of the format completion. In the last part of the questionnaire, finally, it is a dedicated space for any reflection or thought on the experience lived during the autobiographical writing in the format.

Data analysis was carried out by quantitative and qualitative methods, the latter moved from an original revision of the Grounded Theory by Glaser and Strauss (1967), and the further studies by Merrill and West (2009). The process began by reading and analysing the writings, by encoding and decoding, by labelling in order to catch main meaning. Subsequently categories and macro-categories have been identified, to achieve at the so-called “core category”, aimed at understanding the deeper meanings but also widespread.

FINDINGS

The first research results clearly showed that prisoners have a great need and desire to reflect, communicate and tell. In reference to the use of autobiographical writing, in fact, almost all of the sample of detainees said they had tried different sensations and feelings, from the interest, to the pleasure, the curiosity and even the relief. The responses also showed that almost all had also come to the awareness of the importance of interpersonal relationships. There were mentioned, indeed, the importance of family, of friendship and of work.

It was also recognized a great desire in detainees to recall their past experiences and to express their moods through feelings such as nostalgia for the past, but also anger, helplessness, negative moments that disrupted their lives, as the loss of a family member or of a friend, the anguish of having to serve jail time for a long time, and the expectation of a process by which they hope to get out as innocent.

From the responses, however, is also evident the acquired awareness on the importance attached to positive events, to share important moments in life, like the birth of a child, marriage, ceremonial events, etc.

Some feelings that mostly come out, are hoping to be reunited with own family and the implementation of the desire for a better future for own children, including by realizing in affective relationships and work.

In addition, many inmates have freely affirmed the determination not to repeat the same mistakes made in the past to avert further suffering, not only to themselves but also to their families and loved ones.

Moreover, many hopes not to return more in prison, because it is perceived as a place of anguish and source of depersonalization.

Instead, about the experience of autobiographical writing and story-telling interview, almost all of the sample of detainees said they had tried different feelings, ranging by the interest, pleasure, curiosity and even relief.

Having remembered and told the major events of their lives, it helped reinforce the relational-dialogical aspect, in a context such as the prison where the need for dialogue is very strong and it is crucial to be more experienced.

The relationships, which are established through dialogue, will reveal significant precisely because they are characterized by respect, by listening, by understanding, flexibility. They are, indeed, open to learning, transformation and they are key for change.

CONCLUSION

To encourage dialogue within difficult situations such as the prison means first educate and re-educate the detainee with awareness to recognize his experience, the choices he made, the positive experiences but also the mistakes he did, and so on.

In this way, he will be able, through words and writing, launching into a temporal dimension that will allow to reflect on his past experience, but at the same time he will have the desire to imagine himself in a purposeful and better future.

According to Buber teaching, education does not exhaust its role in relation to the individual, because it concerns certainly the life of communities, groups, cultures. It is accomplished within and by means of interpersonal relations.

Buber, indeed, gives the relationship a full recognition of otherness from a perspective of openness that listens, encourages and urges. Relationship does not proceed according to principles of indifference, of closure and of destructive inhibition of the other.

Interpersonal relationships, therefore, give meaning to life and relate to others becomes an unavoidable need, especially in contexts where this is made difficult.

Every relationship can become creative moment, where men do not exhaust the I-Thou relationship, but they give substance to emotions, feelings, shared in any space.

The educational process is always peculiarly dialogic and story-telling: it is intrinsically relational, and in it, in the negotiation of one's self with that of others is an element of vital importance. In this perspective, telling about self can find their validation as a training tool.

Going further, “education, called not to be sterile and ahistorical but to enter critically in a constructive dialogue with the reality, with the culture, cannot avoid being ‘political education’, active commitment for each person to ‘participate’, to be actor of world change that is delivered. Men have, through the practical education, to overcome the ‘historic schizophrenia’, which wants them absent from the world, and to be truly ‘wet by reality’” (Freire, 2002, p. 106).

The actual pedagogical vocation is stated in the aspiration to not individualistic freedom, but always constantly in dialogue with others, in that way that Freire calls of "conscientization".

The ability to listen and empathy offer a dimension of respect and accepting that therefore encourage dialogue, expression, transformative learning and ultimately growth.

REFERENCES

- Alberici, A., (2000), *Educazione in età adulta. L'approccio biografico nella ricerca e nella formazione. Percorsi per la formazione dei formatori.* Roma: Armando.
- Aleandri, G., (2012), *Scritture adulte. L'autobiografia come ricerca e costruzione del sé.* Roma: Armando.
- Aleandri, G., (2011), *Educazione permanente nella prospettiva del lifelong e lifewide learning* (p. 157). Roma: Armando
- Bichi, R., (2002), *L'intervista biografica. Una proposta metodologica.* Milano: Vita e Pensiero.
- Bruner, J. S., (2009), *A study of thinking.* Tr.it. Roma: Armando Editore.
- Cambi, F., (2002), *L'autobiografia come metodo formativo.* Roma-Bari: Laterza.
- Cavaleri, P., (2007), *Vivere con l'altro. Per una cultura della relazione.* Roma: Città Nuova.
- Demetrio, D.,(1999), *Raccontarsi. L'autobiografia come cura di sé.* Milano: Raffaello Cortina.
- Demetrio, D., (1992), *Micropedagogia,* Firenze: La nuova Italia, p 86
- Formenti, L., (2009), *Attraversare la cura. Relazioni, contesti e pratiche della scrittura di sé.* Trento: Edizioni Erickson.
- Freire, P., (2002), *La pedagogia degli oppressi.* Torino: EGA.
- Freire, P., (2004), *Pedagogia dell'autonomia. Saperi necessari per la pratica educativa.* Torino: EGA.
- Habermas, J., (1985), *The Theory of Communicative Action: Reason and the rationalization of society.* Boston: Beacon Press.
- [Hans Joas](#), H.,(1991), *Communicative Action: Essays on Jürgen Habermas's.* [Axel](#): MIT Press.
- Jervis, G., (2011), *Il mito dell'interiorità. Tra psicologia e filosofia, a cura di Gilberto Corbellini e Massimo Marraffa,* Torino: Boringhieri.
- Mezirow, J., (1991), *Transformative Dimensions of Adult Learning.* Wiley: University of Michigan.
- Merrill, B., West, L., (2009), *Autobiographical methods in social research.* London: Sage.
- Milan, G., (1994), *Educare all'incontro: la pedagogia di Martin Buber.* Roma: Città Nuova.
- Minolli, M., (2015), *Essere e divenire. La sofferenza dell'individualismo.* Milano: Franco Angeli.
- Mora, E., (1994), *Comunicazione e riflessività: Simmel, Habermas, Goffman* Milano: Vita e Pensiero.
- Moroni, I., (2006), *Bambini e adulti si raccontano. Formazione e ricerca autobiografica a scuola.* Milano: Franco Angeli.
- Taylor, E W., Cranton, P.,(2012), *The Handbook of Transformative Learning: Theory, Research, and Practice.* San Francisco: John Wiley & Sons.

Action research as a dialogical context for critical reflection and continuous professional development

Labrina Gioti & Mairi Ftika
Hellenic Open University

Abstract

This paper presents the findings of an action research project which aimed to promote the dialogue between personal theory and professional practice of a Maths teacher, as well as to explore the contribution of the critical reflection at the transformation of her practice and her professional development.

In the era of lifelong learning and education the critical reflection aims at the learner's emancipation and autonomy in order to gain better control of rapid change and facilitate decision making both in their personal and professional lives and public issues as well and thus it has become crucial for education (Franz, 2007; Kokkos, 2005; Jarvis & Griffin, 2003; Brookfield, 2005). In the last decades a wide range of researches study the interrelation between teachers' personal theories and practices in education (Brookfield, 2005; Merriam, 2002; Mezirow, 1991 & 2000; Gioti, 2010) and specifically the role of critical reflection, as a continuous process of reassessment and improvement of educational praxis and its underlying values, in the professional development of educators (McAteer & Dewhurst, 2010; Bell, & al., 2010; Ovens & Tinning, 2009; Hargreaves & Fullan, 2008; Appl & Yorde, 2005; Day, 2003). Additionally, relevant research reveals that whenever critical reflection is practiced, it results in personal growth, and increases professionalism, democracy and justice in the learning environment, it enhances awareness of the complexities of teaching and helps to better meet the needs of diverse learners, and also develops collaboration among educators (Frydaki, 2015; Lupinski & al., 2012; Franz, 2007; Day, 2003; Munoz-Chrobak, 2001). Moreover, critical reflection may promote critical consciousness and learning through action and reflection, empower both educators and learners to involve actively to a more participatory learning society (Ovens & Tinning, 2009; Cranton, 1994) and develop more equal school relations and

potentially contribute to human emancipation and social transformation (Giroux, 2012).

Based on the above problematic, we conducted an action research project which aimed at promoting a dialectic dialogue between theory and practice of a Mathematics teacher. The purpose was also to explore the contribution of critical reflection to her professional development and its impact on the students' motivation to actively participate and promote team work and cooperation in math lessons.

Theoretical Framework

The interrelation between personal theories and educational practice

Personal theory is a system of theoretical knowledge and experience that evolves progressively and is determined by a) biography, b) the condition of the classroom, c) the organization of the school's system and d) the effects of the teachers' initial and further education. It starts taking form during early schooling, then at college and it is finally crystallized through the teachers' active engagement in the school reality (Richardson, in Fives & Gill, 2015). It is constituted of "subjective and non-systematized mental forms that the teachers possess and include values, beliefs and experiences that affect consciously or not the shaping of their educational practice" (Daskolia, 2004:26). It is characterized by contradictory and conflicting elements that are rooted in philosophical, political and ideological perceptions or personal experience. Some of its aspects are conscious and explicit while others are latent and implicit. It influences the educational practice and the way it is perceived and interpreted as a scientific knowledge as well as their role as educators. (Tsafos, 2012; Frydaki, 2009).

In an extensive review of relevant studies and researches, Fives & Gill (2015) claim that personal theories⁵ (Handal & Lauvas, 1987) are personal constructions (Sendan & Roberts, 2006) or "mental maps" (Elliott, 1993) or a representation of the teachers' belief system (Richardson, 1996; Pajares, 1992) and are characterized by "subjectivity", "particularity" and "circumstantiality". Many researches show that the teaching actions and decisions in the classroom are affected by them (Fives & Gill, 2015; Gioti, 2010; Frydaki, 2009; Chant, & al. 2004; Daskolia, 2004). Significant in the understanding of the personal theory and practice interrelation was the theoretical contribution of Argyris & Schön (1974:7), who distinguished between the espoused theory –the one a person explicitly supports or thinks they practice- and the theory-in-use, that is the values, beliefs and theories they actually practice, and it may include a typical theory or an implicit-implied theory. They also claimed (2003:224), that "the theories of professional practice are better understood as special cases of theories-in-action that determine every purposeful behavior". The distinction between the espoused or personal-theory and the theory-in-use or practice lays on the fact that the first one concerns a theory-in-action while the latter the premises, values and beliefs that a person actually use in their praxis (Gioti, 2012). The process that makes possible their conscious interrelation is the reflection in action (during teaching), on action (after teaching reflecting back and adjusting it) and for action (decisions about the desired outcome in future teaching) (Lupinski & al., 2012:83).

⁵In the bibliography are used as synonyms the alternative terms: "theories of practice", "theories of practical knowledge", "theories of action", "meaning schemes" "habits of mind", "subjective theories", "latent" or "implicit" or «non-verbal" or "hidden theories", "social representations", etc.

Critical reflection and professional development

There is a wide range of theoretical approaches that classifies a reflective process, based on its purpose, into three broad categories. Its purpose may range from acquiring skills and abilities, the personal development and improvement to the realization of political and social forces that distort and restrict the teachers' educational behaviour (Tsafos, 2012; Kokkos, 2010; Kalaitzopoulou, 2001). Specifically:

The technocratic rationality approach concentrates on the effective implementation of the theory in order to achieve predetermined objectives and countable results (Tsafos, 2012; Day, 2003; Zeichner & Liston, 1987). This approach, draws on the positivist paradigm and is governed by a deterministic logic. It emphasizes the compliance with the rules and criteria of rationality when analysing an idea or situation. In some cases, it extends to include the decision-making, as the final stage of the reflective process while the theoretical and research conclusions are adopted by teachers as directives (Kokkos, 2010).

The person-centered approach focuses on the teacher and the construction and reconstruction of their personal knowledge about their teaching and life. The different theoretical aspects are integrated in the interpretative paradigm. They aim at the immediate resolution of problems in the professional praxis and at the awareness of the perceptual and experienced subconscious processes and theories that are reproduced and are, eventually, applied to the teacher's practice, in order to reframe the knowledge or belief system that originally guided their practice (Louden, 2008; Dirkx, 2001). This reframing is conducted whenever the teacher faces problematic situations and disorienting dilemmas that lead to the reconsideration of the dysfunctional premises of their practice, and consequently to the review of alternative actions that may evoke partial or radical transformation of their frame of references and to the total signification system of a person (Bateson in Kokkos, 2010; Kalaitzopoulou, 2001; Mezirow & ass., 2000; Cranton, 1994).

Critical approaches closely associate the questioning of established thoughts, feelings, premises, perceptions and actions with the historically defined and socially constructed reality that shapes them. They draw on the Critical Theory, Freire's work and other criticalists. A critically reflective professional, through a continuous dialogical and dialectical process, sets crucial questions regarding the school's objectives, about what is taught and how, the way the students learn, how the knowledge is produced and how they construct the ideological and political positions from which they speak (Freire, 1999; Giroux 2012). This presupposes the renouncement of objective rationality and the proof that all rationalities are partial, so that the relationship between knowledge and power will always be open to dialogue and critical self-involvement. It also presupposes the critical understanding of the frames of reference and the premises that shape them, together with the socially constructed nature of the school knowledge and the political function of the institutions (Giroux 2012; Brookfield, 2006:168; Mezirow, 1991:xiii).

In our research we choose a critical-hermeneutic perspective for the critical reflection or critical self-reflection, on personal theories which guide educational practices in the context of a dialectical critical discourse (Mezirow & ass., 2000) which emphasizes in power relations, ethical and value issues, lived experiences and emancipation. This process may result in the learner's transformation which varies from making more informed and conscious decisions to solve actual problems in real situations to validating a better judgement, transforming interpersonal relations, taking a personal

social action or getting involved actively to a collective political or social action (Giroux, 2012; Mezirow 1990 στο Kokkos, 2010; Brookfield, 2006; Apple, 2002; Freire, 1974).

Action research as a critical dialogue that transforms professional practice

Action research formulated both the theoretical background and the research method, because it offers a reflective learning strategy to the teachers, while it constitutes the means by which the dialogue between practice and its epistemological ground, takes place (Day, 2003; Carr & Kemmis, 1997). It was also used as a collaboration and support structure to the development of the participants. Action research connects dialectical theory with practice and not as a mere application of the first to the latter (Grundy, 2003). As a circular process of reflection and action, it theorizes practice and questions the conceptions and premises by which it is grounded and influenced (Carr & Kemmis, 1997). Consequently, this might transform the original theory from which it derives while it questions the established educational knowledge and uncovers the contradictions of school education (McLaren, 2010). Thus, it aims for the perspective transformation of the conflicting and dysfunctional premises of the teaching practice and promotes teachers' professional development (Gioti & Flouris, 2014).

In this process, practice co-develops with the teacher's personal theories. Simultaneously, the intersubjective dialectic which is produced from the critical dialogue with the practice is facilitated and encouraged through the relationship with the critical friend who becomes a co-researcher (Lomax, 2000). Additionally, the critical reflective analysis of the practice is fostered by the cooperation and the dialogue which constitutes not only a methodological tool but an epistemological stance as well and consequently creates a supportive professional context that offers alternative perspectives and interpretations of the reality (Altrichter & al., 2001; Lomax, 2000; Carr & Kemmis, 1997).

Relevant studies illustrated the action research's contribution to the promotion of the professional development of teachers, through the transformation of established perceptions and attitudes (Lykometrou, 2014; Gutierrez & Boero, 2006; Magos, 1998), as well as their contribution to the reinforcement of their autonomy through the reconsideration of their personal theories and teaching perceptions (Avgitidou, 2005; Braz-Dias, 1999). Moreover, they showed that it can bring broader changes in the classroom or school (Kouloumparitsi & al. in Mpagakis, 2002), through a reflective and interactive communication between the participants (Katsenou & Nomikou, 2010; Gutierrez & Boero, 2006; Kaloudiotis & al., 2005). Other researches highlighted the difficulties regarding the deepening of reflective practices (Kakana & Kapahtsi, 2010) and the espousal of a critical stance towards the role of the sociopolitical frame (Tsafos, 2012).

Research Methodology and process

The teacher-researcher carried out the action research from January to February 2015 in the public high school, where she teaches Euclidian Geometry in B' class. The participants were the 23 students of the class while a second Math's teacher of the same school unit participated having the double part of a fellow reviewer and an observer. The role of the critical friend was to provide a critical and supportive cooperation, therefore leading to alternative perspectives in theorizing and interpreting practice (Altrichter & al., 2001).

The action research spiral developed through the circles of "planning, action, systematic observation and reflection" (Carr & Kemmis, 1997). Fifteen (15) teaching

interventions took place: 2 for the identification of the problem, 7 in the PC lab and 6 in the classroom with cooperative groups. Each teaching intervention lasted 45 minutes, aiming to process Maths as a totality of concepts and processes which are both constructed by people and do not constitute perennial truths that are accepted and reproduced per se (Hoyle, 1995). The critical friend was observant in eleven interventions.

The survey quality data derived from three sources: the teacher-researcher, the fellow reviewer and the students. To collect the data we used participant observation (diaries-D), systematic observation (observation sheet-OS) semi-structured interviews with the critical friend (ICF) and the students (IS) and open questionnaires with students (QS). The qualitative thematic data analysis method was applied to assess the data.

Findings

Through the data analysis and coding process, four main categories emerged as follows:

Inconsistencies between personal theories and practice – Identification of the problem

The first step in the process of an action research is to locate an attainable starting point, that is, areas of inconsistencies or contradictions and disorientating dilemmas that bring out the “problem” that faces the educational practice (Mezirow, 1991; Altrichter & al., 2001). The teaching interventions to the teacher's standard established and everyday teaching practice showed that she followed a strictly structured direct instruction teaching method, with hardly any deviations from the original goals.

D1: The total time available for the accomplishment of the goals is rather pressing upon me and such a pressure leads to wrong decisions. S. had his own perspective when it came to the calculation of acreage. I overlooked the value of discussing about his perspective and applied my own way of thinking in order to complete the syllabus that I had predetermined, on time.

The interaction with the students was mainly restricted to asking questions, most of them articulated by the teacher. A small number of activities were used for the application of new knowledge, during which time the students worked individually. There was no interaction observed between the students.

OS1: The idea of having the students that sat at the same desk cooperating with each other was fruitless. Could it be that they were given no opportunities in order to learn how to cooperate?

The analysis of the teacher's organizing and teaching choices delimitates the problem as follows: The teaching aimed at developing comprehension schemes by cultivating analogical and deductive reasoning that is the learning objectives. However, the methods that were adopted led to behavioral learning patterns that mostly serve objectives that relate to the student's performance. A contradiction that highlighted the inconsistency between the espoused-theory and the theory-in-use by the mathematician (Argyris & Schon, 1974).

The way the teacher handled the questions and answers of the students, revealed that she integrates the students into her way of thinking. This reflects the implicit acceptance of her teaching role as a mere duty to cover a bigger part of the syllabus, overlooking that the students become passive listeners who approach new knowledge as the transmission of a truth, the one articulated by the teacher. In addition, in this particular environment the pedagogical relationship is restricted to a teaching relationship. As Gotovos (1990:208) remarks: “Nowadays, schools have teachers and

students who are not acquainted with one another and students are the least responsible for this situation”.

The structure of the activities gave no opportunities for interaction between the students. The lack of a cooperative climate leads the students to seek individual success and intensifies competitive relationships. In this context, the “weak” students experience difficulties when it comes to filling cognitive gaps, thus making their self-esteem even worse. Such feelings make them believe that they are “inadequate” and have a certain position in school and society in general (Husen, 1991).

The high school's exam-centered direction as well as the demands of the social context that perceives high school as an education of immediate performativity, both led to a choice of mathematical activities which are mostly focused on repeating old ones that can be easily evaluated. This compliance incorporates and reproduces in teachers, students and parents alike, the belief that learning is about good grades and not a process for gaining school knowledge with a self-evident value for the student (Maier, 1995). Additionally, that kind of knowledge narrows their frame of reference and denies them the possibility of associating this knowledge with the social reality (McLaren, 2010).

Teaching interventions through the use of information technology

The teacher acknowledged all the premises that guide her practice and thus was led to trying new teaching approaches, based on constructivism. She deployed exploratory software in the information technology (IT) laboratory, where the students, divided into groups of two, interacted with each other.

QS3:I liked that we were able to “experiment” and, generally, try out different things, before we started working on the solution of the problem.

QS10:The lesson becomes more interesting when we cooperate with the students and we fill each other's gaps.

The multimodality of the IT environment as well as the inductive approach it offers made the use of a PC more appealing and as a result students participated actively to the lesson, even the “weak” ones, who are marginalized during a teacher-centered lesson (Gutierrez & Boero, 2006). This observation needed to be verified through the evaluation of the lesson's reconstruction with an anonymous questionnaire filled in by the students.

D4:I must ask for their opinion on the way the lesson is carried out. It is important for me to know, since I am not the one deciding everything anymore. Whatever goes on inside the classroom now depends largely on the students.

The data analysis showed that the teacher deliberately adopted the role of encouraging and facilitating an active participation and interaction between all the students and thus handing over the management of the lesson to them. Moreover, the aim was also to bring out the hypothetico-inductive aspect of the mathematical subject as well as the deductive one, while the content of the activities caused some considerations on the part of the students, regarding the neutrality and objectivity of the mathematical knowledge and the possibility to use it in such a way that it can act as a means of social control (Braz-Dias, 1999).

The choice of deploying IT was made because they contribute to a creative and active learning, since the students do not act as users but they are engaged in reflective processes, in order to have a meaningful participation (Mikropoulos, 2011; Gutierrez & Boero, 2006;). However, we should not ignore the fact that the entry of NT in the curriculum aims to adapt, on the one hand, the education to the developments of the productive forces of the post-industrial society or the information and knowledge

society and on the other hand, to connect the curriculum to new forms of cultural capital focused on change, readiness, flexibility and innovation (McLaren, 2010; Husen, 1991).

The greatest challenge was adjusting the teaching hour's length to the implementation of reflective processes and overcoming the restrictions of a traditional style teaching. At this point, a contradiction is observed between the avowed principles of the official educational policy concerning the use of NT and the means provided for their actual use. Therefore, even when the teacher's critical reflective dialogue contributes to realizing her personal theories and their premises, her practice is still determined by the contradictions of the educational institution and the sociocultural environment within which they take place.

Teaching interventions in the classroom through cooperating teaching

The teaching interventions that were made in the classroom were based on a guided, exploratory, cooperating learning. The choice of cooperative groups was made due to acknowledging the importance of the social context to the structure of knowledge and because it fosters responsibility, self-esteem, respect for the others, acceptance of their differences and support between the students (Matsaggouras, 2008). The cooperation of the team contributed to the cognitive evolution of the students in the Zone of Proximal Development, according to Vygotsky (ibid). A student characteristically describes her knowledge construction and the role of "scaffolding learning" in her cognitive development:

QS2: When some members of the team are smarter or more observant, there are times when I fall behind and they have to explain it to me, so I delay them. But in this way, I have the opportunity for further thought. Whereas, when all the members of the team are on the same level, I may be able to think but if I get stuck, the other members won't be able to help me since they would probably be stuck in the same way as me.

But also the role of cooperative learning in their personal development:

IS2: I think that what we learn here and can't be taught anywhere else is cooperation, which is extremely important. We got to know ourselves, our flaws, the way we treat others and it helped each one of us become a better person. However odd it may seem, I really do believe that.

The active participation of the students in the construction of knowledge also activated metacognitive processes:

IS5: I personally believe that I learned much more than I would have if we weren't divided in teams. They helped me a lot and when at home, I often thought about why we worked in this particular way, what we could do different, so I put my brain to work.

In addition, the team contributed to the establishment of communication and dialogue between the students, under terms of equal participation. According to Kagan (in Kakana & Kapahtsi, 2010), when supported by their classmates in a team environment, the students are relieved a bit from the stress they are under in a learning environment that is based on competition.

IS3: When you want to ask the teacher something, you do it once, twice and then you hesitate to ask again, out of embarrassment whereas you feel comfortable to ask your friend as many times as you want.

However, the difficulties in having such a dialogue were also pointed out.

QS20: The difficulty in a cooperation is, certainly, to succeed in explaining your perspective, your opinion, your point of view to the other person and mostly to have them understand what you mean.

It wasn't easy to develop a collaborating relationship between the members of the group. There was observed an imbalance regarding negotiation and a quick acceptance of what the “best” student thought was correct:

QS17:It's difficult for me when the other person won't even bother and just waits to hear the answer. When you have to explain and they just say that they understand while the truly don't. Then you have to rely on your own abilities and there are no different points of view that could possibly help you.

Some differences were noted between the relationships of the group members. In two of the groups, the students who were good in Math obviously tended to guide the group. The rest of the members asserted their role and constrained this attempt to impose their control through “knowledge”.

QS13:There are times when the members of my team don't understand the exercise, so I have to work alone and explain to all the students the method and as a result my team always falls behind.

During the interview, the students both covering and rendering the competitive relationships in school, ideologically legitimate, they characterize them as “healthy competition that motivates and helps them work harder.” According to Gotovos (1990), the acceptance of competitive relationships as healthy competition prevents the lack of order in a society where competition is present in social relationships yet, it is considered a negative thing.

Most of the students, especially the “good” ones, were aware of the attempt to create a learning community in the class as a necessity for their personal development. They believe that the team-work, primarily, contributed to their personal academic progress and secondarily, to the preservation of values such as solidarity and supporting each other. We observe that the students of high school, have adopted the prevailing social perception that school can act as an agent of social mobility to achieve a transfer to a higher position in the socially and economical hierarchy of a stratified society (Apple, 1986:85).

Reflective dialogue and cooperation with the critical friend

The interview with the critical friend began with his motivation for participating in the research. He answered as follows: “It was curiosity and the desire to look in the mirror. I mean that I was going to watch someone else trying and exploring their practice in a way that I would, possibly, like to try too. I wanted to see it happen, even if I hate to admit, being free of the burden of the success or failure of the whole project.” His answer is a reference to Brookfield (2006:177) who characteristically remarks: “We need others to act as critical mirrors that will bring out our premises for us and reflect them back in an unfamiliar, excellent and annoying way.”

Hereupon, judging by the opinions regarding the relationship and the communication among the colleagues, it seems that the co-researching practices create the conditions for cultivating a cooperative culture.

We've always had a good collegiality. We discussed our agonies, our point of view but we didn't exchange experiences so much. But everyone was “enclosed” in their own classroom. Prompted by this action research, you make a move and really trust the other person and automatically the way they perceive you change. Trust is important between colleagues. It adds the “co” in collegiality.

Concerning other claims he made about the cooperating scheme, he says that there was no validation:

I expected that inside the team, the “I” would be somehow lost and the “we” would prevail. But that didn't happen as much as I thought it would. In many teams I

observed that everyone did something, some contributed but not all. There was no “we”. They acted as individuals rather than team members.

He continues by acknowledging the frame's role:

But the “we” can't be developed in fragments, when the students work in teams only the 2 out of the 35 hours of the week, especially in this grade where the children are already used to working in a teacher-centered way.

Then he refers to dealing with the dilemmas in the educational praxis where latent premises prevail and guide his decisions:

The most important is to have the student's involvement. This is an idea that you believe and you speak of but when in the classroom, you start worrying about the result, you want to say one thing and then another, say what you think is important and thus you are led to a teacher-centered teaching.

Conclusion

The results of the action research showed that the Math teacher's combination of teaching practice and research fostered the reflection in action, on action and for action and contributed to a significant transformation of her practice. The critical reflective dialogue between her espoused or personal-theory and her theory-in-use or practice, as well as the cooperation with the critical friend also contributed to this transformation and eventually, to both their professional development. This transformation had all students actively participating and creatively involved in the learning process, while it allowed them to approach learning as a collective process, engage in dialogical and cooperative practices and reflect on the neutrality of the Mathematical knowledge (Kakana & Kapahtsi, 2010; Gutierrez & Boero, 2006; Braz-Dias, 1999).

The kind of reflection that was practiced had elements from the three categories: technocratic, person-centered and critical, although the teacher explicitly placed herself in the critical-hermeneutic perspective. Specifically, the technocratic rationalism was traced in the design of the observation techniques she chose to apply, although her official educational theory wasn't implemented technocratically. The person-centered reflection was located in the reexamination of the frame of reference and its established teaching premises and revealed the hidden ones. Finally, the dialectic dialogue between all the participants unveiled the essential role of the sociopolitical context which influenced and often catalytically limited their choices. It affected the quality of the teaching-learning process, while facilitating the acquirement of a holistic perception of the educational context, as Tsafos' research also pointed (2012). Additionally, action research contributed significantly to the professional development of both the researcher and the co-researcher, as they gained greater awareness of the dilemmas and conflicts among their personal theories and practices and their dialectic interrelations (Avgitidou, 2005; Braz-Dias, 1999). Moreover, this experience allowed them to control better their personal theory, be aware of the way it is formed and its effects in their teaching, as other research show (Lykometrou, 2014; Gutierrez & Boero, 2006; Magos, 1998). Furthermore, it set off a dynamic that allowed the development of a reflective-cooperative knowledge culture and cultivated mutual reflections that questioned the premises of the established teaching practices (Kakana & Kapahtsi, 2010). It also led to their empowerment and reinforced their autonomy, as mentioned in relevant researches (Katsenou & al., 2010; Kaloudiotis & al., 2005;). Consequently, both teachers acted as agents brought about changes in their teaching praxis, to such a degree that it was freed from a normative translation of the theory to technocratic practice, as pointed out by other researches (Avgitidou, 2005;

Kouloubaritsi & al., in Mpagakis 2000; Matsaggouras, 2001; Μάγος, 1998). Additionally, this dialogical cooperative relationship motivated a third teacher of the school to join this learning community and transform the established culture of the educational individualism in the aforementioned school.

References

- Altrichter, H., Posch, P., & Somekh, B. (2001). Teachers investigate their work. Athens: Metaihmio [In Greek]
- Appl, D. J., & Yorde, S. L. (2005). Stories about teaching: Using qualitative data to promote reflective practices. *Journal of Early Childhood Teacher Education*, 25(4), 309-320.
- Apple, M. (1986). Ideology and curriculum. Thessaloniki:Paratiritis [In Greek]
- Apple, M. (2002). Modernization and Conservatism in the Education, (trans. M. Deligianni). Athens: Metaihmio [In Greek]
- Argyris, C. & Schön, D. (2003). Theories of Action. In P. Jarvis & C. Griffin (eds), *Adult and Continuing Education: Major Themes in Education*, vol V (pp. 222-234). London; New York: Routledge.
- Argyris, C. & Schon, D. A. (1974). *Theory in practice: increasing professional effectiveness*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.
- Avgitidou, S. (2005). Action research as a training method for teachers. A paradigm. *Pedagogic Inspection*, 39, 39-56.
- Bell, A., Mladenovic, R., & Segara, R. (2010). Supporting the reflective practice of tutors: What do tutors reflect on? *Teaching in Higher Education*, 15(1), 57.
- Braz-Dias, A.-L. (1999). Becoming critical mathematics educators through action research. *Educational Action Research*, 7(1), 15-34, DOI: 10.1080/09650799900200075.
- Brookfield, S. (2006). Transformative learning as ideology critique. In J. Mezirow & Associates (Eds.), *Learning as transformation*. Athens: Metaihmio [In Greek]
- Brookfield, S.D. (2005). *The Power of Critical Theory for Adult Learning and Teaching*. BRK, NY: Open University Press.
- Carr, W. & Kemmis, St. (1997). *For a critical educational theory: Education, Knowledge and action research*. Athens: Kodikas [in greek].
- Chant, R.H., Heafner, T.L., & Bennett, K.R. (2004). Connecting personal theorizing and action research in preservice teacher development. *Teacher Education Quarterly*, 31(3), 25-42.
- Cranton, P. (1994). *Understanding and promoting transformative learning: A guide for educators of adults*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.
- Daskolia, M. (2005). *Theory and praxis in Enviromental Education. The personal theories of teachers*. Athens: Metaihmio [in greek].
- Day, C. (2003). *Developing Teachers: The challenges of lifelong learning*. Athens: Typothito [In Greek]
- Dirkx, J.M. (2001). *The Power of Feelings: Emotion, Imagination and the Construction of Meaning in Adult Learning*. *New Directions for Adult and Continuing Education*, 89, 63-72. Retrieved [21.11.2009] <http://direct.bl.uk/bld/>.
- Fives, H. & Gill, M-G. (Eds) (2015). *International Handbook of Research on Teachers' Beleifs*. NY;OX: Routledge.
- Franz N. (2007). Adult Education Theories: Informing Cooperative Extension's Transformation. *Journal of Extension*, 45(1)

<http://www.joe.org/joe/2007February/a1.shtml>

- Freire, P. (1974). *Pedagogy of the oppressed*. Athens: Rappa [In Greek]
- Freire, P. (1999). *Pedagogy of Hope: Reliving Pedagogy of the Oppressed*. New York: The Continuum Publishing Company.
- Frydaki, E. (2009). *Teaching in the intersection between modern and postmodern thought*. Athens: Kritiki. [In Greek]
- Frydaki, E. (2015). *The professional identity of the teacher and the future of the teaching*. Athens: Kritiki. [In Greek]
- Gioti, L. & Flouris, G. (2014). An attempt of constructing a ‘language of possibility’ in an in-service training program for mentors in order to support a culturally sensitive teaching of students from a subcultural group. *Proceedings of IV International Conference on Critical Education*, Grollios, G, Liambas, T. Pavlidis, P. (Eds) *Critical Education in the Era of Crisis*, Thessaloniki, (e-book).
- Gioti, L. (2010). *Adult Education Philosophies Guiding Educational Theory and Practice: The Case of Greek Primary Education Teacher Counselors*. *The International Journal of Learning*, 17(2), 393-405.
- Gioti, L. (2012). “Theories-of-action and “theories-in-use” of the School Counsellors concerning the motivation, the obstacles and the personal differences in teachers learning. *Proceedings of the 8th Panhellenic Conference “Greek Pedagogical and Educational Research”*, Ioannina (2-4 Νοεμβρίου), PEE.
- Giroux, H. (2012). *Border Crossings: Cultural Workers and the Politics of Education*, (2nd ed). NY: Routledge, Taylor & Francis Group.
- Gotobos, A. (1990). *The logic of the real school*. Athens: Gutenberg. [In greek]
- Grundy, S. (2003). *Curriculum: Product of Praxis?* Athens: Sabbalas. [In Greek]
- Hargreaves, A. & Fullan, M. G. (Eds.), (2008). *The development of teachers*. Athens: Patakis. [In Greek]
- Hoyles, C. (1995). What is the importance of group discussion in Mathematics? In A. Gagatsis (ed), *Teaching of Mathematics*. Thessaloniki: Art of Text. [In Greek]
- Husen, T. (1991). *The contestation of school*. Athens: Protasis.
- Jarvis, P. & Griffin, C. (Eds), (2003). *Adult and Continuing Education: Major Themes in Education*. London; New York: Routledge.
- Kakana, D. & Kapahtsi, B. (2010). The cooperative action research as a model of teachers’ professional development. *Action Researcher in Education*, 1, 40–52.
- Kalaitzopoulou, M. (2001). *Teacher as a reflective practitioner*. Athens: Typothito. [In greek]
- Kaloudiotis, S., Kosmidis, P., Kritikou, E. & Mpagakis, G. (2005). Exploring the Professional Development of teacher in an action research environmental education program. In *Proceedings of the 1st Panhellenic Conference PEEKPE*, Korinthos. [In greek].
- Katsenou, Ch., Nomikou, Ch. & Flogaiti, E. (2010). The contribution of action research in the professional development of the teacher. In *Proceedings of the 5th Panhellenic Conference PEEKPE*, Ioannina. [In greek]
- Kitchenham, A. (2008). The Evolution of John Mezirow’s Transformative Learning Theory. *Journal of Transformative Education*, 6(2), 104-123.
<http://jtd.sagepub.com/content/6/2/104>
- Kokkos, A. (2005). *Adult Education. Tracing the field*. Athens: Metaihmio. [In greek]
- Kokkos, A. (2010). *Critical Reflection: A critical issue*.
<http://www.adulteduc.gr/images/22kritikosstoxasmosenakrisimozitima.pdf>
- Lomax, P. (2000). *Action Research: Personal and professional development*,

- institutional change and innovation. In Mpagakis, G. (ed) *Optional educational programmes in school education*. Athens: Metaihmio [In Greek]
- Louden, W. (2008). Understanding reflection through cooperative research. In A. Hargreaves, & M.G. Fullan, (Eds.), *The development of teachers*. Athens:Patakis. [In Greek]
- Lupinski, K., Jenkins, P., Beard, A. & Jones, L. (2012). *Reflective Practice in Teacher Education Programs at a HBCU*. Educational Foundation, Summer-Fall 2012, pp. 81-92.
- Lykometrou, S. (2014). Dialogical practices in education: A cooperative action research. *Action Researcher in Education*, 5, 91 – 111.
- Magos, K. (2005). «Action Research versus ... Treaty Lausanne». In Mpagakis, G. (ed) *Training and professional development of the teacher*. Athens: Metaihmio [In Greek]
- Maier, H. (2005).The objective goals in Mathematics. In A. Gagatsis (ed), *Teaching of Mathematics*. Thessaloniki:Art of Text. [In Greek]
- Matsaggouras, E. (2001). *Theory of teaching. The personal theory as a context for critical reflective analysis*. Athens: Gutenberg. [In Greek]
- Matsaggouras, E. (2008). *Cooperative teaching and learning*. Athens:Grigoris. [In Greek]
- McAteer, M., & Dewhurst, J. (2010). 'Just thinking about stuff': Reflective learning: Jane's story. *Reflective Practice*, 11(1), 33.
- McLaren, P. (2010). *Critical Pedagogy. A review*. In Gounari, P. & Grollios, G. (Eds) *Critical Pedagogy. A collection*. Athens: Gutenberg. [In Greek]
- Mezirow J. & Associates, (2000). *Learning as Transformation: Critical Perspectives on a Theory in Progress*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass Publishers.
- Mezirow, J. (1991). *Transformative Dimensions of Adult Learning*. San Francisco:Jossey-Bass.
- Mikropoulos, A. (2011). *The use of ICT in education. Major Training Program*, vol. A. Athens: Pedagogic Institute. [In Greek]
- Mpagakis, G. (ed) (2002). *Teacher as a researcher*. Athens: Metaihmio. [In greek].
- Munoz-Chrobak, E. (2001). *Conceptualizations of reflection in teacher education*.Cornell University, Ithaca, NY.
- Ovens, A., & Tinning, R. (2009). Reflection as situated practice: A memory-work study of lived experience in teacher education. *Teaching and Teacher Education*, 25(8), 1125-1131.
- Tsafos, B. (2012). Developing research and reflection skills in students and prospective teachers: The use of educational action research. *Action Researcher in Education*, 4, 44 - 65.
- Zeichner, K. & Liston, D. (1987). Teaching student teachers to reflect. *Harvard Educational Review*, 57, 23 – 48.

Stress and Attitude Change in Adult Education: Perceptions of post graduate students completing a course in Adult Education

Niki PHILIPS

Open University, Open University of Cyprus, Piraeus University

Katerina KEDRAKA

Democritus University of Thrace

Anna TSIBOUKLI

Head of KETHEA Department of Education, Tutor HOU

Abstract:

The present study focuses on adult trainees' reflection upon their personal course of action and development on completing a five-year long PG programme in Adult Education at the HOU. Reflecting back, students were asked to evaluate their experience.

It seems that learning within the research context (Open University) is positively experienced. The positive aspects are relevant to how participants in this study managed to communicate with others when they were asked to express their own assumptions and reflect feelings and thoughts in a context of critical thinking and open dialogue.

Introduction:

Post graduate students in Adult Education often report that *stress* and *coping* are usually part of the learning process, even though adult education programmes should be designed according to the learners' demands and focus on reducing their stress. However, adult trainees' stress seems to originate from both educational demands and environmental events, psychosocial processes and physiological responses. *Stress* is conceptualised as the *relationship* between the person and the environment, when the person appraises that the environment exceeds his/her resources and endangers his/her well-being (Lazarus & Folkman, 1986).

Stress results from change, uncertainty and imbalance between posed demands and the individual's response to them (Mattesson & Ivancevich, 1987). Worrall & May (1989) argue that the present emotional state can be understood as being influenced by *four sources*: a) *situational disturbances* being generated in an episode, b) *anticipatory stress* associated with imagined scenarios of the event to be experienced; c) *the day to day or ambient life stresses* and d) the *core stress* which can be defined as comprising the unresolved residues of past negative experiences from all ages of the person's life history.

Cognitive appraisal and *coping* are critical mediators of stressful, person-environment relationships. *Cognitive appraisal* is a process during which a person evaluates how a particular encounter with the environment relates to his/her well-being (Fleming et al., 1984).

Coping is a mechanism employed in dealing with stress, designed to reduce its aversive qualities while serving two major functions: *problem solving and regulating*

emotions (Fleming et. al., 1984; Lazarus & Folkman, 1984; 1986; Aldwin et. al., 1980). *Problem-focused coping* includes *aggressive interpersonal* as well as *rational efforts* to problem-solve. *Emotion-focused coping* includes distancing, self-control, social support, escape avoidance, accepting responsibility and positive reappraisal.

A positive appraisal should promote positive outcomes and good morale by facilitating effective problem-focused solving (Folkman et. al., 1980). A threat appraisal, with its distressing emotions, may impede problem-focused coping, thereby increasing the possibility of poor problem resolution. When faced with the demands of a post-graduate degree after several years of absence from formal educational settings, adult trainees report experiencing stress and coping, as an experience leading to two decision-making processes. When the appraisal is threatening, they tend to dropout of the training course, especially during the last year of the research and thesis submission. When the appraisal is positive, they complete their training course, submit to the programme demands, and transform their attitude.

Fishbein & Ajzen (1975) argue that *attitudes* are defined as the *sum of the beliefs* about particular behaviours and the corresponding *evaluations of the consequences* of that behaviour. The *subjective norm* consists of the *expectations* of other important persons' opinions (normative beliefs) and the degree to which an individual is inclined to agree with these opinions, meaning his/her motivation to comply with (DeVries et. al., 1988). Measurements of attitudes and subjective norms can take different forms. In *attitudes measurement*, all the advantages and disadvantages of a given behaviour are included. In *social norms*, a distinction is made between *direct social influences*, that is what other people expect, and *indirect influences*, meaning what other people do themselves (modelling). These psychological constructs are directly linked with Mezirow's (2007) theory of assumptions and dysfunctional beliefs.

According to the Transformative Learning Theory, during our development our experiences, social norms, stereotypes and interaction with our social and cultural environment, assist us in integrating values, attitudes and standards. We adopt the beliefs and attitudes that we see them as our own choices and ideas, when in fact, they are a gradual and rather uncritical or 'convenient' construction of 'borrowed' cognitive, socio-cultural and psychological assumptions. Mezirow (2007) points out that the assessment of our views, beliefs, values – in other words of our certainties – as well as our emotions, depend on the context - biographical, historical, cultural - in which they are embedded. However, adults are often confronted with the realisation that a particular belief or practice which has been effective, it may fail to provide a solution when we need to deal with a sudden experience, a "disorienting dilemma" as defined by Mezirow. Such a dilemma can be a great starting point for critical reflection, in order to determine whether our beliefs are still valid and functional, or whether our values, perceptions and attitudes towards new events and experiences need to be reviewed and placed in new contexts (Lintzeris, 2007).

Therefore Mezirow (1991), supports that the transformative process of beliefs and perceptions begins directly with a "disorienting dilemma", which Kokkos et al (2011) define as an internal crisis of individuals, a sense that "something is wrong" in how they add meaning to situations, which forces them to reassess their assumptions. Thus, during a training process, which does not only aim in instrumental but also in transformative learning, it is primarily needed to be detected whether learners are facing a disorienting dilemma, which they themselves recognise as such and therefore are willing to engage in a process of critically reflecting upon it. The following step is

the reassessment of their assumptions in order to transform the "reference framework", meaning the entire thinking structure. Their coping appraisal over the course of study will be affected by adult trainees' *self-efficacy* defined as the estimation of the effectiveness to reach a desired goal (Kokkos et. al., 2011). *Self-efficacy expectations* are based on previous *experiences*, on *observation of others*, on *persuasion by others* (verbal persuasion, e.g. tutor positive feedback and encouragement or encouragement by fellow students) and on *physiological reactions* (e.g. stress exhibited in exam situations). *Performance accomplishments* are the most influential sources of efficacy, followed by *vicarious experiences* (Bandura, 1986).

Expectations, stress level and self-efficacy estimation may affect an adult trainee's decision to dropout of a training course **as a response to the disorienting dilemma**. Bandura (1986) would argue that the decision over the course of action would be determined by *expectancies and incentives*. *Expectancies* can be *environmental cues* (beliefs about how events are connected-what leads to what), *outcome* (that is consequences of one's own actions), and *efficacy expectancies* about one's own competence to perform the behaviour needed to influence outcomes.

Incentives are defined as the *value* of a particular object or outcome, in this case being the educational achievement and the appraisal and approval of others. Consequently, the behaviour of the trainee adult as a response to the disorienting dilemma will be regulated by consequences or else reinforcements, but only to the extent that these consequences are interpreted and understood by the individual (Rosenstock, 1988).

In order for an adult learner to successfully complete a course (Behaviour) for professional reasons (Outcome), he/she must believe both, that his/her career will benefit (Outcome expectations) and that he/she is capable of completing the course (Efficacy expectations). Self-efficacy relates to beliefs about capabilities of performing specific tasks in particular situations and it does not refer to a personality characteristic or a global trait that operates independently of contextual factors. Individuals' efficacy expectations will vary greatly, depending on the particular task and context, which confronts them. It is therefore inappropriate to characterise a person as having "low" or "high" efficacy, without reference to the specific behaviour and the circumstance with which the efficacy judgment is associated. Bandura (1986) argues that perceived efficacy influences all aspects of behaviour, including the acquisition of new behaviour, inhibition of existing behaviour and disinhibition of behaviour.

Self-efficacy also affects people's choices of behavioural settings, the amount of effort they put on a task and the length of time they will persist in the face of obstacles. Finally, self-efficacy affects people's emotional reactions, such as anxiety, distress and thought patterns. Efficacy expectations vary along the dimensions of magnitude, strength and generality. *Magnitude* refers to the ordering of tasks by difficulty level. *Strength* refers to a probabilistic judgment, of how certain is one of one's ability to perform a specific task. The *generality dimension* concerns the extent to which efficacy expectations about a particular situation or experience are generalised to other situations (Kokkos et. al., 2011). Bandura (1986) says, "*Convictions that outcomes are determined by one's own actions can have any number of effects on self-efficacy and behaviour. People who regard outcomes as personally determined but who lack the prerequisite skills would experience low self-efficacy and view activities with a sense of futility*".

The interesting interpretation of the trainee's self-efficacy, as presented by Krumboltz,

complements the theory of Social Learning described by Bandura. The learner's feeling of self-efficacy is influenced by: a) genetic origins and special abilities, b) environmental conditions and c) past learning experiences (Krumboltz, 1979). Thus, adults construct self-observing generalisations, which according to Krumboltz et al. (1978), are of three kinds: 1) related to the project adequacy, i.e. whether they have the necessary skills to carry out a project 2) related to interests e.g. "I am interested in literature," which are considered to be products of learning experiences which connect previous learning situations with subsequent ones 3) related to personal values. Krumboltz (1979) believes that values, habits, norms and standards have indeed shaped the adult's self-observing generalisations who tends to act based on these assumptions, which, however, they continually adjust by linking past experiences and situations with subsequent ones and with their personal values. Therefore, adults are in a constant process of revision and adaptation of the self-observing generalisations, hence, a lifelong developmental fermenting process (synthesis or compromise) amongst the individual and the social / labour factors, amongst self-perception and reality.

Another relevant concept is that of self-esteem (Kaplan, 1982). *Self-esteem* refers to the liking and respect for oneself that has some realistic basis and is based on the evaluation of one's self-worth obtained from the feedback on the effectiveness of behaviour from childhood forward. Self-esteem is positive when the *perceived and ideal* self are a good match. High self-esteem is a healthy view of the self, one that realistically encompasses shortcomings but without being harshly critical of them. Low self-esteem exhibits an artificially positive attitude to the world, in a desperate attempt to prove to others that the person is adequate. Self-esteem derives from at least *five components*: social, *academic*, family, body image and global self-esteem.

Adult trainees often return to the academic arena after many years of absence. They have once more to assess themselves as students. In this process, they have to meet or exceed their own standards for academic achievement. Family, work and professional demands come to interplay with the new challenges of academic work. Most psychologists view *positive self-esteem* as a central factor in the process of social and emotional adjustment (Pope et. al., 1989). Positive self-esteem is related to more effective functioning and serves as the foundation for the individual's perceptions of life experiences. Praise and recognition seem to play an important role for adult trainees. Empathy and understanding by the adult trainer can help learners develop valuable skills, for tolerating their frustration when they critically discuss dysfunctional assumptions.

However, radical thought transformation rarely and hardly occurs as a result of an educational programme (Mezirow & Associates, 1990). Hence, the change in one or more "habits of mind" (a set of assumptions regarding an issue,) related to one or more of the participants' "points of view", is considered to be a satisfactory learning outcome. According to Mezirow (2007) the adult educator plays a "catalyst" role during the learning process: the facilitator is the one to support and guide the adult learners in order to develop their critical awareness of the origin, characteristics and consequences of their assumptions, so that they can be able to transform their beliefs and become actively involved (Cranton, 2007).

The present study focused on adult trainees' evaluation of their personal course of action and development at the end of the completion of a five years long post-graduate programme. Reflecting back, adult trainees were asked to evaluate their

experience.

Analysis of the results

Analysis of results reveals four main areas that seem significant in this learning process: a) incentives, b) self-efficacy, c) self-esteem and d) stress. In the process of reflecting on their experience during the post-graduate course, most participants revealed the *incentives* defined as the *value* of a particular object or outcome:

"...I feel that I can keep improving, that I have now been given the ways to do so, to become better...I feel filled up with knowledge that I can use, that I have the motive to do so..."(140113_0003).

"... An extremely fascinating year. I really enjoyed it ... it was very intriguing to see how people reacted when they were asked to participate in a survey, how they responded, some tried to avoid me. ... It flowed effortlessly, in other words I enjoyed the topic. And when you love something you do it well, so I enjoyed every stage of the research ... never got bored not even for a moment ..." ... (150927_0008).

"... it has generally helped me develop many skills, particularly professional ones, I radically transformed me as a teacher and an educator ... I'm far richer and much more delicate in the way I try to apply and transmit knowledge ... I have experienced this through action."(140113_0004).**

"... The sense of creativity. What changes, apart from developing knowledge, is the concept of creativity, that you start from zero point and manage to create something, which may have absolute no value to some, but significant value to others, and maybe regarded as greatly important by us. This is invaluable. There are things in life that have a price, have certain value. This is of mythical value, on a personal level of course. The concept of creativity, that I created something." (150927_0003).

I started my postgraduate course five years ago and I believe I have gained a lot ...I had to "de-learn" my so far knowledge and wanted to "kill" the tutor since whatever I was thinking or writing seemed wrong... I had no idea of the "un-learning" process; I did not know what it was... I have discovered many things, through the assignments and my reading, some of it was executed in a "careless" manner and had no idea why I had to do it... spending your time creatively is obviously beneficial, not on a material level but it "broadens your mind" and takes you to a higher level. Looking back five years ago and comparing with the present you see things differently..." (140113_0005).

Some adult trainees reflect on the experience as a way of developing their own *self-esteem*, a way of closing the gap between the ideal and the perceived self, a way of respecting oneself on some realistic basis and on the evaluation of one's self-worth obtained when the *perceived and ideal* self are a good match.

"I did this post-graduate course for personal reasons...I had two babies and was fed-up with babysitting and all those duties which were not mentally stimulating..."

“It was a challenge for me to be able to come in contact with some people, convince them to speak to me, to devote my time to them and work with them ... If I did not make them trust me, they wouldn't talk to me... .. When I interviewed them I was so thrilled, I even shiver now just by thinking about it. You meet some people who had a hard time and share personal things. I believe this is the liveliest part. To apply in practice what you have learned in theory, at university”. (DW_C0081)

Self-efficacy was also mentioned as having affected people's choices, the amount of effort they put on a task, the length of time they will persist when facing obstacles and thought patterns. Their efficacy expectations were more relevant to *strength, meaning* their probabilistic judgment; of how certain they were of their ability to perform a specific task.

“... I would probably do it again...I mean I really enjoyed it... The actual research stage, I liked it very much ... I adopted the researcher's role and surely this is of benefit, you feel that you are doing something important, it's not just one more assignment that you submit in order to complete your degree. ... ” (DW_C0079).

“...Suffering.. sometimes frustration, the feeling that I won't make it. Despite the supervisors' efforts and their assistance, this is a lonely journey ... the amount of work you put into it ... it really needed long hours, it is difficult, stressful and I was deprived by many things. (150927_0007).

“I enjoyed it ... I came closer to the educators ... I was astonished I learned new things and got inspired ... it opened me up as a person ... It developed me the desire to study the issue of art ... I've now put rationality aside and try to use more emotion in particular situations. ... Nevertheless, it is different to experience various situations and not being able to interpret them than to being able to put them in a good order. I think I have arranged a few things in my personal life as well, on a personal level.” (DW_C0083).

Stress was another variable that was reported in this process of change, uncertainty and imbalance between the demands made on adult trainees and their ability to respond to them. *Situational disturbances, anticipatory stress, the day-to-day or ambient life stresses* and *core stress* were all mentioned in the process.

“... I struggled a lot ... It was a completely different and new situation to me ... It was stressful ... Sometimes I was questioning myself why I chose to do it ... I believed I couldn't do it, that I will find it very difficult to complete...”. (140114_0007).

“... the final year was quite troubling... This is when I appreciated the value of non-formal education even more ... the experience which I gained ... There were times I was disappointed ... The courage, the first night, the second night, fatigue was building up. ... There were moments when I thought I could not do it, followed by those in which I managed to complete the task and then I would set the following goal... ”. (DW_C0078).

“... during its course I would say: Oh God, I want it finished, I am so tired... adversities and personal obstacles where too many and I was

exhausted. ..." (DW_C0080).

"... During undergraduate studies I didn't have the chance to do any research, so right from the start I was stressed about how a research is done" (DW_C0084).

"... I have experienced all this with difficulty; I had to be still in bed.... It was demanding..." (150927_0004).

Discussion:

This paper is concerned with the critical reflections of adult learners in relation to their training experience in a five-year post-graduate blended learning programme. The analysis of the results revealed four main significant areas which seem to affect their learning process: a) incentives, b) self-efficacy, c) self-esteem and d) stress.

Research findings show that the post-graduate students who were interviewed at the final stage of their course completion (*Adult Education* at the Hellenic Open University) **evaluate themselves positively in relation to self-efficacy and self-esteem as they have managed to achieve their original goals.** Nearly the majority of them reported that their incentive when initiating their studies was to gain a post-graduate degree while they had given intentions in regards to the learning process. Nevertheless, the programme's requirements **and the level of stress they have experienced during the course of their study and during exams** raised doubts in relation to their ability to complete the course, made them feel inadequate and willing to drop out, while feeling both guilty and stressed towards their families. Some were motivated by the satisfaction of an, often, unconscious need, or by acquiring knowledge or participating in learning processes, while others wished to develop particular skills in order to cope with social and professional roles. This confirms Jarvis' position (2004) according to which the most common motivators for learning in adulthood are professional development, skills development, the need to adjust to changes in the work place, the need for socializing, the pursuit of knowledge in order to satisfy particular or repressed desires that failed to be met during one's youth. On the other hand, the difficulties and obstacles experienced by adult learners are classified in three general categories: the ones which derive from the **educational context**, others arising from the duties and responsibilities of certain **life conditions** and thirdly, **internal** obstacles (Jarvis, 2004).

Research participants greatly value the knowledge acquired during their post graduate studies in "Adult Education" at the HOU, as well as the indirect knowledge they acquired through their participation in the educational process. It seems as if participants view the course as an education model which was incorporated through their **social learning**, and have characterised it as "good" while it has become some kind of "filter" through which they try to explain the fact that they achieved a particular learning outcome: the acquisition of a postgraduate degree (Bandura, 1977, 1995).

Self-efficacy seems to have played an important role in the completion of this demanding project. Self-efficacy increases through the impact of positive standards projected, opportunities and expectations offered by the educational framework for the successful practice of the role as a learner, as well as through the acceptability of their "significant others" - the educators, i.e. Tutors/Advisors of HOU in our case. It also develops through encouragement, praising and affirmation, elements received by

the participants for their efforts (Kokkos et al., 2011). Jarvis (2004) reports that when adults come to a training course they bring along a smaller or larger experiential and cognitive load which can work either positively if the educational process acknowledges it, or negatively if ignored by the educational context. However, in this particular case, it seems that the learning environment has acted positively towards the learners' success, a key fact for adult learning as noted by Knowles et al. (1998). Moreover, despite the difficulties recorded, this learning experience is characterized as being a positive one, since the learners felt capable of completing their task, motivated by the intense interest caused by the new knowledge and their fulfilled personal values. This confirms the importance of Krumboltz's (1979) self-reflective generalisations who interprets self-efficacy as a key factor for the successful completion of the task they had undertaken, i.e. the completion of their Master degree.

Education in adulthood can be hindered by **situational** factors caused by obligations, commitments and responsibilities which adults confront, such as lack of time and financial efficacy, child care and mobility difficulties, and general barriers alleged by the professional, family, social, and/or their cultural environment (Cross, 1981). In the current study, the above mentioned factors were reported by the learners, however, they have not been able to demotivate them in relation to completing their Master's degree. It is worth noting that this research was implemented during the harsh financial crisis experienced by Greece which has also impacted the learners.

Therefore the *four sources* which influence the emotional state (Worrall & May, 1989) were all present in the current study. Due to the economic crisis, followed by income reduction and high unemployment rates **situational disturbances** and **day to day life stresses** were present together with the **anticipatory stress** associated with imagined scenarios relevant to the difficulties of the present course of their study. In addition, **core stress** (Worrall & May, 1989) which can be defined as comprising the unresolved residues of past negative experiences from all ages of the person's life history, was also present in relation to managing the learning material as well as in relation to fears of failure in completing the programme due to the turbulent external environment. However, despite pragmatic and psychological stress, many participants reported that they had employed significant coping mechanisms, regarded as **transactional** in a dynamic, mutually reciprocal and bidirectional relationship with the external environment. **Cognitive appraisal** was a critical mediator of stressful, person-environment relationships and a process through which most participants evaluated whether the completion of their studies could work as a benefit to their self-esteem.

This cognitive appraisal reinforced their efforts to complete their course of study. Despite situational disturbances and day to day life stresses such as financial and family obligations, cognitive appraisal together with personality characteristics including values, commitments, goals and beliefs were employed to overcome obstacles. **Secondary appraisal** (Fleming et. al., 1984) which includes what can be done to overcome or improve the prospects for benefit was also employed in the process of achieving satisfaction and enhancing self-esteem and self-efficacy in accepting and coping with the situation. In this process, most participants reported that they used *rational efforts* to problem-solve as well as **emotion-focused coping** that included self-control, seeking social support in family or fellow students, accepting responsibility for their initial decision and positive reappraisal of the

situation. Positive reappraisal helped adult trainees to feel satisfied despite their experienced stress and fear of failure (Cross, 1981) and difficulty in revising their views and perceptions about the requirements of a Master's Degree (Mac Givney, 2004). Learners indicate stress generated by the academic requirements of the postgraduate course and lack of self-efficacy and self-esteem in relation to their ability to cope with programme demands. It seems that personal incentives, persistence and focus on a certain goal, accompanied by the need to fulfill their original aims and achieve a high level of education, contributed and strengthened their original decision.

In conclusion, it seems that learning which occurs within the environmental context in which this study took place could be considered as positive. The positive aspects are relevant to how participants in this study managed to communicate with others when they were asked to express their own assumptions and reflect feelings and thoughts in a context of critical thinking and open dialogue. It could also be considered as positive since within a turbulent environment and during a prolonged crisis, it managed to sustain adult trainees and assist them in their personal course of action. In this context the adult educator seems to play the role of a "catalyst" during the learning process by offering support and guide to adult learners. A future study could focus more on how adult educators can help adult learners cope in an environment of crisis so that they could be able to become actively involved in a coping process which turns life stresses into developmental opportunities.

References

- Aldwin, C., Folkman, S., Schaefer, C., Coyne, J. C., & Lazarus, R. S., (1980). Ways of coping: A process measure. In *meeting of the American Psychological Association, Montreal*, Vol. 1012, p. 0599.
- Bandura, A., (1986). Recycling misconceptions of perceived self-efficacy. *Cognitive Therapy and Research*, 8, 231-255.
- Cranton, P., (2000). Individual differences and transformative learning. *Learning as transformation: Critical perspectives on a theory in progress*, 181-204.
- Cross, K.P. (1981). *Adults as Learners*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.
- De Vries, H., Dijkstra, M., & Kuhlman, P., (1988). Self-efficacy: the third factor besides attitude and subjective norm as a predictor of behavioural intentions. *Health education research*, 3(3), 273-282.
- Fishbein, M. & Ajzen, I., (1975). *Belief, attitude, intention and behavior: An introduction to theory and research*. USA & Canada: Addison Wesley
- Fleming, R., Baum, A., & Singer, J. E. (1984). Toward an integrative approach to the study of stress. *Journal of personality and social psychology*, 46(4), 939 - 949.
- Folkman, S., Lazarus, R. S., Gruen, R. J., & DeLongis, A. (1986). Appraisal, coping, health status, and psychological symptoms. *Journal of personality and social psychology*, 50(3), 571.
- Kaplan, H., (1982). Self-attitudes and deviant behaviour: New directions for theory and research. *Youth Society*, 14, 185-211.

- Kok, G., de Vries, H., Mudde, A. N., & Strecher, V. J., (1991). Planned health education and the role of self-efficacy: Dutch research. *Health education research*, 6(2), 231-238.
- Kokkos, A. et.al., (2011). *Education through the Arts*. Metaixmio: Athens.
- Krumboltz, J.D., (1979). A social learning theory of career decision making. In: A. M. Mitchell, G. B. Jones, J. D. Krumboltz, (Eds). *Social Learning and career decision making*. Cranston, Rhode Island: Caroll Press.
- Krumboltz, J.D., Mitchell, A.M., & Jones, G.B., (1978). A social learning theory of career selection. In: J. M. Whiteley & A. Resnikoff (Eds). *Career counselling*. Monterey, California: Brooks/Cole.
- Lazarus, R. & Folkman, S., (1984). *Stress, Appraisal and Coping*. New York: Springer Publishing.
- Lintzeris, P., (2007). The process of Transformative Learning. *Adult Education*, 12, 6-8.
- Matteson, M. T. & Ivancevich, J. M. (1987). *Controlling Work Stress: Effective Human Resource and Management Strategies*. London: Jossey-Bass
- Mezirow J. (1991). *Transformative Dimensions of Adult Learning*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.
- Mezirow J. & Associates (Eds) (1990). *Fostering Critical Reflection in Adulthood*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.
- Pope, H.G., Ionescu-Pioggia, M., Aizley, H.G and Varma, D.K., (1989). Drug use and life style among college undergraduates in 1989: A comparison with 1969 and 1978. *Amer. J. Psychiat.* 147: 998-1001.
- Rosenstock, I. (1988). Social learning theory and the health belief model. *Health Education Quart.*, 15, 2, 175-183.
- Worrall, N. & May, D. (1989). Towards a Person-In-Situation Model of Teacher Stress. *British Journal of Educational Psychology*, 59, 174-186.

In Greek Language:

- Mezirow, J., (2007). ‘Μαθαίνοντας να σκεφτόμαστε όπως ένας ενήλικος. Κεντρικές έννοιες της θεωρίας του Μετασχηματισμού’. Στο: J. Mezirow και συνεργάτες, (2007). *Η Μετασχηματίζουσα Μάθηση*, σ. 43-71. Αθήνα: Μεταίχμιο.
- Jarvis, P., (2004). *Συνεχιζόμενη εκπαίδευση και κατάρτιση. Θεωρία και πράξη*. Αθήνα: Μεταίχμιο

Is dialogue enough to promote transformative learning? An example of “Electra” by Sophocles

Kotsolakou M., Nikolaraki K.

Abstract

The purpose of this paper is to identify those elements of the dialogue, which prevent transformative learning both from the side of people involved and the audience watching them. We could meditate these views, based on an ancient tragedy "Electra" by Sophocles. First, could the dialogue lead to critical reflection and transformative learning? Could review one of two intellectual frameworks and take the action? What are the elements that could make the dialogue of two brothers rational in order to activate the critical reflection and lead to transformative learning?

Introduction

Founders and researchers of adult education, have occasionally referred to the importance of dialogue about achieving transformative learning. First of all, Jack Mezirow, who considers that *the dialogue in the framework of the Theory of transformative learning is a specific form of dialogue, the discourse, which focuses on the search of common understanding and assessment of the justification for an interpretation or a belief* (Mezirow, 2000: 10-11).

This article is an attempt to understand the importance of the discourse in transformative learning. An example through an ancient drama has been chosen in order to serve as an educational example, taken by the tragedy "Electra" by Sophocles. According to A. Boal, art is not only an object of pleasure but also through it a person can be shaped, informed and organized (Boal, 1981: 91).

To fulfill the attempt described above, this paper is organized in two parts. The first part deals with the relative theoretical background and the second one analyzes case study chosen as an example through which theory is applied. Each part is divided into five smaller parts which follow the same logic so as to facilitate the matching between theory and application. These five parts reflect a grouping of points which are considered fertile by the authors to be highlighted.

Moreover, a dramatic act illuminates the actual practice as it reproduces images

of the world and thus reflects reality. Additionally, art recreates nature, that is to say all created things (Boal, 1981: 54). As A. Boal typically mentions, the tragedy imitates human actions, the actions of the rational soul, aimed at an ultimate end, happiness (Boal, 1981: 103).

During watching the play, the audience plays an important role. It does not simply monitor uncritically the play but also aims to transform itself through it (Boal, 1981: 54). Particularly, theater is an effective and releasing weapon, which prepares action and social change (Boal, 1981: 9). Art broadly gives a view of the world that is transforming. Consequently like the audience watches a play thinks and acts about itself, also learners while analyzing an ancient drama are able to better understand some educational issues while being transformed (Boal, 1981: 91).

The reasons described above explain why an ancient drama is chosen as a case study on which can work an adult educator in an attempt to bring together learners with transformative learning, critical reflection and discourse. Specifically, this article provides for the process of a dialogue conducted between Electra and her sister, Chrysothemis, in order to take revenge for the death of their father, Agamemnon, who was murdered by their mother and her lover Aegisthus. This enterprise leads to correlation between options relevant to transformative learning and discourse.

Part A: Theoretical approach of discourse in transformative learning

Meaning structures in transformative learning

According to the theory of transformative learning, as formulated by J. Mezirow, learners review meaning structures in order those to become more reasoned and true in relation to reality, with the help of critical reflection (Mezirow , 2006: 43-45).

Meaning structures include frames of reference relating to the way in which learners interpret their experiences that have been inadvertently and have affected their way of life, thus each one creates his own reality. Specifically, frames of reference are determined by the temperament of the individual as acts repeatedly since very early age (Mezirow, 2000: 16-17).

Furthermore J. Mezirow claims that *the frame of reference involves two dimensions, both habits of mind and resulting points of view*. Habits of mind initially are formatted as predispositions with which someone is gifted in order to interpret his

own experiences. In particular, they bear on assumptions that filter and define experiences and actions of individuals. On the other hand, resulting point of view is an utterance of habit of mind and consists of feelings, judgments and behaviors which shape the way someone interprets reality in which he lives. Hence, resulting points of view are those that determine the image of every human being. (Mezirow, 2006: 56-57).

Meaning structures may define a progressive or conservative manner contrary to every individual, as directly affect values and consciousness. Transformative learning through discourse is what leads human beings to edit frames of reference and to form new meaning structures even more real in order to reach reality in which he lives (Mezirow, 2006: 57-58).

As for the discourse, participants involved should think reflectively of their meaning structures and particularly to realize both their own frames of reference and correspondingly their interlocutor's. This is necessary so as frames of reference are reviewed and transformed and incorporated into reality having as ultimate aim the consensus. During the discourse, is fruitful that participants, to the extent possible, are free from coercion and distorting views. (Mezirow, 2000: 12-13).

Conditions under which a dialogue can or cannot be transformed to a discourse

The discourse refers to a particular form of dialogue, in the context of transformative learning, in which people involved participate democratically, knowing the subject that will be discussed and at the same time having or creating a common purpose of consensus on a common solution. This form of reflective dialogue requires certain conditions which, if met, participants tend to be able to express their views and feelings, learn from each other and reach a consensus (Mezirow J. 2000: p. 10-14).

According to J. Mezirow, both participants have to take care of the information provided so as them to be accurate and complete (Mezirow, 2000: 10-14). It is evident that a dialogue can not obtain solid foundations and can be unproductive as far as the desired results are concerned when participants broadcast information which are not checked for accuracy and completeness.

To continue with, J. Mezirow refers to the need to an argument be assessed and critically evaluate as a condition of the discourse (Mezirow, 2000: 13-14). This

condition requires critical thinking, which, according to P. Freire is a key component of rational dialogue and through this reality is transformed (Freire & Schor, 2008: 157-158). Additionally, during conducting a discourse, should be presented equal opportunities for participation in the various roles that emerge. Both participants should be able to share their perspective and feelings and correspondent should listen to them carefully, editing each statement critically (Mezirow, 2003: 60 & 2000: 3-14).

P.Freire adds that during liberational dialogue participants have to process previous knowledge and experiences gained (Freire & Schor, 2008: 157-159). Each part express its opinion, participate democratically and discuss in order to recreate the world aiming at social change. To succeed the best ease, this democratic conversation requires love and respect for people. Eventually, this general faith and respect to human beings is going to lead participants to trust each other and show mutual confidence (Freire, 2005: 88-89).

As Brookfield supports, J. Habermas also argues that a basic condition of discourse is to create a conversation liberated from any kind of domination, which processes the thoughts and opinions of all participants with a view to a common solution. In accordance with the above, in a genuine discourse heard all relevant sides are taken into account. More specifically everyone's opinion and reality is considered so as to edit each knowledge and point of view (Brookfield, 2005: 265-272).

Emotional conditions which complicate purity of thought and create obstacles in being transformed

While a discourse is held to achieve transformative learning, it is considered valuable to deal with emotions and deeply understand how they affect human beings and their way of action each moment. It arises the question, whether and how emotions of participants influence the nature of the dialogue.

Initially, according to R. Kegan, each participant is randomly possessed by frames of reference which are likely to submit him or her in a specific mood. (Kegan, 2007: 89). Since frames of reference play nothing less than a key role, hence emotiones which connect with them. The issue that lies in is what should be the attitude of participants when confronted with their feelings in a dialogue, in order to turn it in a discourse.

J. Mezirow has formulated the theory of transformative learning, forming the 10

stages, which shows the course of learning to transform learners. It is not a coincidence that in the second stage, puts the self-evaluation of emotions such as fear, anger, guilt or shame. He considers that learners who intend to transform themselves, should be free from such emotions. This can be achieved if they recognize them, evaluate them, realize that they may have a negative impact on their lives and make an effort to transform them (Mezirow, 2007: 60).

Managing emotions self-evaluation is almost necessary to confront themselves as objects. R. Kegan claims that we can be objective towards the evaluation of our experiences when we do not treat them as part of ourselves, but when we front them from outside.

For conclusion, during a discourse participants should manage their feelings so as to succeed critical reflection and build consensus.

Social skills and competences required in a discourse

In a discourse, social skills and competencies are required in a satisfactory level. Presence of these elements contributes to the best possible understanding of other side's viewing, resulting in a correct and human communication. How these elements contribute to transformative learning has been an object to investigate.

According to J. Mezirow, discourse intends to investigate and assess beliefs, feelings and values. Participants should both be possessed by self-awareness and capability to assess and consider the feelings and thoughts of their interlocutors. (Mezirow, 2000: 10-11). Moreover, in a discourse full and voluntary participation is a prerequisite such important as understanding other participant's points of view (Mezirow, 2000: 10-15). The proper conduct of a discourse needs participants who can be emotionally intelligent. Assessments which compose such intelligence seem to be *emotional maturity, awareness, empathy, self-awareness, control impulses, persistence, zeal, self-motivated and social skills* (Mezirow, 2000: 10-11). Empathy, the ability to feel the emotions of the other side is rooted and directly relative to self-awareness. When we do not know our own selves it is difficult to understand the other side and take into account their emotions and thoughts. Openness to our own emotions, improve one's ability to perceive emotions (Goleman, 2009).

Furthermore J. Mezirow underlines the democratic habits of heart which each participant in a discourse should obtain. Among others these include respecting

others, self-esteem possessing, voluntary responsibilities undertaking aimed at the public good, willing to embrace diversity and to approach others with an open attitude and acceptance of other participant's alternative view (Mezirow, 2000: 14-15). In addition, values such as freedom, equality, tolerance, social justice and rationality provide essential norms for liberate and complete participation in a discourse (Mezirow, 2003: 59-60).

P. Freire similarly refers to social skills and competences required for each participant in a discourse. First, he refers to the processing of experiences, feelings and thoughts. Participants have to develop critical thinking within a process to understand how the other side thinks and feels in order to better realize what is meant and thus to agree on a common solution. Furthermore, a democratic communication allows participants to equally participate, be heard and fight for their beliefs so as to be truly expressed and lead to a dialogue with solid foundations (Freire & Schor, 2008: 155-162). Moreover he emphasizes social skills such as humility, self-awareness, openness towards new opinions and attitudes as necessary conditions for such a dialogue (Freire, 2005: 88-92).

As reported by Brookfield, J. Habermas highlights the ways through which participants can conduct a successful dialogue aimed at critical reflection and consensus. Specifically, he refers to four claims of human and good communication. Participants should be confident that the information given is true, understandable and correct and relevant to the context in which the dialogue is proceeded. Finally, authenticity should not be missing, both from saying and intention of each participant. Each participant should deeply believe that all involved want to reach consensus (Brookfield, 2005: 260-271).

As follows when empathy and concern for how thinks and feels the other side is missing a dialogue fails. The absence of social skills and open disposition to alternative views can also lead to the same result. If all this does not work properly, discourse can result in a monologue or a barren dialogue through which participants will not gain anything from each other and will not reach a common solution and agreement.

Need for consensus or a common solution

The discourse, as a main subject of this paper, aims primarily to reach

consensus on finding the best and common solution so as to manage transformation (Mezirow, 2000: 10-12). J. Mezirow supports that discourse is a process within participants discuss so as to find a common consensus solution, which reflects both's points of view. This solution is achieved through common understanding and appreciation of the views of both participants. Specifically, they reach an agreement engaging in a dialogue in which both sides try to understand the point of view of the other taking into account its claims, learning from it and completing it (Mezirow, 2000: 12). Further, an agreement requires the recognition of the joint between the opposite, which requires extra effort from both sides (Mezirow, 2000: 12). It generally concerns an attempt to creatively compose the different points of view and run into the best, mutually accepted, solution (Mezirow, 2003: 59-60).

P. Freire has also dealt with the dynamic dialogue during liberating teaching, naming, referring to it either as liberating and or structured (Freire & Schor, 2008: 155). According to him, a democratic dialogue is the one through which participants intend to name the world and recreate it. (Freire, 2005: 88). That reconstruction includes opinions, considerations, knowledge and experience of both participants (Freire & Schor, 2008:155-158) which are expressed through democratic conditions, free from any kind of authoritarianism. (Freire, 2005: 90). P. Freire treats dialogue as a common process and learning, a common creation. (Freire, 2005: 88-92). To achieve common agreement through liberating dialogue, participants must first be aware of the world and of themselves, and at the same time they should consume grey matter to investigate how others think (Freire, 2005: 88-92). Participants knowing what they want to achieve and appreciating the view of the other part easier reach to consensus.

J. Habermas, as Brookfield supports, referring to proper human communication and discourse, agrees with the above as regards its purpose, which means consensus. Focusing on discourse, he states that any kind of sovereignty must be avoided, while to promote the acceptance and appreciation of all views (Brookfield, 2005: 260-273).

Part B: Case Study: “Electra” by Sophocles

General aspects

The purpose of this case study is to highlight elements of theoretical approaches that are mentioned on the role of discourse in transformative learning through the teaching example chosen. In Sophocles' tragedy "Electra", Electra converse twice with her sister Chrysothemis. During the first conversation their mother Clytemnestra, has delegated to Chrysothemis to offer libations at the tomb of their father Agamemnon, whom she has murdered. The purpose of the dialogue is whether it is legitimate for Chrysothemis to perform such a directive. The dialogue ends up with Chrysothemis deciding not to leave the libations of Clytemnestra in Agamemnon's tomb, without Clytemnestra be aware of it. During the second dialogue returning from the tomb of Agamemnon, Chrysothemis announces to Electra that she has evidence of the return of their brother Orestes. This event takes place sometime after Electra has falsely been informed of the death of Orestes. Subject of conversation is whether they must take action to revenge for the unfair death of their father, which based on their beliefs formed an act which ought to fulfill their brother Orestes. The dialogue does not lead to a consensus and eventually ends up with the departure of Chrysothemis.

Identification and analysis of stereotyped assumptions and attitudes of participants in the dialogue

Both Electra's and Chrysothemis claims, while carrying out their dialogue seem to be governed by a range of assumptions and beliefs that define their frame of reference and resulting points of view expressed verbally.

Electra accepts socially superior position of the man against the woman, a view that is a habit of mind promoted by the social context of the time and this turn to be visible through some circumstances. An example of such circumstance is the fact that Electra awaits the return of her brother, Orestes, to take revenge for the death of their father, since she considers herself not capable of acting alone because she is a woman. Another example is that she has justified to herself the action of her father, Agamemnon, to sacrifice her sister, Iphigenia.

Many times throughout tragedy, Electra argues that when someone leaves to forget the dead implies that does not honor them. She considers a debt towards the

dead to bring permanently to mind.

Simultaneously, Electra is equitable to restore the honor and memory of the dead and necessary to punish the perpetrators. She considers revenge as the only solution and believes that such an act will have the favor of the gods.

Chrysothemis also accepts social stereotype assumption on higher nature of the male sex, and she expects the solution given by Orestes, while at the same time descriptively reflect the role of women.

A key element that emerges from the frame of reference of fatalism is that she is not capable of doing anything to change the course of her life. In this context is included the resulting point of view on the need for obedience to rulers as a sign of prudence in order that no one manages his fortune, since she cannot neither define nor change it. Also she considers that she is sharing same view with the gods.

Elements preventing from transformation

Participants are committed to their meaning structures, causing each to interpret and filter the information resulting from the dialogue to a width allowed their perception. Within the text written by the tragic poet in many sentences the projection of stereotypes is observed without any intention of doubting them. On the one hand, the assumptions of Chrysothemis made clear by using phrases such as the following: *"I will reveal what opinion I have ... but now it seems right to sail with furled sails"*, *"but if you want freedom to live, need to be in all obedient to rulers "* and *" not to learn it but to retreat to the rulers"*. Similar phrases that highlight the Electra's beliefs, that at every opportunity brings to front are: *"It's awesome a child to forget the father who gave birth to it"*, *"forget your own"*, *"but to those I bring sorrow to honor the dead, if there is some pleasure in Hades "* and *" the son of Orestes alive and most powerful than ever to trample as a winner"*.

On the side of the slot to participation in the dialogue both participants have similar opportunities without one overshadowing the time of the other. On the other hand, it would be difficult to argue that they have equal opportunities for substance since each while listening to the other does not keep carefully in mind and process the information it obtains to the axis of the configuration of personal perceptions but geared to judge the opinion of the other based on its own assumptions.

During the two dialogues excerpts, one sister stands critically to the other

without disposition of critical reflection. Even social starting point of the two sisters is common, intent on finding common points of reference on the basis of which will develop a common solution is almost nonexistent in the text. When one participant is addressing to the other feels especially confident of what she says, perceives the thought of as self-evident and does not enter into the process of challenging, does not go on assumptions review.

These prevent as much as possible from an objective evaluation of both sides arguments. In the excerpts there is a point that needs to be shared as at least verbal recognition, is available for any use and it refers to the common visualization of what is considered to be “fair”. Specifically Chrysothemis mentions "*fair is not as I say but as you judge*".

It is worth noting that both Electra and Chrysothemis express in an understandable way, clearly and accurately. Consequently there is no reason to doubt for the truth of their claims. But from the general context trust does not necessarily seem to arise, an observation which complicates successful communication.

Emotions harden critical reflection

During the discuss between the two sisters, while emotional charge is diffused, it is of particular value to check whether the two sisters come to the recognition and self-examination of the emotions arising from the dialogue.

The feelings of anger, pain, anger, grief, hatred, fear not allow processing logic and often leave to reproduce barren initial thoughts. Each one feels is right. It seems like each intends to convince other, while the substance of interest remains to highlight the "correctness" of their thinking.

It is observed an attempt to invoke the feeling of fear connecting it with negative consequences that may result from not complying without existing any relative support through logical arguments. Electra's logic stems from the need and desire for revenge, as the only solution that will lead to redemption and the Chrysothemis' logic results from fear of the consequences of non-compliance with the standards of having power.

Each participant seeks to highlight the other side the feelings that nourish the words expressing but in no cases do not promote self-evaluation of emotions that nourish their own speech. Chrysothemis accuses Electra that she is "*given away*" in

anger, while Electra blames Chrysothemis that is "*left*" in fear. Lack of critical reflection is observed once more.

Social skills and competences required in the excerpts

During both talks between the sisters is evident that by their expressions lack in social skills.

Regarding of even the early start of the dialogue, it does not acquire the solid basis of dynamic discourse, namely the recognition of the need for finding a mutually acceptable solution. The dialogue is more like arguments report than a synthesis of views. Both Electra and Chrysothemis not accept substantively finding a common solution, as they do not try to identify those points which will form the basis for a new creation and editing.

Under these excerpts become apparent democratic elements that highlight the dynamics of dialogue. There is respect and courtesy without appearing deeper qualitative elements. Each side attaches voluntary exact meaning in what it delivers. But purpose and objectives of communication are not observed. Each participant has its own purpose, which may not have been fully clarified, but certainly no single purpose of communication is commonly perceived.

Participants are relatively stiff in understanding feelings of the other side and interpretation of how their behavior based on that. They face difficulty in negotiating the position, role and views considering as finite and closed the limits of their beliefs.

Two key elements almost not detected, the approach with an open disposition of the other and self-awareness effort. These are two interacting elements that determine both viewing and the depth of its quality regarding the effectiveness of dialogue in order to challenge stereotyped assumptions and transformation of thinking.

No need for consensus in the excerpts

The result of the two excerpts is the withdrawal of one participant without finding commonly accepted solution. The two participants in the debate have not challenged their beliefs as those were analyzed in the previous section. Relieved some of their feelings, made known about each other some of their concepts but could not find a functional solution that act liberating for both parties.

According to what is considered to be "fair", Chrysothemis adds the statement *"the right is not reasonable to make two people quarrel, but to proceed as quickly as possible in practice"*, which shows an effort to act to some degree against rulers. Chrysothemis has not decided to fully support her statement as she moves into this secretkt saying *"And while I will try to do this act, for the name the gods not take a word"*. In addition, it is presented still a point in the dialogues where Chrysothemis appears verbally to seek consensus, using the words: *"So what you wish me to do?"* and *"But if for some benefit, I will not deny you"*.

These commonalities potentially springboard finding common means in the opposite. However, in the text it is clear that both sisters are trapped in their ideas, subordinated to them, and not allow themselves to assess their individual interests unaffected. Therefore, obstacles encountered demonstrate that they are in the third stage of awareness according to R. Kegan (Kegan, 1994: 118-120). In order to succeed a mutually accepted solution, subjects should exceed this level.

In order for the dialogue to become a discourse and two sister to end up with a mutually acceptable and simultaneously functional solution must first and foremost the one to receive the recognition of the other, to feel equal opposite during the debate and feel that both have same opportunities.

Once communication causes feelings which are diffused through the dialogue is fruitful to make effort to optimize and understanding of nature and their causes. Recognition of emotion from the other side can trigger self-evaluation of emotions and search for its causes. The processing of emotions from each side separately serves each participant consider herself from a distance, as far as possible as an object. Result is framing their thoughts with rational arguments.

This would be possible if one listened carefully elaborating the opinion of the other during the confrontation. In the excerpts it is observed that references to the statements of the other side is almost nonexistent and where they exist take the form of prosecutor with criteria included in one or another meaning structure. Careful listening leads to processing of arguments. The expression of chorus is characteristic *"in such circumstances is caution and helps him who speaks and one who listens"*. Finally, understanding the importance of the perception that there is a perspective other than their own, which may be of value if examined is a profitable and mature

approach.

Editing not only pursued as a process within the current meaning structure, but as an attempt to internalize the contrary view, conflict with it, and compose a new perspective. The uncritical rejection of any claim because seems not to be in line with the beliefs of each participant should be replaced by openness towards other viewings.

Understanding viewing of the other side opens up a new world in which both sides have to contribute. Chorus by saying "*for the name of gods, do not say anything angry because in both words there is a profit, if you hear the words of her and she hears again yours*" conceptually encapsulates the necessity of views to be taken into account every new element emerged, even if at first they seem to conflict with the current beliefs.

The primary objective of a discourse is to challenge their own views, to bring them in to front for discussion and to think them with themselves so as to transform their initial perceptions. Electra could potentially with such an approach to rethink and transform the frames of reference that if ever remember their dead, their honor. Similarly Chrysothemis could challenge the meaning structure who want to believe one way the subordination to the rulers.

Conclusion

In this paper, was attempted an analysis of the role of the discourse in transformative learning. This analysis was approached by correlating a relevant case study. The results that came through this effort are varied and reflect the reasons why a discourse can be successful or not.

In particular, the dialogue of two sisters cannot be characterized as a discourse, mainly because an intention to end up with a consensus and a common solution never existed. The reasons which explain it are related to the conditions of this particular dialogue.

In conclusion, if specific conditions are not held, dialogue becomes fruitless and participants leave without reaching a mutually accepted solution. The aim of this paper was to recognize those conditions and competencies that one should possess in order to achieve a discourse that leads to the transformative learning.

References

- Baltsa, A. A. (1994). *Electra by Sophocles*, Athens: Dim. N. Papadima.
- Boal, A. (1981). *The Theatre of the Oppressed*, trans. Mpraoudaki, E. Athens: Theoria.
- Brookfield, S. (2005). *The Power of Critical Theory*, San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.
- Freire, P. (2005). *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, trans. Bergman, R. M., New York: The Continuum International Publishing Group Inc.
- Freire, P., Shore, I. (2008). *A Pedagogy for Liberation*. Dialogues on Transforming Education, Athens: Metaixmio
- Goleman, D. (2009). *Emotional Intelligence. Why it can matter more than IQ*. Athens: Ellinika Grammata.
- Kegan, R. (2006). "What 'Form' Transforms?: A Constructive-Developmental Perspective on Transformational Learning.", In J. Mezirow (Ed.) *Learning as Transformation: Critical Perspectives of a Theory-In-Progress*. Athens: Metaixmio.
- Kegan, R. (1994). *The Evolving Self. Problem and Process in Human Development*, Cambridge, Massachusetts and London. England: Harvard University Press.
- Mezirow, J. and Associates. (2006). *Learning as transformation*, trans. Kalaouzidis, G., Athens: Metaixmio.
- Mezirow, J. (2003). «Transformative Learning as Discourse». In *Journal of Transformative Education*, Vol.1, p. 58-63
- Mezirow, J. and Associates. (2000). *Learning as transformation*, San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.

Reflections on the impact of transformative learning: the need of designing a coherent and holistic evaluating approach
Manos Pavlakis & Dimitra Andritsakou

Evaluation of a transformative learning process has been rarely discussed within academic community. This paper examines previous work on the field, discusses on the benefits and the missing points of proposed research attempts and emphasizes the need for an open dialogue regarding the design and construction of an evaluation tool which will take into account the work, which has been already presented, but also successful assessment models from other disciplines.

1. Introduction

Transformative learning has been a key aspect within the theoretical framework of adult education and, as a theory, has been expanded to various horizons after Mezirow's first contribution back in late 70s'. Critical reflection and critical discourse were the main instruments proposed during the transformation learning process, however Mezirow himself helped the theory to move on by acknowledging the importance of the affective, emotional, and social aspects of transformative learning (2000). Since then, transformative learning is a key concept of adult learning affecting and intriguing the work of researchers who try to find new places and environments to use it, new challenges to experiment with it and, of course, for a and conferences to present its impact on people's lives.

However, although the theory seems to be developed towards various fields, one of the issues that have not been dealt with the same caution by the majority of TL scholars is the assessment of a transformative learning process. In other words, despite the fact that everybody discusses about the transformative learning process, there is not sufficient research evidence about the real impact of transformative learning. The issue of evaluation is indeed a critical one. One question however that needs to be addressed in order to discuss this matter has to do with the purposes of the evaluation. What is the need for evaluation and why is it required to evaluate transformative learning? Is it to legitimize the value of a specific training? For the sake of critical reflection? Don't learners know when they are transformed? Those are questions that may be relevant to consider as there is a real risk to get lost in the diversity of evaluative practices.

Hence, the purpose of this paper is to shed some light on a challenging research gap in transformative learning. The paper is divided into three sections. In the first one, we will try contextualize the background of this idea and we will present data from some previous works in the field. In this section we will also discuss about the benefits and the weaknesses of these proposals. In the second section we will focus on specific assessment tools, used already in other sciences, such as Management, Psychology and Coaching and we will make an effort to relate their utility within the transformation learning context. In particular, we will examine the importance of who is responsible for the assessment, what is assessed, how and when. The paper will close with a discussion regarding the whole idea and future prospects

and challenges.

2. Theoretical background

Transformative learning may occur through objective or subjective reframing. Objective reframing involves critical reflection on the assumptions of others encountered in a narrative or in task-oriented problem solving, as in "action learning" (Revans, 1982). Subjective reframing involves critical self-reflection of one's own assumptions about the following: A narrative-applying a reflective insight from someone else's narrative to one's own experience A system-economic, cultural, political, educational, communal, or other-as in Freire's (1970) conscientization, consciousness raising in the women's movement and the civil rights movement An organization or workplace-as in Argyris' (1982) "double loop learning" Feelings and interpersonal relations-as in psychological counseling or psychotherapy The ways one learns, including one's own frames of reference, per Se, in some adult education programs-as in Isaacs' (1993) "triple loop learning"

Mezirow, J. (2000). Learning to think like an Adult. Core Concepts of Transformation Theory. In Mezirow, J et. al. (Hg): *Learning as Transformation Critical Perspectives on a Theory in Progress*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.

In 1991, Mezirow (1991a) expanded the original 10-phase model of perspective transformation to include an additional phase, "renegotiating relationships and negotiating new relationships" (Mezirow, 1994b, p. 224), between the original Phases 8 and 9. This new phase reflected the importance of critical self-reflection. He further outlined the constructivist assumptions that formed the basis of the revised theory as including "a conviction that meaning exists within ourselves rather than in external forms such as books and that personal meanings that we attribute to our experience are acquired and validated through human interaction and communication" (Mezirow, 1991a, p. xiv). In other words, meaning is individualistic and found inside the learner and teacher rather than prescribed by external influences such as written texts and speeches; however, that meaning becomes significant to the learner through critical discourse with others.

Freire also refers to a process of liberation, an instrument for the critical awareness where students self-evaluate their personal experiences, interact with the educators and form a critical relationship with knowledge (1970)

2.1 Previous work on the field

Among the first attempts on the field are the works of Kreber (2004) and Kember and his colleagues (2000), who tried to measure the level of reflective thinking, a key element within TL theory. Furthermore, within the TL context, Cranton and Wright (2008) used what they called *learning companions* to evaluate possible transformation in illiterate people in North America, while interviews and likert scaled questionnaires were used in agricultural population in Tanzania (Friis-Hansen, Duveskog & Taylor, 2013). Other researchers used tools which facilitated reflection on previous actions, storytelling techniques and action plan (Nitsche & Malvicini, 2013).

*In order to connect with European traditions of research, I would also suggest to explore **biographical approaches** as they have emerged at the same period than TLT,*

as a way to 'evaluate' how adults learn, by asking them to narrate their experience

Taylor has also discussed the issue of TL evaluation in his recent texts and papers (2009, 2014) and together with Cranton and Stuckey created a model, which can be accessed online through a certain questionnaire.⁶ The questionnaire provides a set of 112 questions that assess the outcomes and processes of engaging in TL.

2.2 Benefits and missing points

Taylor's model: At this point some questions arise:

- How accessible is such a questionnaire? How easy is to be used in various educational settings?
- When is the evaluation of the results supposed to take place? How long after the educational intervention?
- How qualitative data could contribute towards the depiction of change and transformation?
- How could other stakeholders (e.g. the educator, co-trainees etc.) of the seminar contribute to the evaluation of possible transformations?
- Εδώ καλό είναι να κάνουμε την κριτική μας για το εργαλείο. Τι δεν λαμβάνει υπόψη, τι αδυναμίες έχει κτλ. Έγγραφα 2-3 πράγματα από αυτά που είχαμε στο ppt, τι άλλο θα μπορούσαμε να βάλουμε;

At this point a crucial question arise: How accurate could be to evaluate the level or the impact of transformative learning with a questionnaire, since it clearly implies that people are fully aware of their development

3. Contribution from other sciences

Evidence from other disciplines shows that the issue of evaluation has been dealt with a more holistic approach, taking into account various dimensions. Methods and tools suggested, such as the 360° feedback or the JOHARI Window might be useful during a process of evaluating transformation within learning contexts. In addition, in this section we will refer to the relation between Adult Education and Coaching, since the first one is considered as an important theoretical tradition underpinning the second one (Bachkirova et. al.,2010) and we will try to gain insights, as adult educators, from coaching tools and methodology.

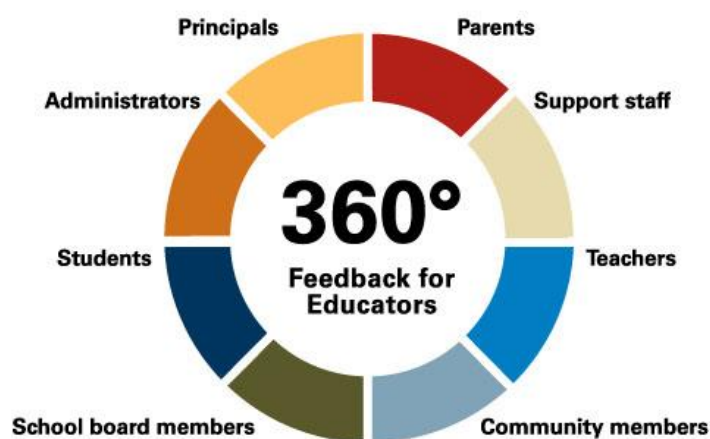
3.1 360° degree feedback

The idea behind 360° feedback is not new and it is based on the belief that anyone can

⁶Full questionnaire is available at: <http://transformativelearningsurvey.com>

receive feedback or evaluation from everyone in an organization, co-workers, bosses, peers, subordinates, customers and others. Actually, 360° feedback goes back to the assessment centers developed by German militarists during World War II and their need to gather performance data from multiple perspectives. Later on and especially after the 80s organizations found quite intriguing the idea to obtain information regarding various aspects, such as compensation, leadership, behavior etc not only from one source (Fleenor and Prince, 1997). Various 360° feedback models were developed since then and were mostly used for performance appraisal and decision-making purposes (Edwards & Ewen, 1996) and as tool to increase self-awareness of people in organizations.

Daniel Goleman makes a significant point at this issue at his research into what distinguished the leadership of highly successful healthcare companies from less successful ones: ‘Tellingly, the CEOs from the poorest performing companies gave themselves the highest ratings on seven of the ten leadership abilities. But the pattern reversed when it came to how their subordinates rated them: they gave these CEOs low ratings on the very same abilities. On the other hand, subordinates saw the CEOs of the best performing companies as demonstrating all ten of these leadership abilities most often’ (Goleman et al. 2002: 95). Picture 1 shows possible sources where an Educator of an educational organization could take feedback from.



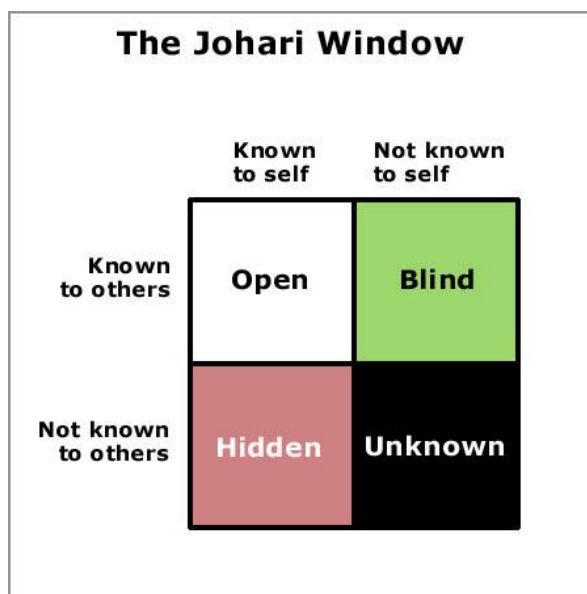
Picture 1: A typical 360-degree feedback system for an Educator in an educational organization.

3.2 JOHARI Window

360 degree feedback, as a culture or philosophy, rather than as model, presupposes that everyone in an organization or other context is willing to give and receive feedback, that is to be open to explore himself or herself and receptive at the same time. In the 1950s, two psychologists from the University of California created a model, which they called after a combination of their own names, **Joe** Luft and **Harry** Ingram = Johari Window (Luft & Ingham, 1955). The model consists of four rooms. Room 1, Open, is the part of ourselves that we see and others see. Room 2, Blind, is the aspects that others see but we are not aware of. Room 3, Hidden, is our private space, which we know but keep from others. Finally, Room 4, Unknown, is the most mysterious room in that the unconscious or subconscious part of us is seen by neither ourselves nor others (Picture 2).

So how does JOHARI Window work? The purpose is to develop the Open room to any direction. As far as concerning the Hidden room it is a matter of decision

to what extent someone wants to expose weakness and reveal things about themselves. As far as the Unknown room, things become more complex and may require the presence of a therapist or other expert. Hence, the only room, which provides opportunities for real improvement, is the Blind. In this case, feedback is more than welcomed and can be used for people to improve the missing points of their picture, in other words what other people see as strengths or weaknesses in themselves, while they are not able to see.



Picture 2: JOHARI Window

Coaching

Finally, worthy remarks come from Coaching. First of all, its benefit is that Coaching, in most cases, demands a medium or long term period, that is a lasting relationship between Coach and Coachee. In others words the Coach has plenty of opportunities to meet with their client, thus monitor their progress. The first key element of coaching is raising awareness, which is the product of focused attention, concentration and clarity. 'Awareness also encompasses self-awareness, in particular recognizing when and how emotions or desires distort one's own perception' (Whitmore, 2002: 33). Others prefer to use the term 'self-knowledge', a term which is regarded as the fount of wisdom in many cultures. In particular, Clutterbuck and Megginson stand up for the power of coaching to open up the learners' values, to change belief sets, to bring stereotypes into the open and finally 'enhance awareness of the degree to which we make our own lives' (2005: 69).

So, how coaching works and what lessons can adult educators take from it especially during a transformation learning process? First of all, coaching is all about asking the right questions and thus, facilitating a procedure during which learners will find their own reality. Self-awareness discussed above is strongly related to the sense of responsibility learner should obtain in order to achieve desired change and performance. The 'most effective questions for raising awareness and responsibility begin with words that seek to quantify or gather facts, words like 'what', 'when', 'who', 'how much', 'how many'. 'Why' is discouraged since it often implies criticism and evokes defensiveness. Instead, questions expressed as 'What were the reasons ...?' evoke more specific, factual answers' (Whitmore, 2002: 47).

A second tool used in Coaching is the already discussed Autobiography as a

method of self-evaluation. In Coaching words this concept is epitomized in the question: ‘how did you get from there to here?’ Many coaches love asking their clients for a brief account of their lives so far, as it is a good chance for them to build intimacy, rapport and also interest in the whole person, not just the work person. As Rogers states, what clients emphasize and what they leave out is always interesting and relevant to their view of themselves (2008).

Finally, coaching is about giving and receiving feedback. As Whitmore states, ‘the worst feedback is personal and judgmental. The most effective is subjective and descriptive (2002: 134). In Coaching feedback is used with caution, and it is always necessary to remind clients that it is not an instruction to change, since they have the responsibility to choose what they take notice of and what they ignore (Rogers, 2008). However, behind the meaning of feedback, every educator can find the way to help learners learn from their previous behavior and achieve desired change.

4. Discussion and future steps

The discussion above demonstrates the need to explore the issue more. For example, our experiences as adult educators reveal that transformation can occur during a moment, which it may be not quite apparent for both the trainer and the trainee. In other words, transformation may occur long after the training experience or intervention, at a completely different environment. So, time seems to play a crucial role in this process and this why we believe that in order to get a valid result, we could begin the evaluation process even before the educational intervention and keep track of the process, monitor it during the training and later on after it, so as to include final remarks and impacts. Coaching procedure, which is based on constant evaluation by its nature, could offer some important insights in terms of how time can help learners unfold possible dysfunctional assumptions.

Including a coaching culture within the learning context could be also useful during the evaluation procedure, especially in cases where learners have difficulties in developing self-awareness levels satisfactory so as to provide space for a transformation to occur. Results from biographical approaches could be also combined in order to strengthen the link between self-awareness and critical reflection, a necessary step towards transformation.

Besides time and the issue of self-awareness, which are both critical, the ‘who’ of evaluation needs to be re-addressed during a transformation learning process. Both 360° feedback and the JOHARI Window, emphasize the need to focus during the evaluation process, not only on trainees’ perspectives, but also include data from many other factors that could influence the process of transformation, e.g. the educator herself, co-trainees, self-evaluation, persons of the external environment etc. Behind this idea, the role of *learning companion*, which has already mentioned above, acting as a co-evaluator and objective observer could be reinforced and further developed.

Concluding, we come back to the questions we raised at the introductory part of this paper: What is the need for evaluation and why is it required to evaluate transformative learning? Is it to legitimize the value of a specific training? For the sake of critical reflection? Don’t learners know when they are transformed? A simple reply of ‘yes’, ‘no’ or ‘under specific circumstances’ at those questions would be naive and pointless. Hundreds of papers published every year in various Journals, presentations at Conferences and Fora, dissertations at postgraduate level deal with the theory of Transformative Learning. To our opinion, the creation of a coherent and holistic evaluation approach on transformative learning is a matter of respect to all

people who struggle to keep the theory alive and expand it to new fields and horizons.

References

- Bachkirova, T., Cox, E. and Clutterbuck, D. (2010). Introduction. In Cox, E., Bachkirova, T. and Clutterbuck, D (Eds) *The complete handbook of Coaching*. UK: Sage.
- Clutterbuck, D. & Megginson, D. (2005). *Techniques for Coaching and Mentoring*. G. Britain: Elsevier.
- Cranton, P., & Wright, B. (2008). The transformative educator as learning companion. *Journal of Transformative Education*, 6, pp. 33-47.
- Edwards, M. R. & Ewen, A. J. (1996). *360° Feedback: the Powerful New Model for Employee Assessment and Performance Improvement*. New York: American Management Association.
- Fleenor, J. & Prince, J. (1997). *Using 360-degree Feedback in Organizations. An annotated bibliography*. Center for Creative Leadership, Greensboro North Carolina.
- Friis-Hansen, E., Duveskog, D., & Taylor, E.
- Goleman, D., Boyatzis, R., and McKee, A. (2002). *The New Leaders – Transforming the Art of Leadership into the science of results*. London: Time Warner.
- Luft, J. & Ingham, H. (1955). *The Johari window, a graphic model of interpersonal awareness*". Proceedings of the western training laboratory in group development. Los Angeles: University of California.
- Mezirow, J. (2000). *Learning as transformation: Critical perspectives on a theory in progress*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.
- Nitschke, P., & Malvicini, P. (2013). Drawing toward transformation and action in a forgotten barrio: Cultivating a learning and planning community, *Journal of Transformative Education*, 11 (2), pp. 127-144.
- Rogers, J. (2008). *Coaching Skills. A Handbook*. (2nd ed) New York: Open University Press.
- Taylor, E. (2009).
- Taylor, E. (2014).
- Whitmore, J. (2002). *Coaching for Performance. GROWing People, Performance and Purpose*. (3d ed). London: Nicholas Brealey Publishing.

**Transformative Learning through Dialogue and Collective Reflection with
Peers. The case of Teachers' In-Service Training**

Athanasia Dakopoulou
Hellenic Open University

Abstract.

The paper presents the results of a survey conducted in three educational

regions of Primary Education in Athens. It argues that the model of collective reflection through dialogue in in-service training for teachers would be an effective tool for the remedy of distortions concerning teaching practices as well as teachers' professional role.

1. Introduction.

Reflection has been researched in teachers' in-service training for decades. Dewey (1933 as cited in Spalding & Wilson, 2002, p. 1394) has defined reflection as the "active, persistent and systematic examination of any belief or supposed type of knowledge under the light of the foundations that support it, as well as the further conclusions to which it tends". For the needs of this paper, we conceptualize reflection as "the rational analytical process, through which human beings extract knowledge from their experience" (Jordi, 2011, p. 181).

The idea of collective reflection was built later to further develop the reflection aspect. Teachers' education literature (Zeichner, 1996; Fendler, 2003) argues against decontextualised reflection exercises with weak connections to professional practice. The remedy to this "danger" may be facilitating teachers reflecting in collective environment, a process that would be at least a challenge for education. Teachers' INSET aiming at the creation of professional learning communities may provide an ideal structure for engaging in collegial dialogue about what is learned through reflective practice and for discussing on beliefs and practices in relation to taken for granted beliefs and assumptions about the work in primary schools.

The paper presents the results of a survey conducted in three educational regions of primary education in Athens. The context was an INSET program for specialist primary teachers titled: "Issues of Social Pedagogy: Approaching the dynamics of the classroom" during the school year 2015-2016. The purpose of the program was to provide specialist teachers (English, French, German language, Music, Arts, Physical Education) the opportunity to address socio-pedagogical issues related to classroom management, both at theoretical and practical level.

The aim of the study was to highlight teachers' views about collaboration in primary schools and the cooperative behavior of fellow teachers in schools. Moreover, the research aimed at outlining the reasons that supported (or not) collaborative schemes in primary schools. The publication of research findings aspires to contribute to the efficient structuring of INSET programs for teachers, as well as targeted interventions to promote cooperative schemes in schools.

2. The theoretical discussion.

Starting the theoretical discussion, it is necessary to define what we mean by the term "collaborative culture". More specifically, collaborative cultures in schools support a shared sense of purpose, and networks of professionals who share problems, ideas, materials, and solutions. Such cultures are not easy to develop, but they may offer substantial and meaningful settings in which teachers develop craft knowledge, a powerful sense of efficacy, and a deep connection to fellow educators, parents, and students (Peterson, 1994). The literature on collaboration argues that teachers who function in collaborative cultures usually trust, value, and legitimize sharing expertise, seek advice and help their colleagues value and practice team teaching and shared decision-making (Shah, 2011). Moreover, they share resources and supplies, plan cooperatively and develop a strong sense of efficacy (Ashton and Webb, 1986). Collaborative cultures are created by teachers who regularly seek ideas from

conferences, in-service training and colleagues. Schools where collaborative culture takes place are places where "continuous self-renewal is defined, communicated, and experienced as a taken-for-granted fact of everyday school life" (Rosenholtz, 1989, p. 74).

Reflection in education is considered as a crucial factor for identifying, analyzing and solving complex problems that arise in the educational process (Spalding & Wilson, 2002; Pollard, 1997). Reflective thinking starts from a state of doubt, hesitation or embarrassment and through dialogue moves towards the search of mental resources that will resolve and clarify the doubts. These mental resources which come from previous experience or relevant knowledge can't be taken for granted, as they don't necessarily lead to reflective thinking. A basic condition to obtain reflection is to maintain and extend this state of doubt (Spalding & Wilson, 2002).

Teachers' INSET programs may function as the environment that would offer the opportunity to create conditions of doubt, hesitation or embarrassment among teachers. This point of view was the beginning of our thinking during the research. Drawing upon this idea, we approach the specialist teachers' INSET program as the context where reflection may take place.

Furthermore, participation in reflective practices may lead to teachers who teach reflectively. The existence of reflective teachers may contribute positively to the quality of education. Dewey (1933) argued that reflective teaching requires a teacher who will reflect on what is happening in the classroom, who is committed to a continuous self-evaluation and development. It also requires flexibility, a detailed analysis and social awareness. After Dewey, many educators and researchers got involved in reflective teaching and training mainly in the field of adult education (Schon, 1983; Brookfield, 1995; Jarvis, 1992; Mezirow, 1998).

Since the 80s, the term of reflective practitioner has been introduced to educational literature to refer to teachers who achieve their own professional development through reflective practice. According to Schon (1983), teachers who follow reflective teaching develop professionally through a process of critical reflection relevant to the profession. Through this process, teachers acquire specific practical skills, knowledge and understanding of the professional demands.

Reflective teaching is based on teachers' judgment, which draws partly upon reflection and partly upon educational science. Therefore, it requires an open mind, responsibility and soulful commitment. The concrete idea that the paper draws upon is that effective teaching, professional learning and self-fulfillment are enhanced through cooperation and dialogue with colleagues (Pollard, 1997). When we create an environment that facilitates dialogue with colleagues, then it's possible that reflection turns into collective reflection.

Dialogue and collective reflection through working with colleagues refers to the interaction between people, experiencing their coexistence as an opportunity and time to learn together and from others. Dialogue as the tool for collective reflection emphasizes the social nature of meaning construction and confirms the genuine expression of personal knowledge (De Lawter & Sosin, 2000). The keyword is "together", in the sense of a mutual commitment to build a common meaning. Collective reflection, too, enables the creation of a common language for understanding new meanings based on experience. It promotes communication and moreover it gives the advantage of conscious openness towards the "different", towards the "other" (De Lawter & Sosin, 2000). In this sense, the notion of collective reflection is utilized widely in the literature of teachers' training. We find the term also in the way that Brookfield (1995), through the Lens theory, suggests that people,

apart from reflecting on their own personal beliefs, they also reflect through other 'lenses', on multiple perspectives including theory.

The miraculous way in which teachers create a new language with which they talk about education has been also presented in Freire's work (1998), according to which the real and substantive discussion, active listening and deliberate action are ultimately expressions of power. In this context, collective reflection is an example of experiential learning that looks towards freedom, democracy and social justice as social opportunities as well as personal and social actions (De Lawter & Sosin, 2000). Adult education researchers (Cranton, 2006; Dirkx, 2006; Mezirow, 2000) argue that adult learning is a dynamic, social, interactive process. Therefore, groups of adults may function as the environment that facilitates learning and transformation. Mezirow's (2000) transformative learning theory focuses on the engagement of adults in dialogue - which as it involves different perspectives – facilitates individual learning and transformation. Nevertheless, many researchers argue that individual transformation is not the only process that takes place through dialogue. Above all, there are also collective transformation processes that occur when dialogue with peers takes place. Cranton (2006, p. 48) argues that “transformative learning becomes an expansion of consciousness that is collective as well as individual”.

Moreover, the paper draws upon the theoretical points of Mezirow's theory (1991 as cited in Kitchenham, 2008) about the role of dialogue with peers as the vehicle for the remedy of distortions of meaning perspectives. Adults have a certain number of distortions of meaning perspectives. Especially for teachers, the re-evaluation of their beliefs about the nature and use of knowledge (epistemic level), as well the re-evaluation of their socio-cultural distortions seems crucial. More specifically, as Mezirow (1990) analyses, socio-cultural distortions involve taking for granted belief systems that pertain to power and social relationships, especially those currently prevailing and legitimized and enforced by institutions, while psychic distortions are mainly psychological distortions that have to do with presuppositions generating unwarranted anxiety that impedes taking action.

The psychological distortions of adults are based on earlier beliefs and assumptions that cause undue stress and may prevent action. The role of adult education is exactly to transform such distortions. Adult learners must help themselves to clarify two things: the sub-areas where they feel trapped from acting and the source and nature of anxiety in decision taking. Mezirow (1990) suggests that adults can learn with guidance to separate between reasonable and unreasonable concerns and to dispute the distorted psychological assumptions, which inhibit action. The psychological-educational process, through which the adult is strengthened to overcome these common existential psychological distortions, could be facilitated by the appropriate adult educator. Adult educators have the role to provide emotional support and cooperate with adult learners to transform their mental distortions (Mezirow, 1990). At this point, it has to be pointed out that it is not necessary that all adults experience all 11 phases of Mezirow's transformation model to have a perspective transformation.

During teachers' INSET, participants as adult learners often examine their worldview in light of their own particular belief or value system (Kitchenham, 2008) which may include distorted assumptions that can be either completely or partly internalized. Thus, for example, a specialist teacher may believe that it's impossible for a newcomer to participate in a school community which, in turn, may block participation in collaborative schemes. More broadly, teachers' socio-cultural distortions may involve taken for granted assumptions about teaching as a “lonely”

profession as well as assumptions about lack of collaboration in primary schools. In the case of specialist teachers who were transferred from secondary education, this may be combined with psychic (that is, mental and emotional) distortions which could include anxiety regarding for their new role in primary education. Finally, teachers may experience epistemic distortions, that is, distortions that refer to the nature of knowledge and its employment in problem-solving. In this case, a new meaning construction that challenges preexisting ways of problem-solving could be regarded as a distortion of the previously held ideal (Mezirow, 1990).

Transformative learning involves the correction of these distorted assumptions, epistemological, socio-linguistic, or mental, resulting from prior learning by means of a reassessment of the prior beliefs that cause these dysfunctional frames of reference (Mezirow, 1990). Kitchenham (2008) offers an example of rating of assumptions and argues that the content of the assumptions and beliefs requires renegotiation of thought and action through reflection.

More specifically, in the third stage of transformative learning, there is a critical assessment of the epistemological, socio-linguistic and psychological assumptions (Kitchenham, 2008, p. 105). The distorted views and assumptions “are transformed through a critical assessment of epistemic, socio-cultural and psychological distortions arising during the introjection process, that is the uncritical acceptance of others’ values” (Mezirow, 1990, p. 11).

Our research aspires to find out possible distorted assumptions of specialist teachers for cooperation in primary schools and the new educational profile, which they form after the educational process of INSET, which was based on dialogue with colleagues, forming thus their collective critical reflection. The INSET program functioned as a professional learning community that provided the context for engaging in dialogue with peers in relation to taken-for-granted beliefs and assumptions about practices in primary schools.

3. The research methodology.

Drawing upon the theoretical discussion, the aim of our research was to identify the initial assumptions of specialist teachers on collaboration in primary schools and whether INSET process contributed to the modification of their previous distorted views. The research questions were:

1. Do teachers collaborate in your schools?
2. Which are the factors that support (or inhibit) collaborative schemes in schools?
3. Do teachers’ staff meetings facilitate collaboration?

Data were collected by means of focus groups interviews, because it encourages the expression of various and often divergent views. Group interviews in a dialogical manner focus on a theme and revolve around the axis of research questions (Vaughn et al., 1996; Morgan, 1998). Focus groups involved forty-eight (48) specialist teachers from three educational regions of Primary Education in Athens, who participated in the research-training program on "Issues of Social Pedagogy: Approaching the dynamics of the classroom” for the school year 2015-2016.

The restrictions of the program that did not allow the training of more than two specialist teachers per school, its voluntary nature and the outside working hours implementation resulted in the formation of a relative homogeneous group: all participants shared the basic aim of the program, that is, the creation of co-operative teaching conditions and sought to familiarize themselves with methods and procedures that facilitate the handling of socio-pedagogical issues in schools.

After the completion of the INSET program, teachers participated in a two

hours meeting with the three school advisors. During the meeting eight (8) focus groups of six (6) persons each were established. Initially, the basic questions of the research were given to each member of the group individually. Then, after an in depth discussion between team members, each focus group announced in a common session the results of its work. A school advisor coordinated a structured discussion and the other two kept relevant notes.

4. Discussion of the research findings.

As far as the first research question is concerned - whether specialist teachers develop collaborations in schools - the majority of the participants responded positively and deemed the existence of collaborative climate as particularly important. In line with the relevant literature on its importance on school effectiveness (Sammons et al., 1997), they significantly value collaboration in their workplace, recognize that it offers professional reward and makes schools exciting places for both teachers and students.

Starting from the assumption that the implementation of collaborative strategies and actions may fail by incompatible attitudes within schools such as lack of understanding and lack of communication (Deal & Kennedy, 1999), the second research question aimed at exploring this parameter. There was an important differentiation concerning the participation of specialist teachers in structuring collaborative climate and the reasons why that happens. Teachers who responded positively argue that working for many years in the same school, is a key factor for the development of cooperation with colleagues. As they mentioned, it allows them to acquire the necessary information about the way the school functions and to work with their colleagues for the resolution of the common school problems.

On the contrary, teachers, who felt that they could not develop collaborative networks in schools, attributed it mainly to the continuous movements between different schools. The limited time spent in each school restricts the development of communication and cooperation channels, which specialist teachers aspire to. As a consequence, the main obstacle to the development of cooperative schemes was mostly the current operation of primary schools with the few opportunities offered and the restricted time for interaction than the school culture. Therefore, it seems that specialist teachers do not recognize as a key problem the type of school culture, in the sense of decision making and general behaviors that direct their decisions and actions in their daily practice (Peterson & Deal, 2009).

Regarding the third research question on the role of the teachers' staff meetings in collaborative climate and the factors that contribute to the building or not of cooperative climate in schools, the participants' views converged on several points. In the beginning of the INSET program, teachers ceded responsibility for building collaborative climate to teachers' staff meetings. They highlighted the importance of understanding and respect for different viewpoints and democratic dialogue, as well as the role of positive relationships among teachers. Moreover, they pointed out that the dynamics of the teachers' staff meetings could also prevent the building of collaborative networks. The lack of collaborative culture, they argued, sometimes undermines their educational work. Specialist teachers seem to understand the crucial role of the teachers' staff meetings in forming cooperative schemes in schools. At the same time, they seemed to be aware that the values, beliefs and opinions of the teaching staff members in schools could strengthen cooperation, teamwork and dialogue.

Focussing on the INSET program, we should point out that there were shifts in

teachers' opinions from the beginning till the end of the program. More specifically, there were shifts from the certainty that a teacher "meets" collaboration in schools to the possibility that a teacher could create the conditions for collaboration in schools. Therefore, we should argue that specialist teachers had mostly epistemic meaning perspectives related to their professional knowledge. They may also had socio-cultural meaning perspectives related to the taken for granted assumptions about the nature of teaching profession and the function of specialist teachers in primary education. Such internalised types of meaning perspectives may have been distorted and problematic.

As specialist teachers who shared with their colleagues their experiences about cooperation in schools and their problematic state (Kitchenham, 2008) entered into a collective critical reflection process, they, on one hand, acknowledged their own dysfunctional assumptions and schemes and, on the other hand, gradually recognized the role of the others, their colleagues with different ideas and assumptions.

We may, thus, argue that the model of collective reflection through dialogue in INSET programs for teachers would be an effective tool for the remedy of distortions concerning teaching practices as well as teachers' professional role. So, the example of teachers discussing and learning collectively could inform processes and methods of transformative teachers' INSET programs. Our research showed that for teachers learning collectively as they interact is easier than isolated learning. As a consequence, interaction and dialogue with peers would provide a perfect context for collective rethinking and acceleration of transformations.

Dialogue with peers offered the opportunity for collective reflection which became the vehicle towards the remedy of mostly epistemic and socio-cultural distortions of specialist teachers' meaning perspectives. The INSET program as the research context, offered the opportunity to participants to think together with their colleagues. It happened, thus, what Mezirow (1998, p. 197) calls critical reflection of assumptions through the participation "in discourse to validate beliefs, intentions, values and feelings".

Is dialogue with peers and collective reflection on teachers' experiences with collaboration in primary schools a kind of "needless luxury"? As teachers are in the core of the work in schools, research should at times challenge previous practice and often provide impetus for transformation. From this vintage point, various forms of critical reflection by teachers are a prerequisite to develop collaboration in schools that it may be enhanced in the near future.

5. Concluding Remarks.

To wind up, it's necessary to point out the great importance of the creation of collaborative culture of professional learning at all levels of the school system. In this paper, we provided a short description of the implementation of collective reflection through dialogue from the perspectives of the teachers involved. From their accounts, we determined that collective reflection as a kind of professional development remain newfound in the educational community, but such types of exposure to this kind of professional development may function as a positive and effective model for transforming teaching beliefs and practices. We have to underline, also, the importance of the affective components of the adult learning environment, and the ways in which the teachers-participants were able to change their learning assumptions when they felt supported, valued and respected as part of an honest and supportive group trying to learn collectively. During our INSET program, there was special care for the establishment of a climate of collegiality and trust. So, we can

assume that transformative learning happened as adult learners had opportunities to interact with their colleagues, as other learners, when they are offered time to discuss, when they have opportunities to reflect and make sense of their learning in relation to their prior experiences. Transformative learning takes place especially, when adults have the opportunity to connect their learning to their own contexts, purposes, and needs. Nevertheless, we need to stress that the necessary prerequisite remains always the interaction in a safe environment in which adults may try out new ideas and share personal experiences (Mezirow, 2000).

Finally, further research is needed to better understand how we can facilitate and sustain meaningful transformation among teachers who use dialogue and collective reflection as a useful transformative tool for their work in primary education. Moreover, we must admit that, more research is needed to better understand the social and emotional context of the development of transformative dialogue and collective reflection with peers in educational contexts.

References.

- Ashton, P. & Webb, R. (1986) *Making a difference: Teachers' sense of efficacy and student achievement*. New York: Longman.
- Brookfield, S. (1995). *Becoming a Critically Reflective Teacher*. San Francisco: Jossey Bass.
- Cranton, P. (2006). *Understanding and promoting transformative learning: A guide for educators of adults*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.
- Deal, T.E. & Kennedy, A.A. (1999). *The New Corporate Cultures*. Reading MA, New York: Perseus Books.
- De Lawter, K. & Sosin, A. (2000). "A Self-study in Teacher Education: Collective Reflection as Negotiated Meaning", Paper presented at the *Annual Meeting of the American Educational Research Association*, New Orleans, LA, April 25, 2000.
- Dewey, J. (1933). *How we think: A restatement of the relation of reflective thinking to the educative process*. Boston: Health and Company.
- Dirkx, J. (2006). Engaging emotions in adult learning: A Jungian perspective on emotion and transformative learning. *New directions for adult and continuing education*, 109, 15–26.
- Fendler, L. (2003) Teacher Reflection in a Hall of Mirrors: Historical Influences and Political Reverberations. *Educational Researcher*, 32(3), 16-25.
- Freire, P. (1998). *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*. New York: Continuum.
- Jarvis, P. (1992). *Paradoxes of learning*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.
- Jordi, R. (2011). Reframing the concept of reflection: Consciousness, experiential learning, and reflective learning practices. *Adult Education Quarterly*, 61, 181–197.
- Kitchenham, A. (2008). The Evolution of John Mezirow's Transformative Learning Theory. *Journal of Transformative Education*, 6 (2): 104-123.
- Mezirow, J. (1990). *Fostering Critical Reflection in Adulthood*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.
- Mezirow, J. (1998). On Critical Reflection. *Adult Education Quarterly*, 48 (3), 185-198.
- Mezirow, J. (2000). *Learning as transformation: Critical perspectives on a theory in progress*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.
- Morgan, D. L. (1998). *The Focus Group Guidebook*. London: Sage.
- Peterson, K. (1994) *NCREL Monograph: Building Collaborative Cultures: Seeking*

- Ways to Reshape Urban Schools*, University of Wisconsin-Madison, North Central Regional Educational Laboratory.
- Peterson, K. & Deal, T. (2009). *The Shaping School Culture*. San Francisco: Jossey – Bass.
- Pollard, A. (1997). *Reflective Teaching in the Primary School*. London: Cassel.
- Rosenholtz, S.J. (1989). *Teachers' workplace. The social organization of schools*. New York-London: Longman.
- Sammons, P., Thomas, S. and Mortimore, P. (1997). *Forging links: Effective schools and effective departments*. London: Paul Chapman Publishing.
- Schon, D.A. (1983). *The Reflective Practitioner: How Practitioners Think in Action*. New York: NY Basic Books.
- Shah, M. (2011) The dimensionality of Teacher Collegiality and the Development of Teacher Collegiality Scale, *International Journal of Education*, 3 (2): 1-20.
- Spalding, E. & Wilson, A. (2002). Demystifying Reflection: A Study of Pedagogical Strategies That Encourage Reflective Journal Writing. *Teachers College Record*, 104 (7), October 2002, 1393-1421.
- Vaughn, S., Schumm, J. S., & Sinagub, J. (1996). *Focus group interviews in education and psychology*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Zeichner, K. (1996) Teachers as reflective practitioners and the democratization of school reform. In K. Zeichner (Ed.) *Currents of reform in preservice teacher education*. New York: Teachers College Press (pp.199-214).

TRANSFORMATIVE LEARNING AND SOCIAL LIFE

A Site of Transformation: Community Sound-Off

Clint-Michael Reneau & Skyller Walkes

Dialogue is transformative to the formation involved in the various stages of one's life. It is key in building common ground in the exploration of the significant differences between individuals and allows people access that enhances worldviews as a resource for learning and living as a collective. Conversely, relationships are changed and redefined in a number of ways over time due to the absence of dialogue. The "threatening Other, immortalized in various threat narratives, is not only described by their malicious deeds; they are characterized as vicious and/ or depraved" (Rothbart and Korostelina, 2006, p.1). Times of crisis- economic, social, and even personal, can expose the underbelly of humanity when our fears invite communities to stereotype and denigrate the Other through the use of negative imagery, often classifying entire groups of people as uncivilized, dangerous and less than. Brookfield argues, "critical reflection on hegemonic processes becomes transformative when it fosters challenges to hegemony, when it prompts counterhegemonic practices" (Mezirow & Associates, 2000, p. 139). In-group members establish a collective thought, oftentimes displaying the Other as malicious or destructive. This thought gradually becomes the assumed truth for the members of the in-group. Such times of crisis can create a need for the hegemony to create clear divisions with the Other, often fostering a sense of fear, blame, and hatred. "Members of the in-group position themselves positively, while the Other is demonized" (Rothbart and Korostelina, 2006, p. 1)

Studies have shown that high salience of in-group identity promotes negative opinions of out-groups. In-group members also share important values and norms.

(Esses et. Al, 1993). Rothbart and Korostelina predicate the exclusion of the out-group from a society is based on prejudices and attitudes held about that group and are commonly seen in times of crisis. Throughout the world, exclusion of the out-group from a society is witnessed daily. In Europe, the Syrian refugee crisis is sparking in-group identities and out-groups. In America, political rhetoric is casting a clear divide throughout the country while amplifying the violence against the perceived Other. Black lives are shot down daily by bullets in the street without any repercussion from the Criminal Justice system. Individuals who self-identify as either lesbian, gay, bisexual, transsexual, transgendered or queer (LGBTQ) are witnessing strong backlash at the most public level- legislation- stemming from “Religious Freedom” and “Bathroom” bills at alarming rates. Threat narratives are informing policy and law. Violence engenders interconnected repercussions. “Threat narratives shape in-group responses to the Other. In threat narratives, blame quickly shifts from negative, individual attribution to collective denigration. ‘Who committed this crime, this injustice?’ ‘Who aided the work of the criminals?’ ‘Who supported their cause in word or deed?’” (Rothbart and Korostelina, 2006, p. 29). These types of questions foment a collective devaluation and exclusion of the Other, but can be counteracted through objective framing. Objective framing is a part of the critical reflection process, and as such, supports that, “objective framing focuses on learners doing a critical analysis of the concepts, beliefs, feelings, or actions communicated to them, or pausing to examine assumptions about the way problems of action have been framed” (Mezirow & Associates, 2000, p. 131).

Rothbart and Korostelina (2006) examine what happens with a society when dialogue is absent and how the absence of dialogue enhances the construct of crisis, including the “we” and the “they” mentality which includes the identification of

virtues and vices. “Several factors influence the unfavorable perception of out-groups. First, the human need for differentiation can be inadequately satisfied in homogenous societies with negligible cultural diversity (Brewer 2000, p. 30).” The need for comparison begins and thus, certain stereotypes shape in-group identity. Group identities converge into a single dominant category which is usually the hegemony and for these communities that are engaged in generations of hostility, the need to retain symbols such as religion, nationality and ethnicity become imperative. Through the use of these images or impressions, complexities about individuals are enhanced by fear of the collective group which assists in denigration of the Other. People tend to recall specific acts or images in history and constantly refer back to an entire group of people rather than specific individuals.

An important element to understand in the absence of dialogue is normative ordering. “Normative order is defined through dualities of sacred/ profane, good/ evil, or virtuous/ vicious. To accept ‘who we are,’ it becomes necessary to define ‘who we are not,’ that is ‘who are the Others’” (Rothbart, Korostelina, 2006, p. 41). These divisions are emotionally charged. Conversations surrounding normative order frequently involve extreme divisions within in-group and out-group members. For example, consider the charged meanings of such terms as “Israeli,” “Arab,” “Hamas,” and “Palestinian” (Rouhana, 1997). Another example is to look at how charged conversations become around the three words “Black Lives Matter.” Value judgments are used when there is a duality between in-group/ out-group identities. The Other has always been present throughout history and it is easy to identify groups of people that have been associated with emotionally charged terms largely based on silencing the attempts of dialogue between groups.

Identity provides the framework for those associated within the in-group and

those who are cast into the out-group. The “need for identity seems to be, like other needs, a basic human need common to all individuals. As such, ethnicity is a fundamental criterion in terms of which to express, satisfy, and experience violation of one’s need for identity. The fairly rigid, ethnocentric distinctions are made between in-groups (‘us’) and out-groups (‘them’)” (Rothbart and Korostelina, 2006, p. 65). A socialization occurs for members of identity groups that tend to identify who they are but also who they are not. The socialization also enhances ideas of who is “out to get them.” Thus, typically, the Other become suspicious and culpable- even in imagination. When an analysis of a conflict happens, very little is actually discussed in the media about the psychological process used by out-group and in-group members. Media analysts and war correspondents rarely discuss ideas of identity when offering critical commentary. Crucial dialogue surrounding identity is often absent when deconstructing conflict.

The hegemony never has to examine the narrative they tell themselves because they are in the in-group. However, the narrative that is constructed by the in-group certainly impacts the Other. Politics, including laws and policy can be based on the narrative as seen by the in-group. Storytelling, traditions, myths and symbols are handed down from one generation to the next based on the perception of the in-group and the out-group. The implicit premise becomes apparent when essayist Dennis Sandole writes “The ‘last frontier’ may not be ‘outer space,’ but ‘inner space.’” Nevertheless, it is imperative to be aware and uniquely conscience of the almost symbiotic influence that dominant narratives in their various forms, can have on us all, particularly when those narratives, however false, are affirmed through reproduced images and messages. Paulo Freire’s idea of conscientization applied to the role that mass media as an educative platform implicates mass media in furthering

hegemonic ideology. Mass media often serves as a primary and highly influential source of information, and at times, misinformation. For that reason, it is an educational platform. Media can substitute actual and authentic interaction among groups and communities, and as a result, it can be the referential cornerstone of “truth” that replaces those relationships. In fact, many people perceive the media as “truth;” the watchdog reporters of all that is real, and such perceptions become the axiology against which all is measured or compared. hooks contends that “since much of the pedagogy of domination is brought to us in the United States by mass media, particularly television...no one...is protected against the subliminal suggestions that imprint themselves on our unconscious brain” (hooks, 2003, p. 11). Conscientization begins when one recognizes that the pervasive images and messages propagated by the media are in fact, attached to certain ideologies that include both dominant culture and corporate interests. hooks indicts the media and television specifically, asserting that it perpetuates and maintains an imperialist, patriarchal, white-supremacist, capitalist ideology. More now than ever, one can note the global application of xenophobia and the perpetuation of racist ideology across borders. The media transports these images and messages even more expediently than the opportunities to disrupt them with actual dialogue are able to present themselves. Therefore, once aware, it is impossible to simply receive and digest those messages without analyzing them through a semiotically critical lens. Yet, this awareness and conscientization can certainly be cultivated through dialectical thinking and dialogue.

By employing critical analysis and rejecting the false ideology as truth, one is engaging in emancipation and actively asserting resistance. “It is only when the oppressed find the oppressor out and become involved in the organized struggle for their liberation that they begin to believe in themselves” (Freire, 2012, p. 65).

Therefore, it is through conscientization that one can understand that messages are interpreted by certain audiences differently, and moreover, those messages are signs whose meanings and symbolic representations are defined/constructed by the signifier. In short, this is semiotics, which in itself, is a critical application of understanding and interpreting perceived reality. hooks extends this critique as a way to highlight the need for both awareness and consequent resistance. “More than anywhere else a dominator-controlled mass media, with its constant manipulation of representations in the service of the status quo, assaults us in that place where we would know hope...When despair prevails we cannot create life-sustaining communities of resistance” (hooks, 2003, p.12). Moreover, we may have more knowledge about ‘outer’ than we do of ‘inner space’” (Sandole, 1999, p. 64). Having the awareness that we view specific incidents in our lives through a lens based on our identity and our in-group/ out-group status would increase one’s ability to shift towards introspection and self-reflection rather than shifting automatically to denigration of groups of people.

Therefore, how can people utilize dialogue as a means of transformative learning in order to move forward to a shared, constructive future? After all, “the overall purpose of adult development is to realize one’s agency through increasing expanding awareness and critical reflection” (Mezirow & Associates, 2000, p. 142). How do you have a conversation with someone who is unwilling to move past the chosen trauma and how do you move past the narratives you have lived with all of your life? According to hooks (1989) “Dialogue implies talk between two subjects, not the speech of subject and object. It is a humanising speech, one that challenges and resists domination’ (p. 131). Brookfield (2005) would suggest adult learners committed to engaging dialogue as a transformative learning tool must also be

committed to utilizing critical theory in association with this tool. Brookfield provides the adult learner with a framework to think more critically and action steps to take in order to create a just society. Critical theory “tries to generate a specific vision of the world as it might be. It springs from a distinct philosophical vision of what it means to live as a developed person, as a mature adult struggling to realize one’s humanity through the creation of a society that is just, fair and compassionate” (Brookfield, 2005, p. 27).

As Zinn (1990) observes, “How we think is ... a matter of life and death” (Brookfield, 2005, p. 1). Throughout *The Power of Critical Theory*, adult learners are challenged to explore the lens in which they view the world around them. Brookfield asserts “... in focusing on one tradition, others are discounted. The critical theory tradition draws on Marxist scholarship to illuminate the ways in which people accept as normal a world characterized by massive inequities and the systemic exploitation of the many by a few” (Brookfield, 2005, p. 2). Therefore, Brookfield attempts to engage adult educators in recognizing their role within the context of critical theory and the use of dialogue as a transformational tool. “For adult educators the tradition helps us understand how people learn to perceive and challenge this situation. A critical approach to understanding adult learning is learning how to perceive and challenge dominant ideology” (Brookfield, 2005, p. 2). When communities learn to use dialogue as a means of challenging and enhancing the learning surrounding difference and new realities, groups can enter into brave spaces. Belenky and Stanton write that “reflective discourse develops best when participants are well informed, free from coercion, listen actively, have equal opportunities to participate, and take a critical stance toward established cultural norms or viewpoints” (Mezirow & Associates, 2000, p. 71). When critiquing ideology during this critically reflective

process as a member of a marginalized group, there is recognition of a power dynamic that lends itself to elements of power and privilege, and “externalizing and investigating power relationships (the first purpose of critical reflection) forces us as adult educators to acknowledge the considerable power we exercise in our practice” (Mezirow & Associates, 2000, p. 137). When connections begin to happen, transformational healing is a possibility. Yes, there are challenges with the use of dialogue, but there are transformational possibilities within the self, as well as in the wider world. Nonetheless, people must remain open to the possibilities of listening to and engaging one another despite differences- presumed or actual.

Any critically reflective effort we undertake can only be accomplished with the help of critical friends. We need others to serve as critical mirrors who highlight our assumptions for us and reflect them back to us in unfamiliar, surprising, and disturbing way. We also need our critical friends to provide emotional sustenance, to bring us ‘reports from the front’ of their own crucial journeys.

(Mezirow & Associates, 2000, p. 146)

Again, it is the prospect of shared community that can salvage the hope of collective living through transformative thought, critical dialogue, and action. When we ourselves are unable to be reflexive in thought, it should be those with whom we share a community, however global or expansive, to interrupt and challenge our hegemonic assumptions. It is this sense of shared accountability that can help greater communities not only survive but thrive.

The notion Plato asserts in “The Cave Allegory” along with many of the philosophies discussed in adult education have not only enhanced our own understanding of adult learning but have also helped us to identify how dialogue positions itself in adult learning as a tool for community building and meaning-making. Plato argued that leaders need to reach a certain level of enlightenment with

the understanding of the interconnectedness of one's humanity to another— colleges and universities across the globe use liberal education to help adults ascend to that level. Because adult educators can be the facilitators of this process, “they are the cultural activists committed to support and extend those canon, social practices, institutions, and systems that foster fuller freer participation in reflective discourse, transformative learning, reflective action, and a greater realization of agency for all learners” (Mezirow & Associates, 2000, p. 31). Race, gender, and sexuality, like experience, though socially constructed, are subjective, and are depicted through subjective interpretations, which can be expressed and understood through dialogue. Furthermore, Nussbaum stated “Citizens who cultivate their humanity need, further, an ability to see themselves not simply as citizens of some local region or group but also, and above all, as human beings bound to all other human beings by ties of recognition and concern. The world around us is inescapably international (Nussbaum, 1977, p.446).

The reality is classrooms, workplaces, neighborhoods and society in general are becoming intertwined with the multiple intersections of identities that make the world so interconnected. This emergent diversity and heterogeneity, as a result of the boundary-less movement of the global world and its citizens, is making critical reflection and dialectical thinking through courageous yet critical dialogue imperative for communities to not only exist together, but thrive together without the oppressive exchanges that can inhibit that growth and prosperity. Brookfield explains Mezirow's articulation of critical reflection for adult learners in saying that it serves by, “helping adults become aware of oppressive structures and practices, developing tactical awareness of how they might change these, and building the confidence and ability to work for a collective change” (Mezirow, 2000, p. 144). Furthermore, Brookfield

asserts that critical reflection can spurn transformative action, which can in turn, affect social change. Now, more than ever, we must utilize dialogue as a tool to recognize the humanity within each of us. We must use dialogue as a way to maintain a sense of community and shared accountability- locally, regionally, globally. McKnight and Block (2012) posit that communities that aim to achieve competence have three properties, which are focusing on the gifts of its members, nurturing an associational life where associations are defined by location, the functions they serve, or interest, and finally, the properties of hospitality: kindness, generosity, cooperation, forgiveness, acceptance of fallibility, and mystery. Moreover, an important characteristic of a competent community is that it is self-organizing rather than a managed system with one individual in charge. Again, it is crucial to move from the individualist mindset to the collective. As a self-organizing group, the community does not impose order; instead, there is self-chosen order among its members. In addition, communities continue to focus on gifts and the capacities of its members, rather than needs or perceived deficits. The authors recognize that this type of thinking requires a shift in the thinking; yet, such a shift is necessary for the transformation to take place. Individuals in their communities must actively look to the resources and gifts of its network- the community.

Freire's *Pedagogy of Hope* examines the need to feel complete through building community and engaging with one another. "Hope is rooted in men's incompleteness, from which they move out in constant search" (Freire, 1994, p. 64). Throughout the text Freire makes the correlation that hope and education come from the same vein. "And it is in this pursuit of completeness, this hope-driven search that characterizes the human condition, that the necessity and necessarily political nature of education is to be found" (Freire, 1994, 65). Where there is dialogue, there is

hope- hope for a future of empathic connections and meaningful engagement with one another across borders, however expansively they've been imagined.

References

- Brewer, M.B. (2001). The many faces of social identity: implications for political psychology. *Political Psychology*, no. 22, 115-126.
- Brookfield, S. (2005). The power of critical theory: Liberating adult learning and teaching.
- Elmers, N., Spears, R. and Doosje, B. (1997). *Sitcking together or falling apart: in-group identification as a psychological determinant of group commitment versus individual mobility*. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, no. 72, 617-626.
- Freire, P., Freire, A. A., & Freire, P. (1994). *Pedagogy of hope: reliving Pedagogy of the oppressed*. New York: Continuum, 1994
- Freire, P. (2000). *Pedagogy of the oppressed / Paulo Freire; translated by Myra Bergman Ramos; with an introduction by Donald Macedo*. New York: Continuum, c2000.
- hooks, b. (2003). *Teaching community: a pedagogy of hope / Bell Hooks*. New York: Routledge, 2003.
- Mezirow, J. (2000). *Learning as transformation: Critical perspectives on a theory in progress / Jack Mezirow and Associates*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, c2000
- McKnight, J., & Block, P. (2012). *The Abundant Community: Awakening the Power of Families and Neighborhoods*. [Chicago, Ill.]: Berrett-Koehler Publishers.
- Rothbard, D., Korostelina, K. V. (Eds). (2007). *Identity, Morality, and Threat: Studies in Violent Conflict*. Lanham, MD: Lexington Books.
- Sandole, D. (1999). "Virulent ethnocentrism: a major challenge for transformational conflict resolution and peacebuilding in the post-cold war era." *Global review of ethnopolitics*, 1(4): 47-69.

From Ancient Greece to the Present Day; How the Development of the Modern Mind Distanced Us from Genuine Dialogue

Louise Livingstone

Canterbury Christ Church University

Abstract: This paper explores the development of the modern mind from ancient Greece to the present day, aiming to show how a shift to rationally-devised ways of knowing has contributed to an inability for people in the modern West to see themselves in dynamic relation to, and in genuine dialogue with, each other.⁷

As I begin to type words on this page to convey my ideas, I am struck with the realisation that I am entering into a relationship with each person who reads them; connecting in a space with others where ideas, opinions and judgements naturally form. As I ponder this, I am left wondering how my words and ideas will be received; embodying my own research into the conditions which may be conducive to people being able to hear each other's true and authentic voice as a facilitator in conflict resolution.⁸

Will my words, and the true meaning of what I wish to communicate, be genuinely heard? Will I be met in a place of receptivity and openness which will allow my true and authentic voice to speak?

I am reminded of a passage in Theodore Zeldin's *An Intimate History of Humanity*, wherein he highlights the Chinese political philosopher, Han Fei Tzu (280-236 BCE), who stated that the obstacle to communication was "not knowing the heart" of the person one spoke to, "thereby to fit my wording into it." A controversial character, Han Fei seemed to know what could facilitate better conversation and dialogue with others, but he was unable to do it.⁹ (1995, p. 41)

Two thousand years later, in today's contemporary western culture, human to human connection is increasingly fragile as witnessed in continuing wars and violence. Deeply curious about this, my whole life has been dedicated to exploring conflict, and why modern culture appears unable to communicate, dialogue and build lasting

⁷ Here I am distinguishing the Western mind from the Eastern and Oriental ways of knowing which are less applicable to our own native traditions

⁸ I am drawing here upon Prosser who states he has been "attracted and influenced by religious existentialists such as Martin Buber, Gabriel Marcel, Paul Tillich, Karl Jaspers, etc" and that their "central idea is that existence is communication – that life is dialogue...Communication is dialogue, and dialogue, I-Thou meeting, is not just in the sense of two people talking, but of real efforts at mutual understanding, mutual acknowledgement, and mutual respect" (1985, p. 227)

⁹ Cognitive scientist Susan Brennan defines conversation as "a joint activity in which two or more participants use linguistic forms and nonverbal signals to communicate interactively. Dialogues are conversations between two participants (although the terms *dialogue* and *conversation* are often used interchangeably)" (2013, pp. 202–205). For the purpose of this paper I shall use the terms interchangeably.

relationships with each other.

Considering the challenges that western contemporary culture faces on a daily basis, in this paper I explore the idea of growing ‘distance’ from one another since the time of ancient Greece, and how this distance might have contributed to our current worldview which guides the way that we currently act within the world. I will also offer an alternative worldview, which suggests a way of seeing and being in the world that could facilitate deeper relationship and dialogue with each other. Indeed, my aim in this paper is to bring to the foreground a different approach to our place in the world which currently lies hidden behind a materialistic philosophy.

Moving into a less familiar epistemology,¹⁰ I explore the implications of ‘genuine dialogue,’ which I am defining as *whole, deep, moving and evolving*, with a ‘relational quality’ - in line with Wood’s view which states that “Genuine dialogue depends less on self-expression and other transmissional aspects of communication than upon responsiveness” (Anderson, Baxter, & Cissna, 2003, p. xvi). Suggesting that depth and movement are part of genuine dialogue, Wood quotes Bakhtin who states that; “each word tastes of the context and contexts in which it has lived its socially charged life” (Anderson et al., 2003, p. xvi)

Differing Worldviews

As human beings we simultaneously experience two worlds; an external life of ‘observable phenomena’, separate from each other and distinct (a world of ‘parts’), and an inner life of feelings, emotions, the intuition and imagination (through which the ‘wholeness’ of life can be accessed). Indeed the divided nature of our reality has been highlighted and explored in various ways throughout history; from the poet and scientist Goethe declaring that ‘two souls, alas! Dwell in my breast’,¹¹ to Schopenhauer’s description of two completely distinct forms of experience,¹² to Scheler defining the human being as a citizen of two worlds,¹³ and Bergson referring to two different orders of reality.¹⁴

However, since the time of the Scientific Revolution our culture has come to overly value the ‘fragmented’ (part-driven) experience of reality, within which the skills of rational thought and the intellect thrive.¹⁵ As a result of this approach to life, everything we encounter becomes either one thing or another; different things *distinguished* from one another, with each thing *outside* the other, and all things *separate* from one another. In recognising the world around us in this way, “we, too, are separate from and outside of the things we see. We find ourselves side by side, together with, and separate from, the things we recognise. This is the familiar spectator awareness” (Bortoft, 1996, p. 13), entailing *objective observation* which naturally requires abstraction and fragmentation, encouraging rationality and

¹⁰ As outlined in phenomenology, Goethe, and the discourse of holistic science, which all recognise the dynamic relation of the ‘whole’ and ‘part’

¹¹ Goethe, Faust, Part I, line 1112

¹² Schopenhauer, Die Welt als Wille und Vorstellung, I, ii, §19, 1960, vol. 1, pp 163-4

¹³ Scheler, 1976, ‘Die Formen des Wissens und die Bildung,’ p.95

¹⁴ Bergson, 1908, ‘De la multiplicité des états de conscience: l’idée de durée,’ p.74

¹⁵ Precise dates for the Scientific Revolution are disputed, however according to traditional accounts it began in Europe at the end of the Renaissance period and lasted until the mid 18th Century. The scientific method prioritises mathematically precise, logical, rational, quantitative thinking.

emotional withdrawal/distance from what is being studied.

While the worldview of abstraction and fragmentation still remains prevalent today, this way of perceiving is only one side of the story. For the past 400 years, this worldview and its limitations have been investigated in a plethora of different ways by many scientists and philosophers – including Goethe, Bohm and Bortoft – who, in parallel with contemporary scholars across the discourses of holistic science, deep ecology and eco-psychology/philosophy assert that life/nature is not fragmented or competitive, but deeply interconnected, relational and co-operative.¹⁶

At the forefront of research into the limitations of the materialist, literalist viewpoint, neuroscientist and psychiatrist Iain McGilchrist states that as the brain has developed, it has become left-side dominant. This hemisphere of the brain has a propensity for logic, objectivity and abstraction, whereas the right hemisphere's skills of the imagination and intuition have become underused and devalued.

I propose that a reading of McGilchrist's grand metaphor of epistemological duality in the light of human relationship could provide meaningful guidance to understand, and participate in, genuine/transformational dialogue, and in the next part of this paper I shall return to the era of the Pre-socratics; a time when McGilchrist's idea of 'necessary distance' between people emerged, which he suggests is a point where "we have been sufficiently detached to be looking at one another, but not yet so detached that we are inappropriately objective about, or alienated from, one another" (2009, p.303).

By understanding how the modern mind, and subsequently modern culture, has developed to participate in, and see, the world, it may be possible to move beyond rationally-devised ways of relating to each other into a place where the potential for genuine/transformational dialogue lies.

McGilchrist's Thesis

Based on a vast body of experimental research, McGilchrist argues that the left and right hemispheres of the brain have differing insights, values and priorities, with distinct 'takes' on the world. While both hemispheres have now been proven to be involved in everything that human beings do and have considerable ability to perform any task, the striking difference between them is that each hemisphere *goes about their tasks* in different ways; i.e., it is *how* the two hemispheres *approach* their tasks that is different in each case; the left hemisphere's thinking is decontextualised and tends towards logic; dealing efficiently with abstraction, it extracts things from their context and categorises (2009, p. 50). In contrast the "right hemisphere deals preferentially with actually existing things, as they are encountered in the real world." (2009, p. 50) It is concerned with interconnectivity, and with the *relation between* things. It is deeply imaginative and intuitive; a rich world of symbols, feelings and metaphor.

¹⁶ These discourses unite science, philosophy, psychology and ecology, positing that humans are an intrinsic part of, and inseparable from, nature – a 'w-holistic' view. I shall be highlighting a selection of these views later.

McGilchrist suggests that the *kind* of attention we pay to the world actually changes it. Indeed, he highlights the importance of our disposition to the world and one another “as being fundamental in grounding *what it is that we come to have a relationship with*, rather than the other way round.”¹⁷ He continues to say that, “The kind of attention we pay actually alters the world: we are literally partners in creation.” (2009, p. 5)

Having established his position, McGilchrist points out that the development of the human brain would have therefore left its mark on the world that Western culture brought about, and duly discovers evidence in sixth century BCE Greece when “a radical change in the way we think about the world seems to have occurred.” (2009, p. 266) At this time there was an extraordinary flowering of both science and the arts which he believes, “stems from the achievement of a degree of distance from the world.” (2009, p. 266)

In what McGilchrist terms ‘necessary distance’ (2009, p. 5), this development demanded “increased independence of the hemispheres, allowing each hemisphere to make characteristic advances in function, and for a while doing so in harmony with its fellow” (2009, p. 6). He goes on to argue that from this point in our history, a relentless growth in our self-consciousness occurred, which over the centuries has led to increasing difficulties in co-operation, and I suggest, difficulties in dialogue and relating to others.

A Movement in Consciousness¹⁸

In addition to McGilchrist, there are a number of scholars who speak in favour of a shift in consciousness in ancient Greece - including Jean Gebser, Julian Jaynes and Jean Pierre Vernant. Indeed Gebser sees the ancient Greeks as foundational in the development of what he terms a new ‘mental’ structure of consciousness, which emerged from the previously ‘mythic’ structure.¹⁹

Evidence for a movement from ‘mythic’ to ‘mental’ consciousness can be suggested by looking at Homer’s epic poems (*Iliad* and *Odyssey*: circa 900 - 700 BCE) which had little description of the expressive face (McGilchrist, 2009, p. 283) and which did

¹⁷ In line with my own view, McGilchrist believes that something “exists apart from ourselves, but that we play a vital part in bringing it into being.” (2009, p. 5) His position is closer to Schopenhauer’s belief that the world exists ‘between’ something independent of the mind and the mind that apprehends it.

¹⁸ When referring to consciousness, I am referring to a *state of awareness* as an embodied reality (i.e., one’s own existence, sensations, thoughts, etc). This paper will not explore the scientific question of the origin of mind which followed on from the theory of evolution, or, more specifically, the origin of consciousness in evolution.

¹⁹ Gebser’s ‘mythic’ consciousness is “typified by a symbolic (ritual) world... the ego is more individuated, but not to the extent of the self-consciousness mental structure.” (Purdy, 1988, p. 172) ‘Mythic’ consciousness is polar, with *complementary* aspects like ying and yang, male and female; whereas similar pairs of terms from the ‘mental’ consciousness are *dualities* (opposites) rather than polarities. In ‘mental’ consciousness, time and space become objectified – apart from the self (Purdy, 1988, p. 172). Gebser identifies five basic structures of consciousness: archaic, magical, mythical, mental and integral. He is fluid with his dates for the shift from ‘mythic’ to ‘mental’ consciousness, suggesting that the movement began around 1225 BCE, coming into perfect expression with the Greeks around 600 BCE, however not becoming prevalent in Europe until around 1250 CE.

not appear to show an introspective sense of subjective self-awareness (Jaynes, 2000, p. 69).

At this point in history, McGilchrist posits that the right brain appeared to be slightly more dominant, with its characteristic trait of seeing itself in relationship with, and inextricably connected to, the world. Indeed, he points out that Homeric man does not *perceive* a body or mind which are separate, referencing the work of Michael Clarke's (2000) *Flesh and Spirit in the Songs of Homer*:

[...R]ather this thought and consciousness are as inseparable a part of his bodily life as are movement and metabolism. The body is indistinguishable from the whole person (2009, p. 263).

Similarly, Vernant talks about the body and its meaning in archaic Greece as follows:

The fact is that in the archaic period Greek 'corporeity' still does not acknowledge a distinction between body and soul, nor does it establish a radical break between the natural and the supernatural. Man's corporeality also includes organic realities, vital forces, psychic activities, divine inspirations or influxes (1991, p. 29).

Vernant continues this observation by clearly distinguishing his own modern, 'rational' consciousness from that of the ancient Greeks by stating:

It is I who am distinguishing between these different spheres [*the author previously outlines the different spheres to mean the world of nature, the social world, the human world and the supernatural world*] because they do appear separate to us today, but the religious thought of the Greeks made no such clear-cut distinctions between man and his internal world, the social world and its hierarchy, the physical universe and the supernatural world or society of the Beyond made up of the gods, the daemons, the heroes and the dead (1980, p. 94).

However, around the sixth century BCE, both Jaynes and McGilchrist pinpoint a change of awareness in the Greek mind which created a space for one person to be able to perceive 'the other'.²⁰ Jaynes' terms this 'mind-space', while McGilchrist defines the opening of this space as 'necessary distance.' While both definitions involve the idea of *space* or *distance*, this new way of seeing the world starts to become particularly obvious in Greek art:

It is only with the continuing evolution of greater distance from one another that we start to focus on the uniqueness of ourselves and others as individuals, which is largely what is expressed in the face (McGilchrist, 2009, p. 283).

McGilchrist argues that the development of an ability to see more objectively, to stand

²⁰ While McGilchrist and Jaynes agree there is a connection between the hemispheres of the brain and a shift of consciousness in the archaic Greek era (i.e., to be able to objectify and detach from phenomena), Jaynes' thesis states that this ability is a result of a *merging* of the two hemispheres of the brain which had previously been separate. In stark contrast, McGilchrist argues that this ability occurred because of a *separation* of the hemispheres.

outside of the natural frame of reference, occurred as a result of the separation of the left and right hemispheres of the brain, and that this growing ‘necessary distance’ from the world gave the ancient Greeks the opportunity to see things they previously could not have appreciated (2009, p. 262).

By standing back from the animal immediacy of our experience we are able to be more empathic with others, who we come to see, for the first time, as beings like ourselves (McGilchrist, 2009, p. 22).

Indeed the philosopher Owen Barfield argued that “human consciousness needed to detach itself from participation with nature, in order to gain more space, more play between itself and its world.” (Baring & Cashford, 1993, p. 436) With this movement came the ability to make specific distinctions between objects and the ability to perceive ‘the other’ as separate, making it “possible to see oneself as a self like other selves, to stand back and observe” (McGilchrist, 2009, p. 259).

According to McGilchrist, the flowering of the left hemisphere happened in tandem with the right, enabling the ancient Greeks to develop their rational capabilities, but at the same time, continue to see life and divinity in all of nature. For many centuries, from ancient Greece to the Renaissance, the idea of living nature helped to maintain a healthy bond between humanity and the world around it.

However, evidence of a left-brain dominated worldview appears with “...the rise of modern science” (Delio, 2015), when in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries a new analytical spirit emerged, prioritising mathematically precise quantitative thinking, objective observation, categorisation and fragmentation, and “[...] became the basis for new political theories, as well as theories for the human mind, knowledge and behaviour from that time onwards” (Hayward, 1991, p. 62).

While two thousand years of history is far too rich to delve into more deeply within this paper, what I have attempted to demonstrate is a movement towards a left-brain way of seeing, being and knowing the world; creating our modern reality of ‘fragmentation’ and a clear sense of *distance* from ‘the other.’

Indeed, physicist Bohm spoke of the ‘fragmentation of human consciousness’, suggesting that the way we now think *about* things assumes that we are separate from them. (2002, pp. intro, p.xii) While Jung, writing in the mid twentieth century laments; “The centre of gravity of our interest has switched over to the materialistic side [...]” (1967, p. 20)

In the 21st century, reality is reduced to parts – fragmented and rationalised; becoming, as McGilchrist states, a metaphor for the problems which face our world today. In parallel, economic activist Charles Eisenstein talks of our time as the “Age of Separation” and states that it is “separation that has generated the converging crises of today’s world” (2013, p. xx).

A Way Forward?

It can therefore be suggested that the fragmentation, separation and distance that left-hemisphere dominance has yielded, has contributed to a myriad of problems in

Western contemporary culture. Inherent within these problems, I suggest, lies our inability to dialogue effectively with one another and form deep, lasting relationships.

However, developments in discourses including holistic science, eco-philosophy and deep ecology are challenging the literal, ‘world-as-machine’ interpretation of reality; inviting us to see a different world of interconnectedness, ‘wholeness’, purpose and meaning as fundamental properties of matter. Eisenstein sees these developments as heralding a new era which he has called the ‘Age of Reunion’ (2013, p. xxiii).

Indeed, Gebser identifies this age as ‘integral’; a new emerging consciousness which integrates the “abstracted (fragmented) world of the mental-rational into wholeness” (Purdy, 1988, p. 172). In parallel, McGilchrist points to how this new consciousness could be achieved by stating:

It seems that, the work of division having been done by the left hemisphere, a new union must be sought, and for this to happen the process needs to be returned to the right hemisphere so that it can live. (2009, p. 199)

Rather than a fixed and static view of the world, such a process of reintegration and co-operation is suggestive of *movement*; a fluid process which is continually open to being (re)formed. Through the movement between right and left hemispheres, it is possible for life to be seen as dynamic and responsive; opening up possibilities for deep relationships and genuine dialogue.

Genuine Dialogue for Transformation

While dialogue “implies talk between two subjects, not the speech of subject and object” (Hooks 1989), the concept of dialogue is broad, with scholars emphasising ethical (Buber), literary (Bakhtin) and even political (Freire) aspects. However, one distinct commonality is the idea that genuine or transformative dialogue is inclusive, unconstrained and honest (Gillespie, Reader, Cornish, & Campbell, 2014). In addition, Wood states that “central to dialogue is the idea that any utterance or act is always responding to and anticipating other utterances and acts.” (2003, p. xvi) Moving this idea further, I propose that genuine dialogue also implies an evolving and dynamic experience which entails a movement into a deep, imaginative, reflexive space of understanding the ‘Other’; beyond status, power, and lines of responsibility.

In support of this, Bohm, fascinated by the breakdown in communication between Einstein and Bohr, explored how it might be possible for people to enter into dialogue in open and creative ways (2011, p. 77). For Bohm, genuine dialogue occurs when people realise what is going on in each other’s minds by suspending their conclusions and judgements (2004, p. 30). In a similar vein, Wood talks about the ‘responsiveness’ of genuine dialogue which “arises out of and is made possible by qualities of thought and talk that allow transformation in how one understands the self, others, and the world they inhabit.” (2003, p. xvi). What Bohm and Wood appear to be suggesting is the necessity of moving into a space where it may be possible to intuit what it might ‘be like’ to be the other person.

This is very similar to the phenomenological method of Goethe for whom the imagination was a crucial part of the development of a deep, intuitive and holistic

relationship with the phenomena of his study, requiring a fundamental shift of attention within everyday experience. Goethe's goal was to enter into a relationship, or dialogue, with an 'object' (he studied plants and the phenomena of colour) by actively studying it as clearly and deeply as possible; without the blinkers of established theories, classifications and pre-formed mental models.²¹ He then deepened his understanding by actively remembering/reliving the experience through his imagination, inwardly recreating what he originally observed in order to come to know the phenomena better.²² 'Hearing' and 'listening' without preconceived ideas, labels or judgement, Goethe would see each phenomenon of study *as it actually presented itself to him*. By cultivating openness, curiosity, and interest through his imagination, and paying attention to thoughts and feelings, he slowly brought forth words to describe what he perceived; using the skills of both left and right hemispheres of the brain in a reciprocal relationship.

Inspired by Goethe, philosopher of science Henri Bortoft (1938-2012), developed the idea of 'downstream' and 'upstream' ways of seeing. The former refers to our current analytical way of perceiving the world, which leads us to see things from the standpoint that *we already know how to know*. Starting from a set of entities already taken as given, from there our knowledge of any phenomenon can only go 'downstream' into more and more abstraction. 'Upstream' ways of seeing involve accessing the intuitive/imaginal mode of consciousness (through the suspension of judgements and preconceived ideas) where it is possible to enter into a dynamic experience where one can "catch things in their coming-into-being" (*The Form of Wholeness: Henri Bortoft on Multiplicity and Unity*, 2013).

Within this context, it can be suggested that Bohm, Wood, Goethe and Bortoft are arguing for the cultivation of a different kind of relationship with others; a different kind of seeing which is characteristic of the right hemisphere; enabling a person to enter into a deep and immediate, reflexive experience of what it might 'be like' to be the other person, involving the imagination as an *organ of perception*.²³ In this way, it may be possible for a space to open up where people can meet "more or less outside the framework of the social hierarchy and social conventions, 'without rank', as it were" (Bakhtin, 1986, p. 97)

If we now apply this way of meeting another person in genuine dialogue, utilising the inherent characteristics of the left and right hemisphere, we allow ourselves to be guided into a living experience; moment-by-moment, sensing of the unfolding meaning of a person's expressions and their words – becoming an integral part of their striving to give expression to their actual lived experience. This deep sensing of what is taking place in the dialogue, oscillating between listening carefully and noting the felt movement of the other person, becomes the source of the next question, the next interaction; rather than a pre-existing scheme of opinions, judgements and facts. This means that it is more likely for the other person to be *truly heard* and, I posit, forms the basis of genuine dialogue.

²¹ Goethe called this 'exact sensorial perception'.

²² Goethe called this 'exact sensorial imagination'

²³ In parallel with the philosopher Henry Corbin, I am differentiating the word 'imaginary' (i.e., something which today is equated with the unreal/something outside the framework of being and existing), from the imagination as an *organ of perception* which mediates between the physical world and the domain of abstract thought; imaginative consciousness. (Corbin, 1971)

Echoing this thought, Buber (1970) speaks about “imagining the real of the other,” suggesting an understanding of human meeting human at a deep level of understanding and recognition; existing relationally, rather than individually. It could be said then, that the heart of genuine dialogue lies in the relation between self and other, or, between left and right hemisphere. In this way dialogue becomes a form of deep human meeting; an act of creation through a deep experience of connectedness which facilitates transformative change in relationships between parties through self-realisation, trust and connection.

As a result of this union, it could be suggested that that two modes of perception have merged. Rather than Jaynes’ ‘mind-space’ or McGilchrist’s ‘distance’ being a space which distances or separates, it can instead become a gateway of transformation into genuine dialogue and authentic relationships.

Final Thoughts

This paper has aimed to explore the development of the modern mind from ancient Greece to the present day, showing how a shift to rationally-devised ways of knowing might have contributed to an inability for people in contemporary Western culture to *really hear* one another, or *genuinely dialogue* with one another in *authentic relationship*. I have also aimed to show how it is possible to regard phenomena from another perspective; one which integrates the rational mind with imaginal consciousness.

Indeed, Hillman laments that “failures in our loves, friendships, and families often come down to failures of imaginative perception,” (1997, p. 124). While the power of the imagination has become disregarded in the modern world, when engaged with in the right way, the imagination, as an organ of perception, can become a means of deepening our experience of reality; accessing a way of being that lies beyond the literal view of the world, reconnecting us to the lived world of embodied experience and deep, nourishing, reciprocally-rewarding relationships where it is possible to actively imagine the position of ‘the Other’ and enter into genuine dialogue.

The reciprocal, dynamic and continually unfolding characteristics of genuine dialogue can allow differences to exist without trying to resolve, overcome or synthesise them; placing emphasis on the process of *deep listening* - creating new ways of understanding self, other, the social, symbolic and material world (Anderson et al., 2003, p. xviii)

In this way, genuine dialogue becomes a living process; making it possible for people to be transformed into *beings who come into being in the process of dialogue* - whether that dialogue takes place between our left and right hemispheres, with each other, or with the world at large.

By learning to move into the dynamic movement of the simultaneity of the ‘whole’ and the ‘part’, maybe, just maybe, it will become possible to *truly hear*, and in Han Fei’s words, ‘know the heart’ of another in genuine dialogue; supporting us to better deal with conflict and other global challenges.

REFERENCES

- Anderson, R., Baxter, L., & Cissna, K. (2003). *Dialogue: Theorizing Difference in Communication Studies*. SAGE publications.
- Bakhtin, M. (1986). *Speech Genres and Other Late Essays*. Trans. by Vern W. McGee. University of Texas Press, Austin, Tx.
- Baring, A., & Cashford, J. (1993). *The Myth of the Goddess*. Penguin Arkana.
- Bohm, D. (2002). *Wholeness and the Implicate Order*. Routledge Classics.
- Bohm, D. (2004). *On Dialogue*. Routledge.
- Bohm, D., & Peat, D. (2011). *Science, Order and Creativity*. Routledge.
- Bortoft, H. (1996). *The Wholeness of Nature: Goethe's Way of Science*: Amazon.co.uk: Henri Bortoft: Books.
- Brennan, S. (2013). *Encyclopedia of the Mind: edited by Harold Pashler (Conversation and Dialogue)*. SAGE publications.
- Corbin, H. (1971). *Mundus Imaginalis. En Islam Iranien: Aspects Spirituels et Philosophiques (Paris: Gallimard)*, 7(4).
- Delio, I. (2015). *Making All Things New: Catholicity, Cosmology, Consciousness*. Orbis Books.
- Eisenstein, C. (2013). *The Ascent of Humanity*. Evolver Editions.
- Gillespie, A., Reader, T., Cornish, F., & Campbell, C. (2014). Beyond ideal speech situations: Adapting to communication asymmetries in health care. *Journal of Health Psychology*, 19(1), 72–78.
- Hayward, J. W. (1991). *Perceiving Ordinary Magic: Science and Intuitive Wisdom*. Shambala Publications.
- Hillman, J. (1997). *The Soul's Code: In Search of Character and Calling*. Bantam.
- Jaynes, J. (2000). *The Origin of Consciousness in the Breakdown of the Bicameral Mind*. First Mariner Books.
- Jung, C. J. (1967). *Two kinds of Thinking: Symbols of Transformation - Collected Works of C. J. Jung, Volume 5*. Princeton University Press.
- McGilchrist, I. (2009). *The Master and his Emissary*. Yale University Press, London.
- Prosser, M. (1985). *Cultural Dialogue: An Introduction to Intercultural Communication*. Society of Inter Cultural Education.
- Purdy, M. (1988). Book Review: Structures of Consciousness: The Genius of Jean Gebser, An Introduction and Critique, by George Feuerstein. *International Journal of Intercultural Relations*, 12, 171–180.
- The Form of Wholeness: Henri Bortoft on Multiplicity and Unity. (2013). *In Context*, 29(Spring).
- Vernant, J. P. (1980). *Myth and Society in Ancient Greece*. The Harvester Press Ltd.
- Vernant, J. P. (1991). *Mortals and Immortals*. Princeton University Press.
- Zeldin, T. (1995). *An Intimate History of Humanity*. Vintage; New Ed edition.

Intercultural Dialogue as a means of *Reflective Discourse* and Collective Action

Eugenia Arvanitis
University of Patras

Abstract

This paper describes how an intimate and intentionally designed reflective discourse among 25 interculturalists projected reflective and generative dimensions of dialogue using the world café approach during the Forum of Intercultural Dialogue and Learning that took place in Delphi, Greece. Participants discussed systemic interventions to promote interculturality and social inclusiveness.

The context

Modernity's extreme dynamism comes with increasing differentiation and social destruction (Beck, Giddens & Lash, 1994). Unpredictability, discontinuity, erosion of social life, flexibility, individualization and 'self-made risks' are main expressions of modern living. However, the *liquidity of modernity* (Bauman, 2000) brings more power to agencies. Human agency means that individuals assume more responsibility in decision making about their lives counteracting new threats linked to the *risk society* (Beck, 1992). Individuals have become more liberated from traditional norms able to make choices and build up their own biographies in a self-reflexive and self-produced way (Giddens, 1991; Beck, 1992). This tendency has been characterized as *reflexive modernization* (Beck, 1992) where people are able for self-construction adopting multiple identities and life-style cultures. This conscious or unconscious *reflexive project* (Giddens, 1991) of constructing selfhood is a means of emancipation enabling individuals to interrogate and reflect on social conditions and transform/redefine them.

In late modernity, positioning *self* in relation to *others* takes into account both global risks and the cosmopolitan element. Beck's term of *cosmopolitanization* (Beck, 2009) is a compulsive and mandatory drive of modern life occurring through the coexistence of diverse identities and the loud presence of the *other* in our daily routines. Diversity is interpreted not only through sociocultural or personal plurality but through the dynamics of interlinking between societies. This means that individuals' reality in one locality becomes coercively connected to global problems as well as the contradictions, conflicts and risks they bring. These risks and the mix of 'natives' and 'foreigners' create new narratives of inclusiveness and possibilities for new global civility/ awareness.

In this context, intercultural experiences might be better understood through reflection, reciprocal exchange and rigorous dialogical processes. More specifically, reflection is an essential component of effective (professional) learning and practice (Boyd & Fales, 1983; Schön, 1983; Boud, Keogh & Walker, 1985) and one of four critical steps in the experiential learning cycle (Kolb, 1984). Schön (1983 & 1987) had originally defined two forms of reflection on past and present actions, namely *reflection-on-action* and *reflection-in-action*, noting that it is not an easy task for professionals to articulate the procedures that underline their practice. As a result of

these two types *reflection-for-action* may occur and it refers to the actions individuals are prepared to undertake in the light of a more informed perspective (Saban, Killion & Green, 1994).

Many researchers define reflection as a cognitive developmental process (Dewey, 1933; Boyd & Fales, 1983; Boud, Keogh & Walker, 1985; Brody, 1994; Mezirow, 1994). Despite their differences researchers agree that reflection refers to an active, persistent and coherent process of clarifying, negotiating and transforming personal past and present experiences, as well as conceptual perspectives, assumptions and learning with regard to the self and *others*. Mezirow (1994, p. 223) defines reflection as “attending to the grounds (justification) for one’s beliefs” (in Freed, 2003, p.3). Reflection involves one’s rethinking/ re-evaluation of own experiences and assumptions to determine whether these remain functional. If not a change to perspectives and improved actions are sought. Self-reflection is central for deep and effective learning, but it is not *enough to promote transformative learning* as it is self-centered with little critical positioning (Brockbank & McGill, 2006).

On the other hand reflection might be facilitated through social and collective experiences, which involve dialogue. Dialogue is a *process of collective participation* (Bohm, 1996) and collective thought. In dialogue participants enter in a self-exploration, not for their self-interest but to adopt solutions and actions for the collective as they shift from a first to third person perspective. In other words, *thinking together* creates a *participatory consciousness* (Bohm, 1996) towards generating new common or shared meanings and renegotiable assumptions. This in turn leads to the development of a coherent culture of dialogue and collective action in addressing complex social issues. This process has been defined by Isaacs (1999) as *reflective dialogue*. Reflective dialogue promotes reflective and transformative learning (Brockbank & McGill, 2006) as people can altered their own established assumptions only through intentional dialogical process with the *others*. In this context, existing worldviews are challenged and transformed as different perspectives and viewpoints are explored and adopted in a collective way enhancing the so-called “double-loop learning” (Argyris & Schön, 1974; Brockbank & McGill, 2006).

This paper will show how a small-scale, intimate and intentionally designed discussion among 25 interculturalists projected reflective and generative dimensions of dialogue using the *world café* approach.

Towards a reflective and generative dialogue

Issacs (1999) has referred to reflective dialogue as a process and/or a place where people engage meaningfully in a conversation with their self and *others* to renegotiate assumptions taken for granted and to explain their thoughts and actions. People engaging in reflective dialogue they actively reflect on the rules of communication, perform empathetic listening, reflect on their selves and the *others* and make inquiries into assumptions. On a similar note, Mezirow came up with the term *reflective discourse*. Reflective discourse is the “specialized use of dialogue devoted to searching for a common understanding and assessment of the justification of an interpretation or belief. This involves assessing reasons advanced by weighing the supporting evidence and arguments and by examining alternative perspectives.

Reflective discourse involves a critical assessment of assumptions. It leads toward a clearer understanding by tapping collective experience to arrive at a tentative best judgment” (Mezirow, 2000, p. 10-11, cited in Freed, 2003, p. 6).

Furthermore, Issacs (1999) highlighted that effective reflective dialogue can lead to *generative* dialogue (DG), where common solutions and new future possibilities for interaction are generated through collective wisdom. According to Issacs (1999) generative dialogue is of increased difficulty and it can be occurred only if participants perform four patterns: a) listening with empathy without resistance or imposition (*listening*). b) articulating own thinking and personal truth (*voicing*). c) Respecting one’s integrity/authority and being aware that it is impossible to fully understand it (*respecting*) and d) suspending assumptions, judgment and certainty (*suspending*).

Moreover, Scharmer expanded Isaacs and Bohm ideas on dialogue as a thinking together act. His model on generative dialogue (Scharmer, 2003) depicts the progression of conversation in successive stages (a sequential movement through each field). Individuals and groups move from i) *talking nicely* to ii) *debate (talking tough)* and advocate their ideas through to iii) *reflective dialogue* and iv) towards forming a *collective or collaborative intelligence* (Hamilton, 2004; Kalantzis & Cope, 2012) by engaging in *generative dialogue*. In each stage of conversation, participants unveil their patterns of listening, attention, acting and learning (Scharmer, 2000; Isaacs, 1999).

During the *talking nice* stage participants intentionally bring and explicitly manifest, in a polite manner all past forms of their knowing. They in fact project knowledge patterns of the past, by being cautious or simply listen to the others and infer meanings or build new assumptions based on what they already know. Conformity characterizes their participation in this stage as participants avoid to discuss issues that might be threatening (Argyris, 1990) or may hide, suppress or postpone their thoughts. The delayed expression of participants’ truths or ideas may emerge as an urgent need later on during the *talking tough* phase. Here participants try to align their inner thoughts with what they express in the group discussion (Scharmer, 2000). This transition to the second stage of debate, requires skillful ways of sharing suppressed ideas. Participants may also require the re-enactment of discussion rules to enable authentic expression by group members (Isaacs, 1993). In this stage, major communication barriers or *breakdowns* (Isaacs, 1999) such as language obstacles or personal style of communication or hierarchical/ narcissistic attitude may lead to a polarized expression of views, reactive behavior and combative listening (Scharmer, 2000).

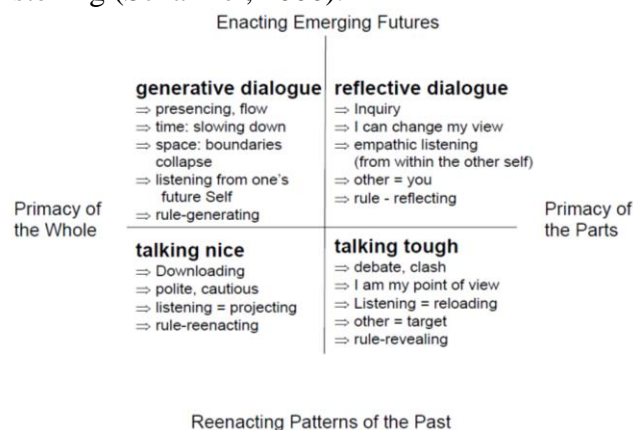


Figure 1: Scharmer’s model (as cited in Gunnlaugson, 2007, p. 46).

Moving to the *reflective dialogue* stage requires participants’ to focus on reflective inquiry by being more attentive and receptive to other views seeking tacit embodied knowledge (Scharmer, 2001). The practice of *suspension of thought* as defined by Bohm (1996) prevails. Namely, participants moving from advocating and imposing their own ideas (*talking tough* stage) to trying to embrace competing perspectives and build a collectively understanding of the pervasive tendency in topics discussed. Suspension means that participants expose their ideas in a more thoughtful and articulated way to point out the underlying meanings of their sayings and at the same time expect feedback from the group members. Reflective dialogue through suspension creates a *third space* of interaction (Bhabha, 1994; Soja, 1996) as it enables participants to mediate the point of views emerged from their cultural context or lifeworld diverse experiences. At the same time, it enhances their metacognitive thinking as participants gain awareness of past knowledge patterns based on unexamined assumptions and they desire to re-enact them. In this dynamic space, individuality and collectivity are mediated and a culture of thinking together is developed. Participants build a new understanding of how their experiences have constructed and expressed since they develop skills of empathic listening and collaboration. Finally, the transition to the final stage that of *generative dialogue* is marked by the notion of *redirection* (Varela, 2000) or *presencing* (Scharmer, 2001). Redirection means the shift of the group attention to the source of newly emerging meanings shared in the group and not the actual objects of knowledge (Varela, 2000). Participants in a recursive mode of thinking become more receptive to new insights as they seek *not yet embodied* tacit knowledge Scharmer (2001). They imagine new learning and future possibilities for the topics discussed revealing a collective intelligence.

Based on Scharmer’s model, Wilber (1997) has developed an epistemological framework with interdisciplinary application.



Figure 2: Wilber’s model (as cited in Gunnlaugson, 2007, p. 48).

He described “interior and exterior perspectives of individuals and collectives” in a quadrant (Gunnlaugson, 2007, p.48). His quadrant refers to each one of Scharmer’s stages of dialogue, but also fits in every life situation. Wilber’s quadrant model includes four dimensions, namely “subjective (i.e., the interior of an individual), intersubjective (i.e., the interior of a collective), objective (i.e., the exterior of an individual) and inter-objective (i.e., the exterior of a collective)” (Gunnlaugson, 2007, p. 48). These four dimensions are “informed by a range of *experiences* (e.g., suspension, presencing, bearing witness), *behaviors* (e.g., advocating, inquiring, making decisions), *cultures* (e.g., the worldviews and values of the participants and group) and *systems* (e.g., guidelines and rules within organizations, classrooms, or learning communities where GD is taking place)”

(Gunnlaugson, 2007: 48). Any *moment* within one of Scharmer's four stages could be interpreted through and influenced by different lines of experiences, behaviors, cultures and systems. If aware of Wilber's quadrant model participants may easily track and avoid communication breakdowns such as competing behaviors or cultural biases, which keep the group entrapped into a particular stage. They can also appreciate diverse and competing ideas as well as be more observant on the kind of knowing their discussion is focused on or spot dimensions that are ignored during dialogue (Gunnlaugson, 2007, p. 50). Wilber's quadrant offers an epistemological framework to participants to collectively ensure the full reflective and generative potential of their dialogue. Overall, Scharmer's and Wilber's models offer a conceptual schema in understanding dialogue. However, there is no sufficient evidence to support a valid measure of individual and/or group developmental process or how these lines of experience, behaviors, cultures and systems emerge in each stage of dialogue. This article draws from generic concepts of the conversational stages described above to describe actions emerged in the world café activity during the Forum of Intercultural Dialogue and Learning.

Methodology

The primary purpose of this paper is to present how 25 experienced interculturalists and field experts from Cyprus, Italy and Greece engaged in a process of intercultural dialogue during their participation in the 1st Forum of Intercultural Dialogue and Learning (FIDL) in Delphi (31st October 2015). Overall the Forum used the *Delphic* method of reasoning to generate an intercultural dialogue around themes of great importance to participants and wider community. The *Delphi* method (Koulaouzidis, 2010; Bellali & Karamitri, 2011) was adopted to elicit suggestions, opinions, beliefs and consensus of this selected group of experts through the use of laps of discussion, namely the administration of two online questionnaires between October – November 2015 and the face to face meeting in Delphi. Participants were engaged in a process of relational learning entering in an enriched 'in between' and 'also/and' cultural contact zone among partners of equal value. They created a *third* space of intercultural dialogue/learning through tolerance of ambiguity, empathy and solidarity (Council of Europe, 2000). Reflection, negotiation, contradiction, and reciprocity coincided with other principles of *intercultural learning* such as openness to others, active respect for difference, mutual comprehension, active tolerance, validation of all cultures present, equality of opportunity and anti-discrimination (Council of Europe, 2012, p.3 https://www.coe.int/t/dg4/youth/Source/Resources/PR_material/2012_Compendum_Intercultural_Learning_text_en.pdf). In a non-formal encounter, participants reached consensus on reciprocal future collaboration engaging in *reflective discourse* (Mezirow, 2000). This enabled the specialized use of (intercultural) dialogue as a means for interculturalists to a) critically assess their underlying theoretical assumptions by providing evidence and arguments on the reasons of their current practice in the areas of migration/refugee influx, intercultural policy and educational practice; b) enact future possible actions and alternative perspectives towards promoting intercultural learning based on collaborative intelligence established throughout the meeting; and c) create common understanding on migration related issues. A *wisdom awareness* (Rosch & Scharmer, 1999) emerged as participants tried to recognize the source of emerging new learning backed by new evidence. The exploration of the particular kinds of reflection namely *reflection-on-action* (Schön, 1987) and *reflection-for-action* (Saban, Killion & Green, 1994) emerged during the

laps of discussion adopted in Delphi method, although their more detailed analysis will be the subject of an upcoming publication.

In addition to *Delphi* method, a structured conversational process known as the *world café* approach (Brown, Isaacs & the World Café Community, 2005) took place during the Delphi meeting. The World Café approach refers to a large group dialogue to consider common solutions/projections for an issue and to harvest collective knowledge through deliberative discussion and shared listening. Participants in FIDL world café were involved in three progressive rounds of discussion in which the members of each group exchanged their views on a given topic in the form of intimate conversations. After finishing their discussion in a given timeframe, they recorded and summarized the agreed points for each topic on large papers being placed on the discussion tables. Following that, each group moved into the next discussion table attending a different topic until they pass from all three discussion tables. Group members linked on each other as they were moving between groups to exchange ideas and reach into consensus. At the end the facilitators of each discussion table based on their recorded points reported back to the whole group and further discussion was generated. Content analysis was used to analyze written summaries and reflective comments made throughout the activity. This paper unfolds the structured arguments, predictions and consensus elicited through the *world café* activity on participant priorities for intercultural learning and inclusive community building as well as future actions in promoting of intercultural dialogue/learning.

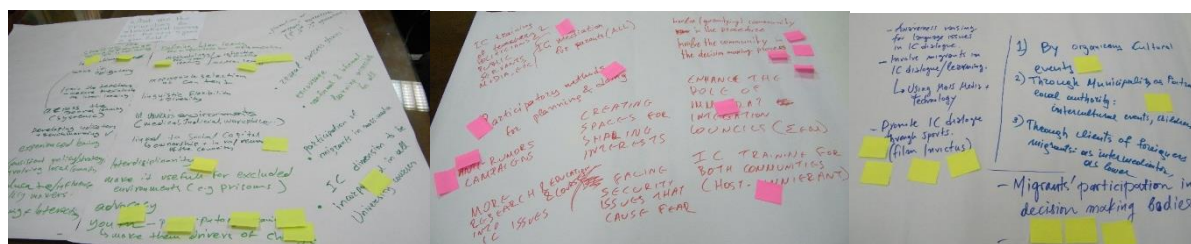


Figure 3: Participant notes during the World Café activity

The group interaction during world café activity was characterized by high complexity generating learning greater than the sum of its parts (individuals). Inter-subjective capacities (professional mindset and values) were subtly expressed. On the contrary inter-objective capacities as described in Wilber's model emerged, namely participants were more conscious in directing their discussion on systemic interventions in the topics discussed. These are described into the next section as important contributions to the dialogical process.

Re-enacting systemic interventions in promoting intercultural learning and collective action

Participants viewed intercultural learning and dialogue as critical prerequisites for acquiring intercultural awareness and competences as well as rethinking diversity as a productive resource for Europe. Their deliberations echoed an inclusive approach towards diversity in modern pluralistic societies and the need for an active citizenry.

During the initial stages of the *world café* process participants were *listening* and *voicing* their views on the topics discussed. Expressing feelings and judgements coincided with the need for human bonding, sharing and relational learning. Emotional intimacy or *emotional alchemy* (Goleman, 1997) and empathic listening characterized the *world café* discussion. Participants became interested in developing more relational ways of knowing embracing group's diversity. In other words, they

were open and inclusive to diverse point views and in managing/shading conflicting emotions without being reactive or necessarily repressing their emotions. Only in a few occasions / *moments* during the debate stage two individuals became overly identified with their perspectives being locked into polarized discussion resulting some alienation. The group responded to this behavior with compassion and politeness and, thus, avoiding total marginalization of these members. Overall, the group maintained a more inclusive mode to integrate the multiple perspectives expressed and achieve consensus.

Generally, the group was directed towards establishing a thinking together culture mainly through unblocking *meta-awareness* and *vision-logic*. Collective attention and mutual support created a *vision logic* (Wilber, 1995). In other words, participants' demonstrated capacity to integrate different views and their willingness to see how incompatible notions emerging from different theoretical assumptions and practices can fit together. Participants also performed the practice of suspension developing a *meta-awareness* (Jordan, 2000) of their professional experiences and theoretical assumptions creating a welcoming space (a mediated third space) for emerging new knowledge and the exploration of deeper assumptions on the topics discussed.

Points of consensus

There was a general agreement that current priorities for intercultural learning, future priorities for the building of inclusive communities and the urgency of promoting intercultural dialogue/learning are intertwined. The following points, which emerged from the *world café* activity reveal participants' consensus about the topics discussed.

mainstreaming intercultural learning. Most participants pointed out the need of setting the context and define intercultural learning more accurately. Intercultural learning was broadly viewed as an inclusive term to describe individual or collective processes of acquiring knowledge, skills and attitudes about oneself and *others* as well as embracing diversity in a peaceful and reciprocal way (Arvanitis, 2014). The group wisdom expanded individual thinking raising the need for intercultural learning to be infused in the wider public sphere. Infusing diverse cultural narratives to the public space (e.g. through media and education) thought to be a good strategy to mainstream intercultural learning for all citizens and enhance migrant engagement. It was highlighted that "it is necessary to present migrant success stories in mass media to connect people with different backgrounds and influence policy makers". Also, according to participants newcomers and locals "should be engaged into participatory methods for planning and doing". In that way, "inclusive learning would be achieved for all and diversity could become a cultural and competitive advantage for individuals, local communities, nations and supranational organizations.

enact new methodology. A thorough discussion was made around the methodology of promoting intercultural learning at formal and non-formal level. Discussants highlighted the need to utilize reflective practice and collaborative *action learning* to consistently promote interculturality. Other important issue was the assessment and validation of Intercultural Competence. Participants felt the urgency for educational systems to adopt indicators and benchmarking to measure people's intercultural learning enabling them to understand the risks and possibilities of late modernity. Also, the adoption of an ethical code in mass media and services such as mediation

raised as important dimension in enhancing efficiency and accountability in the European context.

culturally responsive services. Tailoring proper educational programs for newcomers, educators, parents and local communities emerged as important element in building inclusive societies. Participants specifically suggested training for teachers, politicians and public servants, media professionals as well as intercultural mediation programs for parents and family involvement. As for the newcomers, participants strongly recommended introductory classes to the reception countries that would inform beneficiaries for legal, political, social and cultural rules. The importance of mainstreaming language instruction for newcomers as well as the learning of mother tongue or heritage / community languages for all at school was also stressed. Participants voiced their disagreement for pull out programs in schools and declared that these “should be avoided as there is a need for well-organized inclusive classes”. Finally, lifelong learning programs and activities were seen as important for increasing hosting communities’ awareness about the culture of newcomers and vice versa. Many participants pointed out that citizenship and civil rights should be on the top of an inclusive agenda. “Equal political and administrative rights should be established for newcomers in order to become essentially members of society” declared.

tertiary intercultural training. Particular emphasis was placed on tertiary intercultural education and the promotion of intercultural learning and research through universities. “Intercultural education”, according to participants, “should be offered in all universities through compulsory courses to train interculturally competent and responsive professionals”. Teacher and intercultural professional training viewed as a major pillar to transform perceptions about the *other*. “Culturally responsive teachers”, according to participants, “can act as agents of social change by being mentors, multipliers and cultural mediators”.

community engagement. Community’s mobilization into intercultural learning was highlighted by participants as important facet of social inclusiveness. Participants noted that *intercultural social capital* (Pöllmann, 2013) could be sustained through multicultural networks, which generate intercultural formal and informal learning and that all people should be encouraged to take part in. Attention was given to the creation of public spaces for mutual cultural exchange where newcomer cultures should become known to the public and local sociocultural and political patterns can be discussed. Participants agreed that “community should be involved in the procedure of building strong connections with newcomers” and also to deal with issues that cause public fear and prejudice (e.g. through antirumor campaigns). Exposing and accepting community’s multiple narratives, it was thought sufficient factor to influence the decision making process for hosting and supporting newcomers. Another important point was migrant participation in decision making bodies (e.g. the local government integration councils).

dissemination of intercultural dialogue/learning. Finally, participants agreed that a dissemination strategy reinforced by education is the best way forward. For instance, universities can assume greater responsibility of their social role (*third mission*) to enhance public awareness. This could emerge through conferences, research, publications and extensive programs of language learning. “European funded

programs would be an ideal opportunity for dissemination” they said. Finally, according participants, “intercultural dialogue/learning can be promoted by organizing cultural events with the support of local authorities and through mass media and films that present migrant daily life and success stories”.

Conclusion

The *world café* activity in the Forum of Intercultural Dialogue and Learning involved 25 interculturalists and field experts. In this space of reciprocal learning participants envisage new possibilities for their fields of expertise. Through reflective and generative dialogue they created a *third* space of interaction disembedded from local circumstances (Greek, Italian and Cypriot context) where diversified professional and academic experiences were renegotiated. Away from narcissistic narrations participants enriched their dialogue with more critical reflections aiming to reach consensus and undertake a common intercultural action through a collective-oriented discursive approach.

Reflection-for-action and the enactment of emerging new knowledge and future possibilities, enabled participants to generate cultural and systemic interventions as a way to make intercultural dialogue and learning more visible in their own communities and networks. Participants collectively agreed on an action plan with specific interventions. Currently some of these interventions are well underway or have been fulfilled. More specifically, collaborative action was taken to disseminate a coherent view of migrant /refugee flows through seminars and consolidate intercultural cities concept. As a result a seminar on the refugee crisis was organized in Patras in association with the Barrister’s association whereas the City of Ioannina was successful in becoming a member of the Intercultural Cities Network; an initiative run by the Council of Europe. Another action was the design of undergraduate and post-graduate programs in universities and measuring intercultural competence. This action is well underway with the University of Modena involving eight Mediterranean universities (including Patras) as partners in its joint Master’s degree. Developing educational activities in schools was another priority, which came into fruition with the involvement of the University of Patras’s in planning refugee education at the Refugee Migrant Camp of Myrsini, Greece. Other activities were also fulfilled such as attending conferences and applying for research grants, signing Erasmus agreements and measuring tertiary students’ intercultural sensitivity in Italy and Greece.

Reflective and generative dialogue potential as unfolded in the Forum of Intercultural Dialogue and Learning proven to be an appropriate means of collective presencing in making interculturality visible and attainable project in participants’ professional life as well as the wider public.

References

- Argyris, C., & Schon, D. (1974) *Theory in practice: Increasing professional effectiveness*. San Francisco: Jossey Bass.
- Argyris, C. (1990). *Overcoming organizational defenses: Facilitating organizational learning*. Needham Heights, MA: Allyn and Bacon.

- Arvanitis, E. (2014). Rethinking intercultural learning spaces: The example of Greek language schooling in Australia. *Educational Journal of the University of Patras UNESCO Chair*, 1(1), 60-68.
- Bauman, Z. (2000) *Liquid modernity*. Cambridge, MA: Polity Press.
- Beck, U. (1992). *Risk society: towards a new modernity*. London: Sage.
- Beck, U. (2009). Cosmopolitanization without cosmopolitans: On the discussion between normative and empirical-analytical cosmopolitanism in philosophy and the social sciences. In K. Ika & G. Wagner (Eds), *Communicating in the third space* (pp. 11-25). New York: Routledge.
- Beck, U., Giddens, A. & Lash S. (Eds). (1994) *Reflexive Modernization*. Cambridge: Polity Press.
- Bellali, Th. & Karamitri, I. (2011). The Delphi research methodology and its applications in the healthcare sciences. *Archives of Hellenic Medicine*, 28(6), 839-848. Retrieved from <http://www.mednet.gr/archives/2011-6/pdf/839.pdf>.
- Bhabha, H. (1994). *The location of culture*. New York: Routledge.
- Bohm, D. (1996). *On dialogue*. London and New York: Routledge.
- Boud, D., Keogh, R. & Walker, D. (Eds.) (1985). *Reflection: Turning experience into learning*. London: Kogan Page.
- Boyd, E.M. & Fales, A.W. (1983). Reflective learning: Key to learning from experience. *Journal of Humanistic Psychology*, 23(2), 99-117.
- Brockbank, A. & McGill, I. (2006). *Facilitating reflective learning through mentoring and coaching*. London: Kogan Page.
- Brody, C.M. (1994). Using co-teaching to promote reflective practice. *The Journal of Staff Development*, 15(3), 32-36.
- Brown, J., Isaacs, D. & World Cafe Community. (2005). *The World Café: Shaping our futures through conversations that matter*. Sac Francisco, CA: Berrett-Koehler Publishers.
- Council of Europe and European Commission (2000): T-Kit 4 “Intercultural Learning”. Strasbourg: Youth Partnership.
- Council of Europe. (2012). *Intercultural Learning*. Retrieved from https://www.coe.int/t/dg4/youth/Source/Resources/PR_material/2012_Compendium_Intercultural_Learning_text_en.pdf.
- Dewey, J. (1933). How we think: A restatement of the relation of reflective thinking experience. *Journal of Humanistic Psychology*, 23(2), 99-117.
- Freed, S.A. (2003). Metaphors and reflective dialogue online. *New Horizons in Adult Education*, 17(3), 4-19. Retrieved from https://www.andrews.edu/~freed/qualprocess/Competency_Resources/Docs/NEW%20HORIZONS%20IN.pdf.
- Giddens, A. (1991). *The consequences of modernity*. Cambridge: Polity Press.
- Goleman, D. (1997). *Emotional intelligence: Why it can matter more than IQ*. Bantam: New York.
- Gunnlaugson, O. (2007). Exploratory perspectives for an AQAL model of generative dialogue. *Integral Review*, 4, 44-8.
- Hamilton, C. (2004). *Come together: the mystery of collective intelligence. What is enlightenment. Special Reprint*.
- Isaacs, W.N. (1993). Taking flight: Dialogue, collective thinking, and organizational learning. *Organizational Dynamics*, 22(2), 24-39.

- Isaacs, W.N. (1999). *Dialogue and the art of thinking together*. New York: Doubleday.
- Jordan, T. (2000). *Dimensions of consciousness development: A preliminary framework*. Retrieved from https://scholar.google.is/citations?view_op=view_citation&hl=en&user=8BK8icAAAAJ&citation_for_view=8BK8icAAAAJ:u5HHmVD_uO8C.
- Kalantzis, M & Cope, B. (2012). *New Learning: Elements of a Science of Education*. New York: Cambridge University Press.
- Kolb, D.A. (1984). *Experiential learning: Experience as the source of learning and development*. New Jersey: Prentice-Hall.
- Koulaouzidis, G. (2010). The Delphi method as a policy-making tool in adult education: Implementation issues, planning and an example. *Adult Education, 21*, 13-21.
- Mezirow, J. (1991). *Transformative Dimensions of Adult Learning*. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.
- Mezirow, J. (1994). Understanding transformation theory. *Adult Education Quarterly, 44*(4). 222-252.
- Mezirow, J. & Associates. (2000). *Learning as transformation: Critical perspectives on a theory in progress*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass Inc.
- Pöllmann, A. (2013). Intercultural capital. Toward the conceptualization, operationalization, and empirical investigation of a rising marker of sociocultural distinction. Sage Open. Retrieved from <http://sgo.sagepub.com/content/3/2/2158244013486117>.
- Rosch, E. & Scharmer, C.O. (1999). Primary knowing: When perception happens from the whole field (Interview with Eleanor Rosch). Retrieved from <https://ai.wu.ac.at/~kaiser/birgit/Rosch-1999.pdf>.
- Saban, J.M., Killion, J.P. & Green, C.G. (1994). The centric reflection model: A kaleidoscope for staff developers. *Journal of Staff Development, 15*(3), 16-20.
- Scharmer, C.O. (2000). *Presencing: Learning from the future as it emerges*. The Conference on knowledge and innovation. Helsinki School of Economics, Finland, and the MIT Sloan School of Management.
- Scharmer, C.O. (2001). Self-transcending knowledge: Sensing and organizing around emerging opportunities, *Journal of Knowledge Management, 5*(2), 137-150.
- Scharmer, C.O. (2003). *Four fields of generative dialogue*. Generative Dialogue Course Pack. Cambridge, MA: Massachusetts Institute of Technology.
- Schön, D.A. (1983). *The reflective practitioner*. New York: Basic Books.
- Schön, D.A. (1987). *Educating the reflective practitioner*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.
- Soja, E.W. (1996). *Thirdspace: Journeys to Los Angeles and other real-and-imagined places*. Oxford: Blackwell Publishing.
- Varela, F. (2000). The three gestures of becoming aware: Interview with Francisco Varela. Retrieved from <http://www.iwp.jku.at/born/mpwfst/02/www.dialogonleadership.org/Varela.html>
- Wilber, K. (1995). *Sex, ecology and spirituality*. New York: Shambhala.
- Wilber, K. (1997). An integral theory of consciousness. *Journal of Consciousness Studies, 4*(1). 1-47.

Adult Education As A Means Of Empowerment For Drug Offenders In Prison/Post Prison Treatment

Olympia Chaidemenaki & Remos Armaos

KETHEA

Abstract

This mixed method study investigates participants' perceptions about the role of empowerment adult education for incarcerated as well as prison released drug addicts. It also attempts to identify the ways in which education reinforces their personal development and treatment progress. The study aims at emphasizing the training interventions of a treatment facility as means of dealing with the exclusion of this group on a social and professional level. Research findings disclosed a high correlation between the training provided to drug offenders while in treatment and levels of empowerment for these individuals in their personal and social improvement. A high correlation was shown between training and the reinforcement of self-confidence and self-efficacy of this group. Moreover, findings are discussed in relation to educational and occupational background and experiences, the adult education importance in motivating their detoxification and rehabilitation process and their personal transformation process and social activation through education and therapy interventions.

Key words: Adult education, Empowerment, Self-confidence, Self-efficacy, Drug Addiction, Social exclusion, Incarcerated, Released Prisoners, Treatment.

1. Introduction

Empowerment is a context-specific, socially-loaded, sensitive term (sociology, education, psychology, social work, management); an individual to empower suggests that they are lacking in skills and competences to satisfy the social demand and requirements for them to flourish in society (Zimmerman, 1990). In literature empowerment has been used in diverse educational programs to describe actions for the development of employment and entrepreneurship. And, of course, the term is used evocatively for the empowerment of groups (e.g., ethnic groups, women) as well as individuals, in order to describe strategies for de-marginalization and socialization (La Salvia, 1993;Draine, McTighe & Bourgois, 2011). Additionally, empowerment, as a popular trend of our days, runs the core of E.U. official declarations and papers.

However, stigmatization of marginalized groups is increasing. This paradox simply underlines the complexity of social exclusion as a phenomenon, and emphasizes the difficulty to apply empowering strategies both for individuals and groups, let alone for drug offenders in prison/post-prison treatment. Education emerges for this group as a means for the elimination of social exclusion through acquiring knowledge and skills, achieving personal development, gaining self-esteem

and self-efficacy and, finally, activating social integration. Additionally, adult education has both an empowering and liberating role for drug offenders in prison and post-prison treatment. Educational interventions in treatment setting empower the therapy process and enhance the effort for personal change and social activation.

Research has documented the positive association between participation in prison activities and improvement of basic skills (Vacca, 2004;Brosens, De Donder, Vanwing, Dury & Verte, 2014;Ripley, 1993), contribution of self-worth (Coyle, 2009) and reduction of recidivism (Petersilia, 2003;Harding, Wyse, Dobson & Morenoff, 2014;MacKenzie, 2006). Although these positive associations are recognized, little is known about participants' perceptions about the role of adult education in their transformation through therapy process and the motivating role of education through life changing decisions.

2. Objectives and Theoretical Base

The current study aims to investigate how adult education provided to people in drug treatment within the prison system and after prison release, enables them to take back control of their own lives and actively reintegrate into the society. In addition, empowering education is crucial both for one's personal development as well as for reinforcing their treatment progress. For those individuals, to become empowered, means that they are able not only to struggle within the existing social system, but namely to combat barriers in an emancipatory manner. Education and learning for drug offenders, taking place in prisons or in post-prison drug treatment units, provides opportunities for their personal transformation in order to deal effectively with the exclusion of this group of people on a social and professional level.

The basic theoretical background of this study is Freire's liberating theory (Freire, 1977^b; Freire & Shor, 2011) and the theory of transformative learning, namely from Brookfield's point of view (Brookfield, 2001, 2007, 2013), aiming to highlight both the interaction of education with the social and political context within which learning occurs, and the importance of critical reflection, self-awareness and personal action, as processes emerging thereafter. Empowerment is also viewed as an essential tool for personal development and improvement. Moreover, Mezirow Transformational Learning Theory reinforces this theoretical background. Common element in the above adult learning theories is that empowerment can be, either as a learning outcome of specific educational activities or as the overall goal of an educational program, essential tool for personal development and improvement (Mezirow, 2007; Koulaouzidis, 2014).

Additionally, Freire (1977^a, 1977^b) through conscientisation relates empowerment with social and personal change. The individual, initiating from their personal reinforcement, acquires knowledge and gradually becomes conscious of them and the social community, in which they live in, attains new knowledge and understands the social and political context in which they operate. Through dialogue and collective interactive processes, individuals, organizations and the community as a whole develop their ability to interact effectively in order to produce social change (Freire, 1977^a, 2005;Israel, Checkoway, Schulz & Zimmerman, 1994).

In this paper, adult education for drug offenders in prison/post-prison treatment is

considered as participation to education, vocational education, wellbeing and health courses, cultural and sport activities. Additionally, empowering education is defined as participation to educational interventions in order to achieve personal development and social improvement, regardless the type or the context in which learning is occur (formal, non-formal, informal education). Furthermore, self-confidence and self-efficacy are considered to be an integral part of empowerment for this population, because enhances both the personal transformation and the success of their the therapy process (Keegan, 1987;Gossop, 1976;Miller, 1988;Marlatt, Baer & Quigley, 1995;Roundtree, Edwards & Dawson, 1982;Connor, Gullo, Feeney, Kavanagh, & Young, 2014;Crouch, DiClemente, & Pitts, 2015;Witkiewitz, & Marlatt, 2004).

3. Method

This research was carried out at two settings: a. at KETHEA's therapy units within prison setting (in the Women's Prison of Korydallos, the Men's Prison of Korydallos, the Women's Prison in Eleonas Thivon and Men's Prison in Thessaloniki) and b. at therapeutic units in post-prison settings in Athens (KETHEA EN DRASI²⁴) and Thessaloniki (KETHEA PROMITHEAS²⁵). Both KETHEA EN DRASI & KETHEA PROMITHEAS were selected, because they both offer their services exclusively to prisoners and ex-prisoners released from correctional institutions satisfying the criteria for inclusion in this study.

3.1. Target Population

The profile of the target population of this study was “adult male and/or female, prisoners and/or ex-prisoners with drug addiction problem, under recovery, located in the greater Athens region, in Viotia area as well as in the city of Thessaloniki”. The selection criteria for the sample were a. participation in a treatment program (therapeutic community, re-entry center and post-treatment follow - up) in prison or post-prison system and b. participation in training and educational programs²⁶. The participation in therapy was obligatory, because education becomes most effective, especially within prison system, when there is absence from any drug use. Inmates' participation at training programs in prison without therapy intervention shows inconsistency and discontinuity (Dimitrouli, 2009). The research population comprises two sub-groups. The aim was to identify similarities and differences in perceptions of each sub-group respondents and by doing so, getting deeper insights into the role of adult education in participation to lifelong learning activities throughout different therapy phases.

²⁴ *The program offers its counselling support, treatment and social integration services to prisoners and former inmates in the Athens area. KETHEA EN DRASI offers counselling and support programs to prisoners in the city's Psychiatric Hospital, the Women's Prison in Korydallos, the Eleonas Thivon Prison, and the Agios Pavlos Prison Hospital in Korydallos. KETHEA EN DRASI has also created therapeutic communities for prisoners in the Women's Prison of Korydallos, the Korydallos Prison for Men, and the Women's Prison in Eleonas Thivon. The communities are run in specific spaces and have a daily program which includes treatment, education, training and working groups. Continuity of care following release is ensured by the KETHEA EN DRASI Reception and Re-Entry Centre in Athens, whose goal is the ultimate social reintegration of former inmates (www.kethea.gr).*

²⁵ *This program offers its services to prisoners and ex-prisoners released from correctional institutions. It offers a non-residential therapeutic program aiming at recovery from drug abuse and smooth social reintegration. It includes treatment motivation groups, treatment groups and social re-entry groups, and offers support on legal issues, information on job issues, and a counselling service to members of the released prisoners' families. It also runs a Relapse Prevention Unit which offers support to people who relapse after completed a recognized therapeutic program. Also, KETHEA PROMITHEAS provides its services at Men's Prison in Thessaloniki (www.kethea.gr).*

²⁶ *One more obvious criterion was the experience of incarceration (in the present or in the past).*

Regarding the distribution of the quantitative tool (questionnaire) the selection of incarcerated individuals derived from correctional institutions in Athens, Viotia and Thessaloniki, leaving out only one from the five therapy units in prison system (specifically the Therapy Center for Drug Offenders). In that way the “inmates under recovery” sample almost covered the research population, which met the criteria above. As for the post-prison population, the selection was made from therapeutic programs KETHEA EN DRASI & KETHEA PROMITHEAS according to the selection criteria.

As for the qualitative tool (focus groups) and particular for those who were at the re-entry center and post treatment follow-up program (KETHEA EN DRASI), the population selected satisfied elements of representativeness in terms of gender, ethnicity and residence time in the treatment. A stratified sampling method was used for this particular focus group. Finally, the focus group that took place in Women’s Prison in Korydallos (KETHEA EN DRASI) included the total population in therapy, which was apparently all women. Finally, the focus group that was carried out in the therapeutic community (KETHEA EN DRASI) included all clients (men & women) that were there at the time and met the selection criteria.

3.2. Data Collection

A mixed methodology was selected, combining qualitative and quantitative research tools, in order to leverage the advantages of each research approach and to ensure the holistic mapping of human behavior and experience (Mertens, 2009).

The quantitative instrument (questionnaire) came in two versions according the setting in which was distributed (in prison and post-prison treatment). So, the questionnaire basic axes were shaped according to research sub-sample:

- a. for the inmates under recovery the questionnaire included demographic characteristics, professional background, educational background, education received in prison setting, criminal record, Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale (RSES), General Self-Efficacy Scale (GSE), Empowerment and Education Scale (design by the researcher) and, finally, future expectations about education, employment and social rehabilitation.
- b. for the ex-prisoners under recovery the questionnaire included all the above plus categories about participants’ vocational and educational experience and their occupational status after their release.

In conclusion the questionnaire was distributed to 100 people (n=100) both in prison and post-prison treatment settings.

Table 1: Questionnaire Distribution in Prison/post-prison Treatment per Therapeutic Program and Therapy Phase

<i>Therapeutic Program</i>	<i>Therapeutic Community</i>	<i>Re- entry and Rehabilitation Center</i>	<i>Follow up</i>
KETHEA EN DRASI	Inmates/Women's Prison of Korydallos: 11		
KETHEA EN DRASI	Inmates in Men's Prison of Korydallos: 15		
KETHEA EN DRASI	Inmates in Women's Prison in Eleonas Thivon: 8		
KETHEA PROMITHEAS	Inmates in Men's Prison in Thessaloniki: 2		
<i>Inmates Sub-total: 36</i>	<i>36</i>		
KETHEA EN DRASI	Released Prisoners: 12		
KETHEA EN DRASI		Released Prisoners: 32	
KETHEA EN DRASI			Released Prisoners: 14
KETHEA PROMITHEAS	Released Prisoners: 1		
KETHEA PROMITHEAS		Released Prisoners: 3	
KETHEA PROMITHEAS			Released Prisoners: 2
<i>Released Prisoners Sub-total: 64</i>	<i>13</i>	<i>35</i>	<i>16</i>
<i>Total: 100</i>	<i>49</i>	<i>35</i>	<i>16</i>

Additionally, twenty-two (n=22) people participated in four (4) focus groups. Specifically, one session was held in prison system (Women's Prison of Korydallos, n=5) and three in post-prison settings (one session at KETHEA EN DRASI therapeutic community, n=7) and two sessions at KETHEA EN DRASI Re-entry Center, n=10). Specifically, through semi-structured questions, which were matching to questionnaire's central axes and after analyze the transcribed group discussions and categorized the participants responses, the researcher tried to gain insight into the importance of education in treatment process, successful rehabilitation and personal transformation, as perceived by recovered drug addicts.

4. Findings

For the purpose of this paper, research findings emerged basically from focus group analyses seeking insight into the reality experienced by the respondents, while hidden information about the participants and their way of viewing and interpreting the world around them will be revealed.

The findings of this study demonstrated the strong relationships between previous negative learning experiences/school dropout and drug use, low self-worth (self-confidence and self-efficacy) and absence of occupational and educational qualifications, drug use and criminal behavior. Even before their imprisonment the participants showed a high percent of school dropout, mainly because of the drug use, which most of the times started at a very young age. Also, there was a total lack of any other vocational and learning activities, which led to unemployment, criminal behavior and finally to their incarceration. The results also stressed the prevalence of a negative attitude towards the acquisition of any new learning experience whatsoever. This finding is in line with previous research focusing on special characteristics of this group (De Leon, 2000; Matsa, 2005; Visher & Travis, 2003; Harding, Wyse, Dobson & Morenoff, 2014; Stephens, 1992)

During their imprisonment and while in treatment, they participated in a variety of lifelong learning activities. However, the participation was not always welcome. Very often, at least at the beginning, they expressed boredom and reluctance. But, as the time goes by the previous negative attitude seems to be changing and those passive feelings disappear. The first seeds of learning are planted during the dry period of incarceration and many are trying to make the most of the time in prison for personal development and improvement. Others only after their release realize that

participation in prison activities and courses had positive influence on their therapy process. Finally, most of them show a positive change in their attitude towards education. There is a high tendency for enrolment in high school and in higher education, in order to complete their education which was interrupted during adolescence because of drug addiction. So they re-enter the formal (and non-formal) educational system attempting to develop their personality, enhance their skills and improve their self-worth. Also, they believe that by doing so they will achieve their personal goals and dreams regarding future occupation.

A high correlation was further shown between training and their levels of self-confidence and self-efficacy. These variables are of particular importance for positive treatment outcomes and for the social rehabilitation of this population. Specifically, during their addictive period of life they expressed low self-esteem and feelings of helplessness, self-devaluation and shame. These feelings were so intense that some of the participants presented their addictive behavior as parasitic: *“I was doing nothing at all, I was a parasite. I couldn't offer anything to anyone and in therapy I am trying to change that”*. Furthermore, the lack of communication and interaction with others in a social context emerges as a main cause of low or lack of self-worth: *“Because before I couldn't communicate even at the simplest conversation, because I was ignorant, I didn't know anything and felt like parasite”*.

But these feelings seem to change after their participation in a therapy setting, where adult education is provided. A transformation begins and an inner and outer dialogue emerges. Through learning process, acquiring knowledge and skills development participants' begin to have self-worth and self-esteem. They can communicate with others, express their opinion and raise their own “voice”: *“As soon as I began my studies and learn new things, I felt worthy and equal. I felt that I have value; I know things so I can participate in a conversation and to feel proud of what I had learned. And I am so proud of interact with others, to participate in each discussion”*. One of the most important factors of self-esteem seems to be the feeling of equivalent, acceptance and respect through social interaction. Once more individuals' social identification and the need for acceptance and recognition are significant for a normal personal development: *“(education)...has helped me how I am with others, how I interact and communicate with others. They seem to hear my opinion, they respect it and that is the most important”*. Finally, the participants' in prison system, even thaw followed courses and other activities, still they expressed low self-worth. This is expected because their present state of imprisonment acts as a minority and disparagement factor.

Also, research findings suggested that there is a high correlation between the education provided while in treatment and the levels of empowerment of these individuals with regard to their personal and social improvement. Personal development and social activation, besides self-esteem and self-efficacy, also includes factors such as critical thinking, communication skills and cooperativeness, knowledge enrichment and socialization.

Through participation in lifelong learning activities drug offenders in prison and post-prison treatment began an inner transformative process which then affected all aspects of social interaction. Specifically, they developed active listening, dialectic ability, a wider range of topics for discussion and better expression techniques: *“In a*

communication level education has helped me a lot and mostly has helped me in active listening. In that way I understand better... and I have become better in discourse, to receive or to give help” and “My enrollment in learning activities has helped me a lot. First of all I have topics to talk about. And if I don’t understand something, I would ask someone who could help me... ”.

The majority of ex-prisoners under recovery²⁷ pinpointed that through education interactions, they widened their social network in terms of lifestyle change, social activation and network development. But besides that, school and adult education emerges as a key factor for social integration. Through learning re-activation they are able to associate with other social groups (such as an educational group) with similar interests and attributes, adopting new behavioral patterns of behavior and thus they reincorporated into society: *“Even to go for a walk with my co-learners, to meet at someone’s house and play or talk, all that is very helpful”.*

Moreover, interacting with others, without prior experience on addictions, transforms their attitude towards people in general. They felt more secure and receptive to interact with people out of their drug use friendly environment: *“I have enlarged my social network. I started to go out with people that have nothing to do with drug use and I haven’t met them thought that. I met them during education activities and I communicate in other level. Education has altered my way of life. I socialize more, in another way... ”.*

This inner change had an immediate effect in the attitude and perception of others. Their openness and honesty about their personal history and difficult biography during their social interaction caused a positive reaction in their social context eliminating any prejudices and stereotypes: *“And there is a moment and you think that they don’t see the drug user or the drug offender any more, they see me. And I present myself with my new identity, free from my old self, free from my quilts and my daemons”* and *“In the past I consider myself as the drug user... now I can communicate with others by choosing a different role, the role of the student”.* In conclusion adult education turned to become a powerful means of social integration, in that it provides the opportunity to re-discover their social context, to broaden their prospective and adopt an open and honest way of interacting with others. This new attitude forced the new social network, to change and transform, uplifting any dysfunctional stereotypes.

Finally, adult education triggered critical thinking and awakened the conscientisation of their social and political context. Regarding the enhancement of critical thinking, all participants’ (except one case) emphasized the empowering role of adult education in shaping an analytical and critical mind. Basic characteristics of a more critical and analytical way of thinking are the deeper and closer look on reality, the realization of the dynamics that shape their life’s, the pundits questioning, the continuing search of knowledge and learning, the formation of a personal perception and point of view, which is based on reasonable arguments: *“And you gain critical thinking, I don’t believe whatever they say, I process and analyze it through discourse, I listen to other opinions and finally I can admit in case I am wrong”* and *“Education*

²⁷ The inmates under recovery were not asked about their socialization, because there it wouldn’t make any sense to ask them about social activation, while they were still in prison.

has helped me in how I conceive the everyday life, whether is political, social, economic”.

It becomes clear that the change in their way of thinking comes from a deeper personal transformation. Even before they began to think critically about the world, it appears that they form a different way they see, evaluate and even question themselves about their own beliefs and assumptions. This self-evaluation helps to locate dysfunctional beliefs, leads to new assumptions, replacement of the old, uncritical way of thinking with a new one and, finally, obtain an analytic and fresh look upon inner and outer world: *“As I entered this process I realized my beliefs, my own aspects, e.g. I believe that environment plays a significant role to personal development. So now I focus on the whole rather than the individual. My personal glances; I discover my beliefs and then become part of me”.*

Regarding the motivating role of adult education in their therapy process participants' responds were extremely interesting. On one hand some suggested that education didn't affect at all their decision to enter a therapeutic program or their precision in therapy. The completely absence of any learning activities would not change the therapy dynamic. Therapy is considered to be an educational process itself, regarding the community structure, groups, collaboration and communication within therapy context. Even more some participants mentioned that therapy was the stepping stone for the learning awaking and activation. The absence of therapy will have a dramatic, negative effect on their learning dynamic: *“...education didn't play any part in my decision to seek help. On the contrary therapy opens up my horizons and believed that I could do things right, that I can learn, that I can do so much more. In other words therapy motivates me for learning”.*

On the other hand education emerged as basic cause for participants to remain faithful to their initial decision for change. Education had a significant impact on their efforts for therapy: *“Education is like a 'banner', which I keep always with me on my path and all it has provided me so far and the people I have met, is like it keeps open up doors for me. Education has help me...”.*

In between lays a more moderate attitude about the empowering role of education in therapy decision and progress. The majority emphasis that education and therapy are linked together, interact and transform into a united learning domain. Both functions serve the same basic purpose, to empower people under recovery, to change their addictive way of life, to transform dysfunctional attitudes and beliefs and achieve reintegration: *“As time passed education make sense. Therapy makes sense. These two are combined. They are tightly tied. They give meaning, I learn things about myself, how to communicate, they are interconnected, can't really separate them...”.*

On a final note, it is recognized that this study does not make any generalizations about the effect of adult education on successful rehabilitation and reintegration. The small sample used in this study does not permit making such generalizations.

5. Discussion

This study confirms the theoretical background mention above, regarding the liberating and empowering role of adult education for addictive individuals (Freire,

1977^b; Freire & Shor, 2011; Brookfield, 2001, 2007, 2013; Mezirow, 2007). Education has a positive effect on drug offenders under recovery personal development, their educational and academic progress and their social activation. In addition to knowledge and vocational skill development, education provided in therapy enhances the therapeutic, life changing, process by helping them to critically reflect on social and political context, to gain self-awareness and to social re-activate.

Making drug offenders in treatment empowered through education, places dialogue at the core of their personal transformation process. It is about an inner dialogue between different aspects of their self, while they renegotiate their dysfunctional personal beliefs in order to alter their addictive behavior. Learning acts as a mirror in which they can reflect the “new” self and recognize abilities, possibilities and strengths. The old image of the drug user is degraded and they take on other social roles i.e. student. By doing so, old dysfunctional beliefs are replaced by new perspectives about themselves (Mezirow, 2007).

Education was also addressed as the means to empower individuals in terms of strengthening their intrapersonal characteristics, which is their critical reflection, self-esteem, and self-efficacy. Particularly, by becoming *aware* of their personal dysfunctional assumptions and their wider social context, by *recognizing* social "manufactured" stereotypes (drug user, prisoner/ex-prisoner) and power structures that determine and influence their lives, and by *reconstructing* new attitudes and values, appeared to help them take action for change (Mezirow, 2007; Brookfield, 2005).

This inner change had an immediate effect on their social surrounding. By adopting different social roles and by reshaping their own beliefs about themselves forced the others to change too, which in turn allowed them to reconsider social stereotypes. Therefore, the conditions for of social justice and equality are shaped through the elimination of social dysfunctions (Mezirow, 2007). Moreover, the interaction with others through discourse and open communication had a positive impact on their interpersonal skills, such as communication and collaboration both with their co-learners and with others at work.

Finally, an underlying systemic interrelationship between therapy and education is evident in prison/post-prison interventions. This study revealed that the empowering dynamics emerged from both functions proved to intensify the individuals' prospects, activate their personal transformation and support their social reentry. Therapy is practical an education, because aims to empower the addictive individual, to help him take back control of his life and adopt a different lifestyle. In conclusion, education liberates and acts within a liberating therapeutic frame. The two functions are interacting and complement each other. Education provided in therapy complement and reinforces the therapeutic goals and in its absence therapy would change dramatically, losing in strength and effectiveness.

References

- Δημητρούλη, Κ. (2009). Πώς η εκπαίδευση επηρεάζει την πραγματικότητα της φυλακής;. Στο: ΚΕΘΕΑ (Επιμ.), *Ανοιχτές Διαλέξεις: Συμβουλευτική στον Τομέα της Τοξικοεξάρτησης: Γνώσεις, Δεξιότητες, Στάση στην Επαγγελματική Πρακτική. Τεύχος II: Απόψεις Ειδικών*. Αθήνα: Κέντρο Θεραπείας Εξαρτημένων Ατόμων.
- Brookfield, S. D. (2001). Repositioning ideology critique in a critical theory of adult learning. *Adult Education Quarterly*, 52(1), 7-22.
- Brookfield, S. (2005). *The Power of Critical Theory: Liberating Adult, Learning and Teaching*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass. A Wiley Imprint.
- Brookfield, S. (2007). Η Μετασχηματίζουσα Μάθηση ως κριτική της ιδεολογίας. Στο: J. Mezirow & Συνεργάτες (Eds.), *Η Μετασχηματίζουσα Μάθηση* (σ. 157-179). Αθήνα: Μεταίχμιο.
- Brookfield, D. S. (2013). Η έννοια του Κριτικού Στοχασμού κατά τον Stephen Brookfield. *Εκπαίδευση Ενηλίκων*, 28, 25-28.
- Brosens, D., De Donder, L., Vanwing, T., Dury, S., & Verté, D. (2014). Lifelong Learning Programs in Prison: Influence of Social Networks on Participation. *Procedia-Social and Behavioral Sciences*, 116, 518-523.
- Connor, J. P., Gullo, M. J., Feeney, G. F., Kavanagh, D. J., & Young, R. M. (2014). The relationship between cannabis outcome expectancies and cannabis refusal self-efficacy in a treatment population. *Addiction*, 109(1), 111-119.
- Crouch, T. B., DiClemente, C. C., & Pitts, S. C. (2015). End-of-Treatment Abstinence Self-Efficacy, Behavioral Processes of Change, and Posttreatment Drinking Outcomes in Project MATCH. *Psychology of Addictive Behaviours*. Advance online publication. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1037/adb0000086>.
- De Leon, G. (2000). *The therapeutic community: Theory, model, and method*. New York: Springer Publishing Company.
- Draine, J., McTighe, L., & Bourgois, P. (2011). Education, empowerment and community based structural reinforcement: An HIV prevention response to mass incarceration and removal. *International Journal of Law and Psychiatry*, 34(4), 295-302.
- Freire, P. (1977^a). *Η αγωγή του Καταπιεζόμενου*. Αθήνα: Κέδρος.
- Freire, P. (1977^b). *Πολιτιστική δράση για την κατάκτηση της ελευθερίας*. Αθήνα: Καστανιώτης.
- Freire, P. (2005). *Education for Critical Consciousness*. New York: Continuum.
- Freire, P., & Shor, I. (2011). *Απελευθερωτική Παιδαγωγική*. Αθήνα: Μεταίχμιο.
- Gossop, M. (1976). Drug Dependence and Self-Esteem. *International Journal of Addictions*, 11.
- Κουλαουζίδης, Γ. (2014). Η Ενδυνάμωση ως Μαθησιακό Αποτέλεσμα στην Εκπαίδευση Ενηλίκων. *Εκπαίδευση Ενηλίκων*, 29, 3 - 10.
- Μάτσα, Κ. (2005). Κοινωνικός αποκλεισμός και απεξάρτηση στην κοινωνία της διακινδύνευσης. *Τετράδια Ψυχιατρικής*, 90, 61-66.
- Harding, D. J., Wyse, J. J., Dobson, C., & Morenoff, J. D. (2014). Making ends meet after prison. *Journal of Policy Analysis and Management*, 33(2), 440-470.
- Israel, B. A., Checkoway, B., Schulz, A., & Zimmerman, M. (1994). Health education and community empowerment: Conceptualizing and measuring perceptions of individual, organizational, and community control. *Health Education & Behavior*, 21(2), 149-170.
- Keegan, A. (1987). Positive Self-Image—A Cornerstone of Success. *Guidepost*.

February, 19.

- La Salvia, T. A. (1993). Enhancing addiction treatment through psychoeducational groups. *Journal of Substance Abuse Treatment, 10*(5), 439-444.
- MacKenzie, D. L. (2006). *What works in corrections: reducing the criminal activities of offenders and delinquents*: Cambridge University Press.
- Marlatt, G. A., Baer, J. S., & Quigley, L. A. (1995). Self-efficacy and addictive behavior. In A. Bandura (Ed.), *Self-efficacy in Changing Societies*. New York: Cambridge University Press.
- Mertens, M. D. (2009). *Έρευνα και Αξιολόγηση στην Εκπαίδευση και την Ψυχολογία*. Αθήνα: Μεταίχμιο.
- Mezirow, J., & Συνεργάτες. (2007). *Η Μετασχηματίζουσα Μάθηση*. Αθήνα: Μεταίχμιο.
- Miller, R. L. (1988). Positive self-esteem and alcohol/drug related attitudes among school children. *Journal of Alcohol and Drug Education, 33*, 26-31.
- Petersilia, J. (2003). *When prisoners come home: Parole and prisoner reentry*: Oxford University Press.
- Ripley, P. (1993). *Prison Education Role in Challenging Offending Behaviour*: Mendip Papers MP O47.
- Roundtree, G. A., Edwards, D. W., & Davidson, S. H. (1982). The effects of education on self-esteem of male prison inmates. *Journal of correctional education, 32*(4), 12-17.
- Stephens, R. T. (1992). To what extent and why do inmates attend school in prison. *Journal of Correctional Education, 52*-56.
- Vacca, J. S. (2004). Educated Prisoners are less likely to return to Prison. *The Journal of Correctional Education, 55*(4), 297- 305.
- Visher, C. A., & Travis, J. (2003). Transitions from prison to community: Understanding individual pathways. *Annual Review of Sociology, 89*-113.
- Witkiewitz, K., & Marlatt, G. A. (2004). Relapse prevention for alcohol and drug problems: that was Zen, this is Tao. *American Psychologist, 59*(4), 224.
- Zimmerman, M. A. (1990). Taking aim on empowerment research: On the distinction between individual and psychological conceptions. *American Journal of Community Psychology, 18*(1), 169-177.

Democracy matters: dialogue, the Islamist and the good TL group

Linden West

Canterbury Christ Church University

Introduction

This paper focuses on the emotional interplay of the psychological world with the relationships and groups in which we are embedded; and it considers how deeper forms of dialogue and democratic relationship with others are facilitated or frustrated. It draws on auto/biographical narrative research in one distressed post-industrial city struggling with racism and pockets of Islamism, but also with a once proud history of workers' education (West, 2016). I seek to understand the dynamics of racism, fundamentalism and of hate towards the other, but also of dialogue, love and recognition and their role in building social solidarities both in the past and present. I illuminate where resources of hope lie for creating space where dialogue and inclusive social solidarities can flourish. This at a time of rampant individualism and growing antagonism between ethnic and religious groups at national as well as international levels. I use an interdisciplinary psychosocial theoretical frame, drawing on psychoanalyst Donald Winnicott, critical theorist Axel Honneth and educator John Dewey, to illuminate particular dynamics, including pedagogic, within Islamism, for instance, in contexts of growing Islamophobia. These forces can draw alienated individuals into Islamism, which provides powerful forms of self recognition. Such processes operate at a primitive emotional as well as a cognitive, narrative and group level. Recognition gives meaning and purpose to fractured lives but may also be impregnated with misrecognition of the other. There can be processes of collective psychic splitting in which unwanted parts of a self and culture are projected into the other, evoking alienation, ironically, from self as well as the other, in the name of purity.

These reductive dynamics are compared with what was 'an experiment in democratic education' in the same city at the beginning of the last century. This was the product of an unusual alliance, at least in a European context, between progressive elements in universities and working class organisations to provide access to liberal and humane forms of university education for everyone – a kind of education of citizens, no less - at a local level (Rose, 2010; West, 1972). Drawing on personal testimonies and recent research, such workers' education, I suggest, offered forms of recognition, structures of hope and new forms of social solidarity. Working class men and women became university students, in their own localities, in their industrial towns and cities, in what were called 'tutorial classes'. These were classes not lectures: 30 or so worker-students met weekly with a university tutor and 'all were teachers and learners' as they negotiated their own syllabus and worked dialogically. They became (or were already) leaders and activists in their communities and their educational experience, they report, strengthened them in their struggles for a better, more equal social order. Over time many worker-students also became open to symbolic diversity and, in some cases, to their own bigotry. Processes of self-recognition operated here too, but alongside relatively open engagement with symbolic diversity, with others, and thus with the potential diversity of self. This provided the basis for more fulsome

recognition of the other and for building, as suggested, a more vibrant social democracy.

Problems about the past, present and potential role of education in strengthening democracy have become critical in present times. The problems of democracy are well documented: there is abundant evidence of concern in many quarters about the health of representative democracies, including in 'post-industrial' contexts (Biesta, 2011; Alexander, 2014). There are indicators of increased alienation and cynicism among people towards conventional politics, which can be especially strong in marginalized, multicultural communities (Auestad, 2012; 2014; Friedman, 2013). If widespread citizen distrust or disenchantment with formal democratic institutions, local and national, is well chronicled, so too are patterns of minimal engagement in voting, especially in local elections, in the districts where poor people live (Goodwin, 2011).

Distress in the city

In 2008, I was deeply troubled by the rise of racism and fundamentalism as well as the neglect of the city of my birth, Stoke-on-Trent, in the English Midlands. In 2008/9 the racist British National Party (BNP) was strengthening in the city; and a mosque was pipe-bombed. It seemed that racists would form the majority on the Municipal Council by 2010 (West, 2016). There were frequent incidents of racial violence and outbursts of Islamophobia. The economic base of the city had unravelled and its politics were in chronic crisis with low levels of engagement in voting. The traditional economic base of the city – coal mining, iron and steel production and pottery - had either disappeared or drastically declined. Long-term structural unemployment was endemic (West, 2016). The financial crisis, from 2008 onwards, and consequent austerity, including cuts in local government funding, added to feelings of despair.

I visited a district of the city, called Etruria, where, in the eighteenth century, the famous pottery manufacturer Josiah Wedgwood built his second factory, and he named the area after the region of Italy whose ancient pottery so inspired him. Wedgwood's house is still there, part of a hotel chain, and there was new development, including the expanding headquarters of the betting giant, Bet365. But dereliction met the eye at the abandoned railway station, framed by a disused, vandalized factory site. Historical geographer Matthew Rice (2010) has written that 'maybe Stoke-on-Trent', England's twelfth biggest city, 'is just one industrial city too many' (p. 17). Yet this city had once been home to vibrant pottery, mining, and iron and steel industries. Hundreds of thousands of plates, cups and saucers, all packed safely with straw in barrels or wooden baskets, were sent to food markets in India, Ceylon (now Sri Lanka), Canada, Australia, New Zealand and America. In 1925, 100,000 workers were employed in the pottery industry. By 2009 the figure was about 9000. 'The Potteries', as Rice (2010) observed, 'no longer equip the tables of Empire; in fact, jobs have been exported instead. Factories in China and India are sending their cheap export ware to the city: Stoke is now the consumer' (p. 57). Malaysia and Indonesia became attractive to employers and shareholders as sources of cheap labour and manufacturing was outsourced in the endless search for competitive edge and profit. The pottery manufacturer Spode, for whom my own mother once worked, moved 80 per cent of its production to Indonesia, while Wedgwood turned to Malaysia. Rice notes that wages were never high in Stoke, and cheap labour came to the area from places like Kashmir and the Punjab in Southern Asia in the 1960s. Low wages in Stoke equated to relatively high sources of income for migrant families – and there had been a long history of migration into the city. But when outsourcing gathered pace, many of the people whose grandparents had earlier migrated were left

in a jobless limbo. Having a job matters for cultural as well as economic reasons, particularly for young Asian men: to be the head of the family and support its members is a strong cultural as well as economic imperative.

I wanted, as stated, to explore the psychosocial, cultural, political and economic roots of this decline and associated discontent. I conducted auto/biographical narrative research, some of it longitudinal, with over 50 people in the city, from different ethnic groups. I sought to connect larger historical forces (such as deindustrialisation) with the meso or intermediate levels of human interaction; of what was happening within institutions and groups as well as at an intimate relational level. I attempted to illuminate how and why xenophobia flourishes and to think seriously about its antidotes. On one predominantly white working class estate in the city – the place where I was born - there is a pattern of narratives of lost worlds and feelings of abandonment and disrespect by authority. In contrast stories are told of the BNP listening to local people and offering forceful as well as sensitive representation, of the kind that other parties failed to provide. In Muslim communities there were stories of Islamophobia, and of anxieties about pockets of Islamism among young people.

Recognition and the power to illuminate

Research of this kind is problematic when viewed through the lens of conventional quantitative research that often dominates the academic imagination. The stories people tell are always a reconstruction of events, afterthoughts, rather than the events themselves, while the powerful discourses of a culture and unconscious processes of wanting to please or appease circulate in stories. They can be seen as of little relevance to any bigger picture of, for instance, democracy in crisis – ‘fine meaningless detail’, as one historian graphically framed it (Fieldhouse, 1996). Yet we can so much better understand the nuances of why particular people are attracted to the BNP, or radicalized, through the lifelong and life-wide lens of auto/biography. This is its especial power.

For one thing, the general – or bigger – picture is always in the particular, not least in the narrative resources people draw on to tell their stories. We are storied as well as storytellers. Stories may constrain as well as liberate, as a bigger picture – of neo-liberal assumptions, say – grips particular accounts. And people can internalize the negativities about ‘people like us’, whether emanating from the mouths and projections of politicians, policymakers or the mass media. Those targeted may be struggling on benefits or single parents, as chronicled in my earlier work in other marginalized locations (Merrill and West, 2009). People can feel themselves to be the objects of society’s disdain, caught in the gaze of the judgemental other and constantly needing to justify themselves. Those on the margins easily internalize negative projections, or feel inadequate, despite their capacity to think about experience in new ways and build resilience and self-agency in the process, if given time, space and resources to do so (West, 2007; 2009). People are unused to being listened to or taken seriously, or of their stories being treated as significant evidence. ‘Are you really interested in me and my story?’ they often ask. They may at first seek to impress researchers, largely unconsciously, by giving answers they imagine the researcher wants to hear. Over time, however, they can think about the stories they tell in the company of a sympathetic other in new and even liberating ways. But stories can also remain defensive and partial, as a white researcher, for instance, engages with British Asians who may feel their religion is under attack.

I suggest that stories offer complex material that encompasses a dynamic of here and now, there and then, self and other, psyche and society, power and powerlessness. Such material can offer nuanced representation of what it means to be human, in

conditions of distress, as well as the potential place of dialogue and democratic education in transforming lives; or of how Islamic radicalization works. In these terms auto/biographical narrative research is a serious business. But it asks a great deal of the researcher – we have to think, for instance, about the interplay of our lives and agenda in the encounter with the other. Thus to think about my place in relationships with others in the study became an interpretative and epistemological necessity.

The power of the methodology illuminated particular biographical experiences in ways that more conventional research would get nowhere near. Auto/biographical narrative enquiry sheds light, through the richness of storytelling, especially when done longitudinally, over cycles of interviews, on the seductions and insecurities fuelling fundamentalism, for instance; and how and why space once existed, and can be created again, for the never-complete experiment in democratic education. The distinct methodology has been finely tuned over many years and pays attention to how we as researchers shape responses 'auto/biographically', as indicated. The research is conducted in a clinical style and is sensitive to and reflexive about how emotional, unconscious, intersubjective and power dynamics work between people; how we are present as researchers in the process, for better as well as worse. We seek to create the conditions for good, more inclusive and hopeful stories, through our presence, when we are respectful, listen seriously, and feedback ideas for reflection, in a digestible form. Donning the metaphorical mantle of the white-coated, emotionally distant scientific investigator, on the other hand, can silence the other: we need our humanity and creativity in making good, dialogical research (Merrill and West, 2009; West, 2016).

There were particular theoretical friends –Dewey, Winnicott and Honneth – who helped me make sense of the stories. Using Dewey reminded me of our need to engage with the other precisely because of the limitations, despite our best efforts, of what we can ever know. The other, in short, has an actual importance for the quality of our own psychological and symbolic life; diversity matters in the groups of which we are a part, whether scientific or community-based, for the quality of our thinking and actions; and for the cultivation of what we can call democratic subjectivity – or the cosmopolitan psyche – as a prerequisite for wider human well-being (West, 2016). Such selves may also be more or less agentic and political in quite a basic sense: the nurturing of children – or adults for that matter – is a political as well as an emotional act. It is about cultivating relationships in which individuals feel legitimate and able to question the taken-for-granted without experiencing paralyzing anxiety. This can involve experiencing the world as a place for imaginative play, in Winnicott's terms: for the playfulness of ideas and the imagination; or – at an opposite end of a spectrum – a place of defensiveness and to avoid difficulty because it is too threatening to self or a group. Such individuals can don false mantles, needing to please or appease others for fear of displeasure or abandonment. The intimately personal is deeply political and potentially democratic in these terms. Axel Honneth (2009) refers to Freud's anthropological idea of how we are born prematurely in comparison with other mammals and depend absolutely on the other for survival and well-being; and on feelings of being loved as a basis for human flourishing (Honneth, 2009; Winnicott, 1971). The love on offer, however, may not be good enough, and survival can come at the price of self-annihilation, if the other, for instance, has constantly to be appeased. Honneth adds the sociocultural into these more intimate dynamics of self-recognition. This includes the role of groups in providing self-respect, in making people feeling accepted and that they belong, with rights and responsibilities. Self-esteem, Honneth's third category of self-recognition, can then be nurtured when

individuals feel recognized as making important contributions to a group's well-being, which provides a potential to better recognize others (Honneth, 2007; 2009); a potential but not an inevitable process, in groups, as we observe below.

There is, as noted, an important historical dimension to the paper. I re-engaged from 2008 onwards, in the light of the distress in the city, with the historical contribution of workers' education in Stoke and revisited my own writing from the 1970s. The late nineteenth century witnessed, in Britain, the foundation of many organizations devoted to educating men and women for active participation in political and, increasingly, social democracy (Tawney, 1964). However, some historians concluded that workers' education of a non-politically partisan kind, in alliance with progressive elements in universities, served to neuter and de-radicalize working-class students. From this perspective radical autodidactic passions were channelled into the calmer, more respectable waters of university learning and a hegemonic national culture. Workers' education, in such terms, served official state policy, and was correspondingly funded. Thus its role was about far more than the dispositions of individual teachers and students: it was functionally conservative in relation to the established order. This was powerful criticism and in diluted form I was a critic (West, 1972; 2016).

Islamism in the city

People of South Asian origin had settled in Stoke from the 1960s onwards. They mainly came from Pakistan and Bangladesh, and now make up about 50 per cent of the city's ethnic minority population. In 2011 they numbered just over 9000 (Burnett, 2011), at a time when the city's white population had been in decline. In one district in the north of the city, over 30 per cent of its residents are from ethnic minority communities (Burnett, 2011). Some people of South Asian origin talked in the research about disrespect and everyday experiences of Islamophobia: among taxi drivers, for instance, told too frequently to 'fuck off home' by white clients. This sense of everyday disrespect was amplified by stories of actual physical violence: particular Asian people had been killed or injured and mosques damaged. Such a reality can produce insecurity, vulnerability and defensiveness – paranoia even – and reinforces the tendency for people to congregate in particular areas among their own. Islamic fundamentalism has attracted certain young people in specific mosques. Small numbers, perhaps, but they do exist. The groups offer recognition but this is then followed by scapegoating narratives and the stereotyping of difference. The perception of others becomes a self-motivated distortion accompanied by an idealization of self and one's own culture. There is, as noted, a psychological splitting between 'good' and 'bad', in which unwanted parts of one's own personal and collective identity – the pursuit of material wealth or pleasure, for instance, or the sexualisation of women or a capacity for violence – are projected onto the other of, say, the white working class estate. Such groups, however, also provide meaning, purpose, identity and recognition in lives. They offer compelling, if warped, narratives of what the problem actually is: it is the other.

Culturally, as occupational structures have fractured, relationships between the generations suffer too, as male initiation rituals between fathers and sons, in the workplace, are lost. Narratives of the 'Christian' neglect of white Muslims in the Bosnian conflict, in contrast to the 'Christian' (that is Russian Orthodox) support for the 'Christian' Serbs, also filled some of this economic and intergenerational vacuum. In the 1990s actions by the West, standing back as Muslims were slaughtered, as at Srebrenica, were essentially seen as anti-Islamic rather than racist, given that the Muslims were white. Certain young people inwardly digested stories of Muslim

humiliation, collective trauma and ‘Christian’ hostility, and a need to fight back. This was then fuelled by the toxicity of Islamophobia.

A community leader, who I call Aasif, (the names used are pseudonyms) talked about some of the above:

... you had groups like Hizb ut-Tahrir taking advantage of the situation in Bosnia ... with what’s happening with the Muslims ... arms not being allowed to get to the Muslims to defend themselves where Russia is providing the Christian Serbs; it was a them-against-us kind of debate with groups like Hizb ut-Tahrir ... talking about the male Muslim section of Muslim community at that time; the youth, low education achievement, low aspiration ... no job opportunity... perfect audience... you can recruit easy ... It’s nothing to do with the colour of your skin; this is not racism; this is a target on the Muslim community because these Muslims are white ... I can remember some of these Hizb ut-Tahrir members who in the early ’90s, pulling the youth away from the parents as well ...

From this perspective, Bosnia was a trauma in which scales fell from eyes: it led to increased politicization and provided a mythic rationale for fundamentalism (Varvin, 2012). A group like Hizb ut-Tahrir (or Liberation Party) – التحرير حزب – in the Arabic – could exploit such feelings. Hizb ut-Tahrir is an international pan-Islamic political organization commonly associated with the goal of all Muslim countries unifying into one Islamic caliphate, ruled by sharia law. Hizb ut-Tahrir was founded in 1952 as part of a movement to create a new elite among Muslim youth. The writings of the group’s founder, Shaikh Taqi al-Dine al-Nabahani, lay down detailed descriptions for a restored caliphate (Ruthven, 2012).

Raafe

I will use narrative material from individuals close to particular jihadists. I paint a portrait of someone I call Raafe, a quasi-fictional composite derived from multiple narratives. Raafe – which in Arabic means companion – was radicalized and sought to radicalize others. Particular mosques provided space for his work, apparently without the elders or imams knowing. They became in effect, locations for pedagogy of a fundamentalist and ultimately non-dialogical kind.

Another community leader, Aatif, told me about the weaknesses of mosque management and how this was exploited by Raafe and others. Raafe, I was told, was an individual ‘who had a very troubled upbringing’. He along with other ‘radicalizers’, as they were called, targeted young people:

... Raafe didn’t have a very good relationship with his father ended up in crime ... was sent down to prison ... Came out of prison and he was within a few weeks, he was, he had transformed into somebody who was a practising Muslim now to hear him ... later on when we realized he was part of Hizb ut-Tahrir, but at that point to see somebody change so dramatically was wow, he made a real positive change ... you couldn’t explain to your parents why you wanted to ... your parents who came in the early ’60s ... came when they were young ... so very little ... religious... education ... so they didn’t have...opportunity to question the imams and learn something; so they couldn’t pass that religious knowledge on to the youth, to their children; so the parents relied upon the mosques to offer that ... so that’s where the communication barrier helped groups like Hizb ut-Tahrir. We can offer you Islamic information in your language, that’s what attracted a lot of people in Stoke-on-Trent on topical issues ...

Radicalization transformed the lives of some individuals, providing meaning, purpose

and self-recognition. Raafe's own transformation could well have depended on feeling understood, listened to and respected – recognised in short – by radical groups in prison

The pedagogy of radicalization seems to work by emotional, imaginative appeals to the past constructed in the light of the present. It involves stories and appeals to action, rather than textual hermeneutics. Narratives of twelfth-century victories supported a call for similar jihad now, one requiring toughness and heroism. Jihad, or struggle, becomes constructed as a heavy responsibility that requires toughness, even brutality. The victory of the Muslim armies, led by the King of Jerusalem, Guy of Lusignan, against the Crusaders in the twelfth century's Battle of Hattin, is interpreted as the outcome of a long process of small-scale, hard hitting attacks in various locations. Past struggles get reinterpreted in the light of the present in the struggle against the new crusaders of the West and its client states; against the army of Rome, as it is has been described. Heroism and martyrdom are called for in what is a very different pedagogical process from rational, textual analysis of the Qur'an. Muslim clerics may speak in the language of theory; the jihadi groups act through stories and doing (Hassan and Weiss, 2015).

Islamophobia, alongside disrespect and everyday violations of intuitive notions of justice, when mixed with politics and intergenerational fracture within Muslim communities, can draw individuals towards Islamist groups. These can, as noted, offer powerful forms of recognition, which operate at a primitive emotional, as well as a group and narrative level. The dynamics have to do with individuals feeling understood, and finding roles, meaning and legitimacy in the world. Such recognition can give meaning to fractured lives and even experiences of transformation in finding 'divine' purpose. But in the closed fundamentalist group, the process is impregnated with misrecognition of the other, and with dialogical and narrative closure. Psychological splitting takes place at both the individual and group level, as unwanted, uncomfortable parts of self and culture are projected onto the other, such as greed, misogyny or the capacity for violence. There is alienation, ironically, from self as well as otherness, in the process, under the banner of purification. Debate, dialogue, enquiry and self- as well as knowledge of the other get stifled.

An experiment in democratic education

Workers education once thrived in the same city. The first ever university tutorial class, of the kind mentioned above, took place there in 1908, when 30 or so worker students met each Friday evening over a period of years with their tutor, R.H. Tawney, a subsequently distinguished economic historian, representing the University of Oxford. The classes were free from prescribed curricula, and its members could explore issues in their working lives from the perspectives of history, politics, economics and literature. Fortnightly essays were required, and the standard of some of these was high, although by no means all (West, 1972; Goldman, 1995). There were no formal examinations or qualifications due to a desire to eliminate competition and vocationalism from the classroom (West, 1972; Rose, 2010). The Marxist Social Democratic Federation made up the nucleus of students who were potters, miners, clerks, shop assistants and school teachers. Many students were from non-conformist religious backgrounds, from families, in short, that encouraged them to think for themselves. The Marxist Social Democratic Federation made up the nucleus of the students. The Social Democratic Federation was formed in 1884 and was led by a businessman named Henry Hyndman. The Federation was strongly opposed to the British Liberal Party of the time, and its programme was progressive, calling for a 48-hour working week, the abolition of child labour, compulsory free secular education,

equality for women and the nationalization of the means of production, distribution and exchange by a democratic state.

Tawney himself thought the tutorial class ‘movement’ and the Workers’ Educational Association (WEA) a successful ‘experiment in democratic education’, which had a profound influence on the development of British social democracy. According to Tawney, the WEA was founded on three core principles. First, the opposition to revolutionary violence: ‘one may not do evil that good should come’, in Cobbett’s dictum of a century before. Second, no institution, however perfect in conception, could be made to work effectively by individuals whose morality was inadequate. Third, where a sound morality was lacking, this could be forged in a community of scholars seeking truth and the common good (Dennis and Halsey, 1988). There was an Aristotelian ideal at work here, as well as Oxford idealism (Goldman, 1995), an ideal of the fully developed person living in communities, building and sustaining virtue – communities cultivating not self- but other-regardedness, collectively directing themselves to higher aims than the purely egotistic or narcissistic (Dennis and Halsey, 1988). The idealists at Oxford who influenced Tawney - opposed to individualism, utilitarianism and social atomism - drew on German philosophers, especially Kant and Hegel, and the notion that individuals can only be understood and realize their potential in the collective. Men and women were part of social and political communities from which they could not be divorced for analytic or practical purposes. They were linked together by values and institutions rather than simply webs of economic relationships.

Tawneyite ways of thinking became unfashionable after the Second World War. He himself had doubts about the tutorial classes, not least the intellectual and emotional effort required from the worker students. Tawney was also far from a naïve idealist and there were ‘limits to his moralising’, as Lawrence Goldman notes (Goldman, 1995: 160). He was also aware that the same spirit of non-conformity that drove some of the worker students could also narrow viewpoints and bring a tendency to over-proselytize that made it difficult to dialogue and take on board different perspectives. Jonathan Rose’s recent historical work has rescued Tawney and workers’ education from the condescension of posterity (Rose, 2010). Rose, drawing on diverse forms of life writing, chronicled the importance of relationship and recognition in workers’ education: between tutors and students, among students, but also in relation to the symbolic world, in challenging bigotry and fascism, for instance, and for cultivating agency at an individual and collective level. Such education offered working-class people avenues into leadership roles in local and national politics, and served to radicalize and motivate them in personal as well as political ways. Surveys of the students showed that most were taking part in trade union activity, cooperative societies, local authorities, religious and political bodies. They were building both a workers’ education and a broader social democratic movement.

Space for dialogue and recognition

The classes themselves created space to question and challenge racism and other forms of bigotry in transformational ways. In one telling account, Nancy Dobrin, born in 1914, writes that the study of literature had revolutionary consequences for her. She grew up in a home where learning was not valued, where there was either ‘a row or an order’. She read little but later joined a WEA class and read avidly, although she admitted that she went to the class partly in search of a man. Nancy became a writer herself. She described working for a German Jew during the Second World War, wondering what on earth he was doing here and why couldn’t people like him go home. Later, in another class, she met her future husband, a German Jewish refugee

who described himself as a Christian Communist. This was a relationship formed in the spaces of workers' education, where literature – from Lawrence, Tolstoy and James Joyce – enabled her to question her own bigotry. Such experiences duly shaped her relationships with her children and family, and impelled her to question aspects of their schooling. Agency can take many forms: in the everyday, in families and on the wider democratic stage.

In certain respects, Nancy's story resembles those of later adult students, such as Brenda, in my own research among non-traditional adult students at university in the 1990s (West, 1996). Brenda found recognition of self and experience with particular tutors and students as well as in literature. Brenda would relate to fictional characters, such as an abused but resilient woman in a novel by Maupassant. The character, so to speak, became part of Brenda's internal world through processes of projective identification – finding aspects of self in the fictional or actual other – and imaginatively experiencing their lives and internalizing some of their strength and resilience. These dynamics can be incorporated into a more developed, nuanced idea of dialogue and a theory of recognition embracing the imaginal and the symbolic, which actively engages emotion as well as mind. It also suggests a developmental rather than fixed self, more open to recognition by teachers, as well as recognition in the symbolic and imaginative domain. Like Nancy, Brenda learned to play with ideas and feel valued for it. Nancy learned, like many other adult students, a more democratic sensibility in the tutorial classes and later, which they describe in their own words (West, 1996; Rose, 2010: 274–5).

Dogmatism and its roots

But dogmatism existed in the tutorial classes too, rooted no doubt in human fragility. It is interesting that the worker students frequently admired tutors like Tawney, who remained steadfast as well as respectful even when harangued by a fundamentalist student. We can think of fundamentalism, like its variant Islamism, as ordinary – when we feel out of our depth we may grab at things that seem to offer narrative certainty, an answer to everything. Leftist fundamentalists sometimes from the Social Democratic Federation and later the Communist Party, though not exclusively so, would quote from texts like *Das Capital* with religious fervour. The other students admired how Tawney remained respectful in the face of agitation. One recalled a particular Marxist – the SDF could dominate the first tutorial classes – challenging point after point and referring to classic Marxist texts. Tawney took it in his stride but insisted that there were other points of view. The student accused the tutor of hopping around from twig to twig, like a bird, and a sense of bad temper pervaded the room. Tawney insisted that everyone, including his challenger, take tea together afterwards and tell stories, read poetry and sing songs. This enabled the group to re-establish some shared humanity and fraternity (Rose, 2010: 266).

It is worth noting that a wider reevaluation of Tawney's contribution to theorizing the role and practice of inclusive university education in building a more effective political democracy and social solidarities is taking place (Holford, 2015; Goldman, 2013). Tawney emphasized the moral and spiritual in human betterment, which could be embodied in the tutorial classes in ways inspiring ideas of fellowship and service. The aim of the tutorial classes was to make university education available to all people in their own localities: very different to today's assumptions about the purpose of higher education for individual social mobility. Tawney was committed to a liberal and humane view of education for everyone, where citizens could acquire civic qualities and understanding in the struggle to create forms of social cooperation and mutual understanding rather than conflict and violence. Holford suggests that Tawney

offers a localist critique to the current emphasis on developing global skills and mobility. Communities should not be privileged or discounted because of their wealth or poverty and universities can be active agents in communities via, for instance, adult education. Moreover, Tawney represents a more constructivist view of knowledge: the classes were classes, not lectures, and ideas were explored and developed in discussion. The processes of education were democratic – students engaged in research and discovery by using original source material like historical documents, rather than being the passive recipients of received wisdom (Holford, 2015).

Conclusion: dialogue and a theory of self-recognition

The research helps to develop Honneth's concept of recognition and to illuminate the role of the group as well as more intimate processes in creating what we might term loving, reciprocal and dialogical relationships; and a spirit of openness and reciprocity towards the other. In the tutorial classes, people talked of feeling respected, listened to and understood as well as legitimate in the academic world; this is self-recognition working at intimate emotional, relational as well as cognitive levels. Self-respect and self-esteem were generated which strengthened the capacity for recognising others and for building an ethos of rights and responsibilities and solidarity across difference. The classes provided emotional, narrative and intellectual resources for agency in both intimate space and a wider social world; not for everyone, but for significant numbers of participants. The dynamics of recognition and its democratizing spirit resonate across the narratives and speak to us at a time when representative democracy seems fragile, xenophobia gets stronger and the role of education has become narrowly instrumentalised.

But recognition, and feeling cared for and understood, can lead to destructive ends too. Raafe, it seems, felt cared for in prison, his struggles and troubles were understood and new narrative resources made available. This enabled him to work among other alienated young Muslims, to care for them (he ran youth groups) in a way that he had been cared for. They no doubt felt recognised in turn, by someone they admired, because he spoke to their concerns, with an apparent authority because he had engaged directly in the struggle against enemies of Islam in the Middle East. Other young Muslims undoubtedly found self-recognition in the groups Raafe helped create and also by internalising new narratives that made connections over time, between their own anxieties and those of Muslims in the past and present. Narratives that explained suffering and the need for heroic struggle against crusaders, as earlier generations of brothers had done. Such dynamics, however perverted, provide existential meaning and the promise, even, of entry into Paradise. The Islamist groups nurtured self-respect and esteem but this was alongside hatred of the other, destroying the possibility of new forms of dialogue and inclusive social solidarity.

I suggest that a developed theory of recognition should include appreciation of our shared vulnerability and a common need for love, affirmation, respect, esteem, dialogue and narrative connections. Dependency is hardwired into us in what the psychoanalyst Melanie Klein called memory in feeling: our effort to transcend the anxiety associated with separation processes requires loving but challenging relationships. Such primitive dimensions of recognition may play out in later life, in a struggle to make a point in a tutorial class, (many students talked of their struggles to feel accepted), or to feel a member of a Jihadi group. Processes of recognition encompass largely unconscious, emotional as well as wider social dynamics and cognition. Workers' education once afforded ordinary people recognition through them feeling understood, and with the right to be heard and fully participate; and to be respected and listened to as mature and capable people. And because their wider

contribution to the group and community were considered important, self-esteem could result. Recognition, to repeat, is more easily given when we ourselves feel recognized. Honneth's idea of recognition is not about having a good opinion of ourselves but rather emanates from the feeling of a shared dignity of persons who are morally responsible agents, capable of participating in public deliberation and action, for better as well as worse. John Dewey (1969) offers an additional and crucial insight into the good and less good group: the former is open to diversity and otherness, including narratively; the latter is ultimately closed and calcified in allusions of total truth and purity.

Dewey observed in fact that the good citizen requires democratic association so as to realize what she might be: she finds herself by participating in family life, the economy and various artistic, cultural and political activities, in which there is free give and take. This fosters feelings of being understood and creating meaning and purpose in the company of others. Dewey suggests that good and intelligent solutions for society as a whole stem from open, inclusive and democratic types of association. In scientific research, for instance, the more scientists can freely introduce their own hypotheses, beliefs and intuitions, the better the eventual outcome. Dewey applied this idea to social learning as a whole: intelligent solutions are the result of the degree to which all those involved in groups participate fully without constraint and with equal rights. It is only when openly publicly debating issues, in inclusive ways, that societies really thrive (Honneth, 2007: 218–39). When groups close themselves off to the other and otherness, as in the fundamentalist or racist group, social fragmentation increases and prospects for dialogue and learning democracy shrivel.

References

- Alexander, T. (2014) *The Pedagogy of Power: Learning for democracy*. Online. [www.citized.info/pdf/commarticles/Pedagogy of Power-IoE-v2.2.pdf](http://www.citized.info/pdf/commarticles/Pedagogy%20of%20Power-IoE-v2.2.pdf).
- Auestad, L. (ed.) (2012) *Psychoanalysis and Politics: Exclusion and the politics of representation*. London: Karnac.
- Austed, L. (2014) *Nationalism and the Body Politic*. London: Karnac.
- Biesta, G. (2011) *Learning Democracy in School and Society: Education, lifelong learning and the politics of citizenship*. Boston: Sense.
- Burnett, J. (2011) *The New Geographies of Racism: Stoke-on-Trent*. London: Institute of Race Relations.
- Dennis, A. and Halsey, A.H. (1988) *English Ethical Socialism: Thomas More to R.H. Tawney*. Oxford: Clarendon Press.
- Dewey, J. (1969) 'The ethics of democracy'. In Boydston, J.A. *The Early Years of John Dewey*. Carbondale, IL: Southern Illinois University Press.
- Fieldhouse, R. (1996a) 'Mythmaking and Mortmain: A response'. *Studies in the Education of Adults*, 28 (1).
- Flemmen, H. (2014) 'Fundamentalism, Nazism and inferiority'. In Auestad, L. (ed.) *Nationalism and the Body Politic*. London: Karnac.
- Freidman, B. (2013) *Democracy Ltd: How money and donations corrupted British politics*. London: Oneworld Publications.
- Goldman, L. (1995) *Dons and Workers: Oxford and adult education since 1850*. Oxford: Clarendon Press.
- Goldman, L. (2013) *The Life of R.H. Tawney: Socialism and history*. London: Bloomsbury Academic.
- Goodwin, M.J. (2011) *New British Fascism: Rise of the British National Party*. London: Routledge.

- Hassan, H. and Weiss, M. (2015) *ISIS: Inside the army of terror*. New York: Regan Arts.
- Holford, J. (2015) 'Adult and higher education in the early work of R.H. Tawney'. In Standing Conference of University Teachers and Researchers in the Education of Adults (SCUTREA) *It's all Adult Education*. Paper presented at a conference held at the University of Leeds, 7–9 July.
- Honneth, A. ((2007) *Disrespect: The normative foundations of critical theory*. Cambridge: Polity Press.
- Honneth, A. (2009) *Pathologies of Reason: On the legacy of critical theory*. New York: Columbia University Press.
- Merrill B. and West, L. (2009) *Using Biographical Methods in Social Research*. London: Sage.
- Rice, M. (2010) *The Lost City of Stoke-on-Trent*. London: Frances Lincoln.
- Rose, J. (2010) *The Intellectual Life of the British Working Classes*. 2nd ed. New York: Yale University Press.
- Ruthven, M. (2012) *Islam: A very short introduction*. Oxford: University Press.
- Tawney, R. (1964) *The Radical Tradition*. London: Penguin.
- Varvin, S. (2012) 'Islamism and xenophobia'. In Auestad, L. (ed.) *Nationalism and the Body Politic*. London: Karnac.
- West, L. (1972) 'The Tawney legend re-examined'. *Studies in Adult Education*, 4, (2): 105–119.
- West, L. (1996) *Beyond Fragments: Adults, motivation and higher education. A biographical analysis*. London: Taylor and Francis.
- West, L. (2007) 'An auto/biographical imagination: The radical challenge of families and their learning'. In West, L., Merrill, B., Alheit, P. and Siig Andersen, A. (eds) *Using Biographies and Life History Approaches in the Study of Adult and Lifelong Learning*. Frankfurt-am-Main: Peter Lang.
- West, L. 2009) 'Families and their learning: An auto/biographical imagination' In Jarvis, P. (ed.) *The Routledge International Handbook of Lifelong Learning*. New York: Routledge.
- West, L. (2016) *Distress in the city; racism, fundamentalism and a democratic education*. London Trentham/UCL Books.
- Winnicott, D. (1971) *Playing and Reality*. London: Routledge.

EMOTIONAL- PSYCHIC

A Dialogue with Chronic Illness

Jay Livingstone

Plymouth University

Abstract: This paper suggests that illness can be engaged with through deep reflective dialogue and practice,²⁸ and as such can become an initiatory event, leading to transformative learning; fundamentally changing an individual's epistemology and ontology.

Introduction - Chronic Health, a Modern Problem

Currently, pathophysiology underpins modern medical scientific thinking, with identification of physical cause and eradication of the symptoms of illness through either suppression or surgical intervention, i.e. pharmacological agents, or ablative procedures; both equating to 'cure-of-condition'.²⁹ However, millions of people globally live with ongoing Chronic Illness/Chronic Health Conditions (*Abbrev.* CHCs)³⁰ with 65%³¹ of global deaths attributed to Non-Communicable Diseases (*Abbrev.* NCDs).³² Interestingly, the root cause of CHCs/NCDs is unknown, leading the WHO to declare CHCs/NCDs to be a "slow-motion catastrophe" (Chan, 2011); leaving medical science puzzled. Could turning to indigenous wisdom traditions, where adversities³³ such as illness are seen as invitations to enter deep, reflective dialogue, or initiatory events – potentially leading to transformative learning and paradigm shifts – help us to better understand the root causes of CHCs/NCDs?³⁴

The Obscuring Lens of Scientific Thought and the Hard Problem of CHCs/NCDs

As outlined by Hyland and Morris, modern scientific thought dominates all other perspectives concerning the body and illness:

Like a clock, the body is made of parts, and the parts together make up the completely functioning organism/clock. Each part exists independently, just in the way that the cogs of a clock each have an

²⁸ In accordance with indigenous cultures and a Shamanic world-view

²⁹ Pathophysiology: the fundamental principle that diseases are caused by specific problems and the malfunction of physiology. Fundamentally, this is an error in the body *machine*, where part(s) operate incorrectly causing problems in health

³⁰ CHCs - a disease lasting longer than three months. Chronic diseases cannot be prevented by vaccines or cured by medication, nor do they just disappear - U.S. National Center for Health Statistics (*Medicinenet.com*, 2012). Some examples of CHCs are asthma, arthritis, stroke, cardiovascular diseases, obesity, cancer, which include varying levels of pain. The term 'chronic illness' fits into the classification of CHCs, and I will therefore be using the abbreviation CHCs throughout this paper to refer to chronic illness

³¹ Calculated from *all* available data (WHO, 2014)

³² NCDs - medical conditions, or diseases, that are non-infectious or non-transmissible (Kim & Oh, 2013) and include asthma, arthritis, stroke, cardiovascular diseases, cancer. Note that the terms 'chronic illness', NCD and CHC are often used interchangeably. For the purposes of this paper, I shall be using these terms interchangeably

³³ The term 'adversity' is used to denote all life challenges, including CHCs/NCDs

³⁴ The cause of the presenting pathology; for instance, what causes cell division in cancer

independent existence. [...] Each [... body part ...] is a ‘module’ [... these modules ...] sometimes go wrong [... needing] to be repaired [...]. *Modern medicine is based on one fundamental principle: that diseases are caused by specific problems where the physiology has ‘gone wrong’ – the technical term used is pathophysiology [and] consists of error in the body machine, that is, failure of a part to operate correctly. Some of these failures are catastrophic [...] whereas others are [... inconvenient ...] However, in all cases, a specific problem or group of specific problems exists. (Hyland, 2011, p. 7)*

Our culture – the modern Western, industrial, technocratic world – has succeeded in persuading us that pain is simply and entirely a medical problem.³⁵ When we think about pain, we almost instantly conjure up a scene that includes doctors, drugs, ointments, surgery, hospitals, laboratories and insurance forms. [Medical science and healthcare systems] play a large role in the cultural construction of pain because the scientific worldview of medicine so thoroughly dominates our society. (Morris, 1993, pp. 1–2)

Science as a cultural, philosophical, and intellectual movement, according to Morris suggests that other ways to question the role of pain (1993, p. 279), and its subsequent treatment outside of the medical model, is futile. With this in mind, medicine has derived the following classifications (Boyd, 2000, pp. 9–10):

Disease: something quantifiable, tangible, objective, able to be touched, smelt or seen

Illness: something that often accompanies disease but resides purely within the private, subjective realms of individual experience

Sickness: the outward public acceptance of illness.

Under current epistemologies of health this makes sense, but in reality is underpinned by scientific assumptions of pathophysiology, psycho-somatics,³⁶ and reductionism. For medical science, people *have* disease, *feel* ill, are *recognised* as sick and are reduced to a complex machine. Anything extraneous to the five-senses (‘something-greater/other-than-human’), is removed from illness/disease causation and the human experience. Ultimately, *illness*, *pain* and *disease* are objectified and classified as something to *battle*, *suppress*, *conquer* and *remove* from the body.

CHCs/NCDs are problematic for medical science as they do not conform to pathophysiology, failing to reveal their root cause. For instance, in cases of IBS,³⁷ no identifiable pathophysiology of the gut is ever found despite patients presenting severe symptoms (Hyland, 2011, p. 15); this “[... D]eafening silence of *illness-in-the-absence-of-disease* [is] unbearable to the clinician [as t]he patient can offer the doctor

³⁵ And by implication, illness and disease

³⁶ Diseases which involve both mind and body. Some physical diseases are thought to be particularly made worse by mental factors such as stress and anxiety. Mental states can affect the severity of physical diseases

³⁷ Affects 1 in 10 people over the age of 50 years and involves pain as well as other symptoms such as diarrhoea, constipation and bloating (Hyland, 2011, p. 15)

nothing to satisfy his senses...” (Boyd, 2000, p. 10). Therefore, medicine has little option than the management of the presenting condition, through pharmacology, corrective therapy and surgery to manage the symptoms of illness and maintain homeostasis (MayoClinic, 2015; Naik, 2010; WebMD, 2015; White, 2001, p. 341).

CHCs such as asthma are surrounded by many assumptions. For instance, asthma is often assumed to be a childhood condition that one grows out of, and that prolonged remission between attacks, as in the case of *Brittle Asthma*,³⁸ demotes the seriousness of the condition, contributing to neglect of medication (Lesslie, 2005; Waldron, 2007, pp. 131–133; Wright, 2015). In reality, however, asthma affects all age ranges, with three UK deaths per day (asthma.org.uk, 2016; Lesslie, 2005); and if not medicated properly may develop into other CHCs, such as airway remodelling which permanently decreases an individual’s lung functionality (asthma.org.uk, 2016; Bergeron, Tulic, & Hamid, 2010; umm.edu, 2016).

Globally, NCDs account for 65% of *all* deaths. Millions live with CHCs and by 2020, NCDs *in Africa*, will surpass *all* other causes of morbidity (CDC, 2015; Elmslie, 2015; KingsFund, 2016), leading the WHO to declare:

The epidemic is being driven by powerful, almost universal trends, namely demographic ageing, rapid unplanned urbanization, and the globalization of unhealthy lifestyles. These trends are not easily reversed. In a sense, this is a slow-motion catastrophe, as most of these diseases develop slowly (Chan, 2011).

As stated by Morris – a system dealing with illness in the form of pathophysiology and psychosis where *everything* is attributed to genetics, tissue damage, trauma, infection or neurological/psychological imbalance, is dangerous, as it perpetuates a centuries old mind-set (Morris, 1993, pp. 114–115). Failure to establish a root cause means no long-term solution options. Unfortunately, whether examined from the neurological, physiological, psychological or sociological viewpoint, pathology within CHCs/NCDs continues to elude medical science.

Therefore, I suggest that we need to rethink the approach to CHCs/NCDs where pathophysiology is seen as the only ‘*one*’ possible explanation, and revisit the ideas of indigenous cultures (*Abbrev. ICs*) who intrinsically see adversity as presenting opportunities for transformative learning (*Abbrev. TL*).

Moving Towards Dialogue and the Transformational Learning Opportunities of CHCs/NCDs

Underpinning TL is the concept of fundamental change in epistemology/ontology arising from a learning experience. These experiences invoke a cycle of *challenge-reflect-implement* that afford paradigm-shifts, guiding all subsequent understanding, appreciation and action (Clark, 1993; Mezirow, 1997). Illness provides the opportunity to start this reflective cycle, as it must be seen not only as the dysfunction of the body, as in pathophysiology, but the disorder of the body, self and the world; i.e., the body cannot be separated from the self and the carefully created realities

³⁸ Brittle Asthma: a condition where sufferers are symptom free for long periods of time between attacks

which individuals construct to give themselves meaning in the world (Cooper, 2016; Toombs, 2013, p. 81).

Western scientific thinking has sought to sever the human from nature, reduce human to machine, and classify the earth and universe as inert and purposeless; removing the ‘something-greater/other-than-human’ from the human experience. ICs, however, recognise the earth to be conscious and living, seated within a multi-dimensional conscious universe in which ‘seen’ and ‘unseen’ realms co-exist, inhabited by sentient beings (Greenway, 1998, p. 998). For ICs, vital energy permeates *everything*, binding ‘seen’ and ‘unseen’ together in ‘something-greater-than-human’ in which there is an overall purpose or plan. Illnesses, when viewed through the lens of ICs, turn the sufferer’s attention from outward, to inward facing; becoming the starting point for *dialogue-with-condition* - a chance to listen to, dialogue with, and understand the illness. As intimated by Morris and Toombs (Morris, 1993, pp. 125–126; Toombs, 2013, p. 81), inspecting pain through alternative epistemologies affords prophetic, visionary and redemptive dimensions – an alien viewpoint to the current Western Medical Model (*Abbrev. WMM*) - that not only reveals a disorder in the biology, but the self, personal world and beyond. For ICs, illness and disease represent the opportunity for dialogue; instead of something to be suppressed, eliminated and ignored. This can ultimately lead to transformative learning experiences as agents for raising human consciousness to *other* places and realms.

All cultures show a capacity for deep, relational dialogue and communion between the self and ‘something-greater-than-human.’ Examples of this are the Shamanic three-world system (Farrell, 1993, p. 729; Stutley, 2003, p. 2), the Tao, Buddhism, Plato’s cave, Jung’s archetypes and the collective unconscious to name but a few.³⁹ Underlying all of these epistemologies is a realm of *otherness* with which the human is intrinsically linked, and in constant dialogue with; as real as everyday reality. Shaman have long acknowledged that deep, reflective dialogue with realms of *otherness* is vital for maintaining balance within the individual (microcosm) and environment (macrocosm). Often through trans-states – i.e., ‘journeying’ - Shaman communicate with ‘other-than-human’ beings which inhabit other dimensions in order to retrieve important knowledge/information with which to restore equilibrium.⁴⁰

The first time an Ashaninca man told me that he had learned the medicinal properties of plants by drinking a hallucinogenic brew[,] I thought he was joking. We were in the forest squatting next to a bush whose leaves, he claimed, could cure the bite of a deadly snake. "One learns these things by drinking ayahuasca," he said. But he was not smiling (Narby, 1999, p. 1)

In addition, the cosmology that underpins an individual's engagement with the supernatural and natural landscape is mirrored in the

³⁹ All of these systems involve not only seeing the world through rational, literal eyes, but requires the vision of the imagination to access deeper meaning

⁴⁰ Parallels exist in the colloquially termed *witch-doctor* or *medicine man*, and serves, amongst others, as healer, diviner and priest. A distinction is drawn here between Shaman in indigenous cultures who have not been exposed to Christian ideologies, and New-Age Shamans who have grown up in a Western-oriented culture (as this *may* inherently affect their view of ‘*other realms*’ and source of creation)

individual's immersion in hierarchical and egalitarian social webs that require reciprocal exchanges of goods, labor, and ritual activities. The connections between the individual and the social and spiritual landscape are thus reflected in the causes, meaning, and experience of illnesses that are often rooted in the transgression of the boundaries between these three elements (Greenway, 1998, p. 998)

I suggest that scientific thought has slowly eroded the connection between western contemporary culture and its Shamanic past. However, inspection of folk tales and faery stories reveals the underlying, hidden and forgotten Shamanic roots of every culture (BBC, 2016; Stutley, 2003, pp. 2–3). Furthermore, inspecting the everyday language of western contemporary culture when describing illness, reveals subconscious epistemologies. Indeed, the everyday language used to describe illness, pain and disease, I suggest, reveals the true, private and subconscious relationship between the sufferer and their condition; as highlighted by Morris, who describes pain as (*paraphr.*) leading a *secret life* (1993, p. 1), and psychoanalyst Rollo May, who describes pain as able to *gnaw, wrench and twist* the body (Morris, 1993, p. 247). May and Morris' language, whether intentional or unintentional, reveals a '*life-ness*' to pain.⁴¹ It is easy to dismiss Morris' and Mays' statements as a simple 'turn-of-phrase' under the present scientific/WMM epistemology of health and wellbeing. However, I propose that these 'turn-of-phrases' reveal more about an inner, subconscious dialogue with pain, illness and disease than we consciously acknowledge.

May associates *gnaw, wrench and twist* with the objectifying word *it* – "*it wrenches*"; objectifying something as extraneous and separate to the sufferer, which logically, due to objectification, cannot be part of the sufferer's physiology (except through residence, e.g. infestation, or parasites). One could call this a 'metaphorical other'; which gnaws, wrenches and twists, able to afflict differing levels of suffering, i.e. from dull pain, to body twisting.

It is a fact that CHCs/NCDs exist. The deeper question is why, and what happens if we simply choose to ignore/avoid the idea of a 'life-like' quality to illness? According to psychiatrist, neurologist, and Holocaust survivor, Frankl, we must try to engage and dialogue with adversities if we are to ever receive the gifts - the hidden meanings and messages - implicit within them (similar to the IC model). For Frankl, time spent in WW2 concentration camps gave him a unique perspective on pain, and the inner dialogue that each individual must undergo to understand the role of pain within life:

The meaning we discover in our lives will differ from person to person. The meanings an individual creates or discovers may differ from situation to situation, or simply change as we grow older [...] meaning must be discovered, not given, [...] searching is more important than discovering. You may never find what you are searching for. Yet [...] if you block or deny the *search* for meaning, you ultimately annihilate the will to live (Morris, 1993, p. 170).

For Frankl, there is meaning in suffering and pain (i.e., adversity) which is a non-

⁴¹ In using this term, I am suggesting that 'pain' (and by implication, illness and disease) has a dynamic, 'life-like' quality, which lies beyond our current, accepted, materialist philosophy of understanding, but which is 'normal' for ICs

negotiable tunnel, or a journey through which one emerges to a new stage of being; i.e., the Sisyphus rock that must be pushed in order to reveal life's lessons/experiences for growth (Morris, 1993, pp. 171, 172, 182):

A list of conditions that frequently accompany chronic pain would include divorce, rape, spouse-abuse, incest, depression, child-abuse, grief, alcoholism, obesity, suicide, bankruptcy, drug addiction, unemployment, dead-end jobs, and quarrelsome, impossible families [...] Often, deeply felt emotions of grief and guilt, for example, find no outlet or resolution. Sometimes the trauma is quite idiosyncratic (Morris, 1993, p. 276).

Tragedy, like a dark alter-ego, strips away the illusion that living well or eating well (*as espoused by modern science, society and the WMM*) offers any protection against the destructive forces within ourselves and within our world that we cannot control or defeat but only endure, until endurance itself becomes too terrible to bear. Tragedy forces us to confront the suffering we normally evade, avert or deny – a suffering that medicine too [...] turns away from (Morris, 1993, p. 265).

Just as with Frankl's Sisyphus rock, psychotherapist Moore recognises that the avoidance of adversity could lead to challenges elsewhere in life, such as emptiness, meaninglessness, vague depression and disillusionment (Moore, 1992, p. xvi).

Reflecting upon TL and the cycle of *challenge-reflect-implement*, it can be suggested that only if we are prepared to '*dig-deep*' and take the initiatory journey to discovery that illness invites (as in the IC model), can TL be achieved. Echoing Frankl's thought that one must discover meaning for themselves, engaging within this cycle allows TL experiences to arise that are unique to each person. As outlined by Moore, there is no clear instruction as to what to do next, the individual must figure it out for themselves, realising the individual gift in every situation (Moore, 1992, p. 161)

Transformative Learning: Implications of a Shift of Perspective

Revisiting the statistics quoted earlier (i.e., 65% of all deaths attributed to NCDs, with countless millions living with irresolvable CHCs) could recognising CHCs/NCDs as '*illness wishing to dialogue*' move us towards an understanding of their root causes? For this to happen, I suggest, involves following the explicit principles of TL, in which we must firstly challenge *our own* assumptions regarding medicine and the body, and be open to the possibility that there may be something more to illness than is currently accepted in the WMM. This action will naturally lead to reflection, and finally to the implementation of a new epistemology and ontology. If enough people enter into this cycle then a paradigm shift could be affected, changing medicine; where *condition-having-pathology* thinking, is replaced by *condition-as-having-meaning* thinking.⁴²

If Morris, Frankl and other authors cited within this paper are correct, moving to a

⁴² See Table 1, contrasting two ways of seeing illness (i.e., *condition-as-having-pathology*, and *condition-as-having-meaning*)

system where individuals see illness as a form of Shamanic initiation (in which deep, reflective dialogue with CHCs lead to TL through the *challenge-reflect-implement cycle*; ultimately leading to personal and spiritual growth) may help individuals and health providers to understand the root cause of CHCs/NCDs. This ultimately could lead to a model where the gift within adversity is realised, and the suffering that the condition brings is not avoided, but embraced and dialogued with; revealing the gift and the message.

Table 1	
<p>Current Epistemologies and Ontologies Surrounding CHCs/NCDs</p> <p>Current epistemology:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Condition-having-pathology • Condition/suffering as worthless • Root cause of CHCs/NCDs unknown • Reductionism, pathophysiology & psycho-somatics: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Analysis of body machine ○ Location of pathology ○ Isolation of pathology ○ Eradication of pathology <p>Current Ontology:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Research into pathology • Reactive medicine: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Suppression of symptom ○ Corrective therapy ○ Surgical removal of medically-defined problems; for instance cancerous tumours • Hospitalisation and segregation of individual 	<p>Revised Epistemologies and Ontologies Surrounding CHCs/NCDs</p> <p>Revised epistemology:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Condition-as-having-meaning • Condition/suffering as valuable • Illness wishing to dialogue with individuals for growth and learning • ‘Whole-istic’ approach to medicine: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Openness ○ Communion ○ Dialogue ○ Reflection ○ Challenge-reflect-implement cycle <p>Revised Ontology:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Research into meaning • ‘Whole-istic’ approach to medicine integrating non-scientific practices and disciplines • Deep communion with illness: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Reflective practice ○ Inspection of personal epistemologies ○ Inspection of personal ontologies • Integration individual with community, tribe and environment
Condition-as-having-pathology	Condition-as-having-meaning

Concluding Thoughts

By returning to indigenous wisdom techniques, and deep, reflective dialogue with illness, we have the potential to transform our own consciousness and deepen our lived experience of being human. The central idea here is that there may simply *be more to being human*, and such a realisation may help to open a way for the WMM to expand its thinking.

Moving to a system proposed within this paper breaks all current epistemological and ontological rules surrounding medical science and health provision. As discussed earlier, our everyday language reveals our hidden Shamanic past (one which recognises the ‘life-like’ quality of adversity/illness, from which point one can enter

into deep, reflective dialogue), and therefore sets up a tension between what we subconsciously know, and that which we have been consciously taught. It is therefore important to briefly outline the implications of moving to this type of system.

All too often, especially with technocratic physicians (Beck, 2008, pp. 80–81), individuals may feel powerless and removed from decision making regarding their illness and its treatment, with sufferers of CHCs often experiencing severe depression due to the lack of long-term solution options, and the use of therapies which have reduced long-term effect. Moving to a system principally centred upon deep dialogue between an individual and their illness, in which a journey of self-discovery is undertaken leading to TL, could empower individuals; revealing messages for personal and spiritual growth. This could have beneficial implications for our overstretched health systems, allowing for health providers to include more front-line services such as therapists, counsellors and coaches, who would be able to guide and support individuals while on their journey of self-discovery.

Moving towards an inclusive model which has at its centre dialogue, transformative learning and the principles of ICs, we may learn that there is more to CHCs/NCDs than meets the eye, and facilitate an evolution in healthcare and medicine in the 21st century.

Bibliography

- asthma.org.uk. (2016). Asthma UK | Frequently asked questions. Retrieved March 31, 2016, from https://www.asthma.org.uk/advice/understanding-asthma/faqs/?gclid=CjwKEAjlO3BRDR4Pj_u-iO2U0SJAD88y1SK1zPQeHh90nMJfZppaWaY1vlZvHlwV6KLBhWZzQobxoCwf7w_wcB
- BBC. (2016). Fairy tale origins thousands of years old, researchers say - BBC News. Retrieved April 8, 2016, from <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-35358487>
- Beck, U. (2008). *World at Risk* ISBN: 978-0745642017 (2nd ed.). Polity Press.
- Bergeron, C., Tulic, M. K., & Hamid, Q. (2010). Airway remodelling in asthma: from benchside to clinical practice. *Canadian Respiratory Journal : Journal of the Canadian Thoracic Society*, 17(4), e85–93. Retrieved from <http://www.pubmedcentral.nih.gov/articlerender.fcgi?artid=2933777&tool=pmcentrez&rendertype=abstract>
- Boyd, K. M. (2000). Disease, illness, sickness, health, healing and wholeness: exploring some elusive concepts. *Medical Humanities*, 26(1), 9–17. <http://doi.org/10.1136/mh.26.1.9>
- CDC. (2015). Chronic Disease Overview | Publications | Chronic Disease Prevention and Health Promotion | CDC. Retrieved January 4, 2016, from <http://www.cdc.gov/chronicdisease/overview/>
- Chan, M. (2011). WHO | The worldwide rise of chronic noncommunicable diseases: a slow-motion catastrophe. Retrieved March 31, 2016, from http://www.who.int/dg/speeches/2011/ministerial_conf_ncd_20110428/en/
- Clark, M. C. (1993). Transformational learning. *New Directions for Adult and Continuing Education*, 1993(57), 47–56. <http://doi.org/10.1002/ace.36719935707>
- Cooper, S. (2016). *Theories of Learning in Educational Psychology: Jack Mezirow and Transformational Learning Theory*. Retrieved March 25, 2016, from

- <http://www.lifecircles-inc.com/Learningtheories/humanist/mezirow.html>
- Elmslie, K. (2015). *Against the Growing Burden of Disease*. Retrieved January 5, 2016, from <http://www.ccgh-csih.ca/assets/Elmslie.pdf>
- Farrell, D. E. (1993). Shamanic Elements in Some Early Eighteenth Century Russian Woodcuts. *Slavic Review*, 52(4), 725. <http://doi.org/10.2307/2499650>
- Greenway, C. (1998). Hungry Earth and Vengeful Stars: Soul Loss and Identity in the Peruvian Andes. *Soc. Sci. Med.*, 47(8), 993 –1004. Retrieved from <http://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S0277953698001634>
- Hyland, M. (2011). *The Origins of Health and Disease*: ISBN: 978-0521719704. Cambridge University Press.
- Kim, H. C., & Oh, S. M. (2013). Noncommunicable diseases: current status of major modifiable risk factors in Korea. *Journal of Preventive Medicine and Public Health = Yebang Ŭihakhoe Chi*, 46(4), 165–72. <http://doi.org/10.3961/jpmph.2013.46.4.165>
- KingsFund. (2016). Long-term conditions and multi-morbidity | The King’s Fund. Retrieved January 4, 2016, from <http://www.kingsfund.org.uk/time-to-think-differently/trends/disease-and-disability/long-term-conditions-multi-morbidity>
- Lesslie, T. (2005). The hidden danger of adult asthma. Retrieved March 31, 2016, from <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/health/alternative-medicine/3323509/The-hidden-danger-of-adult-asthma.html>
- MayoClinic. (2015). *Chronic sinusitis Treatments and drugs* - Mayo Clinic. Retrieved December 22, 2015, from <http://www.mayoclinic.org/diseases-conditions/chronic-sinusitis/basics/treatment/con-20022039>
- Medicinenet.com. (2012). *Chronic disease definition* - MedicineNet - Health and Medical Information Produced by Doctors. Retrieved April 7, 2016, from <http://www.medicinenet.com/script/main/art.asp?articlekey=33490>
- Mezirow, J. (1997). *Transformative Learning: Theory to Practice*. *New Directions for Adult and Continuing Education*, 1997(74), 5–12. <http://doi.org/10.1002/ace.7401>
- Moore, T. (1992). *Care of the Soul*. Piatkus.
- Morris, D. B. (1993). *The Culture of Pain*: ISBN: 978-0520082762. University of California Press; New Ed edition.
- Naik, A. (2010). Beta blockers in arrhythmias: when and where to use? *Indian Heart Journal*, 62(2), 136–8. Retrieved from <http://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed/21180304>
- Narby, J. (1999). *The Cosmic Serpent: DNA and The Origins of Knowledge*. W&N. Retrieved from http://www.amazon.co.uk/Cosmic-Serpent-DNA-Origins-Knowledge/dp/075380851X/ref=cm_cr_pr_product_top?ie=UTF8
- Stutley, M. (2003). *Shamanism, an Introduction* (London, NY). Routledge. Retrieved from <http://lib.freescienceengineering.org/view.php?id=206391>
- Toombs, S. K. (2013). *The Meaning of Illness: A Phenomenological Account of the Different Perspectives of Physician and Patient* (Vol. 11). Springer Science & Business Media. Retrieved from <https://books.google.com/books?hl=en&lr=&id=llZtCQAAQBAJ&pgis=1>
- umm.edu. (2016). *Asthma* | University of Maryland Medical Center. Retrieved March 31, 2016, from <http://umm.edu/health/medical/ency/articles/asthma>
- Waldron, J. (2007). *Asthma Care in the Community*. John Wiley & Sons. Retrieved from https://books.google.com/books?id=TZyyLNeIB_4C&pgis=1
- WebMD. (2015). *Sinusitis Surgery Types and Recovery*. Retrieved December 22, 2015, from <http://www.webmd.com/allergies/tc/sinusitis-surgery>

- White, C. A. (2001). Cognitive behavioral principles in managing chronic disease. *The Western Journal of Medicine*, 175(5), 338–42. Retrieved from <http://www.pubmedcentral.nih.gov/articlerender.fcgi?artid=1071616&tool=pmcentrez&rendertype=abstract>
- WHO. (2014). WHO | Noncommunicable diseases country profiles 2014. Retrieved January 4, 2016, from <http://www.who.int/nmh/countries/en/>
- Wright, H. (2015, August 18). Asthma patients don't understand preventer inhalers or forget to use them | Daily Mail Online. *DailyMail .co.uk*, p. health/article-3201458/How-error-asthma-patients-l. Retrieved from <http://www.dailymail.co.uk/health/article-3201458/How-error-asthma-patients-left-terrified-Helen-gasping-air-Preventer-inhalers-reduce-attacks.html>

Figurations of the OTHER - Self-other-world-relation

Thomas Neubauer, M.A.

Annika Lehmann, M.A.

Transformative learning can *occur* as an adaptive reaction to critical life events (Mezirow, 1991). But as pedagogical professionals we prefer to give rise to situations wherein processes of transformation are *initiated*. We argue transformation is an in-tersubjective phenomenon. We have to take into account its triadic structure when analyzing transformation.

Background of our present theoretical and empirical interest

Learner and educator are two positions of a dynamic inter-relation with different but nevertheless interdependent characteristics. As we all know the inter-relational dynamic between educator and learner can result in a wide range of fruitful and not so fruitful work relationships. Against the background of transformative learning the questions of how dynamics between these two positions can provide a fertile ground for transformation arises. If transformation initially has to deal with falsification we demand an *accompanied falsification* which constitutes pedagogically relevant situations; Cranton & Wright (2008) speak of *learning companionship*. But a relational, dialogic pedagogy is more than mere passive company of the educator for the learner. There are different layers dialogic pedagogy manifests itself. In addition to the inter-relation (inter-personal) of educator and learner there are intra- and extra-personal relationships constituting relational, dialogic pedagogy (Lysaker & Furuness 2011: p. 189).

In order to find out more about facilitation of transformative learning in pedagogical situations we suggest to take a socio-psychological look at the initial state the learning individual (as well as the teaching individual) brings in when (transformative) learning is in question. In our view the individual has to be captured theoretically in terms of *self-world-relation* (Koller, 2012). The individual develops typical ways of meeting claims and tasks that life contains. These typical ways are developed ontogenetically as well as preformed culturally. In this way the individual learns to interpret the world and its position in it by means of its particular *figurations of self-world-relation*. Undergoing critical situations / crises self and world and its interrelations have to be re-organized, in our terms re-figured. In a previous explorative study (Neubauer & Lehmann, in press) we tried to take a clearer look at the process of transformation against the background of theory of transformation of self-world-relations (Koller, 2012). We identified three manifestations of change of self-world-relation (addition, substitution/highlighting, transformation). We came to subsequent hypothesis that these types of change which we firstly treated as mere descriptive categories could also be indicating a *progress* from addition to transformation. But how can such a progress be facilitated?

By the educator of course! Relational, dialogic pedagogy takes a look at the interplay between educator and learner, and so do we. In the following we try to carve out our understanding of relational, dialogic pedagogy within self-world-relation of the learning individual. We try to elucidate our position by analyzing particular sediments of relational, dialogic structures 'in' the individual. What exactly does happen to the individual when transformation takes place? We therefore have to present our conceptualization of self-world-relation (with orientation to Koller, 2012) before the *dialogic* structure of pedagogical sediments can be focused. Our study deals with the attempt of tracing particular figurations of these sediments, especially in terms of 'the

other'. At this point it becomes clear that we then have to use the description *self-other-world-relation* instead of the former self-world-relation.

Self-world-relation as basic conceptualization for understanding individuals' being-in-the-world

Individuals' being-in-the-world in the sense of their fundamental constitution cannot at all be traced back to mere physical processes in a depiction natural science inheres. Much more we have to refer to an irreducible dimension of meaning and desiring (Waldenfels, 2002). Individuals are *per se* embedded in and in relation to its surrounding world which means some-thing to them (see also Merleau-Ponty, 1986, 1966 [1945]). Self-world-relation even on this fundamental layer of existence must actually be conceptualized within a framework of a certain 'field theory' such as Merleau-Ponty's (1986, 1966 [1945]): self and world can be understood as two positions to which certain perceptions are ascribed. The self in this way is first of all a position to which affections are ascribed (Merleau-Ponty, 1966 [1945], pp. 277) whereas at the same time the world emerges as the *not-me*. Self and world at this fundamental layer of existence emerge out of the 'night of identity' (Merleau-Ponty, 1986, p. 106) as two positions forming a dialectical entity.

In addition to the mere fact that individuals are *a priori* relational ones a more socio-cultural perspective has to be supplemented. Individuals are not only born to a mere world, they are born to a specific world which is culturally (pre-)formed. This is what Bourdieu's concept of Habitus indicates (1984) Habitus serves as historically evolved cultural background which offers limiting (not determining) possibilities of meaning regarding individuals' interpretations of the surrounding world (Bourdieu, 2014[1980], p. 80) The world-relation is pre-formed by Habitus. And so is the corresponding self-relation. How individuals perceive themselves derives from these relatively stable and transferable dispositions of thinking and acting (Bourdieu, 2014[1980], p. 98) which Habitus inheres.

Self and world are two positions of one dialectical entity which emerges at a fundamental layer out of an event of splitting up itself into a center of activity on the one hand and the (object-)world on the other. It is this *dialectical differentiation in actu* which gives rise to perception of what is called self and world. In combination with Merleau-Ponty's (1986) reading of self and world as two poles where activity and affection is ascribed to on the one hand and on the other hand Bourdieu's (1984; 2014[1980]) structuralist view of individuals being pre-formed by culturally limiting numbers of possible ways of thinking and acting in the world we conceive self-world-relation as individual's un-/pre-/conscious effort of meaningful positioning and identifying itself in the world out of a quite anonymous initial state of being-in-the-world.

Adjustment of the term transformation in the direction to approximation of self and world

Considering self-world-relation as analytical perspective for elucidating processes of transformation, particularly against the background of an inter-subjective pedagogy, we have to proofread this conceptualization with regard to Kegan's (2008) question of "what form transforms?" Answer: It is the self-world-relation. Self-world-relation implies affective aspects because of its fundamental dialectical relatedness to the (affected) individual. The individual which gives meaning to its existence in terms of self-world-relation would fade away from meaningful existence if categories of self-world-relation would be eliminated – a crucial dialectical insight of German philosopher Waldenfels (2002)

Self-world-relation connotes a kind of *homologous relationship* between each other – which we want to reject. Borrowing insights from studies of infant development that consider *at-tachment* as basic need for human development (Bowlby, 1983; Schore, 1994; Fonagy, 2002) we can accentuate an aspect which we consider very crucial to studying processes of transformation. Attachment theory suggests looking at human behavior (originally infants) under the topic of searching proximity to primary care givers when being in emotionally over-whelming and subjectively dangerous, unknown situations (Ainsworth, 1970). For our pre-sent purpose of elucidating our understanding of transformation (of self-world-relation) we want to lay stress on one particular aspect: Attachment theory points to what we want to grasp as *fundamental asymmetry of self and world*. Attachment theory says that security of one's own is of higher value than exploration of the world. "Safety first" one might say. In the first place the world is too dangerous to explore it self-reliantly. There first of all has to be built basic trust (Erikson, 1950). The individual's fundamental process of splitting up its affective and physical existence into self and world which was addressed few lines above has to be conceptualized as an asymmetric order with superior value of the self over the world. Going back to transformation we want to integrate the aspect of asymmetry of self and world into our conceptualization of self-world-relation. Individuals' being-in-the-world in terms of self-world-relation cannot be considered as *equilibrium-relation*. Much more we have to consider them as fragile and permanently being attacked by threatening impulses. Transformation as re-figuration of self-world-relations has to include this fundamental asymmetry in its theoretical account. This is what we denominate *approximation*: Learning how the world rules is the way how individuals approximate the world; the self acquires formerly unknown aspects of the world and gains secureness – an equilibrium relation.

As we mentioned above contact of self and world can occur by accident so that in consequence the individual is forced to adapt to such demands. But as pedagogical professionals we do not let learners be confronted with such unforeseen events. We claim to initiate situations in which individuals are offered spaces wherein approximation can go securely and smoothly at its own pace. Transformation of self-world-relation within a pedagogically professional setting does not occur by accident it much more is facilitated by perpetuating a secure ground on which the individual can walk – and in case of doubt fall down softly. The role of dialogue between educator and learner is therefore of highest significance. Dialogue does not only mean conversation between two individuals. Within pedagogical contexts it much more implies a situation in which the pedagogical professional brings the self nearer to a particular subject matter (world). This is what we want to address now in order to get to our research question on inner figuration of the other – which is regarded as dialogically constituted.

The intersubjective setting in pedagogy and its effect on learners' self-world-relation

If we consider self-world-relations as the fundamental dialectical entity for analyzing processes of transformation (Koller, 2012) we have to be clear about constitution as well as impact of the pedagogical setting on individuals – in order to pursue *facilitation* of transformation by pedagogical companionship in contrast to an accidental *occurrence* of transformation as reaction (and assimilation) to unforeseen critical life events. In our view the term *emancipation* serves as the pedagogically relevant issue to which professionals should refer when trying to enable transformation. But how can this pedagogically relevant process of approximation be conceptualized?

In its simplified reading pedagogical settings consist of two individuals and a content to be learnt. Hence we can outline pedagogical constituents as follows: learner, educator, content. Pedagogy appears as triangle of these three aspects (Klafki, 1991; Prange, 1983; Illeris, 2002; Kansanen, 2003). Lysaker & Furuness (2013, p.189) characterize relations between the three pedagogical constituents as inter-relation (educator -learner), intra-

relation (self-awareness) and extra-relation (learner-subject). Applying their differentiation to the pedagogical triangle we state that the inter-relation between educator and learner *first and foremost establishes* the extra-relation between learner and content as well as the intra-relation in terms of self-awareness. Inter-relationality between two subjects (learner and educator) in pedagogical settings serves as prerequisite for all approximation of self and world and subsequent emancipation in consequence of which transformation can happen.

One might say that learners are *dependent* on the educator. Yes, they are! Can transformation in terms of emancipation then happen at all? Yes it can. Dependence on the educator doesn't necessarily have to be looked at under the perspective of malignant brain wash (Prange, 2012), it much more should be understood as one *genuine prerequisite for emancipation*. Referring to psychological (psychodynamic) concepts e.g. of mentalization (Fonagy, 2002) we can state that individuals do not at all internalize singular contents. Mentalization always has to deal with self-other-relations wherein world-issues (contents) are represented to the individual. This is why our conceptualization of self-world-relation as analytical dialectical entity has to be supplemented by a triadic reading. Generally in human development as well as particularly in pedagogical settings where individuals take part in we have to take the *triadic structure of self, (significant) other and content* into consideration. Human being-in-the-world and human(ist₁) pedagogy then must be depicted as *self-other-world-relation*. If we remark dependence of learner from educator on his/her representation of the content emancipation stands for abandoning educator's vital role for learner's approach to the content.

¹ *Anti-humanist* pedagogy would manifest itself as mere permission of so-called educator to let the world / content collide with the individual.

² A Term which we borrow from research on infant development (Tomasello, 1999)

To briefly sum up: We are interested in the particular phenomenon of transformation. Against this background we demand the conceptualization of self-world-relation as analytical instrument in order to observe transformation. Self-world-relation as individual's un-/pre-/conscious attitude(s) in its being-in-the-world can be re-figured – which we denominate transformation. In our view self and world metaphorically have to get in contact with each other if genuine inter-action shall take place. Self and world are not two equivalent categories; they much more build an asymmetric relation. Approximation of self and world is a pre-condition of transformation. In pedagogical settings as well as in any benign human relationship a third position – in addition to self and world – comes into play. The third position represents contents to the self in order to facilitate its approximation to the world. Remarketing this triadic relationship we consider the internalization (mentalization) of this structure as genuinely relevant for transformation because of its possibility for *protected approximation* (learning companionship) and subsequent emancipation from one's dependence on the significant (or generalized) other. In the following lines we now can present our understanding of dialogue within the pedagogical setting and its fundamental role in an emancipatory process of transformation.

The role of pedagogical dialogue in transformation of self-world-relation – research question

Learners find themselves in situations where they are confronted with unknown, new contents. It is the educator's task to provide situations wherein learners can approach contents free from inhibiting issues. From the standpoint of the learner the content is re-presented by the educator who offers a particular approach with a kind of *deictic gesture*². The educator shows content to the learner. This is what we wanted to carve out by taking the concept of didactic triangle (Kansanen, 2003) in. The *deixis* of the educator can manifest itself in various forms; there actually can happen both good and bad pedagogical *deixis*, but hopefully *good enough*. Anyway, it is the educator who decides (more or less consciously) how the learner's approach to the content happens. The metaphor of didactic triangle – especially in its worldly innocent depiction as isosceles triangle – can vary in its manifestations. In order to still gain insight in pedagogical situations we have to dissolve its static idealized state and open it for variation. This is why we suggest to further work with the concept of *self-other-world-relation* when pedagogical contingency shall gain attention. The (significant) other functions as relay-principle for the self in order to approach the world. The educator offers a prepared approach which the learner can adopt if he/she pursues approximation of self and world.

Such *other-dependent* self-world-relation can happen in an authoritarian (Baumrind, 1967) style so the self really is dependent on the other; here the self is handled as an object and not really as subject. Pedagogically other-dependent self-world-relation can also happen as discourse with the educator through which the learner produces its understanding of the content. In this way two genuine subjects with two respective intellectual (and affective) standpoints generate an understanding (which admittedly) was pre-formed by the initially knowing person, i.e. educator. Dialogue in this sense means discourse between two subjects generating a consensual meaning of the content in quest – similarly to Habermas' (1981) and Mezirow's (1991) conceptualization of communicative learning. Dialogue implies two logics – *dia-logos* – that work together on consensual understanding. Pedagogical dialogue appears as intersubjective happening which offers the learner an educator's pre-formed approach to the content. We want to reserve the term dialogue for this kind of interaction wherein *two subjects* come together and negotiate consensus.

As we noted above it is this kind of *self-other-world-relation* which the individual experiences and which is internalized; it is not the mere content it is this very triadic

structure which learners internally store. And as we consider (emancipative) transformation arising out of the contact of self and world which had to undergo approximation before we now can see that pedagogical dialogue has to provide companionship on this process of approximation. In other words: Pedagogical interaction leaves triadic sediments of self-other-world-relation in the learning individuals. The category of emancipation then appears in a different light. Emancipation in service of approximation of self and world which has been internalized as self-other-world-relation indicates disappearance of the third – the other. Only when the dependence on the educator's approach to the content is abandoned and the self dares to establish direct contact – genuine acquisition – the two categories of self and world can intermingle and transformatively negotiate their (self-world-)relation from then on.

Although the term dialogue connotes presence of two individuals we want to lay stress on its triadic structure. Dialogue implies two individuals and a content their interaction is about. The way how the learning individual experiences the other and respectively itself within this pedagogical dialogue is at the same time the particular way learner's approach to the world is memorized. The vagueness of the concrete realization of pedagogical dialogue is one particular aspect which makes pedagogy kind of precarious. Its effectiveness and efficiency cannot be scheduled in detail. This is what makes *pedagogical dialogue* interesting for us. Our present research interest is about the question of how transformation can be facilitated. As we carved out so far, (genuine) approximation of self and world serves as precondition for transformation. Pedagogically induced transformation – in contrast to accidental transformation through critical life events – has to aim in *enabling contact of learner's self and world*. Pedagogically induced transformation furthermore implies a triadic structure of learner, educator and content. This very triadic structure – which is internalized through pedagogical dialogue – has to be focused when studying *accompanied transformation*. Our question which we want to address in our empirical study reads as follows:

How does the third instance, namely the other or the educator or the pedagogical professional, manifest itself in individuals' (learners') approach to a particular content (world)?

Study

The present study was conceptualized as intervention study. As we tried to find out about certain figurations or sediments of the other through pedagogical efforts we implemented our study in a university class wherein a certain concept had to be learnt. This concept then offered the chance for us to ask about it both before and after the class. Our intention was to find out about appearances of a third instance within representations of a specific content. We explicitly decided not to ask about how students experience pedagogical professionals, we much more assumed that this pedagogical professional would appear in their representation of the learnt content.

Students had to write an essay on the question "Tell us your understanding of the topic 'Bild-ung?'" first before the class started (t1). The same question then was asked four weeks after the class (t2). We decided to let the students write two essays so we could reconstruct changes in their understanding of the concept which has been asked for. As we referred to our first study where we carved out three types of changes (addition, substitution/highlighting, transformation) we presumed that third instances in representations of a concept would play a role in these changes.

15 the students only wrote the first essay. These we did not take into consideration in our analyses. All in all we analyzed six cases, each with two essays (before and after the class).

Method

Analysis of our data was carried out with 'documentary method' (Bohnsack, Nentwig-Gesemann & Nohl, 2001). Analyzing essays in the direction of our question set the task

to carve out latent structures of referring to others when talking about a specific content. Documentary method claims to make latent structures visible by methodically controlled interpretation of written documents. Besides the focus on *what* has been said *documentary method* highlights the specific way *how* an individual has generated its (written) document. We re-mained with the concrete case before cross-case comparison took place. As individuals' es-says differed not only in their content but also in their latent structure of producing these con-tents we had to work on each single case individually. Intra-case comparison (from t1 to t2) allowed us, firstly, to classify types of changes (addition, substitution/highlighting, transfor-mation) and, secondly, to make visible changes in manifestations of a third instance in conse-quence of a pedagogical intervention. We paraphrased the specific relations of self and other within students' writings on a specific subject. Cross-case comparison then allowed us to generate heuristic common structures in students referring to others / third instances. All in all we differentiated between relations with dyadic references of self and world – individual and the specific subject – on the one hand and triadic references of self, other and world – individuals referring to others in describing a specific subject. Within these triadic relations we found different ways of reference which we want to address now.

Results

Students displayed different forms of referring to a third instance. In addition there could be found cases wherein students did not refer to such an instance – they exhibited dyadic rela-tions, in contrast to those cases in which triadic relations could be carved out. It became clear to us that students with triadic relations featured different ways of referring to the other when describing the content (essays question). All in all they differed in what we grasped as initial position of activity. This means that individuals displayed movements of action which either happened out of themselves (1. identification, 2. Generating distance) or occurred to them in the sense of external activity which addressed them (3. Being influenced):

- Dyadic reference
- Triadic reference - 1. Identification (a) dependence (b) subsumtion), 2. Generating distance

3. Being influenced

We correlated these forms of reference to our types of change and came to the results that the additional type came along with dyadic as well as triadic relations. Transformation (type of change 3) featured a triadic relation with an emancipative reference to the other:

- three times *type I addition* which had a dyadic as well as triadic reference
- two times *type II substitution* in a mixture of dyadic and triadic reference in one essay T1 and T2.
- One time *type III transformation* as we can describe as an emancipation process from a triadic reference.

Against the background of our initial intention of finding pedagogical sediments in form of the other we could not trace back explicitly pedagogical figuration in terms of pedagogical professionals which were responsible for the class.

The overview below **Type of Change** **Dyadic-Relation** **Triadic-Relation** lists our results ordered by type of change and the distinction of dyadic and triadic relation to which the cases were assigned: **Analyze Code**

Cases

survey date

C1	I addition
T1	Descriptive-theoretically
T2	Descriptive-theoretical reference
C2	I addition-highlighting
T1	Self-reference
T2	appropriation of theoretical terms, de-alienation
C3	II substitution
T1	Mixture of dyadic and triadic (repulsiv) Own decision, against the “third/other”
T2	Not similar to T1, less self- more world, stepping back, passive
C4	I addition
T1	passive-sustainable
T2	active critical for the “third/Other” to delimit someone
C5	III transformation
T1	Change of perspective, pas-sive-sustainable-> active- create
T2	Crises, emancipation, think-ing of “we”, alienation of “we”, force the “I”
C6	II substitution
T1	subsumtion appropriation,
T2	

survey date T1: beginning of semester

survey date T2: end of semester

Tab. 1: Overview study results

Discussion

The assumption of our study was that a dialogue can be seen as an interaction between two subjects about a content. We assumed that of a *pedagogical other* could play a vital role in supporting transformation. So that aspects of facilitation, companionship and connection between content and lecturer can be seen as one opportunity for transformation. We tried to carve out figurations of ‘the other’ in written documents in order to get a picture of different manifestations of self-other-world-relation.

The results of our study can be summarized in three different kinds of reference: 1. identifica-tion (a) dependance (b) subsumtion), 2. generating distance and 3. Being influenced.

We found cases in which transformation occurred through generating distance to the third. In other cases dyadic relation was maintained. The two points in time differed in their theorizing distance compared with t2, i.e. students were affectively captured by the topic they discussed in the first essay while in the second one they built up distance to the content. This we de-nominated *disengagement* in order to capture change in *dyadically* referring to the same con-tent in t1 and t2. In this very case transformation occurred; at least a direction to transfor-mation was possible to find. Another interesting aspect we realized was that a process of change was initiated by irritation (crises) and not – as expected before – by companionship and support of *pedagogical other* (lecture of the class).

Pedagogical others could not be found in essays. An explanation for this observation which we initially assumed could be because of the specific role the lecturers played in the class. The didactical structure of the class can be described as an ‘open discussion class’ with less monologue/speech of lecturers and more parts of discussion within the study group. So con-tents had to be acquired actively by the students and lecturers stepped back into a back-ground. Against this background transformation occurred in triadic and dyadic relation. Transformation might have to be differentiated / divided into two forms: emancipative trans-formation and assimilative transformation. The first could be connected with triadic relation while the latter might occur in dyadic ones.

Emancipation must be grasped as building dis-tance to a third and establishing contact between self and world autonomously without de-pendence on representations of the content on the third. Within a dyadic relation individuals per se are in contact with the world and have to get along with whatever they are confronted with. Assimilation (not in its pejorative reading) could then be the method of choice.

It might be possible that crises are necessary condition for transformation not only in dyadic relation but also in triadic ones. This contradicts an assumption which we made before when we stated that learning companionship might serve as substitute for mere occurrence of crises in transformative learning. Pedagogical professionals of course function as companions but crises still occur regardless of the pedagogical effort that was applied before. Future research might also explore transformation on a base of dyadic and triadic relation. This kind of view could help to explain transformation more detailed. One of our most signif-icant findings is that the nature of pedagogical dialogue lies in *enabling individuals to gener-ate distance to a third* in order to facilitate transformation. Pedagogical dialogue does not have to look like a lecture where students listen and have to reproduce the contents/subjects. There are different ways how a ‘self’ refers to a ‘pedagogical other’. Emancipation can be understood as generating distance to a third when the self approaches the world. Initial de-pendence on representation of the world through a third has to be abandoned by the self in the sense of independently building contact to the world.

References

- Ainsworth, M. D. & Bell, S. M. (1970), Attachment, exploration, and separation: Illustrated by the behavior of one-year-olds in a strange situation. In: *Child Development*, 41: 49-67.
- Baumrind, D. (1967). Child care practices anteceding three patterns of preschool behavior. In: *Genetic Psychology Monographs*, 75(1): 43-88.
- Bohnsack, R. & Nentwig-Gesemann, I. & Nohl, A.-M. (Eds.) (2001). *Die dokumentarische Methode und ihre Forschungspraxis. Grundlagen qualitativer Forschung*. Opladen.
- Bourdieu, P. (1984) *Distinction: a social critique of the judgement of taste*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press.
- Bourdieu, P. (2014[1980]) *Sozialer Sinn – Kritik der theoretischen Vernunft*. Frankfurt a. M.: Suhrkamp.
- Bowlby, J. (1983) *Attachment: Attachment and loss*. Basic books classics.
- Cranton, P. & Wright, B (2008) The Transformative Educator as Learning Companion. In: *Journal of Transformative Education*, 6 (1): 33-47.
- Erikson, E. H. (1950). *Childhood and society*. New York: Norton.
- Fonagy, P. & Gergely, G. & Target, M. & Jurist, E.L. (2002) *Affect regulation mentalization, and the development of the self*. New York: Other Press.
- Habermas, J. (1981) *Theory of communicative action*. Boston: Beacon Press.
- Illeris, K. (2002). *The Three Dimensions of Learning: Contemporary Learning – Theory in the Tension Field Between the Cognitive, the Emotional and the Social*. Leicester: NI-ACE.
- Kansanen, P. (2003) Studying – the realistic bridge between instruction and learning. An attempt to a conceptual whole of the teaching-studying-learning process. In: *Educational Studies*, 29: 221-232.
- Kegan, P. (2008) What "form" transforms? : A constructive-developmental approach to transformative learning. In: Illeris, K. (ed.) *Contemporary Theories of Learning: Learning Theorists -- In Their Own Words*. Routledge.
- Klafki, W. (1991) *Neue Studien zur Bildungstheorie und Didaktik - zeitgemäße Allgemeinbildung und kritisch-konstruktive Didaktik*. Weinheim: Beltz
- Koffka, K. (1935) *Principles of Gestalt Psychology*. London: Lund Humphries.
- Koller, H.-C. (2012). *Bildung anders denken - Einführung in die Theorie transformatorischer Bildungsprozesse*. Stuttgart: Kohlhammer.
- Lysaker, J. T. & Furuness, S. (2013) Space for Transformation: Relational, Dialogic Pedagogy. In: *Journal of Transformative Education* 9(3) 183-197
- Merleau-Ponty, M. (1966 [1945]) *Phänomenologie der Wahrnehmung*. Berlin: De Gruyter.
- Merleau-Ponty, M. (1986) *The visible and the invisible*. Evanston: Northwestern University Press.
- Mezirow, J. (1991). *Transformative dimensions of adult learning*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.
- Neubauer, T. & Lehmann, A. (in press): Bildung as Transformation of Self-/World-Relations, In: Laros, A./Fuhr, T./Taylor, E. (Eds.): *Transformative Learning meets "Bildung"*. Sense Publishers B.V.
- Prange, K. (1983) *Bauformen des Unterrichts – eine Didaktik für Lehrer*. Bad Heilbrunn: Klinkhardt.
- Prange, K. (2012) Machtverhältnisse in pädagogischen Inszenierungen. In: ders. *Erziehung als Handwerk – Studien zur Zeigestructur der Erziehung*. Paderborn: Schöningh. S.77-92.
- Schore, A. (1994) *Affect regulation and the origin of the self*. Lawrence Erlbaum Associates

- Tomasello, M. (1999) *The cultural origins of human cognition*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press
- Waldenfels, B. (2002) *Bruchlinien der Erfahrung – Phänomenologie, Psychoanalyse, Phäno-menotechnik*. Frankfurt a. M.: Suhrkamp

Dancing with pain: overcoming the damaging effects of corporal punishment through DIFFERING

Khum Raj Pathak

Canterbury Christ Church University

Abstract:

This paper examines strategies of resistance and renewal used by three Nepalese survivors of corporal punishment in both their early and adult lives. Through their narratives, the concept of ‘dialogues with oneself’ is extended beyond words, using the metaphor of dance. It explores how the damage of corporal punishment and the punitive vocabularies of performativity ideologies could be overcome by movements resistant to identification, yet demanding recognition by the self and others.

Dance me through the panic till I'm gathered safely in /

*Lift me like an olive branch; Be my homeward dove /
Dance me to the end of love.*

Leonard Cohen

This study begins with the phenomenon of the body and its movements, honouring bodies as both sites of resistance and potentially “disruptive of power” (Pillow, 2003). It discusses the long-term effects of corporal punishment in childhood, especially what I describe as *embedded* and *embodied* psychological pain. This is damage which exists at a deep enough level to affect the individual as a whole, both consciously and unconsciously, and manifests itself in physical symptoms, movements and actions. For Alice Miller, every experience leaves an imprint: “the body never lies” (Miller, 2006, p1, p207).

This is not, however, simply a description of victimhood, which can create a false impression of inertia and reification, representing a victory for abusers. Instead, I want to focus upon survivors’ strategies of resistance, which I define as a mixture of both survival, protest and attempts at revival. These resistances trace paths and patterns which I liken to a dance, on account of their shapes, repetitions and harmonies which show recurrence yet endlessly new combinations. I refer, in particular, to the stories from three people – Krishna, Mukunda and Preeti - who have participated in my research into the effects of corporal punishment in Nepalese schools.

The first participant I will describe is Krishna, a 23 year old farmer from the Magar community, who claims to be “just doing nothing”, despite his hard work. Krishna experienced severe punishments at school, initially because he “didn’t understand the Nepali language”, only Magar. By the age of 6, he was being beaten every day, with nettles and with the long, bamboo stick commonly used in Nepali schools.

They used to thrash us, hang us upside down.....we had to walk through the playground on our knees; there would be blood while doing that.

Krishna’s initial strategy, like most children’s, was to please his tutors but his language disadvantage, plus farm-work and manual chores at home, made it impossible for him to catch up. His ‘dance’ involved a logical reason for not doing his homework:

The Role, Nature and Difficulties of Dialogue in TL – Athens 2016 – Proceedings

I never knew the answers to all the questions. So, if I had done the homework and made a mistake I would be beaten and if I had not done homework I would be beaten anyway. So I opted for the second option and did not do homework at all.

Eventually, a similar logic prompted him to miss school every other day, so that he would have 50% less homework set and 50% less beatings. Krishna's parents felt that obliged to beat him also, sometimes tying him up in the rice-hut. At the age of 16, Krishna's parents reported his evening outings to his teacher:

..the next day this teacher dragged me onto the stage in front of 800 students. Loudly he asked me 'Where do you go at nights? Which girl are you spending nights with?' Then he beat me in front of everybody.

From this point, Krishna claims, he was too "embarrassed" to go to school. He used to spend "all day in the field" and when confronted by his father, ended up physically fighting and punching him. He fled to India, then Qatar, but described being abused and exploited abroad, initially earning only £10 a month. He describes his reaction to this using both past and present tenses, suggesting a continuation:

If someone says something against me or tries to boss me about over something I get very angry and wanted to fight with them. It became my habit.

During the civil war Krishna tried to enlist in both the Maoist army and the Royal Nepal army, admitting "I wanted to behave like an enemy to my teachers". Finally, poverty forced him to come back to the family farm, where his resistance has taken a new shape:

Sometimes I...get beaten and other times I beat others....I think a lot about my past and get frustrated and angry. So to forget my past I drink a lot....When I remember my past then I want to argue and then fight with others.

Krishna's 'dance' has involved physical resistance and the use of alcohol, in an effort to transcend his memories. Although officially reconciled with his family who, he says, "love me in some ways", he does not disguise that he feels stronger and freer as his family grow weaker:

My parents say 'stop fighting', but what has happened, happened (laughs), what can I do now? They need me in their old age, 'sons are the crutches of the elderly'...My parents can't scold me much as I am grown up now.

This dialogue with himself even caused him to laugh: an existentialist moment of ironic pleasure. The development of his physical force has transformed Krishna from the frightened child tied up in the rice-hut to somebody who is feared by both his parents and the other villagers, who spoke warily of Krishna's violent tendencies. His educational experiences, however, seem to have left him with few alternatives – he describes how his lack of education will not even allow him to get a tractor licence and says "I cannot do anything, sir". Krishna's dance has involved a flight from humiliation, followed by a humiliating return home, yet somehow he has made the best of what he has got. He also speaks of his marriage as one of the greatest boosts to his self-esteem. He dances within the confines of his family responsibilities, the disapproval of the villagers and insurmountable poverty, yet maintains a resistant attitude.

In contrast, my second participant, Mukunda, a 34 year old teacher, has mostly performed a 'dance' of compliance. His first descriptions of the corporal punishment that he received at school are burdened with excuses for his teachers. He says

I could understand because he punished us for playing marbles [at home] which was my mistake. He punished us to encourage us to study.

Mukunda seemed to have a need to imagine a dialogue with his teacher in which his teacher was not an abuser, but one who is ‘cruel to be kind’. Another teacher beat Mukunda harshly for wobbling whilst in the humiliating ‘chicken’ position, a common punishment in Nepalese schools. Mukunda explains that the teacher was mentally ill at the time and describes himself as ‘upset’ rather than ‘angry’. He describes himself as always obedient to his parents and feared them “without any reason” other than their hard work and poverty. At school, he was equally compliant:

I never tried to do any bad things at school because of fear. That was one positive aspect of punishment. During that period, I used to think, I must not do anything wrong, I must not be undisciplined, I must complete my education at any cost.

Initially Mukunda came across as successful. He was the first person in his village to complete a Master’s degree, he was married with two children and had been teaching for over ten years. He did, however, find it difficult to express his real feelings for fear of repercussions/ punishment – and had, whilst a teacher, resorted to shouting and swearing at a stream:

In the rainy season, standing in the middle of the *Chhipchhipe Khola* [a brook], my friend and I used to shout rude words in a loud voice...cursing the stream itself...our Principal, his wife or a member of the School Management Committee...We felt very relieved...free.

This dialogue with himself could only take place where no humans representing danger, were present, other than his trusted accomplice. The only other place in which he allowed himself to express anger was in politics. Half-way through our interview he embarked on a furious defence of Hindu nationalism. Coming from a politically active family, he had been taught that political debate is one area where people are ‘allowed’ to express strong emotions. The Frankfurt School in particular, have linked political intensity to suppressed childhood rage (Adorno et al, 1950).

Mukunda’s experience of corporal punishment may have contributed to his indecisiveness and fear of risk-taking. He described many of his plans at various times: to open a boarding school, start a computing institute” and generally “do something for society”. In every case, however, he seemed to encounter obstacles. Repeatedly he said that he ‘did not have time’. He viewed sites for the school but said that he “did not have the courage to follow it through”, even though the land was very cheap. He did not run any organisation as he was worried about ‘standards’:

I worried I might not be able to fulfil people’s expectations. I feel that if I fail to fulfil my promises to the people, they will have negative feelings towards me. I am always afraid of that. Up till now society thinks I’m a good person but if I ever become a leader their opinion of me might change if I become unsuccessful.... I cannot risk my reputation.

Mukunda’s teaching salary was very low, with only part-time hours and conditions, yet he was afraid of change:

when you leave the job you are doing and start a new job or start a new business or in any sector, one thing you will definitely lose is the old job which you cannot get back....you might not be successful. I feel it is quite a risky game.

Was this insecurity due to his parent’s poverty in early life or was it connected to his fear of punishment - as if fate would somehow wreak terrible consequences upon him if he dared to try and improve his lot? The economic challenges of Nepal provided some justification for his extraordinary caution: jobs are few and far between, even for somebody with a Master’s degree. But our second interview, Mukunda said that some of the “sadness” in his life was “due to being beaten.

He did not explain why, but a clue lay in his description of lessons:

On the one hand we studied out of the fear of punishment, but on the other hand all the while the teacher was using punishment in the classroom, we didn't try anything new. In fact, I never thought about new ideas. I just studied what the teacher told us to and how could any new ideas come from there? I did not have any new ideas at all.

In some ways, Mukunda was in a more precarious position than Krishna. Having suffered comparatively less punishment, Mukunda was always afraid of the *possibility* of violence, which in his imagination might have been even worse than the reality. Krishna however, having received and somehow survived what he described as the greatest violence and humiliation possible, had been forced to face his fears and therefore allowed himself to be angry and violent, since he had 'nothing to lose'.

By the second interview, Mukunda had arrived at the conclusion that beating children was "totally wrong" but still he felt unable to bring about any transformation in either his own life or the lives of others. He still had his dreams however, dreams which also represented a form of resistance. When the last interview was over, he said

You know, maybe you and me, we could open a school, a school which never used corporal punishment. That would be something wouldn't it. But I couldn't do it without your support.

Mukunda's imagination, at least, was dancing with a vision of transformation, however far it was from his reality. The interview with me had provided a safe place for him to hold this dialogue with himself – yet without an 'other' advocate, he felt unable to explore or pursue his ideal.

My third interview was with Preeti, a married lady of 26. She had experienced corporal punishment continually in her school life. Preeti began her school-life by being both obedient and conformist but was frequently punished for finding her work difficult to understand and for failing to memorise answers. She described canings and being "struck with a branch with little thorns" by her English teacher and says that, if she dared to ask her friends for advice in PE, "the teachers would bang our heads together".

At the time, it affected her profoundly:

Sometimes the beatings would be quite a lot and my body couldn't bear it. I used to have a fever and would be shivering then unbearably hot. I didn't want to eat any food at that day. Some days, I couldn't do my homework because of the pain on my hand. I couldn't tell my parents...I used to dream about the teacher beating me for not memorizing the text and other very frightening dreams. I used to have some nightmares in the night....I used to wake up suddenly, shouting.

The long-term effects, however, are perhaps obscured by the quiet and submissive role that Preeti, a Brahmin, is expected to play in traditional Nepalese culture. After the interview, when Preeti brought tea to myself and two of her male relatives and I noticed how she observed the custom of bending down to ensure that her head was lower than ours.

Having failed her exams several times, Preeti lacked the confidence to develop her

career and settled for work in the small, 'fancy store' owned by her in-laws. She is not paid but her father-in-law occasionally gives her money if she needs it, for example, for her son's clothes. She describes her feelings of powerlessness:

I think I might get punished if I do something without asking my father-in-law and mother-in-law. I can't make my own decisions...I just follow instructions even though I don't agree with many things they say. I forget what I believe and think and just follow their instructions.

This experience is reminiscent of her schooldays, when she said she would “forget” answers she had memorised at the mere sight of her teacher who made her ‘shake with fear’. Asking questions, she said, was impossible. In particular, her experiences of being beaten taught her not to cry:

When our head-teacher shouted at me and slapped my face in front of the neighbours I wanted to cry but didn't, as I knew that would make it worse.

Preeti said: “I never cry...I hate people crying”, with a look of irritation that surprised me. Her ‘dance of resistance’ seemed to be more about keeping her emotions in check rather than letting them out. At school, Preeti would keep her head bowed over a book, praying that the teacher wouldn't ask her a question. She said “My main aim was just to survive the teacher's beatings”. Now in later life, her main goal is still survival.

Once I wake up at 5am, I am so worried about getting all my chores done in time. Every hours has its task or things go wrong...

She worries in particular about family members getting ‘upset’. I suspected that ‘upset’ was her euphemism for angry. This was confirmed when she used the word to describe how she deals with feelings of frustration, for example over “issues like money”:

If I am upset it tends to affect my appetite. I can't eat anything, however much people try to persuade me. I also don't feel much like talking.

These apparently minor acts of resistance were deeply significant. Prevented by her culture and upbringing from being critical, loud or assertive, Preeti resorts to threats of emotional withdrawal, expressed by periods of silence, and self-starvation. Given the physical workload expected of her tiny body, this could be interpreted as a threat of self-harm, if not suicide. Preeti's dance of resistance involved using a vital resource, her body, to draw attention to her needs. It also revealed how resistance can use absence and withdrawal as effectively as presence and action. At the same time, Preeti's strategy enabled her to maintain the mask of co-operation which she felt was necessary to maintain her current status.

Each of my participants revealed ways in which their ‘dance’ of survival involved voiceless communication, in a social and economic context in which their inner voices were suppressed. Defensive dialogues have therefore sometimes taken overdetermined, elongated, evasive and seemingly contradictory forms. How many more untold stories are there – of corporal punishment survivors enduring mental illness, addictions, immobility or social isolation: their histories known only to a psycho-analyst, friend or perhaps – nobody. How many have been driven to crime or political or religious ‘extremism’: transferring and projecting their anger onto new

‘enemies’, having been unable to confront their early abusers. My own research obstacles were also revealing. I met ‘other’ corporal punishment survivors, whose marginalisation and powerlessness was so great that our dialogue collapsed. I began with Ram Bote, from one of the poorest castes in Nepal. Initially Ram agreed to be interviewed by me, having described his schooldays as “hell”. But every time I came he was either busy harvesting his crops or away from home. When I finally caught up with him, he declared angrily that he could never trust a researcher after one caused his friend to be imprisoned for illegal rhino horn trading. Then there was Rita, a married woman of 19 who was a Christian. Rita had signed my paperwork but rang me, with her voice shaking, to cancel the interview the day before. She explained that her mother-in-law had said that her participation would be “inappropriate and unbecoming for a married lady whose husband is abroad”. Although I attributed these barriers to fears stemming back to corporal punishment, they did not necessarily indicate an absence of resistance. Indeed, Ram Bote’s dismissal of me was a healthy defence against the possibility of being hurt. Rita’s dance was also not necessarily one of defeat, but perhaps an essential survival strategy.

My research is continually haunted by the question – ‘Who am I to trace my participants’ problems back to childhood violence? However ‘participant-led’, my methodology still asserts causal connections, even if they are *a posteriori*. Is this not what Nietzsche calls “a capricious division and fragmentation” of “the flux of events”(1974, p112), which risks neglecting a story’s Whole (Holloway & Jefferson, 2000, p68-70). Why am I trying to harness this issue of corporal punishment and bring it under my conceptual control? Obviously, my story is also one of corporal punishment, with effects ranging from hyperactivity to inertia; from stubbornness to evasiveness and from extreme shyness to wild ambitions. The dance of academics is yet another form of resistance, with a desire to critique the given, rather than fall victim to it, or worse, to become it. bell hooks describes her belief that “theory could be a healing place” from her childhood whippings (hooks, 1994). But ‘theory’ has not always been so gentle. Enlightenment behaves like “a dictator” (Adorno, 1979 [1944], p9) where reason is not just self-defence but pre-emptive aggression, with conceptualisation used to sever, order, ‘master’ and ‘discipline’ phenomena.

We academics may enjoy the idea that we are no longer frightened children, forced to study but instead *gourmands* of learning, whose ‘will to power’ is concealed within the will to knowledge. Yet few of us are safe in an ivory tower. Vibrations of corporal punishment exist in the performativity cultures now pervading the global workplace. For Mukunda, this meant that he was scared to even attempt a business in which he might “fail” or produce ‘sub-standard’ results. In education, performativity demands give rise to “terror” (Ball, p216 [p3], 2003) due to the threat of punishment if ‘standards’ – usually defined by politicians rather than educators – are not met. For corporal punishment survivors, the language accompanying these authoritarian policies stokes memories of violence, with the calculated normalisation of such words as ‘dead’-lines, ‘targets’, ‘cutbacks’, ‘crackdowns’, ‘carving up’, ‘fitting in’ and ‘summing up’. These emphasise brevity, austerity, impatience and an intolerance of difference and dissent. This forced homogeneity or ‘levelling off’ is, for Adorno, a path to genocide (Adorno, 1973, p362): the ultimate corporal punishment. Just like Preeti and Mukunda, the teachers quoted by Ball regret the ‘killing off’ of their own ideas and creativity (Ball, p222 [p9], 2003).

Oppressive policy interventions have kindled new solidarities amongst educators: dances of resistance bolstered by numbers and strengthened by diversity. In Nepal, Mukunda and his friend railed against the school management in a noisy brook. For teachers across the globe, a safe space in which to talk freely (without fear of surveillance and punishment) must be fought for, whether it is a union meeting, the staff room or the local pub. In solidarity, educators might challenge performativity with concepts of generosity, abundance, excess and Nietzschean ‘yea-saying’, perhaps saying ‘yes’ to more time chatting with students, ‘yes’ to mistakes, ‘yes’ to extra chances, ‘yes’ to rewards beyond results. This openness to desire, condemned as permissiveness by the political Right, could facilitate the transcendence of the fears and neuroses induced by corporal punishment. Social transformation itself is at stake: neuroses are described by Adorno as “pillars of society” which “thwart the better potential of men, and thus the objectively better condition which men might bring about” (Adorno, 1973, p298).

Recovering from corporal punishment entails a dialogue with oneself that goes beyond oneself: the wordless dialogue of dance. Each of my participants sought the safety of a human, spiritual or symbolic ‘other’. This might be the security of repetition and mimicry; the comfort of the *mandala* circle doodled by Preeti; energy taken from the fresh air outside the school building or in Ram’s case, harvesting rice. Sometimes dialogue with a partner produced a dialectical healing: a dance in which aspects of each Other were ‘scooped up’ and synthesised into a new, empowered selfhood. Resistance gained a foothold with every movement that was not flinching but stretching, traversing, expanding. The participants who withdrew from my research at least went away with the knowledge that punitive violence had been challenged. Risk-taking allowed the formation of new shapes of being, with memories of corporal punishment shed like old skins. Reid and West observe how “human flourishing” requires “self-recognition: in intimate lives, in groups and in wider communities”. As we move to reject the stifling labels from our punishers, our becoming; our ‘flourishing’ impacts upon the world. The persecuted dancer, dancing off a cliff, determines her own fate. The rebel dancer, Zorba, who fought and lost against corporal punishment, laughs at the absurd, echoing Nietzsche:

Lift up your hearts...lift up your legs...dance beyond yourselves! What does it matter that you are failures! How much is still possible! So *learn* to laugh beyond yourselves. (1961, p19-20)

Dances of resistance recognise a fluid subjectivity and humanity: a recognition that is absent during corporal punishment - in which dialogue is dead.

Bibliography

Adorno, TW.(1973). *Negative Dialectics*, Routledge: London

Adorno, T. W., Frenkel-Brunswik, E., Levinson, D.J., Sanford, R. N. (1950). *The Authoritarian Personality*. Norton: NY.

Adorno, T & Horkheimer, M (1979 [1944]), *Dialectic of Enlightenment*, Verso: London.

Ball, SJ (2003). The Teacher's Soul and the Terrors of Performativity, *Journal of Education Policy*, 18:2, 215-228, DOI: 10.1080/0268093022000043065

bell hooks (1994) *Teaching to Transgress*, Routledge: New York.

Holloway W & Jefferson, T (2000), *Doing Qualitative Research Differently*, Sage: London.

Miller, A (2006) *The Body Never Lies*, Norton: New York.

Nietzsche, F. (1974 [1882]) *The Gay Science*, Random House: New York.

Nietzsche, F (1961[1883-1885]), *Thus Spake Zarathustra*, Penguin: Harmondsworth.

Pillow, W (2003) 'Bodies Are Dangerous', *Journal of Education Policy*, 18(2):p145-59 in Ball, SJ et al. (eds), *Education, Globalisation and New Times (2007)*, Routledge: Abingdon, Oxon.

Reid H & West, L (2016). Negotiating professional and personal biographies in a liquid world: creating space for reflexive innovation in career counselling, *British Journal of Guidance & Counselling*, DOI: 10.1080/03069885.2016.1145014

Zorba the Greek (film) 1961, directed by Michael Cacoyannis (developed from the novel by Nikos Kazantzakis, (1946), *The Life and Times of Alexis Zorbas*), produced by Twentieth Century Fox.

‘Mind-to-mind meeting’: The potential of the online context as a space capable of fostering transformative learning

Alice J F Mongiello

The University of Highlands and Islands

This paper explores the potential of the online context as a space capable of fostering transformative learning. Attention is drawn to the relational, intersubjective nature of transformative learning and a suggestion that the online context may act to facilitate the development of reciprocal relations of recognition that meet the needs of non-traditional learners better.

Introduction: Framing the research

To know someone who thinks and feels with us, and who, though distant, is close to us in spirit, this makes the earth for us an inhabited garden (Johann Wolfgang von Goethe 1749 – 1832).

Due to widening participation and rising qualification requirements for employment, Scotland is witnessing a growing number of childhood practice professionals participating in Higher Education (HE). All those employed in this sector with management or leadership responsibilities are now legally required to be qualified to degree level. The Childhood Practice Degree (CPD) is the only degree that meets this requirement. A significant proportion of students undertaking a CPD can be defined as non-traditional learners and therefore represent the norm within this discipline. Non-traditional learners have often been out of formal education for several years and enter university study with alternative qualifications. For the purposes of this paper I have defined non-traditional learners as being over twenty-one with a vocational training and work experience background.

The University of Highlands and Islands (UHI) is described as a collegiate organisation because it is based on a partnership of thirteen Further Education FE colleges, research institutions and a network of more than seventy learning centres spread across Scotland. The CPD offered at UHI is delivered totally online utilising black board (BB) as the virtual learning environment (VLE). The online approach adopted is referred to as ‘supported online learning’ which is centred on a design of active and collaborative learning experiences. Online study addresses barriers to participation caused by geography or poor transport infrastructure and means learners can access accredited degree programmes from home, work or on the move. This approach appeals to non-traditional learners who already juggle multiple roles. The online context offers a sense of relative anonymity which they may also find appealing and may free them up to interact in ways they may have felt uncomfortable with in a face-to-face situation (Palloff & Pratt 2007). Junn (2007) notes that the two dimensional, linear asynchronous nature of online discussions offers a less chaotic context than a face-to-face classroom which may encourage non-traditional learners to more actively engage and therefore more easily establish their role in the institutional habitus of online education.

This paper offers an opportunity to share aspects of my doctoral research with a wider audience and contributes to the growing interest in the potential of the online context

as a space for collecting qualitative data as well a space capable of fostering transformative learning.

Transformative learning: Towards a unified perspective

Since it was first introduced to the field of adult education by Mezirow (1978) the concept of transformative learning (TL) has been an enduring topic of research and theory. As a theory it has been viewed as a complex idea that presents considerable practical and ethical challenges (Dirkx 1998). The popularity of TL has to some extent been its downfall. The overuse of the phrase transformation to refer to a myriad of learning experiences has led to what Illeris (2014, p.3) refers to as ‘conceptual uncertainty’. This is further supported by Hoggan (2014, p.9) who states that transformative learning theory ‘is suffering from evacuation’. Newman (2012, p.51) somewhat provocatively argued ‘that we strike TL from the educational lexicon altogether’. To ensure TL is not banished from the field of adult education, it is necessary to work towards clearly defining its distinct characteristics. There is a need to move beyond Mezirow’s original work and in doing so recognise that it is possible to draw on a number of perspectives which have emerged in response to the critiques of his work. These differing views can be brought together to form a more unified theory. A unified perspective recognises the broader landscape of TL, the significance of alternative ways of knowing and embraces the emotional and social dimensions.

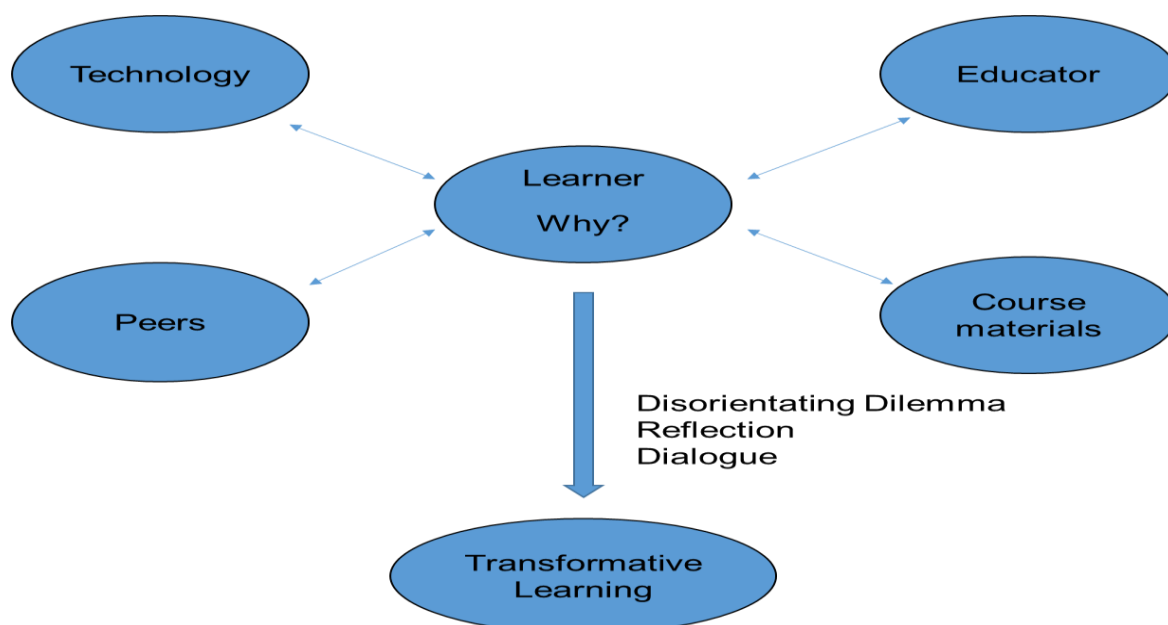
Although Mezirow (2006, p.134) acknowledged a more affective view of transformative learning proposed by Dirkx (2006), he remained committed to the view that TL is ‘a rational process involving critical reflection of epistemic assumptions as a basis for transforming a frame of reference’. Recently, Cranton and Taylor (2012) identified three theoretical dimensions of TL: cognitive or rational, beyond rational or extra-rational and emancipatory or social critique. While the process of TL may vary due to the circumstances, context and those involved, Cranton & Taylor (2012) claim that the outcome for all is similar: acting differently, having a deeper self-awareness, having more open perspectives, and experiencing a deep shift in worldview. Although Mezirow’s ten phases of TL suggests a linear path, Cranton (2002) proposes a spiral framework, one in which learners may repeatedly encounter the same phase as they progress up the transformative spiral. Based on the work of Glisczinski (2007) and Brock (2010) I propose that the significant phases of this transformative spiral are disorientating dilemma, critical reflection and rational discourse. The extent to which reflection is critical and discourse is rational is debatable but further exploration sits out with the remit of this paper.

Online context: A space for fostering transformations

Online learning focuses our attention less on the physical and geographical distance between learners and educators but more on the potential interactions between learners and educators, between learners themselves and between learners and the online course content. Physical proximity therefore loses its significance; the central principles are to create an online context that is convenient, flexible and accessible anytime, anywhere. Lear *et al* (2010) found that interactivity was key to building an online learning community. These findings were replicated by Chu *et al* (2010), whose research found that interaction between learners was the most significant method for fostering TL. Figure 1 illustrates the process of interactivity within an online learning community. As learners interact with the course materials, their fellow peers, and the technology, they may find themselves considering alternative perspectives and begin to look at things in a different way. They may ask ‘Why?’: Why am I feeling this way? Why do I need to consider these alternative views? What

does this all mean for me and my learning? These questions are not restricted to the course materials but may relate to the inner world of learners; the broader landscape of TL (Dirkx 2014). As Dirkx (2001) suggests in pursuit of intellectual and cognitive growth learners may become more aware of their inner world, which has the potential to foster TL but often these transformations are incidental rather than the primary curricular aim. Taylor & Laros (2104, p.6) refer to these as ‘by-product’ transformations.

Figure 1: Online learning community: interactivity



As online adult educators we should remain mindful of learners’ biographies, their culture, their stories and ways in which these offer rich territory for incidental transformations. TL is not merely the process of meeting a course objective, achieving a certain grade or meeting the expectations of a board of examiners. While these are relevant the landscape of learning is made more vivid and alive as learners become more aware of, and work with, their inner world (Dirkx 2010). If, as Dirkx (2006, p. 128) suggests, we ‘restore the *soul*’ to the world of adult education incidental transformations would no longer be ‘by-products’ but would rather be viewed as part of the broader landscape of learning and as such would inform course learning objectives and curricular aims.

Immediacy behaviours are significant in the online context but there are challenges. Online educators can no longer ‘rely on sensory and expressive skills to establish and maintain relationships’ with their learners (Major 2010, p.184). This means their affective online persona has to ‘change in terms of non-verbal communication, intimacy, energy and humour’ (Coppola *et al* 2002, p.178). As an educational setting the online context has the potential and the tools capable of fostering TL. Although learning online naturally diminishes the significance of physical proximity, it focuses our attention on the development of an online learning community that moves beyond the simple transmission of information to deep learning that changes learners’ perspectives (Boyer *et al* 2006). While human interactions create the conditions capable of fostering TL online, technology is the enabler. Therefore the process of

interactivity and the technology are equally significant in creating the conditions capable of promoting a transformation.

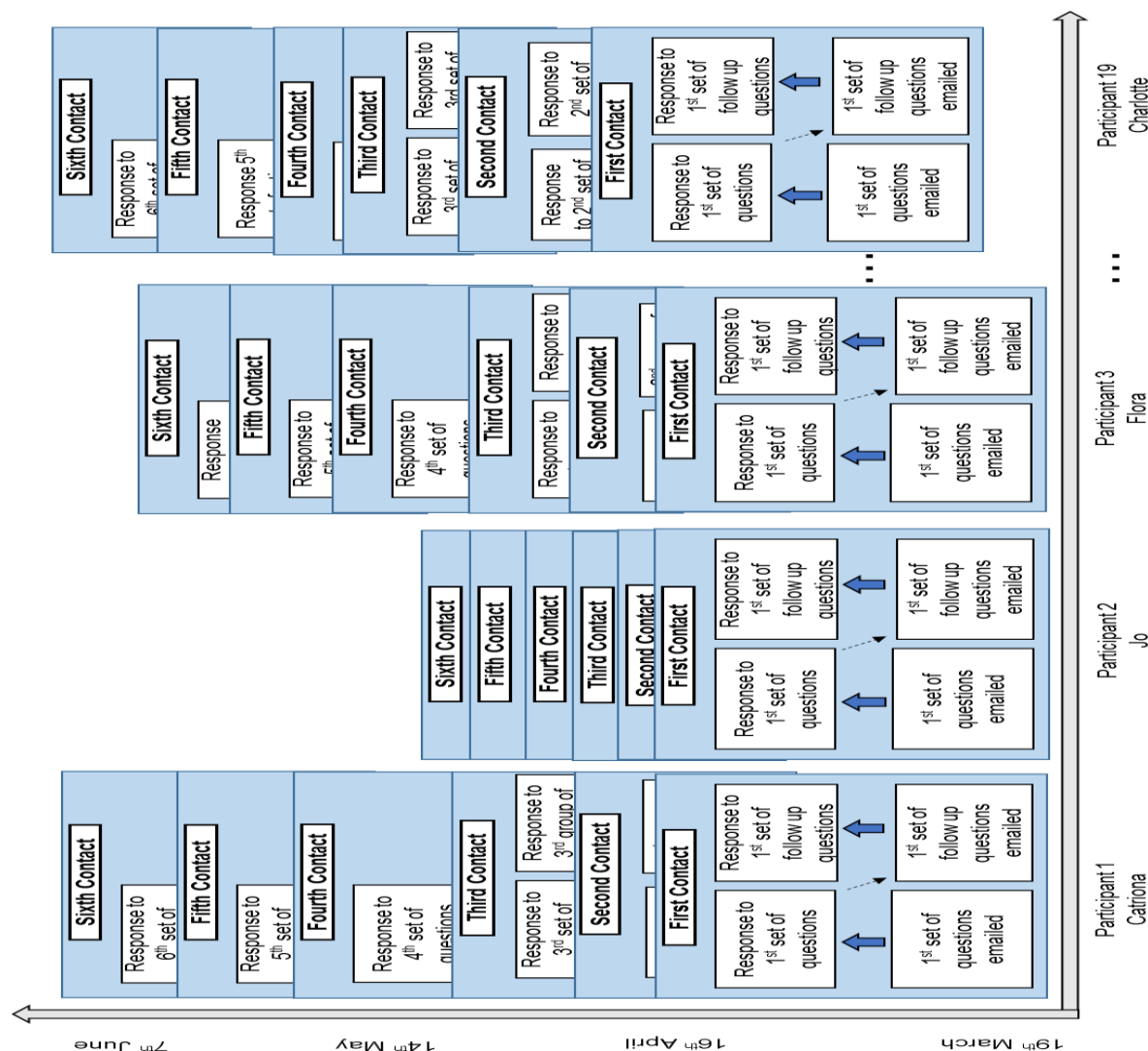
Methodology

...email appears to provide a context for the kind of non-coercive and anti-hierarchical dialogue that Habermas claimed constitutes an 'ideal speech situation', free of internal or external coercion, and characterised by equality of opportunity and reciprocity in roles assumed by participants (Boshier 1990, p.51).

Nineteen participants were purposely selected to take part in my doctoral research. All participants were defined as non-traditional learners, their average age was 46 and they had completed a CPD online at UHI one year prior to taking part in the research. Sixteen were the first members of their family to undertake HE study. The methodology was grounded in a qualitative approach based on a constructivist view of human knowledge. I openly acknowledged the potential for participant bias and subjectivity. While the collection of retrospective narratives has been criticised (Taylor 2007), I found the process enabled participants to revisit their experiences and, in doing so, allowed them to become more consciously aware and gain deeper insight into their lives.

Narratives were collected using semi-structured asynchronous email interviews. As a research method this involved multiple email exchanges over an extended period of time. A total of three hundred and ten email exchanges took place over a six month period. Figure 2 provides a visual overview of the time line and number of email exchanges for four participants.

Figure 2: Overview of email interview timeline



The email interview allowed participants to take more ownership of the discourse. The space and time afforded by the online context enabled them to return to their narratives, edit and amend and redefine the phenomenon. It also offered space to reflect and space to be silent. The construction of knowledge therefore remained open to constant negotiation and collaboration between participant and researcher. As seasoned email users the online context presented minimal communication barriers and having developed online relationships with the participants prior to the research also enabled me to make use of my social capital to access and engage with willing participants.

Figure 3 identifies the main stages of the data analysis process and the emerging themes. While the process remained transparent, the inter-rater reliability was less of a concern. In addressing what Chenail (2012, p.1) refers to as ‘analytic tension’, I had to find a balance between maintaining the participant’s narrative ownership and building more abstracted categories. I came to realise the inherent interplay between inductive and deductive thematic analysis and the significant role I had as the researcher responsible for guiding the process. This led me to adopt what Fereday & Muir-Cochrane (2006) refer to as a hybrid thematic approach. The following factors informed my hybrid approach: participants’ narratives, my reading of the literature, the research questions, my intellectual interests and my creativity. There was much

‘toing’ and ‘froing’ between these aspects throughout the process of data analysis until I reached a point of saturation.

Figure 3: Data analysis: the process

