

Reflections from Lesson Five

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Abstract

I reflect on the nature of transformation learning, design and delivery implications of my learning, my thoughts on critical, feminist, postmodern, embodied, spiritual, narrative and non-western ways of learning and debrief on my team experiences.

Personal transformative learning

I do not consider my learning experiences to have been transformational learning in and of themselves. I have transformed myself in career moves and certainly in personal matters over the years, but I am unable to identify any particular learning experiences at work in the creation of the change. My most recent transformation involved a career growth move where an opportunity presented itself to move from a pre-hospital emergency worker to an in-hospital educator, specifically involving advanced medical simulation. I had no experience in this arena, but saw the growth opportunity on a personal and professional level and choose to move ahead. Was this based on a transformational learning experience? Was there an experience at work freeing me to make such a dramatic career change? This move was the impetus of my choice to pursue additional education at Michigan State. I feel that I am in touch with my left and right brains, known to represent the conscious and unconscious, rational and creative. Perhaps my right brain has experienced the transformational experiences in a less obvious manner, where I am unable to identify them specifically. The more fluid and less defined nature of the right brain experience may be at play here.

I recently read "My Stroke if Insight" by Jill Bolte Taylor, Ph. D. about her transformational experience of living through a stroke as a Harvard neuroscientist specializing in the brain. Her experiences and recollections of suffering the stroke and being able to identify each segment of her brain as it became involved with its related neurologic failure was amazing. Her recovery and rehabilitation were even more

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riveting as she described her painstaking efforts to selectively reconnect her damaged left-brain to its “filing cabinets of knowledge and experiences”. The transformational development was her active choice to use the plasticity of her brain to choose not to connect to her pre-stroke negative attributes. This represents a truly transformational experience in my mind. Jung previously coined the left-brain as the sensing mind and the right brain as the perceiving mind. I tend to be rather left brained, organized and linear in thought and process. Yet, I am also quite perceptive. I will seek to gain more control of this relationship and perhaps transform.

Transformation in Vella

I feel that the stories in Vella demonstrate transformational learning in that they move the learners in meaningful, even revolutionary, ways. The learning has been transferred is being repeated and has significant and a lasting impact that is far reaching in Indonesia, “The tigers are loose in Java!” The more deep-seated problems in Tanzania demonstrated a limited immediate change, yet there was a transformation, months later the women called out, “We remember the kangas!” Change may be slower there, but it is change and it will continue.

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Design and delivery

I find myself aligning more strongly with personal transformation. While this is the most soulful or individual, I follow that cultural and social overtones must apply. I plan to extend my knowledge and experiences as I design and build in additional reflection opportunities attempting to explore the affective and expressive domains of individual learning. I will design with a holistic approach, in search of a totality exploring to the expressive right.

Reactions

My reactions to the theoretical understanding of critical, feminist, postmodern embodied spiritual narrative and non western ways of learning is one of an awakening, a realization that all is not as I know it. I find that it is a broadening of perspective for me. I tend to be bound by my normalcy, expecting that all is like I know. These perspectives allow me to see other views, lenses of others perspective, creating a realization that there are other views and other realities. I find that these experiences are helpful to me, helping me to allow for other views, perspectives and interpretations of the same material or presentation. It allows me to consider a broader diversity, allowing for latitude, where previously I was stiff.

I view Vella's stories as employing a post-modern perspective. I see them exploring and allowing for multiple perspectives and traditions, employing multicultural

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approaches to the simple to complex problems of learning. Language was a significant barrier in many of the stories, requiring a building of language and commonality. The truths or givens of each situation are specific to the sociocultural context in which they endure and generally, science, as we know it, is not the foundation for reality. Vella demonstrates the value of understanding human nature and its role in constructing knowledge.

My implications for these perspectives are a broadening of perspective, an acceptance of a diversity in perspective. I will accept that each of me learners may view with a different lens. As I design and deliver my programs, I will conduct a reflective appraisal of my expectations and outcomes, with the view of an enlightened educator.

Team Debriefing

This lesson took us back to largely individual work. There was very little communication other than revisiting the lesson four product. Our group has not communicated well during the entire class. We were unable to connect or agree on any meaningful communication medium, left to only send message through the message board. I felt that this was an extremely poor methodology, yielding limited benefit educationally. The options of online chat, skype, teleconferencing or even simply three-way calling were dismissed. I found this quite frustrating and began to disengage.

The team products were contributed in sections and reviewed by all, with modifications made by the close of the session. This last minute nature caused a flurry of activity in

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the end, but an acceptable final product. So, here I am working on my reflection paper on the final night, at the last minute. It seems pretty much the same from my perspective.

Since lesson one, there has been little if any change in our team dynamics. Cheryl and I did connect on live chat once during the quarter, and had an enjoyable “conversation.” Having never heard the voices of my group members leaves me disconnected. The power of voice, dialect, inflection and style are powerful for me. I found this class to be a great learning experience. I have lived the frustration of a challenging group environment, where a failure to connect severely disrupted the educational potential for me. I will be on the lookout for any similar group dynamics in my classroom, and I will intercede in an attempt to resolve the dissonance.

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References

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