

Creating a Space for Transformation
(Philosophy of Adult Leadership Education)

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Society is often driven by causes and passions where people are longing to see change in and through their lives. As a beacon of hope, education has continued to be a space where knowledge is cultivated for that change to take place. People are filled with passion and underneath all that passion is their foundation, which is ultimately influenced by their education. Martin Luther King Jr. declared, “Intelligence plus character that is the goal of true education” and student-centered education through rigorous curriculum, relevant academia, and relational pedagogy is one way that that goal is met (Isozaki, 2013). However, education is more than just a philosophy, but rather a lifestyle of creating a space for transformation where people’s minds can be renewed (Romans 12:2, New International Version). Education is made up of a dance between teaching and learning with educators and learners where there is exceptional presentation and design. Where my role as an educator is to create a space for transformation where motivation inspires learning that makes a difference and empowers people to step into their full potential.

The Purpose of Education for Transformation

Rather than teaching facts and building intellect, education is a community of people and ideas that celebrate personal responsiveness and accountability where character is developed through spiritual, holistic, and ethical learning. According to Thomas Merton, “the purpose of education is to show a person how to define himself authentically and spontaneously in relation to his world — not to impose a prefabricated definition of the world, still less an arbitrary definition of the individual himself” (as cited in Palmer, 1983, p. 12). Confidence is built through the spirituality of education in search for truth and truth’s search within each individual who is led into a new life guided by literature, practice, and a community of faith (Palmer, 1983).

Amidst a broken world and beneath the broken surface of a person's life is hidden wholeness that is recalled and interweaved back into a need of restoration. Ethical education creates the capacity for connectedness and development of critical thinking and tolerance of ambiguity, which are tools for disengagement in order to live productively and at peace in a complex world (Palmer, 1983). "Transformed by love, we do not arrogantly impose our powers on the world around us or allow the world to overcome us. Transformed by love we use our minds to recall and recreate the community in which we were created, to know the world in the same spirit in which we are known" (Palmer, 1983, p. 16). Education is where transformation take places in and through people spiritually, holistically, and ethically so that brokenness can be restored.

Knowledge Empowers Transformative Learning

Knowledge spurs on the curiosity and control that drives learning, which reunifies and reconstructs brokenness through neutrality, analysis, and structure to learn and live. "To learn is to face transformation. To learn the truth is to enter into relationships requiring us to respond as well as initiate, to give as well as take" (Palmer, 1983, p. 40). Knowledge is power and there are two primary sources of knowledge: curiosity (knowledge as an end in itself) and control (knowledge as a means to practical ends), which both drives learning and ownership (Palmer, 1983). Through "knowledge arising from love is the reunification and reconstruction of broken selves and worlds" and not by manipulation but reconciling the world as members of the community (Palmer, 1983, p. 8). Through the dialogue between Horton and Freire (1990), some members of the community choose neutrality, which is simply following the crowd, but when those members in the system are called to action they begin to analyze society and the structure of society is subject to change. To learn is to live and by receiving knowledge there is an opportunity to apply what has been learned, "it's impossible to understand teaching without

learning, and both without knowing” (Horton & Friere, 1990, p. 57). Knowledge empowers learning and welcomes transformation through the delivery of truth and teaching of an educator.

Transformative Teaching that Draws Out the Obedience to Truth

Delivering truth is the beginning of knowledge, which is derived from learning that truth through the enthusiastic relationships between the content, learner, and the teacher who empowers learners to practice obedience. In the book, *To Know as We Are Known*, Palmer (1983) states, “To teach is to create a space in which obedience to truth is practiced” (p. 88). Teaching is a form of educating and “the root meaning of ‘to educate’ is ‘to draw out’ and that the teacher’s task is not to fill the student with facts but to evoke the truth the student holds within (Palmer, 1983, p. 43). Content and truth can often be intimidating, but through the enthusiasm of the teacher, “the hospitality of a teacher who has a fruitful friendship with the subject and who wants students to benefit from that friendship” and practicing obedience to truth follows naturally in that living relationship (Palmer, 1983, p. 103). When educating, it is important “to get the knowledge about how the people know...Then secondly, we have to invent with the people the ways for them to go beyond their state of thinking” (Horton & Friere, 1990, p. 98). As a result, this starting point does not become a staying point as learners are understood and where theory becomes learned practice because “without practice there’s no knowledge” (Horton & Friere, 1990, p. 98). Knowing the learner provides an opportunity to discover how truth can become a living relationship that has the power to change society.

Motivating Adult Learners through Transformative Dialogue Education

By understanding the dynamics of a learning environment and motivations of adult learners, provides a context favorable for learning, which is “the human act of making meaning from experience, involving all learners requires us to be aware of how they make sense of their

world and how they interpret their learning environment” (as cited in Wlodkowski, 2008, p. 46). As a result, every instructional plan needs to be a motivational plan where motivation explains why people think and behave, determines energy and attention, and increases performance and outcomes (Wlodkowski, 2008, p. 2-5). Adults learners who are motivated perform because they believe it will help them, attend more carefully to instruction, rehearse material in order to retain information, and reflect on how well they understand the content. Ultimately, “when learners are motivated during the learning process, things go more smoothly, communication flows, anxiety decreases, and creativity and learning are more apparent” (Wlodkowski, 2008, p.6). Motivation spurs on adult learners to take greater ownership in the flow of their transformation where learning becomes a welcoming gift.

Adult learners are driven by motivation and are filled with various capacities for multiple, practical, and emotional intelligence. According to Howard Gardner, “people have the capacity for at least eight intelligences,” Gardner’s Multiple Intelligences: linguistic (sensitivity to the spoken language), logical-mathematical (discern logical and numerical patterns of inductive and deductive reasoning), musical (abilities to produce and appreciate musical expressiveness), spatial (perceive the visual-spatial world), bodily-kinesthetic (ability to know and control body movements), interpersonal (discern and respond to emotions), intrapersonal (access feelings and behaviors), and naturalist (recognize and classify nature) (as cited in Wlodkowski, 2008, pp. 38-39). In addition, practical intelligence, which Tennant and Pogson, suggests is the focus on practice rather than theory to apply direct usefulness with immediate and visible consequences opposed to intellectual curiosity (as cited in Wlodkowski, 2008, p. 40). Finally, emotional intelligence, which according to Daniel Goleman has five domains: “knowing one’s emotions, managing one’s emotions, motivating oneself, recognizing emotions in others, and handling

relationships” (Wlodkowski, 2008, p. 41). These three dynamics: multiple intelligence, practical intelligence, and emotional intelligence, empower adult learners whose shape of knowledge becomes the shape of living where “the relation of the knower to the known becomes the relation of the living self to the larger world” (Palmer, 1983, p. 21).

These adult learners learn best by enhancing their motivation through dialogue education, consensus, and reflecting in community. According to Vella (2008), in her book, *On Teaching and Learning*, dialogue education is defined as

a state of mind, moving us to listening, respecting, doubting, reflecting, designing, affirming, considering options, and celebrating opposites...dialogue education is a structured system that evokes spontaneous and creative responses to the open questions in a learning design (p. 11).

Through personal dialogue between the knower and known, a dialogue spurs on obedience that draws in consensus, which is a decision process that utilizes available resources to creatively resolve conflicts (Palmer, 1983). Palmer (1983), provides five guidelines for achieving consensus: 1) avoid arguing and present concepts logically while listening carefully, 2) search for the most acceptable alternatives for all parties and not a winner or loser, 3) be suspicious when there is agreement and explore reasons rather than simply avoiding conflict just to have harmony, 4) avoid conflict, and 5) expect differences in opinion and seek them out while involving everyone in the decision process for more adequate solutions (p. 95). Reflecting on prior knowledge connects and builds new knowledge or skills by connecting with the established networks (Wlodkowski, 2008). Through communal, cooperative, and consensual inquiry practicing obedience to truth becomes possible, but it faces four issues: “the nature of reality (ontology), how we know reality (epistemology), how we teach and learn (pedagogy), and how

education forms or deforms our lives in the world (ethics)” (Palmer, 1983, loc. 107). Through dialogue education and the knowledge of the diversity of adult learners, educators have the opportunity to motivate and empower learning in a creative space.

Educators are Facilitator of Transformational Learning Environments

Through the complexity of understanding adult learners, educators are entrusted with authority to facilitate respect and creating a learning space. Educators are carriers of knowledge, guides learners, actionable respondents, democratically relatable, and creates a space of authenticity (Horton & Freire, 1990) where “truthful knowing weds the knower” and “dialogue leads them to obedience” (Palmer, 1983, pp. 31, 64). They are respected and carry authority to teach, experience, and demonstrate, but are not authoritarian in order for students to be able to experience freedom in their development (Horton & Freire, 1990). Ultimately, educators have the responsibility to shine a light on a subject with ideas while not imposing them onto others by respecting the knowledge that people carry as their political choice and attitude (Horton & Freire, 1990). By defining and defending boundaries with care, open learning spaces are created where “the bonds of truth can be rewoven, in which we can seek truth and truth can seek us” (Palmer, 1983). These learning spaces consist of openness, boundaries, hospitality, dramatic space, speech, silence, and feelings. Creating an emotional space allows feelings to arise and for them to be dealt with, which unclutters learning spaces from obstacles and the fear of feelings. Considering the significance of motivation, it is essential for educators to carry Wlodkowski’s (2008) five pillars of a motivating instructor: expertise (the power of knowledge and preparation), empathy (the power of understanding and compassion), enthusiasm (the power of commitment and expressiveness), clarity (the power of organization and language), and cultural responsiveness (the power of organization and language) (Wlodkowski, 2008). As a motivating

educator, adult learners are empowered to facilitate a culture of transformation that is uplifted by a healthy learning space that is support by exceptional educational design.

Motivational Design that Empowers Transformation

Educators must be committed “to create an education that enlarges and amplifies the horizon of critical understanding of the people, to create an education devoted to freedom” (Horton & Friere, 1990, p. 219). When creating a space for transformation, these learning environments are against conventional education with the motivational framework of culturally responsive teaching through a process of organizing. According to Palmer (1983), conventional education is external rather than internal focusing on the classroom, teacher, and students who are full of vision as a part of nature and history. Also, conventional education neglects the inner reality of teachers and students factoring out those inner realities as a part of knowledge. In addition, conventional education often has to the tendency to isolate the knowing of self, which lacks community where a community of scholars build upon the findings of other individuals. Finally, in conventional education teachers and learners “become manipulators of each other and the world rather than mutually responsible participants and co-creators” (Palmer, 1983, p. 37). Conventional education educates detached spectator and through the Motivational Framework for Culturally Responsive Teaching educational design has the potential to become more empowering and unconventional.

The Motivational Framework for Culturally Responsive Teaching is “a systemic structure for applying motivational strategies and learning activities throughout a learning sequence” (Wlodkowski, 2008, p. 378) consisting of the four motivational conditions: establishing inclusion, developing attitude, enhancing meaning, and engendering competence, which will link to activities support by both purpose and strategies. According to Wlodkowski (2008), “when

designing the instructional plan, it is essential to clarify the learning objective, determine the amount of time available to help learners accomplish it, and analyze the inherent structure of the material, knowledge, or skill to be learned” (p. 386). As designing take place, educators and learners recognize that organizing educates as a timeless process filled with risk, confronting tensions, and surrounds human experience and curiosity (Horton & Friere, 1990). Horton and Friere (1990) states that,

organizing implies that there’s a specific, limited goal that needs to be achieved and the purpose is to achieve that goal...education is to be part of the process, then you may not actually get that problem solved, but you’ve educated a lot of people” (p. 119).

Through asking question ideas are developed through inquiry discovery, and collaboration in a learning environment not dependent upon the educator. These learners are encouraged to share their knowledge and conviction that is acted upon as to achieve a goal. Education changes when history rests in the hands of the learners who are motivate in an organized design to achieve transformation in an unconventional setting.

Transformative Presentation to Praxis

As a result of that transformative design, educators develop a presentation that provides a structure for organization as well as the formation of the participant learners. Dialogue education is implemented through structures that frame learning, focus dialogue, free learners from fear, form teams, frankly setting limits of time and energy, fuse all elements, functional for learning, and are frequently forgotten (Vella, 2008). Overall, the structure and presentation of exceptional teaching methodologies flow from Vella’s (2008) structure for dialogue education that is informed by the Learning Needs and Resources Assessment (LNRA), Seven Design Steps, and Achievement-Based Objectives (ABO).

Starting with the learning needs and resource assessment (LNRA), which is “pre-course response from learners about their experience with the content, is a structure that can be helpful in the design of an effective learning event” (Vella, 2008, p. 19). The LNRA is the state of mind and listening stance of a good educator: ask, study, and observe. Dialogue education begins with the educator “listening to learners, observing their context, and thereby designing teaching and learning that works for them as well as for the organization” (Vella, 2008, p. 24). With the quantitative and qualitative data gathered, clarity is provided to inform Vella’s (2008) seven design steps: who? (number of participants and leaders), why? (situation calling for the learning event), when? (the time frame), where? (the site), what? (the content), what for? (the achievement-based objectives), and how? (the learning tasks and materials) (Vella, 2008). After have a clear pathway for the presentation through the seven steps, learning tasks are developed and “designed to ensure that learners are subjects or decision makers in their own learning” (Vella, 2008, p. 53). Overall, the natural flow of a learning task consists of four named parts of a learning task- inductive work (anchoring), input (adding), implementation (applying), and integration (taking away) (Vella, 2008, p. 62-66). These four parts connect the learners’ new knowledge to previously learned content and activates principles into practice for their various spheres of influence.

According to Vella (2008), sound learning involves these twelve basic principles and practices: learning needs and resources assessment (ask, observe, and study), safety (learning styles and psychological types), sound relationships (respect, perspective, and empathy), sequence and reinforcement (small to large, simple to complex, and easy to difficult), praxis (action with reflection), respect (honest dialogue), ideas/feelings/actions (cognitive, affective, and psychomotor), immediacy (instant usefulness), clear roles (defined), teamwork (small

groups), engagement (physically, mentally, and emotionally engaged), and accountability (function and response). Through these applied principles throughout the learning tasks and embedded in seven steps achievement-based objectives (ABO) are achieved through three indicators: learning, transfer, and impact. When accomplishing achievement-based objectives, learning is the result of “what takes place in a session as a result of intentional teaching” as seven design steps provides the immediacy and praxis that manifest the learning that emerges through the various learning tasks (Vella, 2008, p. 130). While the transfer of learning is measured by behavior and its impact results in systematic change such as a new mindset, attitude, and renewed purpose. As learner engage with the presentation as well as their learning community, doors are open to new possibilities that educator have the opportunity to be a leading guide in their process of deeper understanding. Ultimately, educators have the opportunity to champion the learner on a journey of discovery through the presentation and transformation through praxis.

Every journey or story consists of the following structure: a character has a problem and meets a guide who give them advice, which either leads to a failure or in success (Miller, 2017). Adult learners face many throughout their lives and educators have the opportunity to be a guide on learners’ pursuit for transformation. “Education portrays the self as knower, the world as known, and mediates the relation of the two, giving the knowing self-supremacy over the known world” (Palmer, 1983, p. 22). With a student-centered approach to education through rigorous curriculum, relevant academia, and relational pedagogy student achievement is inspired (Isozaki, 2013). As a result, learners are transformed by love to recall and recreate the world around them. As educators make a difference in the lives of their students as they walk in obedience toward truth into their full potential where their learning environment becomes a launching pad for the rest of their lives.

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