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The Role of the Educator in Adult Education

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Abstract

The educator in adult education according to the theory of Andragogy, social change and transformative learning is to work towards achieving positive change by coordinating the learning procedure in a way that enables the learner to overcome certain false beliefs he has due to social conditioning, his working environment and the way in which he has learned. The goal of the educator is not only to transfer knowledge but also to urge the learner to search for knowledge himself. A further goal of the educator is to encourage the learner and facilitate the learning procedure. The educator's role is to guide, to encourage, to coordinate, to help in approaching the matters he suggest, he encourages the heuristic course to knowledge, he is constantly interacting with the trainees, he offers them stimulus, he creatively cooperates with the. Also, he gives the ability of free participation in solving matters by giving time, sometimes limited, for discussion, questions and doubting a response.

Keywords: *Educator, adult education, Andragogy, social change, transformative learning*

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Introduction

It is an acceptable fact that in an educational process the team's educator has the most significant role. This role is about creating the appropriate conditions in the team that will allow the free expression of the trainees' expectations and goals. Furthermore, it is very important that the educator must take action in order to set boundaries and rules concerning the individuals' functions during the educational process. This way it will be easier for all participants to exchange opinions and information.

The Role of the Educator

According to the theory of Andragogy, the educator is obliged to make the trainees understand the reason why they have entered the educational process. Through a completely experiential training that utilizes the trainees' experiences that have pre-existed or have been taken place during the educational course by interacting in the team. The climate within the team plays an important role. The educator tries to inspire respect, free expression, and connection to matters that derive from the social framework from whence they come (Mezirow, 1991). Furthermore, it is also a learning source combined with the selected methods; it contributes to a more positive completion of the teaching process (Mezirow, 1990).

The theory of social change by P. Freire is based on the questioning of the up-to-now date and through critical thinking which they gain from learning how to understand reality and its problems and then to transform it (Knowles, Holton and Swanson, 1998). Through this teaching process, the educator creates the proper learning conditions; he promotes discussion that is centered on the participants' problems (Knowles, 2000).

In the framework of transformative learning, the participants who intend to change their way of socializing and organizing, look for other people to share their ambition to create ways of resisting the unedited cultural norms of the organizations, societies, families and political life; they become active subjects in cultural change (Rogers, 1996). The adult trainers must support and broaden the rules, the social practices, the institutions and the systems that empower a more complete and open participation in intellectual discussion, in transformative learning, contemplative action and to a greater activation of the participants (Mezirow, 2007). They are obliged to give and empower opportunities with rules that support a more free and complete participation in discussion, and in a social and political democratic life (Kokkos, 2005). It is also necessary for them to work towards making a positive change. This can be achieved from the moment they distinguish their goals and expectations from those of the educators and to promote discussion and the trainees' participation in it, avoiding dogmatism (Navridis, 1994). The educator must act as an intergraded coordinator of the training process, as a council, as a stimulator, as a guide on the path to knowledge in order to elaborate the trainees' knowledge experiences and admissions (Navridis, 2005).

According to the above theories, the example's educator helped to consolidate the essence of free expression and connection to matters that come from the social framework they belong to (andragogy); he tried to stimulate a discussion about some problem the trainees face (social change) with the goal of making a positive change through the transformation of experiences and acceptance, and rational discussion in order to achieve communicational learning (transformative learning) (Jarvis, 2004). The educator is obliged not to get involved in an emotional relationship that will result in assuming the role of a therapist instead of the one of being an educator. Something similar overcomes the limits of the educational team since its purpose is to provide knowledge and experiences in order to gain professional and social skills, while the goal of therapy is to solve problems that derive from the members psyche. In some cases, like the example, where the goal, the limits, the roles and conditions of education are not defined by the educator and that results in causing confusion and disorientation in the team, namely learning. The educator must set reference limits in the framework of language use and because of the fictitious climate of security and familiarity in the team and not to be carried away by his emotions.

The educator's role is to guide, to encourage, to coordinate, to help in approaching the matters he suggest, he encourages the heuristic course to knowledge, he is constantly interacting with the trainees, he offers them stimulus, he creatively cooperates with the. Also, he gives the ability of free participation in solving matters by giving time, sometimes limited, for discussion, questions and doubting a response. Through the teams in which the educator has places the trainees, the adults solve the specific matters, developing their critical thinking applying techniques in a friendly way, which encourage the trainees to complete the educational process. The educator from the start must design the curriculum by utilizing the role-playing game, so the trainees can comprehend the course's goals, and the educator must also intervene as a guide-coordinator of the teaching process.

One of the most complete and scientifically proven theories of adult training is transformative learning, and according to its representative, Jack Mezirow, it recognizes the individual's ability of inner change by emphasizing the use of the adult trainees' experiences. The essence of transformative learning is about determining the perception that each person has and as a result of his social, political, ideological, ethical, historical, cultural experiences. These experiences derive from the adult's biographic-inventory elements, namely the family, the environment in which he grew up, lives and works in, his age, his education as well as his national-historical traditions and religious views. All the above create a mixture of perceptions, admissions and experiences that are deep within the mind, the behavior that is imprinted in the trainee's personality and creates the framework of the educator's report and work.

The stochastic process is one of the basic characteristics of adult learning. Jack Mezirow supports that as the time progresses so do the individual's ability to develop deeper estimations and to transform his personality. Adulthood is the time to re-evaluate the knowledge that was gained during our upbringing and often this has led to the distortion of reality. For that reason the educator's part is very important. Specifically, the educator must first understand his experiences and through a feedback process, he must classify them in order to determine the reason for living. This way he avoids chaos which is required not only in the case of knowledge oblivion but also in the ability-possibility of redefining himself. The adult educator is obliged to work towards bringing a possible change. This he can achieve a) by determining his goals and expectations from those of his students and b) by encouraging discussion and the participation of the trainees, avoiding dogmatism.

Following the process of contemplation and cultivating critical thinking that supports transformative learning, the trainees will be able to understand that some of their conceptions were wrong. This helps them accept the opinions not only of the educator but also of the rest trainees. This way their perception of things around them transforms, they become more acceptable to new ideas and they redefine their experiences by giving them a new meaning. The role of the adult educator, consequently, is about helping the trainees to re-examine the foundations of their wrong perceptions and to doubt those which have proven to be dysfunctional, so they can form a more experiential image of the world and of their place within it.

Conclusions

In conclusion, the educator contributes to the formation of the teaching atmosphere where discussion is the main point, he coordinates and organizes the teams by following the methods of organizing educational activities, he stimulates the trainees so they can participate actively in all the activities, he defines in the appropriate way the context of the teaching chapters, he applied the educational techniques that aim at the combination of theory and trainees' experience, quite often but not always successfully (Silberman, 1998). The educator responds, despite any weaknesses, effectively to the modern model of adult training that is about using active techniques like group projects, exercises, broaden learning discussion, questions that lead to good adult training outcome. It is clear that the educator's and trainee's personal change of concession and experiences is the cornerstone of the process of adult training.

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