

Short Communication

Comparison of Jarvis's, Freire's and Mezirow's positions on the role and skills of the adult educator

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Abstract

In this paper a reference is being made to the variety and the different roles that an adult educator has in order to achieve a successful learning process and to accomplish the respective educational goals that are not only relevant to the acquisition of new knowledge, but also to the use of already existing knowledge and to the learners' acquisition of new ways of learning and attitudes. Initially, we indicate the standing points of Jarvis, Freire and Mezirow about the role of adult educators and the skills they should have according to the principles of adult education and then there is a comparison of the positions of these three scholars. **Copyright © WJER, all rights reserved.**

Keywords: Adult education, transformative learning, adult educator, learning process.

Introduction

In an educational process, the assigned team trainer has the primary role. This role is about forming the appropriate conditions within the group that will favor the free expression of the expectations and the objectives of his students. The adult educator must work towards positive change by coordinating the educational process so that the learner



can facilitate his learning process by changing any incorrect assumptions, experiences, and knowledge he has from his social environment, his workplace and his life.

The adult trainer endeavors to consolidate the spirit of mutual respect and freedom of expression and is also a source of learning, which in combination with the methods he selects each time, contributing to a possible positive completion of the educational process.

He has to act as a comprehensive coordinator of the educational process, as a consultant, guide, and facilitator on the path to knowledge, action motivator and a processor of the trainees knowledge, experiences and assumptions (Knowles, Holton and Swanson, 2005).

Highlighting the key positions of Jarvis, Freire and Mezirow regarding the adult trainer's skills

Jarvis discusses the role of the adult educator with the help of some criteria which are required so that the trainer is adequate in his role and considers learning as a learning change (Jarvis, 2004).

The objectives that a trainer must set and achieve, concern knowledge, skills and attitudes (Gagné, 1972). According to Jarvis, the adult educator should be sufficient for knowledge and understanding, the ability to apply knowledge and comply postures. With the term knowledge he refers to the understanding of the teaching object the instructor must have, as well as the knowledge he should have on the curriculum, organizing the teaching subject and various learning theories, so that he can create the appropriate learning conditions for his students.

Jarvis believes that the instructor should have knowledge related to group dynamic and interaction between trainer and learners so as to make the most of the group- centered teaching. An important criterion is the ability of the trainer to apply these skills in practice. Another criterion is the attitude that the trainer has towards his role, meaning his professionalism, the validity of his teaching activity and the authenticity of his personality.

According to Freire, an adult educator's basic skills include his personal social and emotional skills as well as his mental - cognitive strategies on decision making (Freire, 2006). Regarding his social and emotional skills, meaning his attitude as a trainer, such as humility, self-respect, self-confidence and respect towards the needs and the individual learners' goals.

Freire believes that the basic skill of the adult educator is decision making, which requires a combination of knowledge, skills, and attitude, but also depends in each case on the group of learners in which he operates. He also argues that the instructor must defend the "joy of life", referring to the enthusiasm of the instructor towards the subject he teaches, in his role and his willingness to adopt positive ways of interaction and support towards his students.

The adult trainer should strive to create a learning environment suitable for the promotion of dynamic learning and critical thinking. Main purposes of the adult educator are to create a climate of freedom and the pursuit of acquisition of skills and attitudes by the learners. According to Freire, another important criterion is the adult trainer's skills on the ethical and social values. Militancy, active citizenship, sense of justice and rights defense are characteristics that the instructor must have so as to respond to the social and ethical aspects of the educational office and to be able to build and defend the climate of freedom during the educational process.

According to Mezirow's transformative learning, the adult educator should possess planning skills and cognitive strategies so that he is able to adapt the learning process each time in a climate of free thinking choices, action and



participation, with the assistance of interactive discussion and collaborative learning in a liberal climate, in order to motivate the students to express themselves freely, to have the opportunity for self-motivation on the acquired information and in the same time to cultivate a climate of respect for personalities and beliefs.

Mezirow believes that a good adult educator should consider the learning process as a process that is open, energetic and dynamic, one that aims to enable learners in active participation and dialogue, rather than a simple transmission of information. The trainer should also have the role of the coordinator and facilitator in the learning process (Mezirow, 2007).

Comparison of the stance of Jarvis, Freire and Mezirow

As mentioned above, Mezirow puts learners in the center of adult education and supports the existence of a climate of free choices. The purpose of adult education is to create people who can self-activate critically on beliefs and attitudes so as to evolve in their social environment. This will result in prosperity and change of the society they belong to. Mezirow supports the instructor's active participation and considers important, his awareness of the fact that he is not superior to his trainees.

Freire gives adult education a broader social orientation and social struggle, characterizing the adult educator as a committed political fighter that aims to suppress social injustice. So Freire focuses on the skills that the adult trainer should have, including moral values, feelings, determination, and responsibility, while Mezirow argues that the adult trainer should foster dialogue and the democratic spirit and have a more liberal attitude towards his trainees. Both researchers believe that the adult educator's attitude is promoted as an example for the learners.

Jarvis believes that the skills an adult instructor must have are not only those of social and emotional type, as Freire and Mezirow think, but he must also have skills regarding knowledge application. Freire does not mention anything on the knowledge a good adult trainer must have. Unlike Freire, Jarvis does not give a clear sociopolitical character about the moral values and the corresponding skills the adult trainer must have.

Conclusion

All three researchers agree that adult education is a dynamic process that the role of the adult educator is important and they all focus on knowledge, skills and attitude, but not in the same way. Mezirow argues that skills, and attitude are tools for interpreting knowledge aiming not at knowledge and skills themselves, but at the creation of personal interpretations and beliefs. Freire gives greater weight to attitude while Jarvis considers knowledge, skills and attitude equally important.

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