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Engendering Perspective Transformation: A model for designing programs and facilitating transformative learning

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ABSTRACT

Traditional training and education events—also referred to as *learning* in corporate talent development programs—often focus on delivering content. Adults work to *define*, *identify*, or *apply* the content in ideal conditions as detailed in the courses' behavioural learning objectives. Such lower-level learning may serve organizations well when training disassociated skills, but it fails in allowing the adult learner to deliberately examine their theories of action. Failing to do so may result in missing out on the work required to develop their capacity and could result in experiencing unproductive dilemmas (Argyris, 1976). Therefore, the authors propose a model for creating and facilitating programs that engages adult learners in examining their purpose, values, feelings, and how they make meaning as they work toward realizing their professional development outcomes.

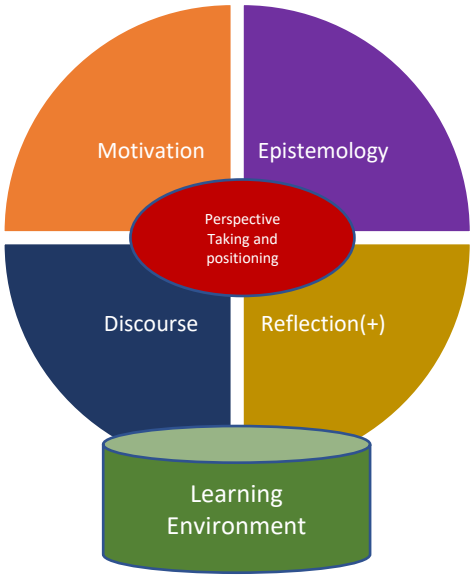
The model provides a framework for designing, developing, and facilitating perspective transformation, so that the participants embody course concepts and can employ them in their context, even in the face of complexity. This model materialized through the examination of the transformative learning literature and two distinct, long-standing, successful transformative learning programs (McCann & Barto, 2018; Corrie, 2023). The model (Figure 1) begins with establishing the foundation of future work, the *learning environment*. Next, attention to learner *motivation* helps examine participant purpose in relation to extrinsic influence. The work in this model transpires through *discourse* with self, others, and the material itself. Much of the work concerns *epistemology*, or how the individual and organization create knowledge. The course curated discourse includes the practice of *reflection*, from simplistic individual process reflection to the more difficult critical reflection. *Perspective taking and positioning* takes the center of the model as they touch each component and directly relate to addressing a participant's worldview. Together, through purposeful design, these components create opportunities for emergence (Pendleton-Jullian, & Brown, 2018) and emancipatory adult learning, where participants can hold object, the forces they were once subject to, and grow their capacity (Kegan, 2018).

Designers using this model select course concepts to serve as meta themes, meaning that they hold relevance in achieving learning outcomes as much as engendering perspective transformation. The concepts assist the participants in planning their own course of action and in acquiring new capability and capacity in later stages of transformative learning. Upfront, the concepts promote an exploration of more ideal ways of being and serve participants in a critical assessment of assumptions. And when trying on new roles, building competence and

confidence, and reintegrating the new perspective, they continue to provide the support required for perspective transformation.

This paper will detail the model for designing and facilitating transformative learning (Mezirow, 1990), while providing examples from real world research (McCann & Barto, 2018; Corrie, 2023). During the roundtable session, the authors will present the model (Figure 1) and invite conference participants into the discourse around the model's efficacy as a tool for promoting transformative and emancipatory learning in professional development programs.

Figure 1: Model for facilitating perspective transformation



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