

## Chapter 6.6

# The Transformation Model

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### ABSTRACT

The journey of transformation is a model of professional development developed, grounded in research of 205 educators, and based on a framework of adult learning begun in 1997. Transformative learning is a theory that describes the experience and cognitive process by which adults critically evaluate previously unexamined beliefs, values, or assumptions; try new beliefs, values, and assumptions to determine the fit for themselves; and then develop a dramatically new perspective of their worldview (Mezirow, 1978). This article describes how the author developed a mixed quantitative and qualitative tool to more broadly gather and analyze data about this experience. The work focuses on two major groups of traditional adult learners: English as second language learners and adult basic education learners. The journey of transformation represents a refinement of the 10-stage transformative learning theory model, one which is dynamic and interactive among the stages. The model emphasizes an environment of support for technology learning and encourages a role for practice and experimentation with technology that recognizes the fluid, nonlinear process of such learning.

### INTRODUCTION

The journey of transformation is a model of professional development that has been developed, grounded in research of 205 educators, and based on a framework of adult learning starting in 1997. It was fully presented in the literature in 2002 and 2003 in a two volume book, *Keeping Pace with Technology+* (King, 2002b, 2003).

Origins of the theoretical basis of this model are the adult learning theory of transformative learning (Mezirow, 1978). Transformative learning is a theory that describes the experience and cognitive process by which adults critically evaluate previously unexamined beliefs, values, or assumptions; try new beliefs, values, and assumptions to determine the fit for themselves; and then develop a dramatically new perspective of their worldview. Mezirow's original study was a small group of adult women returning to college later in life.

King developed a mixed quantitative and qualitative tool in 1997 to begin to more broadly gather and analyze data about this learning experience. From 1997-2002, King focused his work on educators and two major groups of traditional adult learners (English as Second Language [ESL]

learners and Adult Basic Education [ABE] learners). The studies of educators extended from not only educators of adult educators, but also k-12 educators and professors in higher education.

King's basic perspective was to "throw a wider net" of data gathering in order to identify broader patterns of transformative learning experiences than in traditional studies in the field that typically numbered 5-15 participants.

The journey of transformation represents a refinement of the 10-stage transformative learning theory model as it is experienced among k-12 educators (volume 1) and professors (volume 2) learning educational technology (King, 2002b, 2003, 2004). This new integrated model has four major stages: fear and uncertainty; testing and exploring; affirming and connecting; and new perspectives.

As an entirety, this experience is not linear; it is one which is dynamic and interactive among the stages. The learning experienced in the model of the journey of transformation is recognized as resulting in fundamental transformations of educators' perspectives and practice of teaching and learning.

The significance of the model includes many dimensions, not limited to the fact that it brings adult learning theory to a place of practical application across educational contexts. The model emphasizes an environment of support for technology learning and encourages a role for practice and experimentation with technology that recognizes the fluid, nonlinear process of such learning.

## **BACKGROUND**

### **The Research**

In the extended study, which grounded the journey of transformation, 205 participants included 155 women and 50 men. These participants had 0-40 years ( $M=10.53$ ) experience in teaching at k-12, adult, and higher education environments.

Their ages ranged from 30-39 years old (King, 2002, 2003).

Analysis of the data revealed that 84% of the respondents had experiences of perspective transformation through this context and followed a distinct pattern of development that emerged as the journey of transformation model (King, 2002b, 2003). This model may be defined as a four-stage integrated model of transformative learning experienced within the context of educational technology learning, resulting in fundamental transformations of educators' perspectives and practice of teaching and learning. The four stages of the journey of transformation are fear and uncertainty; testing and exploring; affirming and connecting; and new perspectives. Frequently having to learn technology or new aspects of technology under pressure served as a "disorienting dilemma" that was characterized by fear and uncertainty (King, 2004).

## **Research and Theory**

The stages of the journey have linkages with Mezirow's (1978) theory of transformative learning. However, the journey's stages do not represent single actions. Instead they are continuums of experience. Specifically in this model, transformative learning is revealed when "educators' learning journeys of *development*, their *disequilibrium* which promotes learning, and their learning that includes *reflective abstraction*, and the construction of *structures/meaning*" (King, 2004, p. 12, italics in original).

In terms of *development*, instead of one single learning moment, this model emphasizes a direction that some educators follow. That is a pathway that leads to perspective transformation, as adult learners engaged in research-grounded professional development in educational technology.

Much like Rogers' (1995) theory of the diffusion *process* of innovations, the model is a journey. In contrast to his theory, however, this model includes *constructions of meaning*, and ways of

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