



## Transformative Education in the Nursing Discipline

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### 1. Introduction

In 2002 United Nations General Assembly passed a resolution “UN Decade of Education for Sustainable Development” (UN DESD) in the time frame from 2005 to 2014. UN DESD mentions five pillars of the learning:

- 1) *learning to know,*
- 2) *learning to do,*
- 3) *learning to live together, learning to live with others,*
- 4) *learning to be,*
- 5) *learning to transform oneself and society.*

Each of the five pillars of the *education for sustainable development* (ESD) is important for the nursing education. Importance of the fifth pillar is characterized by the fact that this pillar was included in the UNESCO strategy in 21st century in addition to the four other pillars [1; 2]. Pillar ‘learning to transform oneself and society’ corresponds to the transformative education. All other pillars are also important in realisation of the transformative education. Aim of the research is to characterize the transformative education and its implementation in the specific nursing education program in students’ point of view.

### 2. Transformative Education and Ecology of Education

Transformative education and transformative learning, complementary supplemented with the ecology of the education, is a way to develop nursing studies accordingly to the global tendency of the 21st century – ESD. Transformative education is characteristic to the ecological paradigm of the education that is a framework for development of the ecology of education [2].

Transformative education and transformative learning is a way to facilitate transition of the nursing education from the mechanical paradigm in the health care to the ecological paradigm. Transformative learning includes deep, structural changes in the basic aspects of thinking, feeling and behaviour. Such change is connected with our understanding of ourselves and our place in the world, our relationship with other people and natural world [3; 4]. Transformative learning increases the sensibility and ethical responsibility of the nurse-student.

Theory of the transformative learning was introduced by the professor of the Columbian University Jack Mezirow and many other theoreticians have substantially enriched it [5; 6; 7; 8; 9; 10; 11; 12; 13] and others.

Based on the realizations of W. Van de Bohr and other authors on the integration of the sustainable education in the adult education, S. Sterling characterizes transmission from the transmissive education to the transformative education (Table 1.)

Table 1. From transmissive to transformative education

From	To
Transmissive learning	Learning through discovery
Teacher-centred approach	Lerner-centred approach
Individual learning	Collaborative learning
Learning dominated by theory	Practice-oriented learning linking theory and experience
Focus on accumulating knowledge and a content orientation	Focus on self-regulative learning and a real issues orientation
Emphasis only on cognition	Cognitive, affective and skills related objectives
Institutional, staff-based teaching/learning	Learning with and from outsiders
Low level cognitive learning	Higher level cognitive learning

Sterling points out that comparison are necessary because they reflect all changes of the educational system, and they can be summarized in a paradigm, basic tasks, educational policy and practice [14; 15].

Transformative learning stimulates nurses to learn to think independently, so that they would dispose of the knowledge that sometimes is acquired as a result of the life experience without even thinking or asking questions. In a process when nurse really assumes and develops her personal, professional and social roles, the reason greatly helps to improve the personality society and the world. It gives nurses an opportunity to better understand the life of other people. Transformative learning in the nursing education has to be understood as a change of



learning culture because it has to be evaluated critically and it does not contain a contradiction with reality and experience where an active cooperation with others takes place, using the reflection as an activity. Reflective thinking is a basis that supports and facilitates the transformations of such learning perspective.

In the course of time in the process of development of the dialogue, literature and further inquiry these wide and still fundamental changes of understanding have been characterized as new perspectives of meaning, new points of reference, new habits of mind and new worldviews [6; 7; 8; 16; 17].

### 2.1. Transformative Education and Reflection

Types and levels of reflection formulated by Mezirow in the nursing education helps teacher and student more fully understand how to acquire wisdom or cleverness [6; 7]. **Reflection on meaning** is an examination of the content or description of problem. **Reflection on process** includes an examination of the problem solving strategies. **Reflection on premises** leads to the meaning perspective of the transformation.

**Levels of reflection:** reflection – an understanding that is characterised by the specific perception, meaning, behaviour or habit; **emotional reflection** – an understanding on how one feels regarding the perceived, his thoughts or actions; **evaluative reflection** – evaluation of effectiveness of the perception, thought or habit; **judgmental reflection** – evaluation of the perception, thought, behaviour or habit; **conceptual reflection** – self-reflection that can raise doubts about the fact if good, bad or appropriate concepts were used in the understanding and evaluation process; **psychic reflection** – acknowledges that a habit to judge based on limited amount of information is inherent in humans; **theoretical reflection** – an understanding that the ability to perceive and evaluate or the habit of conceptual inadequacy lies in the cultural or psychological assumptions that are taken for granted, that explains the personal experience more acceptable than another perspective that uses more functional criterions of seeing, thinking or behaviour [6; 7].

### 3. Methodology and Results

A survey was performed with participation of two groups of respondents from the Medical College study program “Nursing” – 21 second year students and 15 first year students.

Table 2. Comparison of transmissive and transformative education

Transmissive education	Transformative education
1	2
Instructive learning	Learning by means of discovery
Teacher-based teaching/learning	Reciprocal learning
Subject-object approach	Subject–subject approach
Information is equal for everyone	Additional information that conforms with the preliminary knowledge
Control	Student self-evaluation, self-government
Individual learning	Cooperative learning
Focus on contents, accumulation of knowledge	Focus on self-regulatory learning and real gain
Emphasis only on the cognitive (inquiring) targets	Cognitive (inquiring), as well as emotional, knowledge-oriented targets
One-way communication	Discussion, development of the diversity of viewpoints
Theory-based learning	Practice-oriented learning that combines theory with practice
Emphasis on accumulation of knowledge and recognition of contents	Emphasis on self-regulatory learning and realization of the real gains
Learning objective – only cognition	Learning objective – to comprehend acquired knowledge and emotionally evaluate them

Respondents evaluated existing and desired study indicators (Table 2) that were developed based on Sterling’s research [14; 15].

Each student individually assessed the 12 pairs of indicators that are given in the tables. Three possible types (Table 3) of each indicator pair dominates the indicator on the left; dominates the indicator on the right; there is no significant dominant of one indicator (in the pair of indicators student marks both indicators). The significance of the differences of each indicator pair was determined using chi-square test ( $\chi^2$ ).



Table 3. Actual and desired education according to the assessment of students of the nursing program

Type of education	Actually takes place		Students desire	
	Number of answers	%	Number of answers	%
Only transmissive (just one indicator is marked in the 1st column of the Table 2)	255	59	77	23
Transmissive and transformative (In the pair of indicators both indicators are marked)	35	8	40	12
Only transformative (just one indicator is marked in the 2nd column of the Table 2)	142	33	222	65
<b>Total</b>	<b>432</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>339</b>	<b>100</b>

Total amount of the possible answers evaluating 12 pairs of the indicators:  $12 \times 36 = 432$ . In the current characterization of the nursing education the indicators that correspond to the transmissive education are dominant: 59% of all answers, but 33% are indicators that correspond to the transformative education. In only 8% of the answers a dominant of the transformative or transmissive education was not established – both indicators of the pair were marked. Actual situation does not conform to the desire of students: in 65% of the answers indicators that correspond to the transformative education are dominant. Part of respondents have not indicated the indicators that correspond to the desired education, therefore total amount of answers is different. Differences of the amount of answers that correspond to the transmissive and transformative education both in assessment of the actual and desired education are statistically significant:  $p < .001$ .

#### 4. Discussion

During discussion with students it was found that evaluation of the desired education is affected by the insufficient understanding of the importance of the transformative education both in students' and teachers' point of view. It is confirmed by the research of the importance of the pillars of education in different educational programs [2]. During the research it was established that the pillar 'learning to transform oneself and society' received relatively lower evaluation in the nursing and also other educational programs [2, p. 99]. After survey of nurses learning in the program of the professional development it was established that the ecology of education is mainly associated with the environmental protection and not the ecological approach in the education. During our observations it was established that such understanding of the educational ecology is dominant also among the teaching staff of the nursing study programs.

Comparing the results of our research with analogous research in the educational programs of some other Latvian colleges, it can be concluded that in the examined nursing study program the progression towards transformative education is less pronounced. During separate case studies, performed at two colleges of Latvia, it was found that 70% of indicators that are analogous to the ones used in our research were evaluated as appropriate to the transformative education [18].

#### 5. Conclusion

Global tendency of 21st century is - ESD. A transformative education corresponds to it; it has to be implemented in the nursing study programs. After comparison of the assessment of the indicators of transmissive and transformative education performed by the students of the nursing program it was established that actually the transmissive education dominates in the studies, but students desire the transformative education. In the assessed nursing study program the progression towards the transformative education is less pronounced than in study programs of other colleges. Therefore the actualization of the transition to the transformative education is an essential objective of perfection of the study programs.

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