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Susan van Schalkwyk

Transformative learning theory under
the spotlight: learning that changes the
way we see the world

AUXIN

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The Bellagio Global Health Education Initiative

Project members: David Davies (Univ of Warwick); Janet Hafler (Yale Univ); Moira Maley (Univ of Western Australia); Tim Brewer (UCLA); Michael Peluso (UCSF); Carmi Margolis (Ben Gurion Univ); Mark Clarfield (Ben Gurion Univ)

SU members: Lakshini McNamee; Ilse Meyer; San Schmutz

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

1. A quest to understand *transformative learning*
2. A scoping review
3. *Transformative learning* as pedagogic essential in adult learning

WHAT TODAY IS ALL ABOUT

Why were we interested?

- “iconic education philosophy of the field” (Taylor 2007)
- A ‘revolution’ in health professions education:
 - From informative
 - To formative
 - To transformative

[Frenk et al, 2010]



Where has this all come from?



Jack
Mezirow
and

Bleakley; Bradshaw;
Brookfield; Brown;
Cranton; Dirkx; Freire;
Mann; Meyer & Land;
Scott; Taylor ...

“Transformative learning is learning that transforms problematic frames of reference – sets of fixed assumptions and expectations (habits of mind, meaning perspectives, mindsets) – to make them more inclusive, discriminating, open, reflective, and emotionally able to change.” (Mezirow 2003:58)

Deeply intertwined with the idea of reflection: content; premise; critical

A DEFINITION

Mezirow's 10 steps

A disorienting dilemma

A self examination with feelings of guilt or shame

A critical assessment of epistemic, sociocultural, or psychic assumptions

Recognition that one's discontent and the process of transformation are shared and that others have negotiated a similar change

Exploration of options for new roles, relationships, and actions

Planning a course of action

Acquisition of knowledge and skills for implementing one's plan

Provision trying of new roles

Building of competence and self-confidence in new roles and relationships

A reintegration into one's life on the basis of conditions dictated by one's perspective

Our research questions

How is transformative learning understood in the health professions education (including medical) literature?

- How does current empirical work describe transformative learning?
- How is transformative learning being facilitated in the context of HPE globally?
- What approaches, if any, are being used to assess or evaluate transformative learning

Methodology – a scoping review

1. Identify the research question
2. Identify the relevant studies
3. Study selection
4. Charting the data
5. Collating, Summarising and Reporting the Results
6. Consultation (optional)

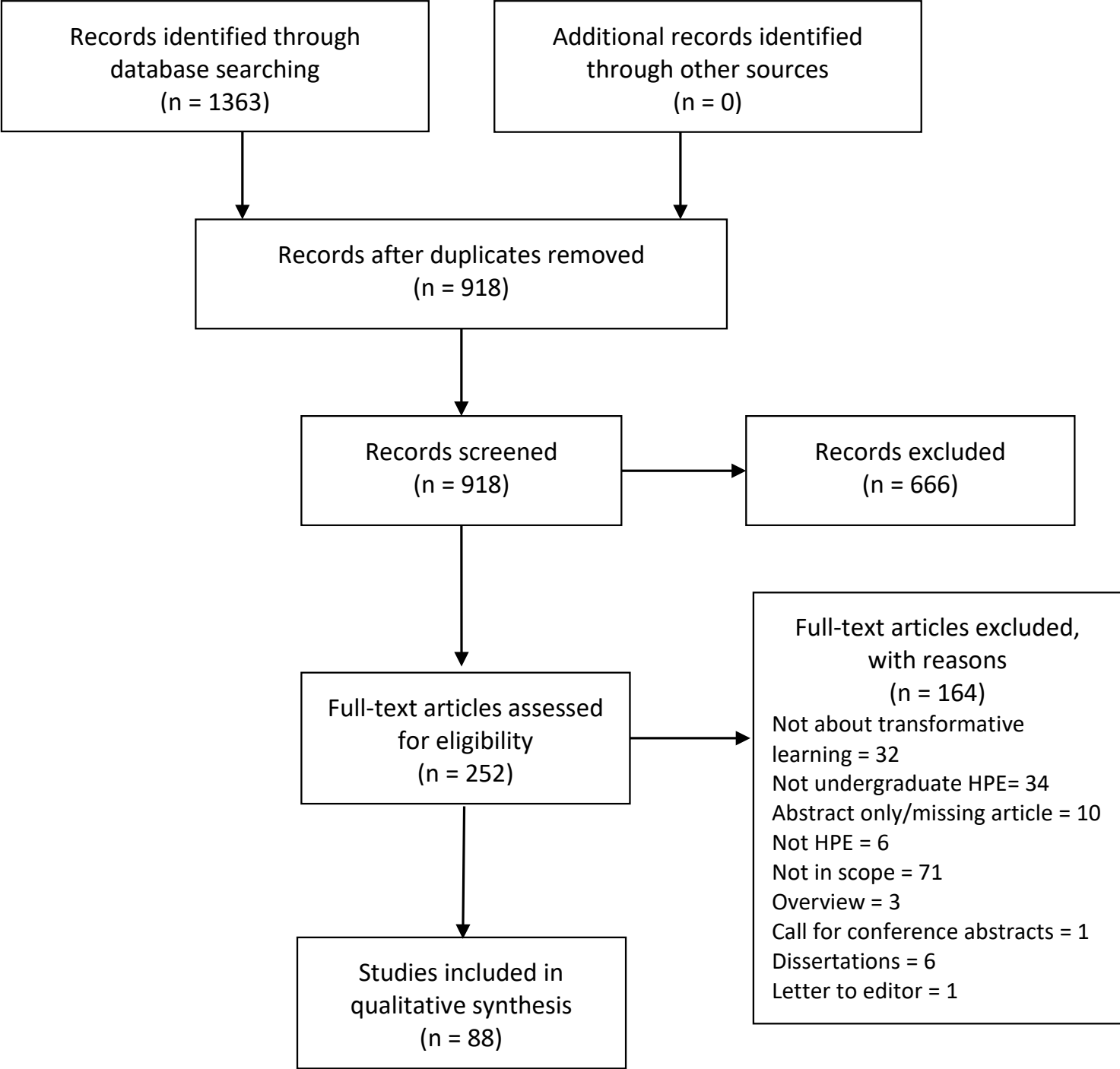
[Arksey & O'Malley, 2005]

Identification

Screening

Eligibility

Included



Something about the included studies

- Covered a range of health professions (UG and UG/PG)
- Often applied in the context of ‘distributed’ learning; rural and/or global health
- Studies from: Australia; Canada; Ecuador; Ghana; Japan; Mexico; Sweden; Taiwan; UK; USA; Zambia ... SOUTH AFRICA
- 49 Empirical (generally qualitative) / 39 Conceptual (using TL as theoretical frame)
- Data collection: audio diaries; journals; logs; debriefing sessions; narratives; participant observations; etc etc.

How does the literature* describe TL?

- change ... in values, in frames of reference that define the student's world, in behaviour
- 'input' [different pedagogical experiences – engagement with (other) communities] and 'output'
- impact
- critical reflection – reinterpreting one's experiences
- leadership with capacity and change agent
- competence and confidence in new roles and relationships
- embraces dynamic, collaborative cognitive strategies
- social justice
- constructivist paradigm

What have these studies found?

- **Factors enhancing transformative learning:** engagement; clarified expectations; critical reflection; nature of the learning (longitudinal; experiential; collaborative)
- **Outcomes:** enhanced awareness; confidence in engaging with others; CHANGES in thinking about oneself and others; identity construction/formation; reframing key concepts; reassessing beliefs and prejudices; increased knowledge and understanding (patience and compassion)
- **Experience:** uncomfortable; emotional; intellectual; educational; enduring

What makes the difference?

- Experiencing the dissonance and disruption of preconceived ideas
 - Requires the creation of opportunity – living and learning in cultures different to one's own
 - Can be an uncomfortable experience
- A focus on the individual (self-authoring)
 - Developing cultural sensitivity through critical self-assessment and reflection
 - Foster coping skills and a capacity for empathy
- Dedicated supervisors/mentors/facilitators
 - Students need to 'trust' the supervisor
 - Mentors/facilitators need to be trained and supported
- Having a clear strategy
 - Ensure awareness of global systemic oppressors, international relationships, health systems
 - Plan for the learning

In this time of disruption, renewal ...?

Health professions education is *a busy, clamorous place, where a host of pedagogical practices, educational philosophies and conceptual frameworks collide ... AND it is a place of increasing accountability and regulation because of its proximity to one of the prime socio-political concerns of government, that of the health of its people* (Swanwick 2014)

Mayosi and Benatar (2014) argue that our *complex (perhaps even intractable) local and global health problems require transdisciplinary sociopolitical-economic research projects that could reframe the nature of progress and perspectives of ourselves as local and global citizens.*

WHY IS THIS IMPORTANT?

*By three methods we may learn wisdom:
First, by reflection, which is noblest;
Second, by imitation, which is easiest;
and third by experience, which is the bitterest.*

Confucius

THANK YOU

SCVS@SUN.AC.ZA