

To what extent is the criticism regarding the underestimation of emotions in transformation theory justified?

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ABSTRACT

This article presents the findings of a literature review conducted within the framework of a doctoral thesis. The findings highlight J. Mezirow's perspective on the role of emotions in Transformation Theory (TT) and also, the viewpoints of significant scholars in the field of Transformative Learning (TL) who raised objections regarding the emphasis Mezirow places on emotion, engaging in a dialogue with him. The ultimate goal is to critically answer the research question: "To what extent is the criticism that TT has received, regarding the underestimation of the emotional dimension of learning justified?". The research initially demonstrated that Mezirow attributed significant importance to the role of emotions, linking it to all the fundamental elements of his framework. It also identified areas that require further exploration, such as proposals for specific techniques for eliciting and managing emotions in educational practice. Regarding the selected theorists, the literature review revealed three trends depending on how their approaches to emotion align or differentiate from Mezirow's positions. Based on the above findings, the research highlighted concerns regarding the compatibility of the proposed techniques with the field of Adult Education. Additionally, it raised questions about which of the mentioned theorists truly engage with Mezirow's work, aim to reconsider attention to it, and contribute creatively to its expansion.

KEYWORDS

Emotions, rational, transformation theory

RÉSUMÉ

Cet article présente les résultats d'une revue de littérature réalisée dans le cadre d'une thèse de doctorat. Les résultats mettent en évidence le point de vue de J. Mezirow sur le rôle des émotions dans la théorie de la transformation (TT) ainsi que les points de vue d'éminents chercheurs dans le domaine de l'apprentissage transformateur (TL) qui ont soulevé des objections concernant l'accent mis par Mezirow sur l'émotion, s'engageant dans un dialogue avec lui. L'objectif ultime est de répondre de manière critique à la question de recherche : « Dans quelle mesure les critiques que TT a reçues concernant la sous-estimation de la dimension émotionnelle de l'apprentissage sont-elles justifiées ? ». La recherche a initialement démontré que Mezirow accordait une importance significative au rôle des émotions, en le liant à tous les éléments fondamentaux de son cadre. Il a également identifié des domaines qui nécessitent une exploration plus approfondie, tels que des propositions de techniques spécifiques pour susciter et gérer les émotions dans la pratique éducative. Concernant les théoriciens sélectionnés, la revue de la littérature a révélé trois tendances selon la manière

dont leurs approches de l'émotion s'alignent ou se différencient des positions de Mezirow. Sur la base des résultats ci-dessus, la recherche a mis en évidence des préoccupations concernant la compatibilité des techniques proposées avec le domaine de l'éducation des adultes.. De plus, cela a soulevé la question de savoir lesquels des théoriciens mentionnés s'engagent réellement dans le travail de Mezirow, visent à reconsidérer l'attention qu'on lui porte et contribuent de manière créative à son expansion.

MOTS CLÉS

Émotions, rationnel, théorie de la transformation

INTRODUCTION

The Transformation Theory (TT) by J. Mezirow has been shaped as an open theoretical field through dialogue, which continues to be reevaluated, evolved, and expanded even today, 45 years after the publication of the first texts by the American thinker (Mezirow, 1978a,b). It incorporates a broad spectrum of ideas and perspectives, as discussed by various scholars (Fleming, 2020; Hoggan, 2016; Kokkos, 2019; Nicolaidis & Eschenbacher, 2022). Within this framework, numerous different approaches have been developed, contributing to the exploration of various issues, including the emotional dimension of Transformative Learning (TL) (Kokkos, 2019; Merriam & Baumgartner, 2020; Nicolaidis & Eschenbacher, 2022). Mezirow himself engaged in dialogue with theorists in which he received criticism on this matter. Simultaneously, this outcome led the field of TL to become quite heterogeneous and its identity fluid (Cranton & Taylor, 2012; Hoggan, 2016; Kokkos, 2019; Mälkki in Hoggan et al., 2017; Newman, 2012; Raikou & Karalis, 2016).

One of the most significant points that has been and continues to be a magnet for additions and expansions in TT is the emotional dimension of the transformative process. Issues such as “soul work” and “embodied narrative” appear in “The Handbook of Transformative Learning” (Cranton & Taylor, 2012). In synthesizing various perspectives on TL, Merriam and Baumgartner (2020, p. 204) note that emotions have been largely ignored as an integral part of the knowledge system. In “The Palgrave Handbook of Learning for Transformation” (Nicolaidis et al., 2022), great importance is given to emotions as a fundamental factor in transformation. This constitutes the theme of this article: the exploration of the emotional dimension of TT. The topic is examined through different “lenses”: the perspective of Mezirow himself on emotion and the perception of selected scholars in the field of TL. This exploration aims to justify the criticism that TT has received regarding this issue.

The article is structured as follows: Firstly, the chosen methodology is presented to clarify the validity of the findings. Then, the findings related to the research question “To what extent is the criticism regarding the underestimation of emotion in TT justified?” are presented. In particular, after briefly documenting Mezirow's perspective on the role of emotions through the findings, we focus mainly on the findings regarding the objections of selected theorists and their proposals for educational practice. Subsequently, wishing to give special emphasis to this, we present the thoughts of theorists in the field of TL regarding critical approaches. The article concludes with final thoughts on the extent to which new approaches develop in conjunction with Mezirow's foundational framework or, go beyond it by introducing elements foreign to the initial core of TT. Additionally, we develop a discussion related to the extent to which adult educators can apply the proposals of the specific theorists to their educational practice.

METHODOLOGICAL ISSUES

The methodology chosen to address the above questions was a literature review conducted in two parts. The first part was conducted using content analysis to explore, understand, present, and document the chronological development of Mezirow's thinking regarding the significance of emotions in TT. Specifically, the analyzed written material consists of 26 texts by Mezirow: 1 book, 4 chapters in books he edited, 4 chapters in books by other authors, 16 articles in journals, and one interview. These texts cover a period from the initial formulation of his theory in 1978 to his most recent positions in 2009, representing 85% of his total work. The ultimate goal was to follow the evolution of his thinking over time.

The second part involved a literature review of selected theorists in the field of TL. The chosen theorists were E. Taylor, P. Cranton, J. Dirkx, E. Fleming, K. Illeris, A. Kokkos, L. Yorks, E. Kasl, K. Taylor, M. Belenky, K. Mälkki, R. Boyd, M. Tennant, and E. Tisdell. The selection of these theorists was based on three criteria. Firstly, the work of these theorists is situated in the field of TL, as evident from the article by Nylander et al. (2017), and their inclusion in the writing of significant collective works contributing to the dialogue on TL. We refer to the three books edited by Mezirow himself (Mezirow et al., 1990; Mezirow & Associates, 2000; Mezirow, Taylor, & Associates, 2009), as well as three important collective volumes on TL (Fleming et al., 2019; Nicolaidis et al., 2022; Taylor & Cranton, 2012). Secondly, Mezirow hosted many of these theorists in his textbooks, and there are references to their work, indicating that he drew elements to complement and/or correct his theory. Thirdly, the work of the included theorists continues to have a broad influence on researchers and educators (Nylander et al., 2017). From the above thinkers, the most important texts were studied, in order to capture on the one hand their objections regarding the role of emotion in a transformative process and, on the other hand, their own proposals for the educational practice.

RESULTS OF THE CONTENT ANALYSIS OF MEZIROW'S TEXTS

The findings of the content analysis of Mezirow's texts revealed that his perception was that emotions are correlated, to a greater or lesser extent, with the core elements of his theory: the object of transformation, the means, the phases of the process, taking action, and the role of the adult educator. Initially, an attempt was made to capture this perception based on chronological periods. However, it was later found to be impractical because Mezirow focused on and analyzed each issue at different chronological moments, and his thinking did not follow a linear progression.

In the early years of his creative journey, Mezirow was preoccupied with the interconnection of emotion with the object of transformation (e.g., Mezirow, 1978a, p. 7, 1990, p. 4, 1991, pp. 138-141), the phases of the transformative process (e.g., Mezirow, 1978a, p. 13, 1978b, p. 101, 1991, p. 168), taking action (e.g., Mezirow, 1978a, 1991, p. 140) and the role of the educator in managing emotions (e.g., Mezirow, 1981, p. 18, 1991, p. 200). All the above issues were so settled in Mezirow's perception that they consistently appear in his latest textbooks (e.g., Mezirow, 2000, pp. 16-17, 2006, pp. 25-26, 2009, p. 22). We consider this to have happened because the thinker had established solid foundations to support his positions, drawing evidence from both neurobiology and fundamental psychological approaches such as cognitive and psychoanalytic theory. As observed, there were two main influences on these issues, Gould (1988) and Goleman (1995). On the other hand, the integration of emotion with the two fundamental pillars of his theory, critical reflection, and reflective dialogue, occurred much later, around the year 2000. It marks a significant turning point where the theorist sought to soften the strictly rational nature of the transformational means. In the chapter he contributes

to the collective volume "Learning as Transformation", the thinker adopts new elements, mainly from Goleman, regarding the concept of emotional intelligence. This leads to a broader perspective on critical reflection (Mezirow, 2000, p. 21) and reflective discourse (Mezirow, 2000, p. 11).

All the aforementioned, we could argue, are the "strong points" of the thinker concerning the recognition of emotions in TL. In Mezirow's work, there is a pervasive belief that learning is a process filled with emotions: they are hidden in cognitive habits ingrained in our perception, they may stem from symbols and traumas internalized during childhood, and they emerge forcefully when we feel threatened, hindering progress towards development and action. Mezirow adequately explained all the above, emphasizing points of convergence between TL and the theories of Goleman and Gould. The thinker's contribution lies primarily in the recognition of emotional barriers, without the management of which it is challenging to engage in a transformative process. Furthermore, his contribution lies in ensuring the distinct separation of the roles of a psychotherapist and an adult educator who encourages emotional expression (e.g., Mezirow, 1990, p. 16, 1991, p. 225). This acts as a protective barrier for both educators and learners since the uncontrolled invocation of emotions could leave them vulnerable and unprotected. Similar positions have been expressed by other thinkers such as Gould (1988) and Illeris (2014).

On the contrary, areas where we feel a more nuanced analysis is lacking, include a greater integration of emotional elements into the process of critical reflection. Particularly, there is a need for the recognition and utilization of positive emotions for the benefit of the transformative process. Additionally, it would be beneficial for the theorist to provide suggestions for specific techniques to highlight and manage emotions in practice, across all phases of the transformative process, such as the use of art or group dynamics. Mezirow had appropriate influences on the issue of art, primarily from his close collaborator Greene (Greene, 2000), whom he references in his work (Mezirow, 2000). Moreover, as an adult educator, he owed it to himself to have a fundamental background in group dynamics. However, the fact that he did not delve deeper suggests that it was an area he did not thoroughly explore. He had the ethics and honesty to analyze only the issues he had thoroughly examined. In fact, in his later texts (Mezirow, 2006, 2009), he acknowledged that these issues require further exploration and, for this reason, referred them to other, more experienced theorists in the field.

RESULTS OS THE LITERATURE REVIEW OF SPECIFIC THEORISTS IN THE FIELD OF TL

After presenting Mezirow's positions regarding the role of emotion in his theory, it is interesting to capture the perspective of selected prominent scholars in the field of TL who raised objections to these specific positions and engaged in a dialogue with him. Simultaneously, reference is made to their work and opinions, as well as their contribution to educational practice, providing the reader with a comprehensive understanding of how these scholars approach the issue.

The objections and contributions of theorists of the first trend

The point of convergence among theorists comprising the first trend (E. Taylor, K. Taylor, Mälkki, Kokkos, Fleming, Illeris, Cranton, Kasl, Yorks, Belenky) is that they start from Mezirow's TL, advocating, however, a balance between rational and emotional factors in a transformative process. Subsequently, the main criticism of these theorists converges on the emphasis Mezirow places on rationality and the corresponding devaluation of emotions (Belenky & Stanton, 2000; Cranton, 2011; Illeris, 2014; Kasl & Yorks, 2012; Kokkos, 2019;

Mälkki in Mälkki et al., 2021; Taylor, 2007; Taylor & Marienau, 2022). On their part, these theorists emphasize the development of relationships, emotional expression, and support for learners to manage emotions related to life's common transitions, while they are very careful about maintaining the boundaries between educators and psychotherapists. In this context, they propose for educational practice the utilization of group dynamics (Belenky & Stanton, 2000; Fleming, 2020; Kasl & Yorks, 2012; Kokkos & Tsiboukli, 2011; Illeris, 2014; Taylor, 2001), life stories (Cranton in Cranton & Kroth, 2014; Tennant, 2012), specialized techniques such as Mälkki's Reflection Facilitator (2021) or P. Cranton's "event critique" and "the box's time" technique (Cranton, 2002) and the use of art (Cranton, 2002; Taylor, 2001; Taylor & Marienau, 2022). Kokkos (2021), suggests the use of great pieces of art as a means of developing critical reflection and at the same time emotional expression, through the method "Transformative Learning through Aesthetic Experience".

The objections and contributions of theorists of the second trend

The objections of theorists of the second (psychoanalytic) trend also concern the emphasis Mezirow places on rationality. However, since these theorists believe that TL is primarily a process that originates from the unconscious and is related to the soul, they focus more on the function of the unconscious and less on the role of emotion. Consequently, their central criticism is that Mezirow overlooks the unconscious aspect of TL (Boyd, 1988; Dirkx, 2010, 2018; Tennant, 2009, 2012).

One of the first theorists to raise objections to the unilateral prominence of the rational element in TL was American anthropologist R. Boyd, whose research interests led him to focus on the deeper synesthetic, psychological, and spiritual dimensions of TL. Subsequently, Boyd did not focus on the rational at all, but only on the unconscious and emotional component of transformation: imagination, intuition, and dreams (Boyd 1983, 1984; Boyd & Myers, 1988). One of the most ardent critics of critical reflection as a key element of transformation was J. Dirkx. As he argued, the approaches to TL, as they have been formulated and shaped by Mezirow (1981, 1990), Cranton (1997, 2002) and other scholars in this area, place too much emphasis on the social context and in the predominance of logic and knowledge, leaving unexplored other aspects such as emotions and the "psyche". At the Sixth International Conference on TL held at Michigan State University in October 2005, Dirkx had the opportunity to engage in a constructive dialogue with Mezirow, through which they explored the similarities and differences between their views on TL. Dirkx focused on the nature of the self—a sense of identification and subjectivity—which he sees as mental work or inner work. Dirkx himself - adopting the Jungian theory - uses more sophisticated terms such as "emotion-laden images" that are hidden behind every emotion, while he considers that the recognition of these virtual shapes can only be done through an internal, spiritual process that Dirkx (2010, p. 148) calls "nurturing soul work" and which is connected to "spirituality" (Dirkx, 2010, 2012).

Based on the above rationale, the proposals of this trend for educational practice involve exploring the unconscious through narrative life storytelling (Dirkx, 2018; Tennant, 2009), group dynamics (Boyd, 1991; Boyd & Myers 1988), art (Dirkx, 2010), and even spiritual experiences such as centering and visualization, which - as Dirkx (2010, p. 152) claims - will help learners bring hidden virtual patterns to the surface, decrypt them, and thus reach a higher level of connection with the world and others.

The objections and contributions of theorists of the third trend

The specific trend (spiritual), mainly represented by Tisdell, criticized Mezirow for his one-dimensional approach through rationality, arguing that broader considerations focusing on the unconscious, symbolic, and primarily the spiritual should be taken into account (Tisdell, 2008). Subsequently, its representatives emphasize the role of spirituality, reflecting a symbolic life

beyond what is visible on the surface, a sense that there is a deeper force that unites the self with the whole and in unconscious knowledge construction processes related to images, symbols, and rituals (Tisdell, in Tisdell & Swartz, 2022). As they argue, awareness of the physical, mental, and emotional states of learners can be achieved through various spiritual experiences, such as reflection on various natural phenomena and meditation (Tisdell, in Tisdell & Swartz 2022, p. 202), relaxation and breathing techniques, detachment, and reconnection with the body, improvisational games aimed at liberation from self-consciousness, and external ways of representing the experience, such as designing an image or a symbolic phrase or movement. Additionally, Tisdell (2008) argues that works of cultural industry, such as the movie "Philadelphia" and the TV series "Sex and the City", serve as stimuli for critical reflection and, simultaneously, for the emergence and processing of emotions.

The aforementioned are summarized in Table 1.

TABLE 1
Highlights of the criticism - Suggestions for the educational act

	Highlights of the criticism	Suggestions for the educational act
1st Trend		
E. Taylor	Excessive emphasis on critical thinking Ignoring the emotional dimension of discourse Underestimating disorienting dilemma's emotional charge, Incomplete approach to individuality	Collaborative Inquiry Utilization of art Audiovisual material Focus on positive emotions
P. Cranton	Excessive emphasis on critical thinking Ignoring the emotional dimension of discourse Underestimating disorienting's dilemma emotional charge, Incomplete approach to individuality	Specially designed educational techniques (event critique technique, box time technique Utilization of art, Life stories Focus on positive emotions
A. Kokkos	Excessive emphasis on critical thinking	Group dynamics Utilization of great pieces of art
K. Illeris	Excessive emphasis on critical thinking	Group dynamics Utilization of incentives
K. Taylor	Excessive emphasis on critical thinking	Utilization of art, images, symbolic prompts
E. Kasl & L. Yorks	Excessive emphasis on critical thinking Ignoring the emotional dimension of discourse	Collaborative Inquiry
M. Belenky	Excessive emphasis on critical thinking Ignoring the emotional dimension of discourse	Group dynamics
K. Mälkki	Excessive emphasis on critical thinking	Reflection Facilitator
T. Fleming	Excessive emphasis on critical thinking Ignoring the emotional dimension of discourse	Group dynamics
2nd Trend		
R. Boyd	Underestimation of the unconscious side of transformation Incomplete approach to individuality	Group dynamics
J. Dirkx	Underestimation of the unconscious side of transformation Incomplete approach to individuality	The fourthought model Utilization of art, Life stories, Spiritual experiences: centering, visualization

M. Tennant	Underestimation of the unconscious side of transformation Selective integration of psychological theories	Utilization of psychological theories Life stories
3st Trend		
E. Tisdell	Non-emergence of the spiritual dimension	Spiritual experiences, breathing, meditation, utilization of cultural industry art

A CRITICAL APPROACH TO CRITICAL PERSPECTIVES

As time has passed, TL has become the subject of criticism from various perspectives. On the one hand, theorists have continued to build upon Mezirow's foundation, to varying degrees, attempting to enrich TL with their own ideas. On the other hand, some critics have emerged for whom Mezirow's views are no longer a connecting thread. In the global community of TL, several centrifugal tendencies have arisen, causing concern among theorists. According to Kokkos (2019, p. 69), this new situation has created “turbulence in the field”. In this context, many researchers have expressed reservations about the foundation of some critiques, raising significant questions about how issues such as non-rational learning methods, exploration of unconscious processes, embodied learning, and spirituality can be integrated into a theory of adult education.

Two significant studies by Taylor & Snyder (2011) and Cranton & Taylor (2012) revealed that a considerable portion of the literature does not rely on primary sources. Consequently, criticism of different perspectives is often superficial, lacking awareness of how these perspectives were formulated. Cranton (Cranton & Taylor, 2012) argues that several new approaches are not adequately integrated with previous ones, leading to a lack of a “theory in evolution”, and their supporting techniques do not fall within the competence of adult educators. Kucukaydin & Cranton (2009, p. 233) raise important questions about the possibility of integrating Jung's theory into TL within the framework of adult education. Illeris (2014) shares concerns about the ambiguity and fluidity of Jungian terms used by various theorists, such as Dirx. Mälkki (cited in Hoggan et al., 2017, p. 49) identifies a fixation on certain issues in discussions about the value of Mezirow's work, which, according to him, leads to oversimplification of important matters and creates divisions.

Newman (2012, p. 46) strongly criticizes representatives of the second and mainly the third trend, considering the most concerning issue to be how some authors associate TL with spirituality. As he explicitly states: “My concern regarding TL has been fueled for many years by the growing trends referring to it as a movement, and in some cases, even as a spiritual movement. I experienced these trends early on, attending an international conference in New York in 2003, and I know from discussions with Mezirow - both then and later - that these trends have troubled him”.

Kokkos has repeatedly expressed his concerns about the shortcomings in various theoretical approaches and related educational methods. Examples include practices that blur the boundaries between education and psychotherapy (Kokkos, 2014, 2017). In agreement with several scholars such as Illeris (2014), and Mezirow (1991), he argues that TL should not be viewed as a form of therapy dealing with psychological trauma. Despite this, he observes a growing number of colleagues who seem to take this warning lightly. He believes that the educational process could delve into interpreting unconscious voices through work on dreams and fantasies, even if the facilitator lacks a psychological background (Kokkos, 2017, p. 70). Based on these considerations, Kokkos and Tsiboukli (2011, pp. 482-486) pose a series of critical questions that have not yet been addressed in the literature. These questions explore the

boundaries between adult education and psychotherapy, the implications if the initial learning contract does not include an examination of unconscious behaviors and traumas, and how an educator could explore the mental structures of a learner in front of a temporarily focused group of 15-20 participants.

DISCUSSION

Based on the above, we can summarize what is derived from the juxtaposition of the perspectives of theorists in the field of TL and the view of the American thinker on emotion. Firstly, according to the mentioned points, we conclude that essentially only the first trend focuses on emotion. The other two trends use it as a "vehicle" to introduce into the field of TL: the second trend introduces the issue of the unconscious, and the third introduces spirituality. Representatives of the first trend believe that the transformative process is both a rational, and a deep emotional and creative experience, leading to emotional transformation. For this reason, they propose various techniques that activate emotion, such as group collaboration, the use of audio-visual media, and the utilization of images and works of various art forms. In contrast, representatives of the other two trends believe that the transformative process is largely unconscious or even spiritual. These concepts are closely related to emotion but also involve deep psychological processes such as dreams, fantasies, instincts, sexual desires (Freud, 1949), and religious, mystical, transcendent issues, such as the encounter with the "Divine", the search for the purpose of life, and the capacity for self-transcendence (Jung, 1971) - matters that are personally considered outside the scope of adult education. Newman (2012, p. 49) even notes the absence of any reference to spirituality in Mezirow's texts.

At this point, a consideration arises regarding which of the aforementioned theorists truly engage with Mezirow's work, aiming to reconsider the focus on it, and which use it as a pretext to promote their own ideas and opinions in the field of TL. For example, minimal references are found to Boyd's work (Boyd, 1983, 1984; Boyd & Myers, 1988) in connection with Mezirow's work, despite the fact that the researcher refers to transformative processes in groups. Therefore, if the second version holds, one should question to what extent the criticism directed at Mezirow is fruitful and creative or whether the excessive emphasis placed by some thinkers on emotion reproduces dichotomies in the field, as identified by Cranton & Taylor (2012). Of course, it cannot be overlooked that a significant element identified relates to the self-critical disposition of some theorists who, although proposing the expansion of TL through Jungian theory (for example, Cranton), do not fail to critically reflect on the extent, manner, and conditions under which this is feasible - a disposition, however, not found in everyone.

Additionally, we are concerned with the extent to which this criticism accurately reflects reality. As revealed by the content analysis, Mezirow initially associated emotion with the fundamental aspects of TL. After 2000, he gave even greater emphasis to the emotional dimension and accepted the relevant criticism directed at him. Moreover, he grounded his positions in cognitive psychology and psychoanalytic approaches, drawing elements from Goleman and Gould. We consider these two researchers to be more favorable to Mezirow, with Gould having had the opportunity to closely acquaint himself with the American thinker's work and Goleman presenting a comprehensive synthesis of elements from neuroscience and psychology in a widely understandable way, which includes implications for education and was, therefore, more familiar to him. Mezirow, starting from the social sciences, gradually incorporated elements from psychology and neuroscience into TL, as well as linguistic, cultural, and philosophical elements. All these components are integral to his work, portraying a holistic image of learning, and this multidimensional foundation of his theory is its strength. However, the most significant aspect was that the American thinker always processed these issues from

the perspective of adult education, fully developing only those for which he had significant references. For this reason, he did not proceed with the uncritical integration – under the weight of criticism – of elements he had not thoroughly explored and perhaps did not have the time to further process. Instead, he invited theorists in the field for a more in-depth examination. This attitude highlights his self-critical disposition, the tendency to avoid embracing sweeping generalizations, and his ethical and honest approach to reflection. Nevertheless, he was criticized for this specific stance (see Taylor & Marienau, 2022).

Secondly, we could argue that some of the proposals from theorists regarding educational practice are not well-documented and/or integrated. For example, as we have seen, several theorists (Cranton, 2011; Dirkx, 2010; K. Taylor in Elias & Taylor, 2012; Illeris, 2014; Taylor, 2001; Taylor & Marienau, 2016) considered the way in which the instructor orchestrates and manages the educational process crucial for the development of critical reflection alongside emotional expression. Subsequently, they highlighted the trainer's responsibility to psychologically support the group, enhance emotional expression and self-exploration, and the relationship with the world, even applying techniques such as meditation and sensory exploration of dreams, fantasies, etc., without, however, considering the possibilities and the scientific basis. An exception is Kokkos and Tsiboukli (2011, p. 484), who focus on the trainer's profile and emphasize that interventions in educational practice should be compatible with the background of knowledge and skills related to emotion. Tennant (2006) also suggests that trainers must have a mandatory psychological background covering all psychological theories, which does not correspond to reality. Mezirow's position (1990, 1991, 2009) was that the distinct roles of adult educators and therapists should be maintained, as well as the differentiation between educators and therapeutic groups. This specific position offers significant clarifications regarding the demarcation of the two fields, highlighting what Kokkos also points out, that their difference lies in the depth and breadth of emotions that are processed and how they are treated by the trainer and the group.

Another example is the proposal to use art as a means of parallel development of the rational and emotional aspects of the transformative process, which, as found, is a point of convergence for most theorists, including Mezirow himself. However, they do not delve further into methods and techniques of application, except for Kokkos (2021), whose method has been researched and applied in various educational environments (Katsouda, 2021). Additionally, it was observed that few theorists deal with the genre and aesthetic value of the works of art they propose and use, resulting in questionable contributions to the development of critical reflection (Kokkos, 2021).

In conclusion, we believe that a combination of TT with comprehensive proposals and methodologies that promote emotional expression along with the development of critical reflection within the framework of adult education, leads to an integrated theory that views critical learning from multiple perspectives and can be safely applied in educational practice (Karakou, 2023). Any other attempt to introduce elements related to the unconscious and spirituality into TL is impractical and dangerous, and the use of works from the cultural industry instead of significant works of high aesthetic value is guided learning and not transformative.

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