

# Teaching EBP: reflections from a transformative learning perspective

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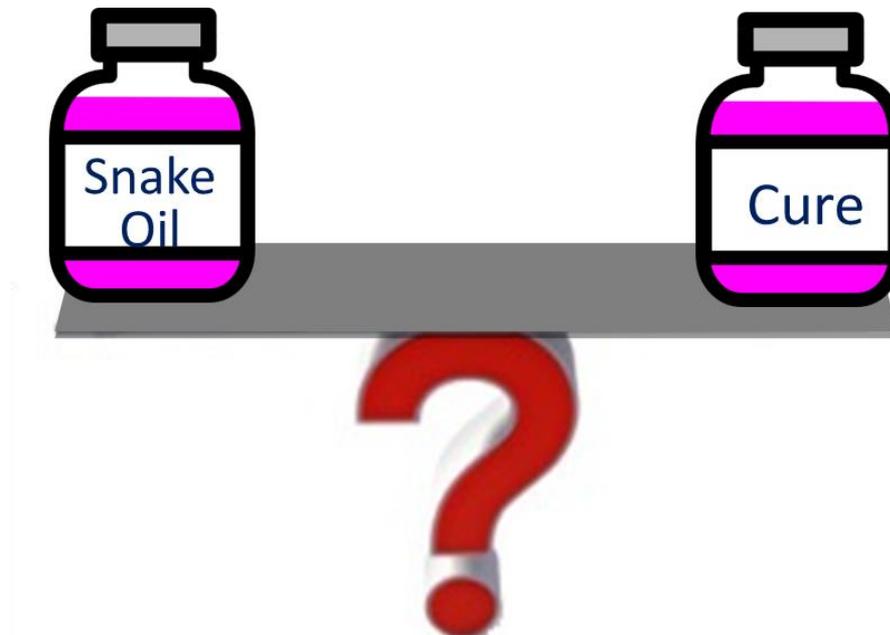
### Objectives:

1. Reflect on one's own teaching philosophy goals and values
2. Critically consider alternative approaches to teaching and learning,
3. Learn about key educational theories
4. Reflect on own teaching practice in the light of key readings from educational literature in relation to own students' learning
5. Understand how one's own teaching practice and understanding of learning and teaching has evolved and consider ideas for future development
6. Formative assessments

## My teaching practice

**Aim:** to fire people to become passionate about using evidence so that they demand evidence and are discriminating users of health research

**Key method:** “dibbing” – a questioning approach



# One of our small group formative assessments:



1. Choose from the previously taught learning theories the one that best reflected our teaching philosophy
2. Interview past students to evaluate their learning experiences using the chosen theoretical framework as the perspective

**Transformative  
learning theory**

# Transformational Learning Theory

*“Transformational learning is defined as learning that induces more far-reaching change in the learner than other kinds of learning, especially learning experiences which shape the learner and produce a significant impact, or paradigm shift, which affects the learner's subsequent experiences” (Clark, 1993)*



# Transformative learning – Jack Mezirow



Mezirow, J. (1975). *Education for Perspective Transformation: Women's Reentry Programs in Community Colleges*

Mezirow, J. (1978). "Perspective Transformation." *Adult Education*, 100–110

Mezirow, J. (1981). "A Critical Theory of Adult Learning and Education." *Adult Education* 32 (1981): 3–23

# Transformational vs. transformative learning

## 1. Kuhn's concept of a paradigm shift

When observations or experiments conflict with one's current conceptual model or model's predictions, leading to a new model (paradigm)

## 2. Paulo Freire's "conscientization"

A concept developed from literacy work in Brazil, where learning leads to positive **action to change** the world

## 3. Habermas' distinction between instrumental and communicative learning

*"The purpose of communicative discourse is to arrive at the best judgement, not to assess a truth claim, as in instrumental learning. To do so one must access and understand, intellectually and empathetically, the frame of reference of the other.... Our effort must be directed at seeking a consensus among informed adults communicating, when this is possible, but, at least, to clearly understand the context of the assumptions of those disagreeing."*

# Aim

To explore the learning experience of MSc in EBHC students from Oxford University using the perspective of transformative learning

- Evidence of reflective practice and changes in paradigms
- Changes in communication/relationships
- Participation in changing the world to facilitate EBP
- To explore elements of teaching that students liked
- To explore elements of teaching related to transformative learning

# Methods

- Pro-forma for interviews developed with DipLATHE small group
- First question: “What was your learning experience?”
- Later question: “Has it changed the way you do your job?”
- As looking for evidence of reflective practice, at end asked directly about reflective practice if not mentioned previously
- In thematic analysis we looked for:
  - paradigm shifts (transformations)
  - evidence of the learning feeding through attempts to change the world
  - changes in communication/relationships/models of discourse
  - episodes of cognitive conflict/confusion (Disorienting Dilemmas)

## Results

- a) All students made claims that would suggest implicitly or explicitly that their learning was transformational
- b) All students reported increased reflective practice
- c) All students mentioned interactivity and small group learning as important for their learning
- d) Some demonstrated “changing the world”
- e) Some demonstrated “changes in communication/relationships”

*“The programme for me was a transforming experience”*

*“It’s changed me and the way I look at the practice that I do now. It was fantastic for me.”*

(Early spontaneous comments)

*“It completely changed the way I do my job. It made me look at things from a different perspective both with patients and colleagues in terms of thinking about the evidence and how to try and communicate that to people and also with my peers giving me the confidence to speak out where perhaps in the past I didn’t fully understand what they were saying when they quoted evidence at me about how to practice.”*

*“It changed the way that I looked at the evidence around me, the people that come to be treated by me. It changed the way I looked at potential treatments that were coming out as opposed to what was already existing, what to look for to see if it would be useful for the patients or whether it wasn’t. **It’s changed my relationship with other practice nurses and a lot of them come to me probably on at least a weekly basis, wanting to know more about evidence,** how to search for things, how to find something and how to tell if something’s good or not or what do you do the people they’re looking after.”*

*“If someone then says to me, well what do you mean? I can actually say with confidence the answer and fully understand what I’m talking about. I think certainly in my area, well maybe all areas, people quote papers and this and that and talk the talk but actually when you understand the methodology behind it **you can then have a rational discussion** about whether you should use that evidence or not.”*

## Transformation, appraisal, reflective practice

*“It changed the way I do my job. It’s extremely complex. Although it sounds simple but it’s extremely complex. It changed the way how I reflect. It changed the way how I perform academically because now I basically critically appraise the new information. Before that I just accept that that’s a new fact and it’s up to us whether we use it or not. But the way is now I’m very critical it should be correct information, it should be graded evidence. So this is what I am doing.... And I am **not using dubious tests anymore**.... people substitute decision making by a test and then they get the result which they don’t know how to apply it and then they basically end up with the same uncertainty but at a different level and **they spend more resources as a result.**”*

## “Emancipating” and acting to change world

*“When I heard about All Trials, that really inspired me and I asked my professional body to sign up to that and as an organisation they did. And also the Trusts that I work for, I asked them – I sent around a global email saying that my team supported it and we wanted people within the Trust. So, yes, that really inspired me. I applied to be on a guideline group for NICE which I wouldn’t have done before. And at work I set up a journal club within my team.”*

*“I did a systematic review module but didn’t anticipate that I’d be writing systematic reviews so quickly afterwards”*

## Interactivity

*“The teaching method, I would give it a 5 star. So extremely interactive lectures, they are structured in a way that they are digestible. Normal lectures are a kind of big class but you give time, well you give the task and you give the opportunity to work with a group of a few people. This was extremely helpful method – some people say it’s interruption of the flow – no, it’s absolutely not because it allows people to engage and digest information. I enjoyed it, I learnt an enormous amount of information and I feel that OK, after this lecture I have a clear idea, so I didn’t end up with a kind of headache which usually happens when you go to lecture conferences and then, oh! what have we been talking about by the way?, and nobody’s asking questions because people just got lost - so that element is completely out.”*

*“I think probably the thing that surprised me the most was that most of the courses that I’d attended previously were very didactic and very lecture based and the thing that surprised me was the degree of interactivity. Even within nominal didactic sessions.”*

*“It’s interesting to actually have experienced teachers ... you were interested in learning yourselves. So it’s not one way communication, it was kind of two ways.... So this interaction which I am trying to use myself in my own teaching. But interaction with post-graduate participants is more difficult than medical students when you teach them.”*

*“I know from my own experience in my area, obviously very high impact professors, they don’t like interactive teaching because you get fragile. You might end up in an area where you have to tell students that there is actually something that you don’t know. And most professors in my area, they don’t like that feeling, so they just want to go down the road the way they used to go and they have all the same stories and all the same teaching. It’s a very simple problem about how you feel as a human being. Is it OK to, as a professor or highly esteemed teacher, that you must tell your students that there actually some things that you don’t know. Most people don’t like that. But in your courses I had the feeling that it’s OK not to know but it’s not OK not to find out.”*

# Limitations (huge!)

- Internal validity is questionable
  - Students being interviewed by their “teacher” – social compliance bias
  - Selection of students was not random
  - Analysis of text by teacher (me!)
- External validity may be poor
  - Amazing, keen, clever, self-selected for interest in EBHC, postgraduate healthcare professionals admitted to University of Oxford

## Bottom line

- EBP is intrinsically transformational
- Elements that facilitate transformative learning in students
  - A learning environment based on trust
  - Interactivity to promote critical reflection
  - Build on existing experience and knowledge of students
  - Problem-based using real life “problems” from students’ own practice
  - Assessments that reflect the processes and attitudes that you want to instil and are fundamentally formative
  - Model open, critically reflective (admit uncertainties and errors), questioning, answer-seeking approach

*Thank You For  
Listening*

*“Education is the most powerful weapon  
we can use to change the world”*

Nelson Mandela