

Chapter 1

Finding Liberation and Social Equality in Transformative Online Education

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ABSTRACT

To find liberation and social equality in transformative online education, the leaders in distance education should effectively focus on a dynamic critical design approach and bring the radical changes in the virtual world. Fostering the courtesy, confidentiality and human dignity of this decisive design approach in distance education should be an active process to obtain, evaluate and produce knowledge. Therefore, the strategies and principles of transformative online education should have a perspective on such serious concerns on liberation and social equality as whether the change process starts with professors, administrators, learners, education communities and professional reformers at local, state, national and international levels. The authors hope that the importance of considering a wide range of situations in implementing transformative online education and matching innovation with the realities of liberation and social equality deal with the rights of learners and professors. Not only should professors, therefore, help their learners but also themselves become active participants in distance education. Entire learning milieu should be interactive and collaborative help learners to work on complex projects, synthesize knowledge to build their own understandings, learn skills and concepts, and use them to solve real world problems. In this liberal and socially equal milieu, professors and learners should adopt innovative communication strategies for transformative online education; because distance education is going through a critical planning and management revolution process as well as concentrating on acquisition of novel intellectual models and egalitarian strategies.

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INTRODUCTION

“The real danger is not that computers will begin to think like men, but that men will begin to think like computers.” Sydney J. Harris

Not only has there been proliferating awareness in considering the future but also in acquiring new communication technologies, which is not deviating from the usual. Especially, the Internet-based technologies provide persons to communicate and interact with each other from text-based to audio-visual spectrums without caring the time and locations. Therefore, the people in the world have been coming closer with the development of communication technologies time after time.

Online education as one of the distance education applications is based on the Internet environment. Since it is a specialized education and communication style, there is no doubt to find some educational theories and approaches in the practices of online education (as well as some communication theories). As highlighted by Magro (2009), transformative learning, which is one of these educational theories, is a deeper level learning and it increases creativity, critical thinking, emotional self-awareness and a change in one's perspective leading to positive change. The other special characters of online education play the roles with the theories and approaches in the practices. Some of these are related to cultural, subculture, social issues and lifestyles as well as bias and stereotypes of the people around the worldwide. The persons in their locations have a capacity to meet the people in the world with other locations and all of these persons have shaped their lives based on their societies and cultures predominantly. It is very important perspective to achieve these persons learn and work together in transformative online education environments. The two concepts become to be considered in transformative online education when keeping in mind worldwide meetings, cultures and societies

as well as increasing creativity, critical thinking, self awareness and positive changes of people. These are liberation and social equality. Finding and understanding the infrastructure based on liberation and social equality in the transformative online education is the main issue of this chapter.

In this perspective, the only need for having the benefits of liberal and socially equal transformative online education is to connect the Internet and enter its huge and more and more growing virtual environment. Within the context of these concerns, professors and learners as tomorrow's leaders should deeply engage in developing a critical curriculum design for liberation and social equality in distance education. This new approach provides these people with alternative holistic forms and scaffolding strategies of social justice as well as the philosophical foundations and backgrounds of interactive environments needed to accelerate democratic transformations. Therefore, the possibilities and potentials of a critical design for transformative online education should engage all online participants in critical civic responsibilities, opportunities and powerful social actions. The strategies, principles and challenges of online interactions and collaboration in distance education should have unique and diverse perspectives as well as practical strengths of liberation and social equality.

As mentioned by Apple and Beane (1995), transformative online education should obtain genuine equal opportunities and democratic participations in distance education to build powerful knowledge networks not characterized by power, dominance, hierarchy and competition. Moreover, transformative online education should promote critical communication activities for interactive online milieus, and also empower authentic and high quality lifelong learning experiences. Finally, the radical approaches and revolutionary structures of liberation and social equality can fight the hegemonic power of capitalism and its unfairness structure in distance education milieus. Transformative online education, therefore, can

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