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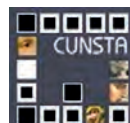
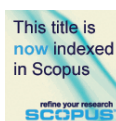
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Professional autobiographical process including identity work in creative writing practices

Ilona Tanskanen*

Abstract

Reflexive and reflective skills are needed in workplaces today and in the future, in contexts that we are not able foresee. The transformative learning theory is focusing on self-reflection and previous experiences of adult students. The practices based on transformative learning theory strive to elaborate on new and existing knowledge and skills, and revision of meaning schemes and perspectives. The target of learning is a change in the meanings given and in the frames of reference, signifying change in the identity of the learner. In making such a big change, critical reflection and critical self-reflection are essential, and alongside rational, cognitive work, imagination, intuition, and emotion also have important roles to play. The transformative learning process includes ten phases, which are also present in MA students' studies at the Arts Academy of the Turku University of Applied Sciences. One course, Professional Autobiographical Process is at the core of the process, and other courses are integrated with it. Art-based and creative methods combine different perspectives, also emotions, imagination and intuition, and provide a platform for identity work. Creative Life Writing, Free Writing, Focused Journaling, Digital Storytelling, and other art-based practices are applied and have proved to be fruitful in the professional autobiograph-

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ical process. The role of the tutor is to facilitate and coach, as transformative learning and professional identity work are highly personal processes. The practices bring out the growth and development, and the material produced documents the progress and makes achievements tangible. This serves the student as well as the tutor.

1. *Introduction*

Education directs us to (work)life in the future. However, we cannot exactly define what that future will be like, but we can already see the kinds of trends and phenomena we have ahead, and some of the workplace skills needed to overcome the challenges of the future. One of the most widespread visions of the future workplace skills is the list of twelve 21st-century skills: critical thinking, creativity, collaboration, communication, flexibility, leadership, initiative, productivity, social skills, information, and media and technology literacy¹.

Reflexivity with reference to questioning one's own personal attitudes, thinking, values, assumptions, prejudices, and actions is inherently present in many of the 21st-century skills. Many of the 21st-century skills, as well as reflexivity, are requirements for continuous learning, and are based on the ability to reflect on actions, and to consciously analyse practices and decision making. Although reflective and reflexive practices are difficult to learn, they are essential in lifelong learning, in learning from experience.

Experiences are the focus of transformative learning theory. Transformative learning theory has received significant position among the different learning theories, being today almost a synonym for andragogy². Personal experiences are fundamental, especially in the biographical approach to transformational learning and identity³.

This chapter examines the theoretical and methodological foundations of the autobiographical process as part of university studies, including professional identity work. The review is illustrated by opening up the Professional Autobiographical Process course and its elements in the Turku University of Applied Sciences' Master's Degree Programme in the Contemporary Contexts of Arts.

¹ Koenig 2011, pp. 1-2; Stauffer 2022.

² Illeris 2014, pp. 12-14; Kroth, Cranton 2014, pp. xiii, 4-6.

³ Illeris 2014, pp. 66-67.

2. Transformative learning theory as the theoretical framework for learning reflective skills

2.1. Aim in individual change

At Turku University of Applied Sciences' Arts Academy, the aims and especially the contents of the courses incorporating the professional autobiographical process vary between programmes, but at the core of them all is the development of reflective skills. At the end of the course, the students should be able to analyse their strengths and development needs as a professional in their field, develop their competencies in a goal-oriented manner, apply creative autobiographical art-based methods for reflecting their own evolving expertise identity and professional skillset, compare different forms of professionalism in a changing work life, assess their suitability to their own personal professional identity, and create and maintain partnerships and networks to support personal professional development⁴.

Goal setting is founded on the transformative learning theory made famous by Jack Mezirow⁵ and developed further by many other scholars⁶. The target of learning according to the transformative learning theory is a deep shift in perspective, resulting in more open, more permeable, more discriminating, and better justified habits of mind⁷.

Similar goal setting can be found in the description of the Creative Writing and Personal Programme (CWPD) at the University of Sussex (currently Creative and Critical Writing MA)⁸: studies claim to develop a more open, flexible, embodied, and agentic way of being, a more critical stance, and the ability to act with integrity – the transformation of professional identity⁹. These qualities are widely applicable and needed, for example, in lifelong learning as well as in versatile workplace contexts. The challenge, however, is how to teach and learn them, as they are not just particular knowledge areas or skills: informative learning to combine new information with already existing knowledge, but with extensive features, and transformative learning, actualised, for example, in the ability to ask critical questions about facts¹⁰.

⁴ Turku University of Applied Sciences' Study Guide 2022, YTAUKS2022, Master's Degree Programme in Contemporary Contexts of Art, <https://opinto-opas.turkuamk.fi/index.php/en/YTAUKS22/course_unit/21626>, 29.9.2022.

⁵ Mezirow 1978.

⁶ Illeris 2014, pp. 5-6, 12-15.

⁷ Kroth, Cranton 2014, pp. 2-3, 9.

⁸ University of Sussex, Creative and Critical Writing MA, <<https://www.sussex.ac.uk/study/masters/courses/creative-and-critical-writing-ma>>, 29.09.2022.

⁹ Hunt 2013, p. 65.

¹⁰ Kegan 2000, 2018; Matikainen 2022, pp. 40-41.

2.2. *Holistic approach*

In making such a big change, critical reflection and critical self-reflection are significant factors, but so are imagination, intuition, and emotion. Cognitive/rational, extra rational and social change approaches, all dimensions of learning are integrated to produce a deep shift: «the acquisition of new knowledge and skills, the elaboration on existing knowledge and skills, the revision of meaning schemes (beliefs and values), and the revision of meaning perspectives»¹¹. In transformative learning making meaning of one's experiences is essential, as the aim of the process is the change in what kinds of meanings are given, how the meanings are given and the premises on which the meanings are based¹². This makes the learning process highly personal and unique.

Transformative learning as a holistic approach is closely attached to the concept of identity. Knud Illeris sees that

identity comprises both how one experiences one's self, one's qualities and properties, and how one is experienced by others, and therefore the concept of identity includes both the self and the personality and something more that is due to the connection between the internal and the external experience¹³.

Illeris claims that «[t]he concept of transformative learning comprises all learning that implies change in the identity of the learner»¹⁴.

Although the concept of identity has been used and defined in various ways among diverse disciplines and paradigms and is therefore somewhat slippery, it fits the holistic nature of learning as a deep personal change. The way Illeris defines the concept of identity implies that it is construed and related to the context. Identity is in permanent movement although the core of it remains to be identifiable. Learning is seen as smaller or bigger change in identity, which is related, being at the centre of learning, to content, incentive and interaction¹⁵. Interaction is actualised, i.e. in different forms of storytelling, narratives and other ways of construing meanings, and therefore is essential in identity work – in transformative learning.

In the context of art education, identity and previous personal experiences are present with specific importance. Perceptions and experiences are elementary in making art and art is an essential part of the artist's professional identity but usually even more so: it is a wide-ranging area of artist's identity¹⁶. For many artists art is a way of life requiring lifelong reflection, not

¹¹ Kroth, Cranton 2014, pp. 1-3, 7.

¹² Merriam, Bierema 2013, p. 84.

¹³ Illeris 2014, p. 38.

¹⁴ Illeris 2014, p. 40.

¹⁵ See Illeris 2014, pp. 54, 59, 68-69, 144-146.

¹⁶ See Illeris 2014, pp. 74-79.

just a job¹⁷. Regardless of what importance the work identity (or professional identity) has in a person's life, the learning process including identity work can only be analysed and understood as part of an individual's development as a whole¹⁸.

Alongside the extensive goals of the transformative learning, we should bear in mind that in mature adulthood, learning may often be very selective and transformations become less likely after that point in life at which one realises that remaining lifetime is limited. After finding one's own personal way to live with natural limitations, external changes or disruptions are often needed to push into the deep learning process, as defined in transformative learning theory. Such changes in life conditions do happen though, in the form of, for example, health issues, losing family members or other loved ones, unemployment or societal crises¹⁹.

2.3. *The transformative learning process*

One of the most essential issues in learning design is the learning process. While the target of transformative learning is extensive and MA studies (at the Arts Academy) are to be achieved in a relatively short time (1.5 years), it is evident that the whole study plan must focus on the same goal, not just on one individual course. One of the courses, Professional Autobiographical Process in the MA Programme, Contemporary Contexts of Arts, forms the platform for self-reflection and for tutoring the learning process.

Transformative learning theory includes a ten-phase learning continuum²⁰, which is presented below. In another chapter in this publication, *Creative writing practices and autobiographical process enabling professional identity work*²¹, which focuses on the practical implementation of the autobiographical process in MA studies, the emphasis is on how the phases are present in the Degree Programme Contemporary Contexts of Arts (MA) at the Turku University of Applied Sciences' Arts Academy. The phases of the transformative learning process are²²:

1. Phase: A disorientating dilemma
2. Phase: Self-examination (questioning one's own personal beliefs)
3. Phase: Critical assessment
4. Phase: Recognition

¹⁷ Hirvi-Ijäs *et al.* 2020, pp. 124-126.

¹⁸ Illeris 2014, pp. 76-78.

¹⁹ Illeris 2014, pp. 90-91.

²⁰ Cranton 2000; MacKeracher 2012, p. 350.

²¹ Tanskanen 2023.

²² Cranton 2000; Kroth, Cranton 2014, p. 3; MacKeracher 2012, p. 350.

5. Phase: Exploration
6. Phase: Planning a course of action
7. Phase: Acquisition of knowledge
8. Phase: Provisional trying of roles
9. Phase: Building self-confidence in skills
10. Phase: Reintegration (to everyday life)

As mentioned earlier, the outcome of the transformative learning process is expected to be a change in meanings and meaning making²³. But how can we observe the meaning making, the contents, and the habits of meaning making? How can we recognise that they have changed during studies?

In highly personal processes, the targets and outcomes of learning and meaning making must be specified individually and by the students themselves. However, some kind of framework is needed for tutoring.

Minni Matikainen has found it fruitful to use Kegan's five progressive categories of meaning²⁴, making them an evaluation tool in her PhD research²⁵. According to Kegan's meaning-making model, levels 1-3 are connected with maturing in childhood and youth. In adult education, the most essential levels are therefore the fourth and fifth levels, which enable abstract thinking and self-reflection, revealing one's own personal needs and preferences, being aware of one's own personal feelings and inner processes, and committing oneself to other people and to personally meaningful issues. At the fourth level of meaning-making (the self-authoring mind), the ability to think individually and systematically is developed. Responsibility and ownership of inner authority, own personal values and ideologies as well as commitment to them are achieved. The goal in adult learning is usually to reach this level. The next, fifth level, which is the self-transforming mind, is also possible – although rarely before the 40th birthday. It requires the ability to monitor and take into account the systems to which individuals belong, awareness of how we and the systems are connected to each other, and our mutual dependency. At this level, the individual is steering their own system, capable of thinking and considering opposite views, ideologies, and abstract systems simultaneously, and being aware of the relativistic nature of knowledge. However, the levels are not strictly classifying; they represent the process of development in meaning-making, and there can be an exchange between levels, because the meaning-making is bound by context²⁶.

In assessment, as well as in the goal setting, students themselves are in the key position. Self-evaluation is a needed and essential part of the transformative learning process. Still the student is not to be left alone.

²³ Kroth, Cranton 2014, pp. 2-3, 9.

²⁴ Kegan 1982, 2000.

²⁵ Matikainen 2000.

²⁶ Kegan 1982, pp. 28, 32, 76-110; Matikainen 2022, pp. 41-45.

The tutoring lecturer has the role of representing “the other” and opening for the student the view to study oneself as “the other” when reflecting and presenting findings and discussions in the Professional Autobiographical Process. In the context of the highly personal and wide-range transformative learning process, it is very difficult to define how one should or could actually teach – rather, the tutor can provide students with a safe, trusting and respectful environment, where the questions presented by the students are welcomed, with helpful materials, assignments and communication opportunities for themselves as well as within the student group, lowering barriers and helping to find motivation. The role of the tutor is on the one hand to facilitate and, on the other hand, to evaluate and accept the outcomes in the summative assessment²⁷.

Carol E. Kasworm and Tuere A. Bowles have found out that programmes focusing on transformative learning in higher education have some common features²⁸:

- Student perspectives and assumptions are challenged;
- Critical thinking and creativity are promoted;
- Knowledge across the disciplines is integrated;
- Community-university partnerships and collaborations are engaged;
- Supportive and inclusive student communities are developed.
- Connections are enhanced between and among students and teachers.

These features have to be taken into account in learning design, in every course, assignment and practice. The lecturers and other educators should collaborate closely, aiming to integrate courses and enable the formation of learning community. Assignments, individual as well as group work, provide the instructor (tutor) with information, the way in which students’ processes are going and how. This information directs the personalised support given by the tutor.

In educational settings, learning is directed forward to progress, to get further, and gain better competencies, and concerning identity, better understanding, better practices, and better modes of experience. However, there is also the possibility for regressive transformative learning, which may take place in a situation that is interpreted as being too overwhelming. Even the regressive transformation, in a sense that personal learning targets are not reached, can still offer a possibility to change for the better or for advancement – although it can be a hard course to pass²⁹.

²⁷ See Illeris 2014, pp. 101-110; Kasworm, Bowles 2012, pp. 393-394; Weimer 2012, pp. 447-448, 451.

²⁸ Kasworm, Bowles 2012, pp. 396, 400.

²⁹ Illeris 2014, pp. 93-95.

3. *Creative life writing*

Celia Hunt calls Life Writing the method set used in the Creative Writing and Personal Development Programme (CWPD) at the University of Sussex, currently Creative and Critical Writing MA³⁰. Fictional and poetic techniques, self-experience, including physical and emotional experience, personal memories, and relations with others are all present in the learning process. The most significant elements in the learning environment from the perspective of supporting students' reflexivity are creative writing exercises, student-led as well as tutor-led experiential groups, critical reflection on experience through course diaries, learning journals, and end-of-course essays and papers³¹.

The Professional Autobiographical Process (the Process of Professional Growth) at Turku University of Applied Sciences' Arts Academy has benefited from the pioneering work of Celia Hunt, who founded the MA in Creative Writing and Personal Development Programme at the University of Sussex³². The Professional Autobiographical Process has been an important part of MA studies in Turku University of Applied Sciences' Arts Academy since 2015, and it applies many methods of CWPD at the University of Sussex.

The theoretical basis of applying creative writing methods is in the transformative learning theory, according to which, art-based methods, narrative learning and storytelling are very useful in the transformative learning process³³ because transformative learning as an internal process cannot actually be taught, only facilitated and fostered³⁴. Art-based methods, especially creative writing and journaling, offer opportunities to look at oneself as another, with their own personal life, actions, emotions and such. Stories that are told or written to oneself or others give space to reconstruct the inner self³⁵. Stories are seen and used as a way of understanding our experiences, as a means for identity work, and as a method for making sense of different kinds of issues from social and cultural viewpoints³⁶. Habits of mind and frames of reference are present in our interpretations and in the meanings we give to our experiences and are in reflective movements in narrative work in the form of creative writing, for example³⁷.

³⁰ Hunt 2013, p. ix; University of Sussex, Creative and Critical Writing MA, <<https://www.sussex.ac.uk/study/masters/courses/creative-and-critical-writing-ma>>, 29.09.2022.

³¹ Hunt 2013, p. xvi.

³² Hunt 2013, p. x.

³³ See Kroth, Cranton 2014, p. 10.

³⁴ See Illeris 2015, p. 46.

³⁵ Hänninen 2000, pp. 56-57.

³⁶ See Clark, Rossiter 2008, p. 65; Kroth, Cranton 2014, p. 14.

³⁷ See Kroth, Cranton 2014, pp. xiv, 10, 25.

4. *Freewriting*

One largely applied method in creative writing is freewriting. In freewriting the writer commits themselves to write freely and associatively for a given or decided time without stopping, trying to reach language flow³⁸. The aim of free associative writing is more open, truthful, and authentic expression.

One form of free writing is structured or controlled freewriting, which is aiming to produce raw material for drafts or has its value as a process when the produced material is not aimed to be used for any purpose later. In structured (or controlled) freewriting, the instructor gives initial words, but the writers are absolutely free to continue with them as they like, following where the pen or keyboard is taking them. The raw material produced – texts – remains private, but the writer can pick up words and phrases to be used in drafts or presented in discussions.

Freewriting and structured (controlled) freewriting have been applied by two worldwide known teachers of creative writing, Julia Cameron and Natalie Goldberg, in their methods. The methods are described in detail in their books: Natalie Goldberg's *Writing Down the Bones* (1986); *Wild Mind: Living the Writer's Life* (1990), and *Old Friend from Far Away: The Practice of Writing Memoir* (2007) as well as Julia Cameron's *The Artist's Way. A Spiritual Path to Higher Creativity* (1992) and *The Right to Write – An Invitation and Initiation into Writing Life* (1998).

The structured (controlled) freewriting facilitated by the instructor, as well as diary writing in form of focused journaling and group discussions, are key elements in Turku University of Applied Sciences' Arts Academy's MA students' Professional Autobiographical Process. These activities provide a place and space to retell inner narratives while side by side having opportunities to tell stories to others, communicating in professional context. Renewing the inner story is one of the targets, as well as finding new perspectives and discourses when telling and listening to stories in group sessions and learning teams. Nonetheless, the inner narrative remains private whilst the stories are told in various ways³⁹.

Creative activities, such as freewriting, can produce flow experiences, the feelings of fluent, effortless work. Aiming to flow experience presupposes that the practice should include such features as⁴⁰:

- option and opportunity to complete the task;
- chance to concentrate on activities as a result of clear goals and immediate feedback;
- sense of control over actions;

³⁸ Hunt 2013, p. 6.

³⁹ See Hänninen 2000, pp. 56-57.

⁴⁰ Csikszentmihalyi 2022, p. 59.

- option for deep and effortless involvement which makes it possible to step out from everyday life and worries;
- altered sense of time where concern for the self disappears – although it comes back afterwards and is stronger than before.

The flow experiences with the moments of joy and pleasure are needed to support students' motivation and tenacity alongside the challenging and the demanding processes of questioning previous interpretations, meaning-making and its premises in transformative learning and identity work. Flow experiences are also experienced in the professional autobiographical process in MA studies at the Turku University of Applied Sciences' Arts Academy, for example in the digital storytelling workshop and other art-based activities that are designed and guided so that several of the common elements in flow experiences would be possible and probable. The implementation of digital storytelling and other art-based activities are described in detail in other chapters in this publication⁴¹.

5. *Journaling*

Journaling in form of writing diary texts has been used as a method for various purposes and in diverse ways⁴². Many of us have experienced diary writing in some stages of life, usually in transitional or challenging times⁴³.

At the core of journaling practices is the option that journaling gives for self-reflection and the many positive impacts of that⁴⁴. Strengthened self-awareness and personal growth as results are needed in many contexts, in educational as well as therapeutic⁴⁵. The writers can steer their writing in personally meaningful purposes and directions by themselves or with the tutoring of the educator or therapist. Journaling as a practice can be a means to take care of oneself, but also others and "the world"⁴⁶.

Although in educational contexts the aim is not to achieve healing effects, students have also reported such experiences. In the following section, I bring together some of the most important impacts of reflective diaries (journaling) and some characteristics of diary and life writing enabling them.

⁴¹ Boehm 2023a, 2023b; Féja *et al.* 2023a, 2023b; Juppi 2023a, 2023b; Knežević, Malone 2023a, 2023b.

⁴² See Monk, Maisel 2021; Monk 2021, pp. x-xiv.

⁴³ See Monk 2021, p. xiv; Marinella 2021, p. 115; Johnson 2021, p. 139.

⁴⁴ See Monk 2021, p. xiv.

⁴⁵ See Borkin 2021.

⁴⁶ Kosonen 2020, pp. 39-48.

1. Life writing is an act of making sense of things⁴⁷. It offers possibilities to observe things from a safe distance and pace and is therefore essential in self-reflexive and reflective work.
2. Journaling offers the place and space to express oneself, to reflect, to freeze time and to take pleasure in writing⁴⁸. Private journaling provides a safe space to study even difficult issues and emotions. There is no need to take into account the possible reactions of others or the consequences for other people. Journaling is a free and safe zone.
3. Life writing provides an opportunity to rewrite oneself⁴⁹, and it is therefore low threshold practice for identity work. Art-based methods give the place and space for emotions, intuition, and imagery. In workshops and other practices which also include group work, they promote encounters and discussions, also focusing on existential questions: who am I? who are you? how do we get along with each other and the present conditions? As well as having an effect on private inner stories, storytelling broadens the social stock of stories when the stories are shared⁵⁰.
4. Focused journaling and other reflexive and reflective practices make such issues and processes tangible that would otherwise be very difficult to observe and pay attention to. Daily routines and recurrences are hard to become aware of – unless they are made visible. Values, attitudes, norms and premises can be discovered when we are able to examine everyday actions and considerations. This enables reflective practices and is valuable for the student, in supportive peer discussions as well as in tutoring.
5. Journaling as repeated daily or almost daily is meditative and ritual act and constructs therefore continuity. Ira Progoff has developed journaling practices for therapeutic and creative purposes. His method is based on the meditative nature of writing⁵¹. Also, Louise DeSalvo claims that writing is practice and ritual⁵². Rituals construct continuity as well as transformations and are therefore essential existential experiences. They also relieve anxiety⁵³. Journaling offers the possibility for continuity for the self and life⁵⁴. This has a remarkable role in well-being.

Autobiographical work, including journaling, self-portraying and other art-based methods, serves several angles: first being the agent in one's own life,

⁴⁷ Lejeune 2009, p. 181.

⁴⁸ Lejeune 2009, pp. 194-196.

⁴⁹ Kosonen 2014, p. 99.

⁵⁰ Hänninen 2000, pp. 128-130, 51-154.

⁵¹ Progoff 1992, p. 22.

⁵² DeSalvo 2000, pp. 71-77.

⁵³ See Uro 2021, p. 8.

⁵⁴ Kosonen 2014, p. 103.

then the perspective of experiencing one's own life, and also the viewpoint of the observer or bystander and researcher of one's own life, as well as the role of author of one's own story and the vantage point of the story's spectator⁵⁵. This complex of different roles anchoring to the same bodily person is attractive and empowering, almost irresistible and includes reflexivity and reflectivity. The material produced in the professional autobiographical process can be used as raw material for many purposes, art being one of them, but it may also be art as it is or has its value in the process without any supposed uses later.

In the implementation of professional autobiographical processes in the Contemporary Contexts of Arts Programme studies in the Arts Academy at the Turku University of Applied Sciences, focused journaling is a key element in learning design. The practices are discussed in detail in another chapter in this publication, *Creative writing practices and autobiographical process enabling professional identity work*⁵⁶. Connected to every month's contact classes, students are asked to do reflective work in form of journaling and to use it in given questions, learning materials or other prompts as a starting point.

The process forms a ten-phase continuum that concentrates on self-reflective work and is being integrated to other courses in the study plan. The theoretical and methodological basis is in the transformational learning theory and the ten-phases process it includes⁵⁷ as well as in Celia Hunt's distinguished groundwork in the MA in Creative Writing and Personal Development Programme at the University of Sussex⁵⁸.

The professional autobiographical identity work done individually in the form of focused journaling as well as in learning groups, other creative methods and various assignments connected to it, brings out the growth and development as the produced material documents the progress. The tangible material makes it possible to reflect the process later and notice the objectives that have been completed.

6. Conclusions

Autobiographical storytelling in its various forms, partly done alone and just for oneself, and partly shared in a group, is an applicable and notable method set for reflective and identity work aiming to provide flexible identity. Group discussions offer possibilities to share experiences and work with one's own personal interpretations and meaning-making by reauthoring and

⁵⁵ See Saresma 2007, p. 64; Tanskanen 2013, p. 80.

⁵⁶ Tanskanen 2023.

⁵⁷ See Cranton 2000; Kroth, Cranton 2014, p. 3; MacKeracher 2012, p. 350.

⁵⁸ See Hunt 2013.

retelling them, as well as to get experience of being listened to and seen and to receive feedback. This can have empowering effects on the professional's self-esteem and sense of security as well as opening up new visions to (professional) identity.

However, further research would be needed to study the kinds of changes and transformations that MA students are going through in their meaning-making, understood as perspectives, the frames of reference, and professional identity in the professional autobiographical process. Various storytelling practices and critical discourse analysis as a point of departure for studying workplace practices as well as identity narratives have been part of practices in the Arts Academy at the Turku University of Applied Sciences, and future research should focus on the continuous constructive formation of identity in various, competing and intertwining discourses and narratives. This kind of research would, for its part, join critical discussion focusing on transformational learning theory and its relevance in higher education institutes as well as broadening the perspective to societal and cultural contexts.

From a pragmatic point of view, research focusing on tutoring and its supportive activities is still needed. The fundamental issue in fostering the transformative learning process is how to challenge students' meaning-making safely, without pushing them to such edges they might even need therapeutic help⁵⁹. What kinds of supportive activities and practices would be resulting experiences of empathy and the collaborative relationship between students and the tutors⁶⁰?

The feedback from students, as well as observations made during contact classes, post-assignments and discussions, has given tutors the impression that the professional autobiographical process is an important, memorable, and impressive part of MA studies. Based on students' feedback the professional autobiographical process has proved to be fruitful and the students have appreciated it. Some students have even applied to MA studies in the Arts Academy because of the possibility for professional autobiographical and identity work.

Transformational learning theory and the related methods and practices are now perhaps more current than ever, as we live in such turbulent times. We have huge challenges ahead: the climate catastrophe; the era of polarisation and non-peace to name just a couple. It is very difficult to see what kinds of skills and knowledge would be helpful in overcoming such challenges – if not self-reflection and reflective competencies.

⁵⁹ See Taylor, Cranton 2012a, pp. 560, 562, 570.

⁶⁰ See Taylor, Cranton 2012a, p. 571.

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