The application of Meaning Therapy for Adult Education in Taiwan

As Frankl (2006) states, “Man’s search for meaning is the primary motivation in his life and not a ‘secondary rationalization’ of instinctual drives” (p. 99). Ault educator Jack Mezirow who propose and promotes transformative learning also says, “A defining condition of being human is that we have to understand the meaning of our experience” (1997, p. 5). Those who commit suicide are because their sense of meaning for life vanishes—they can no longer find a reason to live for. Even though such a “primary motivation” governs the functioning of our lives, we often are unaware of its driven force. When dramatic troubles come, we are easily succumbed by the situation and feeling confused, depressed because we feel life is void of meaning and hopeless. Meaning therapy at this point can be of help to reconstruct the meaning of one’s life so that one can gain back the courage and strength for life. However, in the discourse of adult education is not much linked to the discourse of meaning therapy. When one keying in keywords of adult education and meaning therapy in the Airiti Online Library system yields no results. Therefore, this is an area can be cultivated.

This research will be conducted through literature reviews of recent 20 years of adult education literatures of Taiwan to find discourse or practice though without the name of meaning therapy but in fact with the elements of it. On this foundation, possible ways of implementing ideas of meaning therapy in adult learning setting will also be proposed. Hermeneutical understanding and interpretation of texts will be the theoretical foundation of this research.

Though the linkage between adult education and meaning therapy was not common, there are still educational activities which apply the principles of creative value, experiential value and attitudinal value to help learners reconstruct meaning in life. For instance, in senior citizens’ learning programs, art creation, reminiscence activities, and with more examples of using positive psychology as a main approach to conduct teaching and learning can be seen.

Understanding meaning therapy can help adult educators deepen the significance of current practices and be inspired to develop new teaching materials and activities. Wong (2012) calls for “a grassroots campaign to educate people about the importance of responsible and purposeful living” (p. 19). I see adult education has an important role in responding such a calling. He not only issue such a calling, he and contributors of meaning therapy also work together to provide “the framework for meaning based education” (Wong, 2012, p. 19)

**Key words**: adult education, meaning therapy, senior learning, positive psychology 2.0

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