



Transfer, Transitions and Transformations of Learning

Middleton, H. E.; Baartman, L.K.J., eds.
Sense Publishers, 2013

Book Review

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This edited volume of eleven articles explores the concepts of transfer, transitions, and transformation within a focus of educational technology. This title is part of the International Technology Education Series, and the authors mainly come from the field of education. The articles engage a number of fields including: engineering, science, technology, vocational education, nursing, and architecture.

The opening chapter provides a literature review of transfer, especially in relationship to transitions and transformation. A successful transfer is defined as “a product where something learned in one context is used to assist learning in another context” (2). The authors explore this concept in regards to motivation, sameness and difference, unproductive transfer, transfer in relationship to transitions and transformation, and transfer as boundary crossing. After this introduction, various authors offer research studies and exploratory essays around these subjects.

Several of these studies deserve special mention. Bjurulf’s chapter on the LISA (Learned in Several Arenas) Project explores transfer between work and school within vocational education. This research study uses semi-structured interviews to explore the nature of transfer. Her research supports the conclusion that the transfer of knowledge must be a holistic blending of practice and theory. Another article by Baartman, Gravemeijer, and De Bruijn examines transfer in relationship to technology in non-technical jobs as boundary-crossing skills. They engage transitions, which encompass successfully taking a learned concept from one situation and applying it to another situation. For these authors, and in a number of articles in this book, transfer occurs as a consequence of transitions. Baartman,

Gravemeijer, and De Bruijn observe that boundaries should be viewed as learning opportunities as students work to successfully take skills back and forth between school and the workplace. They indicate that it is important to design education for successful transitions that empower boundary-crossing opportunities.

Some of the articles, such as Pavlova's and MacGregor's, focus upon transformation and transitions, but many of articles do not engage either concept. Both Pavlova and MacGregor engage transformation in terms of the self and as social change. For Pavlova, transformation is demonstrated in both critical self-reflection and emancipatory change. MacGregor focuses on factors that foster or inhibit transformation in teachers as they make the transition from their last year at university to their first year in teaching. MacGregor's transformation also engages self-reflection as teachers' identities are transformed by their experiences of teaching and learning.

Many of these studies might be considered essays or well-developed literature reviews rather than research studies, because they lack an identifiable research methodology. Overall, the various articles appear to be disconnected and underdeveloped with the exception of the authors mentioned. A final concluding chapter would have been helpful to weave these articles together and draw some overarching conclusions. However, the articles are easy to read, contain good bibliographies, and provide an introduction to the scholarly discourse around transfer.

For theological education, transfer is an important aspect of field education. The relationship between theory and practice and methods of creating transfer between the two is critical for the quality of theological education, but the value of this title for theological education is limited. Theological schools with strong pedagogical educational programs or terminal degrees in education might benefit from adding this title to their libraries. Universities with graduate educational programs would want to add this title, especially for those with vocational teacher preparatory programs.

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