



**Restor(y)ing lives:
Autobiographical reflection and
perspective transformation in adults
returning to study**

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how stories came to matter ...



- hair care
- aged care
- child care
- health and wellbeing
- professional development

what's in a name ... is a rose as sweet by
any other name?

- narrative, autobiography & autobiographical reflection, biographicity, educational biography, interpretive biography, storytelling & restorying.
- all contain commonalities around providing the space for people to tell & gain understanding around their stories old & new

the transformative journey of story

- telling & reflecting on our stories to identify deeply inculcated beliefs & behaviours



- symbolic & subjective frames of reference in interpreting past experience
 - challenging cultural norms
- meaning-making, authenticity & authorship
 - identity transformation
- seeing ourselves as authors of new stories untold
- the individual journey towards personal liberation & empowerment

Mezirow, Cranton, Nelson, Frankl, Rogers, Brookfield, Freire & Bourdieu,

- critical theory, examining power relationships
 - identifying hegemonic assumptions
 - reconciling the past
 - personal revolution
 - moving beyond an expectation of the future based on past experience



Mezirow's ten phases

- a disorienting dilemma – loss of job, divorce, marriage, back to school, or moving to a new culture
 - self-examination of feelings of fear, anger, guilt, or shame
 - a critical assessment of assumptions
 - recognition that one's discontent and the process of transformation are shared
 - exploration of options for new roles, relationships & actions
 - planning a course of action
 - acquiring knowledge & skills for implementing one's plans
 - provisional trying of new roles
 - building competence & self-confidence in new roles & relationships
- a reintegration into one's life on the basis of conditions dictated by one's new perspective

the questions ...

- in what ways can telling and reflecting on their story provide adult learners returning to study with a greater knowledge of self to foster a richer engagement in the learning process, building learner self-identity and potentially promote more beneficial learning and vocational outcomes?
- can these individual outcomes extend beyond the individual to their immediate environment, and further to society?
 - what are the potential implications of these findings on pedagogical practices and curriculum design in VET?

the method

- introducing reflection as a tool
 - telling the story
- sample of 5 volunteers
 - 1:1 interviews
 - 1 focus group
- digital recording
 - notes
 - nvivo



the participants and their stories

- 4 adults returning to study in a Diploma of Liberal Arts at TAFE



- 50 yr old female
- 19 yr old female
- 19 yr old male
- 20 yr old female
- 18 male, uncompleted VCAL hairdressing
- me, situated deeply within the research

imagining stories untold ...

we are both the product and the dormant seed that
holds within it undiscovered potential for
unimaginable truths ... the frog in the well ...



recommendations

- further research ... collaborative pilot program linked with Recognised Informal Learning (RIL)
- PD for practitioners across the VET sector in programs that foster transformation around learner self-identity and perceived capacity



**“... you need only claim the events of
your life to make yourself yours.
when you truly possess all you have
been and done,
which may take some time,
You are fierce with reality.”**

Florida Scott-Maxwell (1968)