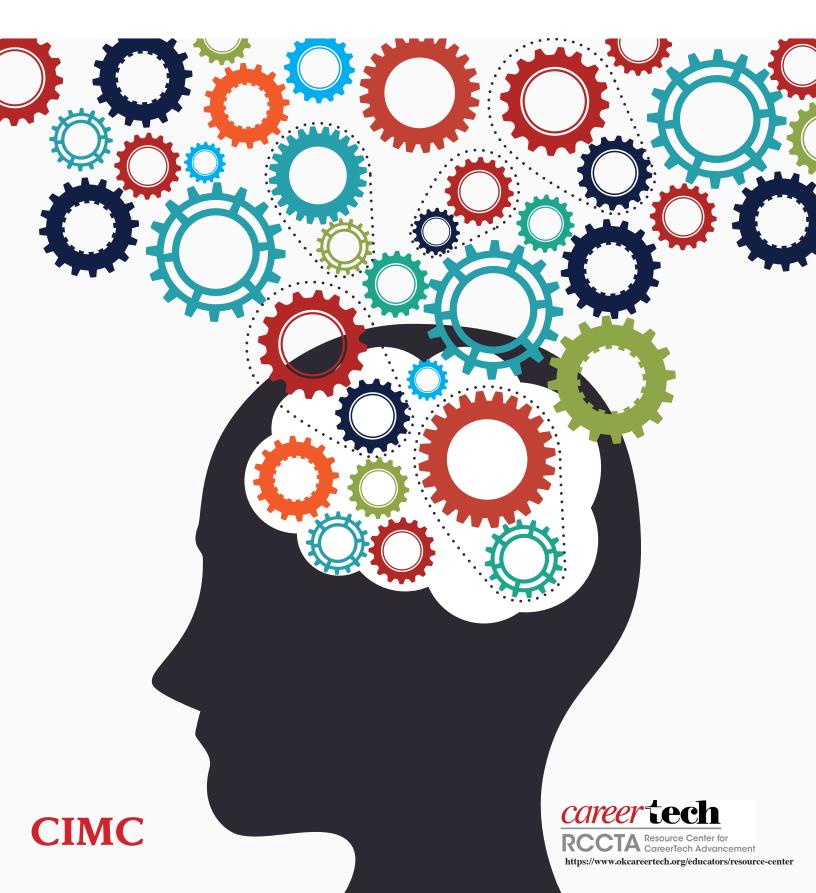
Facilitating Adult Learning Understanding Adult Learners



OKLAHOMA DEPARTMENT OF CAREER AND TECHNOLOGY EDUCATION

Facilitating Adult Learning

Understanding Adult Learners

Curriculum and Instructional Materials Center

UNDERSTANDING ADULT LEARNERS

Copyright © 2012

Oklahoma Department of Career and Technology Education Curriculum and Instructional Materials Center Stillwater, Oklahoma 74074-4364

Project Manager: Laurie Richison

Writer: Jill Bakken

All rights reserved. This publication, or parts thereof, may not be reproduced in any form by photographic electrostatic, mechanical, or any other methods for any use including information storage and retrieval, without written permission from the publisher. Web site addresses were accurate and all content on referenced web sites was appropriate during development and production of this product. However, web sites sometimes change; the CIMC takes no responsibility for site's content. The inclusion of a web site does not constitute an endorsement of the site's other pages, products, or owners. Verify all web sites prior to use.

Oklahoma Department of Career and Technology Education does not discriminate on the basis of race, creed, color, national origin, sex, age, veteran status, or qualified handicap.

Printed in the United States of America

Table of Contents

Introduction
Malcolm Knowles and Andragogy
Characteristics of Adult Learners
Motivation Factors
Barriers to Learning
Dispositional barriers
Situational barriers
Institutional barriers
Learning Styles
Visual6
Auditory
Kinesthetic7
References
Web References
Book References

Introduction

Teaching adults can be an exciting and fun opportunity. Most adults are in the classroom because they *want* to learn what you have to teach. These learners are very different from younger learners, and this document will help you better understand the multiple aspects that influence their learning.

Malcolm Knowles and Andragogy

Malcolm Knowles is probably one of the most well-known names in the field of adult education. He came up with a theory on how adults learn and named his theory *andragogy*, which means "the art of teaching adults." This can be related to the word *pedagogy*, which means "the art of teaching children."

Knowles' theory of andragogy identified the following five areas that make adult learners distinct from younger learners.

- When people are young, they are dependent; but that as they age, they become independent and self-directed.
- Adults accumulate rich resources of learning through their life experiences, and these resources can be applied to their new learning experiences.
- Social roles affect the readiness for adults to learn.
- Adults are problem-centered learners and want to apply their knowledge immediately, whereas younger people who are more subject-centered and expect to use their knowledge at some future time.
- Internal factors motivate adult learners more than external factors.

Characteristics of Adult Learners

There are many definitions as to what qualifies one as an adult learner, but the most commonly accepted criteria include head of household, over 21, or married. If any one of these criteria is true, then one may be classified as an adult learner.

- **Internal factors** Adult learners are independent, self-directed, and self-motivated. Unlike children, adults participate in the learning process because they *want* to, not because they *have* to.
- **Self-perception** Adult learners perceive themselves as *doers*, such as workers or parents, and therefore participate in learning to improve or advance in one of their many roles.
- **Diverse** Adult learners are very different from each other, such as in their background, age, education level, profession, and stage in life.
- **Experience** Adult learners possess considerable life experiences that they can draw upon during the learning process.
- **Interests** Adult learners are interested in topics that relate to their stage of life, such as just starting a career, changing a career, or advancing in their career.
- **Motivation** Adult learners want to solve problems they are currently facing and seek information that can be immediately applied. They also need to perceive the outcome of the learning process as valuable and are focused on the effective use of time.
- **Expectations** Adult learners have well-formed learning expectations which may be negative based on past experiences. They may reject or explain away new information that rejects their beliefs.

Motivation Factors

Besides wanting to solve their immediate problems, additional factors that motivate adults to learn include:

- Creating new social relationships EXAMPLES: Friendships, professional contacts
- Meeting current employment standards or requirements
- Achieving professional advancement
- Increasing knowledge in a particular area of interest
- Pursuing interests and activity outside of home and work
- Adjusting to life changes, such as marriage, parenting, divorce, retirement
- Serving others in the community and improve social welfare

Barriers to Learning

Barriers to learning is another factor to consider when working with adult learners. Even adults who are extremely motivated to learn may not participate in learning opportunities as a result of one more of the following three barriers.

Dispositional barriers

- Feeling too old
- Dislike of study
- Lack of self-confidence
- Uncertain about the purpose of learning something new

Situational barriers

- Cost of education
- Lack of time
- Home responsibilities
- Career or job obligations
- Childcare needs
- Lack of transportation
- Lack of family support

Institutional barriers

- Times in which courses are offered
- Lack of information about different programs
- Location of the institution
- Procedural difficulties
- Complicated registration processes
- Lack of support services, such as childcare and career services
- Lack of feeling important by the institution

Learning Styles

Often the best place to start when learning about different learning styles is to investigate your own preferences regarding the learning process.

Visit <u>http://people.usd.edu/~bwjames/tut/learning-style/stylest.html</u> to take a learning styles inventory. You will learn that you are either a visual learner, auditory learner, or a kinesthetic learner.

Visual

Likes

- Looking at pictures
- Studying maps
- Looking at graphs, tables, and charts
- Working with puzzles
- Watching videos and slide shows
- Reading a procedure

Other traits

- Distracted by visual chaos
- Bored with extensive listening

Auditory

Likes

- Listening to others read
- Listening to audio recordings
- Listening to a lecture
- Listening to others describe a procedure
- Talking through a procedure

Other traits

- Distracted by sounds
- Repeats directions or commands
- Good at following oral directions

Kinesthetic

Likes

- Physical, hands-on activities
- Working with a model
- Drawing or illustrating
- Constructing a project
- Role playing
- Participating in games
- Taking things apart

Other traits

• Learn by doing

Now that you know the differences between visual, auditory, and kinesthetic learners, the next question you may be asking is: *How do I teach so that I address all these different learning styles?*

Visit <u>http://www.youtube.com/v/oNxCporOofo</u> to watch a short video, which offers some great ideas on how you can be a teacher that effectively addresses all types of learners.

References

Web References

Adult Characteristics <u>http://ed.fnal.gov/lincon/staff_adult.shtml</u>

Malcolm Knowles, Informal Adult Education, Self-direction and Andragogy http://www.infed.org/thinkers/et-knowl.htm

Principles of Adult Learning http://www2.honolulu.hawaii.edu/facdev/guidebk/teachtip/adults-2.htm

Teaching Strategies – Learning Styles <u>http://www.youtube.com/v/oNxCporOofo</u>

What's Your Learning Style? http://people.usd.edu/~bwjames/tut/learning-style/stylest.html

Book References

Merriam, S. B., Caffarella, R. S. (1999). Learning in adulthood: A comprehensive guide. Jossey-Bass Pubishers: San Francisco, CA.

Facilitating Adult Learning (2002). Oklahoma Department of Career and Technology Education.