

ADULT vs. CHILD LEARNING

1. Adults are people with years of experience and a wealth of information.

Focus on the strengths learners bring to the classroom, not just gaps in their knowledge. Provide opportunities for dialogue within the group. Tap their experience as a major source of enrichment to the class. Remember that you, the teacher, do not need to have all the answers, as long as you know where to go or who to call to get the answers. Students can be resources to you and to each other.

2. Adults have established values, beliefs and opinions.

Demonstrate respect for differing beliefs, value systems and lifestyles. Let your learners know that they are entitled to their values, beliefs and opinions. Allow debate and challenge of ideas.

3. Adults are people whose style and pace of learning has probably changed.

Use a variety of teaching strategies such as small group problem solving and discussion. Use auditory, visual, tactile and participatory teaching methods. Reaction time and speed of learning may be slow, but the ability to learn is not impaired by age. Most adults prefer participatory teaching methods rather than lecture type presentations.

4. Adults relate new knowledge and information to previously learned information and experiences.

Assess the specific learning needs of your audience before your class or at the beginning of the class. Present single concepts and focus on application of concepts to relevant practical situations. Summarize frequently to increase retention and recall. Material outside of the context of participants' experiences and knowledge becomes meaningless.

5. Adults have varying attention spans.

Plan frequent breaks, even if they are 2-minute "stretch" breaks. During a lecture, a short break every 45-60 minutes is sufficient. In more interactive teaching situations, breaks can be spaced 60-90 minutes apart.

6. Adults have pride.

Support the students as individuals. Self-esteem and ego are at risk in a

classroom environment that is not perceived as safe or supportive. People will not ask questions or participate in learning if they are afraid of being put down or ridiculed. Allow people to admit confusion, ignorance, fears, biases and different opinions. Acknowledge or thank students for their responses and questions. Treat all questions and comments with respect. Avoid saying "I just covered that" when someone asks a repetitive question. Remember, the only foolish question is the unasked question.

7. Adults have a deep need to be self-directing.

Engage the students in a process of mutual inquiry. Avoid merely transmitting knowledge or expecting total agreement. Don't "spoon-feed" the participants.

8. Individual differences among people increase with age.

Take into account differences in style, time, types and pace of learning. Use auditory, visual, tactile and participatory teaching methods.

9. Adults tend to have a problem-centered orientation to learning.

Emphasize how learning can be applied in a practical setting. Use case studies, problem solving groups, and participatory activities to enhance learning. Adults generally want to immediately apply new information or skills to current problems or situations.

10. Adults prefer non-formal learning environments

Formal education as typically found in schooling systems are based on set prescribed outcomes, controls and discipline given the immaturity of the learners, whereas non-formal education is more responsive to the needs and the contributions of learners. It is less restrictive and rigid.

Leadership matters
Post Net Suite # 75, Private Bag X3, Plumstead, 7801
Cell: 084 707 2524 Phone/Fax: (021) 712 6908
Email: alan@leadershipmatters.co.za

ADULT LEARNING NEEDS ASSESSMENT

'Who needs what as defined by whom'? (WWW) This should become the basis for conducting your needs assessment. A useful way to unpack this is to use the 'Seven Step Planning' method:

'Who, Why, When, Where, What For, What and How' The planning steps allow us to firstly address the learner as the subject of the learning to be conducted and seeks to address the client's expectations (e.g. Campus, IBM).

Let's unpack some of these questions:

1. Who are the learners?

The facilitator needs to know, ahead of time, who the target learners are by gaining the following information:

Bio Details: age, cultural backgrounds, gender, educational backgrounds

Learning needs/expectations: This can be done by way of a simple questionnaire circulated ahead of the workshops, or sample telephone calls to some of the learners. Some useful questions: Why are you attending this workshop? What do you hope to learn from the experience? List three things you hope to learn? What challenges do you face in your context? What difference do you hope this learning will make?

2. Why are we holding the workshops?

This is a question that is usually addressed to the client but it is a useful question to ask learners as well. It clarifies the goals and expectations of the client which then needs to compare to those of the learners. Often there's a conflict here because often clients have immediate goals that serve the organisation's needs and not long term goals that develop and serve the learners needs. Good educators are good negotiators!

3. What for?

These are the achievement-based outcomes. It usually begins with the statement: 'By the end of the three days the learners will be able to...' Notice that the learners are the subject of the learning. All the outcomes are stated actions or competencies, e.g. 'The learner will be able to design a needs assessment.' The 'what for' question addresses the accountability side of learning.

4. What?

The question of content. What new competencies will they learn? What new readings and ideas will they be exposed to? The crucial thing here is to ensure that the content is relevant and at the appropriate level, e.g. Theories of Adult learning.

5. How?

The question of methodology. Which are the most appropriate methods, aids etc. making sure that they take into consideration needs, expectations etc. Here we consider options like small group discussions, audiovisual materials, case studies etc.

6. Where?

The question of venue which in turn relates to the crucial question of setting. The learning setting influences the learning outcomes!

7. When?

Leadership matters
Post Net Suite # 75, Private Bag X3, Plumstead, 7801
Cell: 084 707 2524 Phone/Fax: (021) 712 6908
Email: alan@leadershipmatters.co.za

DESIGNING AN ADULT LEARNING EXPERIENCE' "INCOME GENERATES OUTCOME"

Outcome:

That on completion of the module the learners will have the confidence and competency to design a basic learning experience.

The 6 Components of a Basic Learning Design:

1. INSIGHTS
2. NEED'S ASSESSMENT
3. CONTENT
4. OUTCOMES
5. METHODS
6. EVALUATION

1. INSIGHTS:

The design of any learning experience begins with the insights of the facilitator. Firstly, they must have insights into the subject they have been asked to facilitate. Secondly, they must have or at least begin developing insights into the context they will be facilitating in: the people, country, culture and the community/organisation they are going to work with.

2. NEED'S ASSESSMENT:

The learners must be assessed using one or more of the following: Questionnaires, interviews, focus groups. At a minimum you want to clarify the learners' needs and expectations.

3. CONTENT:

The theme or topic of the content is often assigned by the client or sponsor. This gives you direction for the content design, e.g. "How to Experience God's Love and Forgiveness"

Your task now is to decide what you will include as content, based on the need's assessments of the learners. You may decide in terms of the example that the following must be covered somehow:

- Biblical understanding of God's love and understanding.
- Define the terms 'love' and 'forgiveness' from a biblical perspective versus human perspective.

4. OUTCOMES:

Each learning experience must have clearly defined outcomes written with the learner as the subject of the experience. As we have already stated they are short action statements beginning with the words: "At the end of this module the learners will be able to..." The number of outcomes will depend on the amount of material covered, the duration of the session and most importantly, the learners needs being realized.

5. METHODOLOGIES:

You now have to decide how best to convey the two learning objectives above.

- You could give the group a biblical passage to discuss in groups.
- You could use a human case study of incredible forgiveness e.g. Nelson Mandela to highlight comparatively the incomparable nature of God's love and forgiveness.
- You could get them to share personal stories of love and forgiveness in their own lives.
- You could have a video capture forgiveness and love.

The major thing to remember is that in a good design in adult learning the facilitator must constantly be super imposing and weaving the basic principles of adult learning over the methodologies chosen. You are constantly motivating, affirming and drawing the group into discussion. Your design must show cognizance of the cognitive, affective and the psychomotor functions in the adult learning experience.

6. EVALUATION:

There are two dimensions to evaluation: continuous and the final one. The continuous evaluation is based as we will see in the next module on simple yet key questions: How are you finding the material so far? Are you all getting the key concepts? Is there anybody struggling to understand the materials? The final evaluation is usually in the form of a presentation, a project, a paper, an interview etc.

Leadership matters
Post Net Suite # 75, Private Bag X3, Plumstead, 7801
Cell: 084 707 2524 Phone/Fax: (021) 712 6908
Email: alan@leadershipmatters.co.za

Awareness:

Awareness for the facilitator begins with understanding the difference between facilitating and teaching or lecturing. There are a number of key differences that we can highlight:

LECTURING	FACILITATING
Focus on the contribution of teacher	Focus on the learner's contribution
The teacher has authority by virtue of academic experience	The learners play significant role by virtue of their life experience.
Everything rests on the teacher's presentation	Everything rests on the learner's contribution.
Research/prep focused primarily on content development.	Research/prep focused primarily on the learner's needs
Emphasis on articulateness of teacher	Emphasis on learner's participation
Focus on transference of information	Focus on transference of competencies

Leadership Matters
 Post Net Suite # 75, Private BagX3, Plumstead, 7801
 Cell: 084 707 2524 Phone/Fax: (021) 712 6908
 Email: alan@leadershipmatters.co.za