

ADULT EDUCATION TEACHING STRATEGIES AND METHODS

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CONCEPT OF ADULT EDUCATION :

You can understand the concept "adult education" better if you first understand the concept 'adult' very clearly. We will therefore focus first on "adult". In simple terms, we can define "adult" as a person who has attained physical, mental, emotional and social maturity or legal age for marriage, or for franchise or voting right. But can we say for certain that every person who has attained physical maturity only, or legal age of adulthood can be considered to be mature adult of that society or country? Or can we say at what age a person will definitely become an adult, in terms of maturity? The answer is 'No'. But at the same time, as Adult Education: The Basic mentioned above, we can be sure of one thing that we are all adults with different Concept, Terms, Features and Objectives levels of maturity and belong to the most significant and productive age group - physically, socially, mentally, economically, politically, morally culturally, and so on. Nevertheless, we need to remember that maturity is an endless process and in general it increases with one's age, experience and knowledge. In the context of adult education, the concept 'adult' remained inadequately defined because of the multiplicity of criteria used in defining it. The Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary (1995) defines adult as:

1. (a) grown to full size or strength; (b) intellectually and emotionally mature; 2. Legally, old enough to vote, marry, etc. Various other definitions given by different adult educationists (Wiltshire, 1966; Cameron, 1969; Apps, 1979; Shingi, 1980; Knowles, 1980; Legge, 1982; Jarvis, 1990) have also taken into account different criteria, often two or more, like age (legal or otherwise), experience and/or maturity (physical/ biological, social, psychological, etc), citizenship with full rights and duties, and so on. Also, the legal age of adulthood for franchise, marriage, etc of males and females varies from country to country. For instance, the legal age of adulthood in the United Kingdom is 18 years. In India, the legal age for franchise (voting right) is 18 years, while the legal age for marriage of males is 21 years and for females it is 18 years. All these definitions reveal that it is very difficult to define the concept 'adult', theoretically or draw practical boundaries, and thereby render it to remain 'ideal' rather than practicable. Notwithstanding the fact that no one definition defines 'adult' adequately or exhaustively, some have classified adulthood into stages and defined each stage separately (Erikson, 1963; Sheehy, 1976). This is mainly because of the fact that the transition from childhood to adulthood is gradual, not sudden, and the

rate of transition varies throughout life from individual to individual and from environment to environment. Therefore, drawing clear demarcating lines between childhood - when it ends, and adulthood - when it starts and ends - by any one criterion or all criteria together, is a very difficult task. Thus, adulthood by itself is not definitive because of its continuous transition throughout life. In this context, we need to consider the question whether it is essential to have such distinction between child and adult as raised by Legge (1982, p.3). It is also important for us to recall some actions of a few children, wherein they reflect maturity of an adult and some actions of some adults which reflect immaturity of a child. You can thus see "child-man" or "man-child" in terms of their maturity. But, cybercoitus intemptus (May 9, 2007, see <http://ask.metafilter.com/>) draws one clear distinction between adults and juveniles - "I think real adults take responsibility for and clean up their own messes (emotional, domestic, culinary, environmental, whatever), unless physically or mentally incapacitated. Juveniles, whatever their physical ages, make someone else clean up after them".

Characteristics of an Adult :

At this juncture, we need to have a clear understanding of the diverse and comprehensive traits or characteristics by which a person can be called an adult. An adult, therefore, is a person who: i) is of certain age (legal or otherwise); ii) is mature (physically, mentally, emotionally, intellectually and morally); iii) is sensible and has the ability to act rationally and responsibly by understanding his/her own rights and limitations and of others; iv) can exercise self-control or restrain oneself; Education v) can focus with partial or full personal sacrifice on public cause of great importance; vi) can make balanced choices in picking and choosing actions involving not only gains and pleasures, but also loss, danger and pains; vii) owns up responsibility for his/her own actions; viii) can get to be a kid, youth, adult or the old as and when required and continue to exist as adult; ix) identifies one's own strengths and weaknesses; and x) acts and reacts with kindness, compassion and reason and with long-term perspective/goal towards self-actualisation.

Adult Education :

'Adult education' has been variously defined by different people and institutions. It is more useful for us to have a look at a few definitions quoted and analysed by Lakshmi Reddy (2000, pp.4-8) from different view points. According to him, some have defined it as education that starts at a particular stage or level of education. According to Lindeman (1961) adult education, more accurately defined, begins where vocational education leaves off. Adult education offers some, who were not privileged, a last chance to learn. Some feel a need for training in basic skills of learning so they enroll for learning, reading, writing and arithmetic. If we examine this definition we will find the following essential elements that characterise it. i) It is post-vocational education. ii) It is education for the deprived classes. iii) It is training in basic skills of learning i. e. literacy. Some others have defined adult education by looking at it as a process. The Education Exeter Conference 1969 defines it as the process whereby persons who no longer (or did not) attend school on a regular and full-time basis (unless full-time programmes are

especially designed for adults) undertake sequential and organised activities within a conscious intention of bringing about changes in information, knowledge, understanding or skills, appreciation and attitudes, or for the purpose of identifying and solving personal or community problems (Liveright and Haygood, 1969, p.8). In this definition, we can observe that there are two elements that characterise it, viz. i) Part-time or full-time process. ii) Sequential and organised activities. On the contrary there are other definitions which do not link adult education with any level and treat it as an activity or a programme or a process that encompasses so many things. According to Paulo Freire (1970) adult education "is a cultural action for freedom." It means, it is a liberating force for adults. Freedman (1972, quoted in Jarvis, 1990) considers adult education as a process which is part of cultural development, primarily the establishment of a means of communication between the cultural systems of transmitters (inventors, research workers, creative minds) and the cultural system of the receivers, i. e. groups for whom adult education is intended. We will find that there are two important elements in this definition. i) A process which is part of cultural development. ii) Communication between transmitters and receivers. According to Faure et al (1972) the normal culmination of the education process is adult education. There is one characteristic element in this definition i. e. terminal education for adults. But, in view of the Education Committee of the OECD (1971) "adult education refers to any learning activity or programme deliberately designed for adults. Its ambit is taken as spanning non-vocational, vocational, general, non-formal, and community education and it is not restricted to any particular level." As we can see this definition includes three essential elements: i) All activities and programmes for adults. ii) General, non-formal, vocational and non-vocational education. iii) Not-restricted to any particular level. The General Conference of UNESCO (UNESCO, 1976) comprehensively defines adult education as the "entire body of organised educational processes, whatever content, level and method, whether formal or otherwise, whether they prolong or replace initial education in school, colleges and universities as well as in apprenticeship, whereby persons regarded as adults by the society to which they belong develop their abilities, enrich their knowledge, improve their attitudes or behaviour in the two-fold perspective of full personal development and participation in balanced and independent social, economic and cultural development". We can very clearly notice the following essential elements in this definition: i) It includes all organised educational processes; ii) It encompasses all content, levels and methods; iii) It includes formal or non-formal education for adults; iv) It prolongs or replaces initial education in schools, colleges and universities; and v) It develops abilities, knowledge, attitudes and behaviours; and vi) It develops adults in two-fold manner - full personal development and participation in development process. Adult education is also regarded as the provision of largely, non-vocational education for people who have left school and are not formally registered for a college and university course leading to certification. Day-time or evening tuition may be provided by an Extra-Mural or Extension Department or a college or a university or by other institutions such as trade unions or the Workers Educational Association. It may take place in college or secondary school premises and may

cover wide range of cultural, recreational. community and sporting activities. Some writers have defined adult education by viewing it as a self or othersdirected efforts aimed at finding solutions to certain problems. Self-directed in the sense that it is a voluntary, serious and frequently organised effort of adult individuals and groups to find, through educational means, information, attitudes, understanding and skills helpful in diagnosing and solving their vocational, personal, familial and civic problems. According to Sharma (1984, pp.15-16) adult education takes into itself both self-education whereby a learner is responsible for management of his/her learning activities, and others-directed education whereby a teacher, leader, media, or some other educational agent is primarily responsible for the management of learning. While recognising this enlarged application of the term 'adult education', most writers limit their investigation to those activities of men and women, who are guided and shaped for a definite period of time by the desire to learn. This definition is characterised by three essential elements. i) Self-directed or others-directed. ii) Guided by desire to learn and shaped to teach. iii) Problem-solving. Kundu (1986, p.16) states that "adult education is a development oriented I education which can be planned and designed by others as well as the learners themselves. The adult learner, to a great extent can assert in regard to content, methodology, place and time of learning." The three characteristic elements that ! we can notice in this definition are: & i) Organised by adults themselves or by others. I j ii) Learner-centred. iii) Development-oriented. In Eire the 'Murphy Committee' defined adult education as the provision and i utilisation of facilities whereby those who are no longer participants in the fullI time school system may learn whatever they need to learn at any period of their i lives. Adult education, thus, is the organised provision of learning situations to i mature men and women with the purpose of enabling them to enlarge and to interpret their own living experience for solving their own and the community problems (de Castell, et al. 1989). In this definition one can observe two approaches. i) Cafeteria education, a choice based provision and utilisation of learning Education situations. ii) Learning throughout life of mature people for solving their own and community problems. Thus, some of these definitions of adult education restrict it to mere provision of educational facilities out of which the learners pick and choose according to their needs, interests, etc making for a cafeteria approach to education. If we go on to quote and analyse, we have many definitions offered by other adult educationists. Hence, for the present we accept the widely accepted definition offered by UNESCO which was the result of some collective international thinking of the adult educationists. What then is education of adults?

Education of Adults :

Like many academics, you too might have got a doubt as to whether there is any difference between adult education and education of adults. It is, of course, interesting too to know whether there does exist any difference in the usage of these two terms. Can these be used interchangeably or are they different? Perhaps, it is not even out of context to look at different views expressed in this regard. According to Jarvis (1990a, pp.29-32) the term 'education of adults' tends to be used to refer to all 'education' of 'adults'. In other words, its meaning relates to the conceptual understanding of both

'education' and 'adult'. The term 'adult education' carries specific connotations in the United Kingdom, which imply that it is liberal education, and carries a stereotype of being middle-class, leisure time pursuit. It must be recognised that the term 'adult education' has a social definition as being a form of liberal education undertaken by those people who are regarded as adults. Therefore, it is more a social rather than a conceptual definition, and that is why it is important to distinguish between 'adult education' and the 'education of adults'. In this view 'education of adults' is wider than 'adult education'. However, the definition of 'adult' still complicates this discussion. Nevertheless, he ends up saying that what is called 'education of adults' in the United Kingdom is synonymous to 'adult education' in the United States. What then is education for adults?

Education for Adults :

According to Deleon (1970) adult education includes all kinds of education for adults - in schools and out of school, formal and informal, full-time and parttime, for persons who no longer attend schools as well as for those who never attended a school, and so on. We can see through this definition that it is more precise, comprehensive and all embracing. Ansari (1996, p.56) views adult education as education for adults outside the formal system not leading to qualification; education for adults outside the formal system leading to qualification; and deliberate provision of education for adults within the formal system. According to Lakshmi Reddy (2000, pp.7-8) "adult education is parttime or full-time education for men and women of all ages either organised by themselves or provided by schools, learning centres, or other agencies which enable them to improve their general or professional knowledge, skills and abilities by either continuing their education or resuming their initial or incomplete education of previous years. Adult education is, thus, usually more flexible in its structure than traditional, mandatory education. Adult education may offer credits 14 towards higher education degrees or do not offer any degrees or credits. Its clientele include all those adults who have never been to school, who have dropped out of school or who are continuing their education in formal, non-formal or , and Objectives vocational educational institutions of different kinds or who are seeking employment or who are engaged in different occupations or professions". As Lakshmi Reddy, (2000, pp.28-29) further puts it "Though UNESCO's (1976) definition of adult education is widely accepted, the concept 'adult education', like the concept 'adult' has yet to have a universally accepted definition. The different definitions of adult education (Lindeman, 1961 ; Liveright and Haygood, 1969; Deleon, 1970; Nyerere, 1971 ; OECD, 1971 ; UNESCO, 1970a) include adults who are: i) illiterates and literates, irrespective of their occupation, socioeconomic background, etc, and ii) undertaking educational activities in nonvocational, vocational, general, formal, non-formal and/or informal education system on full-time or part-time basis organised by adults for themselves or by others for adults. These definitions embrace education leading or not leading to degrees, certificates, etc, covering a wide range of subjects and activities. Most of these definitions are concerned with promotion of knowledge, skills, attitudes, capacities, etc. for the development and/or welfare of individuals, society and/or nation. However, there is

no unanimity on definition of adult education either from the view point of class of its clientele target groups, nature, aims, objectives, form, type, subjects, scope, stages or levels." Having looked at different views on definitions of 'adult education' and 'education of adults', we understand that though they are generic terms, they are used in different countries to include a wide variety of activities, experiences, efforts, approaches, processes and programmes for adults, which cover different spheres of lives of different groups or cultural systems. They, therefore, reflect the differences in the historical, political, social and cultural conditions of different countries. But, we need to be very clear that whichever of these three terms - 'adult education', 'education of adults' and 'education for adults' - is used by any one, in general it includes all kinds and forms of education for adults i. e. for their growth, development, welfare and transformation. So, we should not have any confusion about these terms or about the distinction between and among these terms as they are used interchangeably by different people in different countries, either inadvertently or intentionally to mean one and the same. In this course material also hereafter use of any one of these three terms wherever used, means one and the same, unless it is specifically mentioned otherwise.

Fundamental Education :

It is the responsibility of the parents, society and/or the State to see that all human beings in a modern society acquire or achieve a certain minimum level of education. This is generally called elementary education and offered to the individuals during their childhood starting with their formal schooling. In reality, due to some reason or the other, many individuals either get deprived of the opportunity to have access to formal school or after access to it they may fail to acquire the desired level of elementary education. In such a case, it is more the State's responsibility to provide them with remedial opportunities/measures in their later years or adult life to promote in them this elementary education as remedial education. Such education is called, by UNESCO, fundamental education. Fundamental education is preparation of children or adults who have not had an opportunity for traditional formal schooling, for effective participation in community life through instructions in basic facts and skills as of literacy, agriculture, dwelling, health and hygiene and citizenship and so on.

Formal, Non-Formal and Informal Education :

Hartnett (1972, p.14) and Coombs et al (1973, p.10) define formal education as the hierarchically structured, chronologically graded 'education system' running from primary school through the university and including, in addition to general academic studies, a variety of specialised programmes and institutions for fulltime professional education and training. Non-formal education, as the name itself indicates, is education without formalities or with relaxed formalities. It refers to education which reduces or relaxes formalities and rigidities with the purpose of avoiding hindrances in making education more accessible to different kinds and types of learners. In *Adult Education: The Basic Concept, Terms, Features other words, non-formal education, as implied by the term, is supposed to be and Objectives available outside the formal or conventional system with enhanced access to many learners. While Hartnett (op. cit)

calls it non-traditional education and defines it as a "set of learning experiences free of time and space limitations", Coombs et al (op. cit) call it non-formal education and define it as "any organised educational activity outside the established formal system - whether operating separately or as an important feature of some broader activity - that is intended to serve identifiable learning clientele and learning objectives". To clarify this definition further, the same authors distinguished non-formal education from informal education. They defined informal education as "the truly lifelong process whereby every individual acquires attitudes, values, skills and knowledge from daily experience and the educative influences and resources in his or her environment - from family and neighbours from work and play, from the market place, the library, and the mass media." However, Radcliffe and Colletta (1989, p.60) state that "in practice no hard lines of demarcation exist between formal, non-formal and informal education: while many activities may be perceived as falling exclusively into one category alone, many share aspects of two or all of them." Non-formal education, like formal education, can also be organised at any level, ranging from primary education in schools to higher education in Universities or institutions of higher learning. It can be offered by existing formal institutions by relaxing the formalities or by establishing specialised structures or institutions outside these institutions. You are, perhaps, aware of Institutes of Correspondence Courses, Directorates of Distance Education in conventional Universities, and Open School, State Open Universities, State Resource Centres for Adult Education and so on outside the formal system. All these are examples (and part) of nonformal education system in India. Of course the Open University is the more current term coined to refer to an institution providing higher education in more open, flexible or non-formal manner through the distance mode.

6 Effective Strategies for Teaching Adults :

Adult enrollment in higher education grew by more than 50 percent between 1991 and 2011, This trend shows that today's educators and corporate trainers must adapt to the different needs, learning styles and challenges presented by teaching adult students.

By understanding adult students, you can become a better educator or trainer. Here are six key teaching strategies for making lessons more applicable for adult learners.

Keep It Relevant

Adult students truly latch onto lessons they feel are relevant. They have to understand how the skills they learn will improve their daily lives. If they believe a lesson will have a measurable impact, they will be far more likely to be engaged and internalize the lesson.

How can this be achieved? Education resource elearning industry recommends considering the "real value in the educational experience you're providing." While teaching adults, educators and trainers should consider the real-world impact on how a person works or interacts with family. Remind adult students that a math lesson can help them better understand what they do every day or that the course will give them the experience they need to advance in their careers. Real-world outcomes will inspire an adult student to put forth more effort in a course.

Remember Student Backgrounds

One of the many difference between adult learners and their younger counterparts is experience. Adult education has to draw on the fact that students have far more life experience. This means that your educational content must reflect the level of education they have completed, what their daily lives are like and what they are looking for out of a course. If you're teaching a certification class for engineers, you have to use the terminology and concepts they use on a daily basis. Failure to do so makes your course seem less relevant.

Integrate Emotion Into Lessons

Successfully teaching adults means remembering that these learners often identify more with content that is emotionally driven. This will make your course more relatable and can give positive encouragement and motivation that a student needs to succeed. This can be achieved through storytelling. Draw on real-life experience, whether your own or your students' experience. Create a visual element to accompany the lesson and attempt to weave interactivity throughout. When content has an emotional connection to adult students, they will pay more attention to the lesson.

Encourage Exploration

Traditional student populations enjoy being taught, but adult learners would prefer to explore a topic on their own. This format is often called “didactic teaching,” according to *Adult Education and Lifelong Learning: Theory and Practice*. In didactic teaching, activities and assignments are designed to give students the chance to learn on their own. The central theme of a lesson is a question or problem that needs to be answered or solved. This lets students integrate their own personal experience into what they are learning. Teachers should offer group projects that inspire true collaboration and exploration. If your students can arrive at the topic on their own, it will resonate more.

Make Assignments Convenient

Adult learners are much busier than traditional students. They have jobs, families and countless other commitments to manage. That means assignments should be convenient to complete. Small blocks of text, bullet points and numbered lists can help make content far more digestible than long readings. Some assignments can even be completed via mobile devices, so students can finish them anywhere. When you offer more opportunities for students to finish assignments, they are more likely to do them.

Always Offer Feedback

If students make an error, offering immediate feedback can make the lesson much more effective. When students are unable to grasp a concept, offer an alternative approach or explanation. This gives students the chance to make mistakes, but learn from them quickly. Waiting too long to give feedback is never advised but especially when teaching adults. This can lead to missed opportunities.

Understanding How To Teach Adults

As more emphasis is placed on adult education, the need for educators trained in the practice will grow. At Point Park University, our online Master of Arts in Adult Learning and training prepares

administrators, educators and trainers for careers in adult learning settings. This program is ideal for those interested in adult learning of all kinds, whether in higher education, corporate training or nonprofit adult education.

The Best Teaching Methods to Adults:

Studies in adult learning theory show that adults prefer courses that focus heavily on application of concepts to relevant issues. To retain and use new information they need to be able to integrate the information with what they already know. Tasks must be slow to moderate pace and not complex or unusual to avoid interference with adult learning. Adults prefer a personalized learning environment with focused effort on concept application where they can solve problems and take personal responsibility.

Use Self-Directed Learning

Design programs for all generational groups because there will be different viewpoints and value sets in a learning environment. Concepts should be explained from more than one viewpoint and appeal to adult learners in different age groups. Adults prefer self-directed learning over group learning. Self-directed learning does not mean isolated learning; it involves using other people as resources, subject matter experts, guides and encouragers. Adults prefer more than one method of learning. They like learning via auditory, visual and kinesthetic means.

Set Expectations Upfront

Set expectations at the beginning of the class. Since adults have learning and classroom expectations, it is vital that the instructor clarifies and thoroughly articulates all expectations before discussing the content. The instructor's and the learners' expectations should be discussed and noted. The instructor can assume responsibility only for her expectations, not those of the learners. One expectation that a good instructor will have is for learners to actively participate in the learning process. A good instructor knows that new and old knowledge have to be integrated and applied to achieve knowledge retention and learning success.

Use Life Experiences

Tap into the broad range of life experiences that each learner brings to the learning environment. Life experience is a valuable asset that should be acknowledged and used because adults learn well when they share experiences with one another. One of the best ways to pull knowledge and experience from learners is to use open-ended questions to draw out relevant knowledge and experience. An open-ended question is one with more than a one-word answer; the answer has to be expounded upon to thoroughly address the question.

Create a Comfortable Environment

Teach adults with books, television, programmed instruction, "how-to" content and applications. Adult learners positively rate short seminars and lectures as a preferred learning method because these venues give them face-to-face and one-on-one access to an expert. The lectures must be short because adults tend to have a high level of irritability if they have to sit for long periods in a learning environment.

The environment must be physically and psychologically comfortable, and they should have time to practice what they are learning.

Feedback and Practice

Provide feedback during skills practice sessions. Learners depend on the instructor to give them feedback to let them know how they are doing, if they are grasping the concepts and ideas, and for confirmation. Likewise, the instructor is dependent on learners for feedback about curriculum and her classroom performance. This valuable information gives the instructor the opportunity to make midstream changes to positively affect the learning environment if needed.

Balance Time and Discussion

Allow adult learners to somewhat control the pace of the class and start and stop time without losing control of the class. A good instructor knows how to balance time, presentation, discussion and debate and still go with the flow, while maintaining facilitative control. An adult learner does best in an environment in which the instructor acts as orchestrator using facilitative skills and control to keep disagreements civil, protect and connect opinions and ideas, and suggest solutions to problems.

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