

Applying Androgological (Adult Learning) Principles in Distance Education

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Authors: Dr. Catherine Dearman (lead author)
Ms. Cheryl Broadus
Ms. Jean Temple
Ms. Marilyn Weitzel
Dr. Yu (Phillip) Xu

Address: USA College of Nursing
USA Springhill
Mobile, AL 36688-0002

E-mail: apatton@usouthal.edu

Phone Number: (251) 434-3590

Fax: (251) 434-3963

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Adult learners pose unique challenges for educators which may be accentuated in distance learning environments. Most adult learners share certain characteristics related to new material. They learn better when the information has direct meaning for them, when it can be applied immediately and in an environment of mutual caring and respect. Adult learning theories propose three basic ways that adults process and learn information: cognitivist, behaviorist, and constructionist. This workshop will review the basic principles of each of these processes and propose strategies to address these learning methods in site-based and distance education.

Educators worldwide are challenged by students and institutions alike to deliver sound education through a variety of distance technologies including synchronous and asynchronous methods, real-time interactive, and web based. Some faculty are resistant to distance education because they believe it interferes with the learning process and prevents accurate, timely assessment of learner progress. Distance education, web based in particular, is an effective way for rural and location challenged adult learners to achieve their educational goals in a timely manner. Many adults prefer distance education because it eliminates the need for travel, limits scheduling conflicts, and allows the learner to control the pace of the instruction to some degree. Technology enhances the acquisition and retention of knowledge through individually controlled repetition and review of content on an as-needed basis without causing embarrassment or delays for the entire class.

Gagne's 9 events of instruction will guide the way this workshop is conducted and will be used to structure participant activities. These activities are designed to develop design instruction, strategies, and evaluation responses based in the constructionist style of learning. Participants will work in small groups to formulate interventions to facilitate learning using educational scenarios. Workshop leaders will use hands-on, how-to techniques to assist participants in achieving a level of comfort with Gagne's events and with the constructionist aspect of adult learning theory. Participants will exit the workshop with a workable set of strategies for use in site-based or distance education.

