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Adult education is an area that most educators and stakeholders in the education sector find interesting. Stakeholders in the education sector need to understand the factors that influence the teaching and learning processes in adult education. Adult education is considered a complex issue and therefore to comprehensively understand factors affecting its nature and process we must involve both empirical research and theoretical studies. Therefore, any study carried on this topic should be critically analyzed to better understand the significance of the research on the processes of adult education.

It is important to fully understand the research article and then critique the credibility of the information contained therein. This research paper seeks to analyze two articles. The two articles will be discussed to better understand how prior experience and knowledge, intrinsic motivation and exposure to the carrier subject are related and how these influences a person's performance in adult education. In her article, *The role of prior experience in adult learners' acquisition of postgraduate literacies in a postapartheid South African University*, Cooper Linda (2011) argues that prior knowledge and experience of the subject or carrier discipline is a significant resource for learners' success in their field of studies (Cooper, 2011). The research is known as Prior Learning Assessment (Cooper, 2011).

The research focuses primarily on the influence of the learners' prior experiential knowledge on the outcome of the academic literacy practices gained in higher learning institutions as well as their contribution to the learning process. The underlying principle of the current research is that learners' literacy skills outcomes largely depends on an interaction of three

main components that includes the disposition and habitus of a learner, how the academic discipline in question has been structured, and the pedagogic agency. The study required that the teachers recognize the learners' prior knowledge on the academic disciplines chosen while the teachers controlled the challenges in each academic program and the learning processes as well as the accommodation and learning group mix (Cooper, 2011). The article examines the case of a group of disability rights-activists who were given the opportunity to enroll for master's degree program under the recognition of prior learning (Cooper, 2011). The disability rights activists were asked to choose master's degree programs of their choices and where they best thought represented their careers and abilities, as well as those that they thought they had adequate prior experience in.

However, all the activists were restricted to enroll in the academic programs which were related to their activities. In each academic discipline where the activists were enrolled, they were distributed into different learning groups. They were further distributed into different hostels to mix with other students. The lecturers in the each discipline where the learners were enrolled provided different levels of challenging tasks for each activist-learner and the learning groups they represented. The lecturers were asked to use different teaching methodologies and resources each time they wanted to evaluate the learners' progress and the impacts of their prior experiential knowledge. During their master's degree programs, the supervising lecturers were asked to monitor their performance and their interaction with other students in their various faculties.

The supervisors recorded every significant contribution made by each learner and kept records of their performance in relation to those who had no prior knowledge and experience. The activist-learners' were interviewed and asked to fill questions related to how they viewed their overall performance and the factors that influenced their performance and learning processes. The supervising lecturers were also asked to submit the activist-learners progress reports and their general evaluation of the learners' progress and performance.

The research results showed that the learners' prior knowledge of their academic disciplines positively influenced their overall performance. The learners' showed confidence in all their activities and had the drive to achieve the maximum in all the tasks that they were assigned. The research also proved that the level of difficulty of the discipline had very little effect as compared to the learner's prior experiential knowledge and intrinsic motivation (Pajares, & Schunk, 2001). The level of socialization and the teacher's knowledge and experience in the academic field also played key roles in learners' overall performance. Generally, the major factors which influenced learners' overall performance were the learner's intrinsic motivation, experiential knowledge and the socialization process. An almost similar article that discusses factors that influence learners' achievements is a journal by Irizarry Robert (2005), on The Effects of self-efficacy and level of motivation on retention for learners in online graduate psychology programs, which focuses on the role of the learner's characteristics, experiences and intrinsic motivation on their performance and retention rates.

It controls the learner's exposure to technology, the level of response from the instructor, learner interest and acceptance of responsibility of learning process. The conclusion was that the learners' well-rounded educational experience, self confidence and self-perception positively influenced learners' achievements (Irizarry, 2005). The study used empirical data on online psychology students as the baseline for its theoretical research. The research was to address two major questions which were; whether completion rates had direct relationship with self-efficacy and motivation; and the differences of that exists among the learners who complete their distance learning programs in Psychology. It was found out that a well-rounded educational experience enhanced the learners' own learning experience with those in their academic fields. The experience and self motivation made the learners be responsible in completing their assignments as well as in executing other self-directed activities (Pajares, 1996). The strength of Cooper (2011) research is actually the limitation of Irizarry (2005)'s research. Irizarry also recognizes that a real empirical research needs to be done with a view to better understanding online learners' characteristics in order to come up with a stronger conclusion.

The two articles considered almost the same variables in testing their research hypotheses; however, Irizarry (2005) based its research on theoretical knowledge (Cooper (2011) had one major limitation its research; it did not consider the level of experience and knowledge in the learners. It had assumed that all the learners with prior experiential learning should be gauged the same way. Irizarry (2005) also made questionable assumption that the theoretical explanation of learners' characteristics suited all the

online learners. However, the strength of the articles lies in the variables that they chose to test. The variables are realistic and easy to test. The topic of research is directly related to adult learners as it discusses the factors that affect their learning process.

The learner's self motivation to achieve his or her educational goals, prior experience and knowledge in the academic field has a great influence in his or her achievement. Cooper (2011) offers a more credible resource for research on this topic since its research is empirical and involves a theoretical analysis. Thus, Cooper (2011) provides stronger conclusion. The researchers were able to meet the participants and their facilitators and discuss the factors that influence the process of adult education. The two articles conclude that experience and self motivation are very important factors that influence adult education.

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