

# Self-directed learning essay



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Self-directed learners according to Knowles, Holton & Swanson (2005) stated, “ adults generally become ready to learn when their life situation creates a need to know” (p. 194). This has some grounded facts because most adult learners do not go back to school without a pre-determined purpose and/or desire to improve on personal or professional set skills. Learning for adults most times have different motivational reasons, which reflect in their learning style and the research on the relationship between aging and adult intelligence, is a very controversial conversation within the scientific arena.

Adult learners have different motivations when they decide to continue their education and understanding how adult learners learn and process information is critical if the instructor is to achieve the course objectives. Brookfield (1995) inserted “ education properly conducted is viewed as a dialogue among equals, an endeavor in cooperative learning” (p. 208). No one person has all the answers and teaching should allow students to think for themselves and understand the process of coming to their own conclusion based on sound peer-reviewed research and analysis.

Based on this process, the student must become a self-directed learner if they are to become a partner in the learning process. According to Diaz & Entonado (2009) “ there is no real difference between on-line and face-to-face teaching methods, but the difference may exists within the teacher involvement and the institutions commitment to the learning process” (p. 32). E learning is really still new to many institutions, but the concept is picking up steam due to increasing demand for limited face-to-face among

this generation who prefer more interaction through technology by learners who prefer a more self-directed approach to learning.

Merriam, Caffarella, & Baumgartner (2007) inserted “ four major variables appear to have the most influence on whether individual adult learners exhibit autonomous behavior in learning situations: their technical skill, familiarity of subject matter, sense or personal competence and their learning commitment” (p. 123). Studies have also shown that when adults take upon self-direction to learning they will gain from that experience and understand the negative onsequences of failure. Due to the possibility of failure, some adult students will flee from the situation, which could explain the higher dropout rates in voluntary adult education institutions that is not in comparison within children learning institutions. Most adults attend school to address a certain required skill set or a particular specialty, whereas, young adults take required subjects as dictated by the school to meet graduation requirements.

This could also explain why adults get bored easier with subjects that have no real life application per their perception or degree plan and why it is also important for instructors to instill real life application within the course objectives Involving adult learners in the process recognizes their intellectual ability to be an partner in the learning process, and it is recognized that adults score better on some aspects of intelligence as they age resulting in a fairly stable composite scores of intelligence until the very old age (Merriam, 2001).

Also, Merriam, Caffarella & Baumgartner (2007) concluded, “ research has demonstrated that as we get older, we have more problems encoding and retrieving memories” (p. 395). This does recognize that certain memory functions do decline, as we age and researchers believe that memory does not have a direct relationship with intelligence, and the process of students transforming their way of learning new formats in facilitating their learning pursuits.

As technology becomes more universal, the student and the educator most times need transformation. Transformational learning is when there is a transformation in our beliefs and/or attitude on the learning process where we become more open to change and doing something totally different to achieve our educational goals. According to Knowles, Holton III & Swanson (2005) “ adults orientation to learning is life centered; therefore, the appropriate units for organizing adult learning are life situations, not subjects” (p. 40).

If the adult learner sees a gap in their learning, the learner will seek out ways to close that gap as soon as possible, based on this urgency, the learner may need to transform their way of thinking to achieve their educational goal and there is no one particular teaching method that will guarantee the student learning will become transformative. Transformative learning requires the student to become open to other teaching alternatives and when a student become open to new ways of learning and thinking it is a fresh awaking to new possibilities for the learner and the educator.

This may involve some aspect in experiential learning which engages the learner at a more personal level by addressing the needs and wants of the individual learner that does require some degree of self-discipline.

Experiential learning theory defines learning as “ the process whereby knowledge is created through the transformation of experience. Knowledge results from the combination of grasping and transforming experience” (Kolb 1984, p. 41).

Merriam, Caffarella & Baumgartner (2007) concluded, “ we learn from experience in a variety of ways” (p. 159) and believed that experiential learning is a process through which students develop knowledge, skills, and values from direct experiences outside a traditional academic setting.

Learning from experience has been a valued premise for many years, and many researchers agree that experience can sometimes be our best teacher, because the experience of adults is a critical concept for the adult learners learning process.

Its major concepts seek to explain why adults learn or how it will benefit them personally or professionally and how learning should be a self-directed process facilitated by college faculty and researchers believed that adults learn best in a informal, comfortable and flexible atmosphere within a nonthreatening setting. In conclusion, self-directed, transformation and experiential learning all play a part in the field I wish to pursue which is education.

Adult learning “ is long-lasting change in existing neuronal networks because when adults learn, they build on or modify networks that have been created

through previous learning experience” (Wlodkowski, 2008, p. 11). The role of the adult learner’s experience has become an increasing focal point for educational institutions and based on this premise, schools have designed course objectives based on the real life experiences for the adult learner.