Unit 2 Individual Project

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**Introduction**

Training is only as successful as the information that learners are able to take away with them and apply in real world work experiences. When a company goes through all the work of conducting a training needs analysis and designing specific training programs, special care must be taken to the training itself to ensure it benefits the learner. The training group composition must be taken into account and training methods applied that best benefit the group. The focus of this paper will focus on how on adult learning models and theories and how to best apply them to ensure that adult learners garner the most information possible from training.

**Theories of Adult Learning Principles**

Many times when training programs are designed, they are designed based off of principles we all learned in school as children. Those principles hinged on the fact that we were children and did not really know anything about the subject matter. When adults are approached in that manner, it can be off-putting and counterproductive because adults do not care for their intelligence to be insulted. Malcolm Knowles, also known as the father of adult learning, first began discussing the principles of adult learning in the 1960s (Tracey, 2010). Knowles presented five basic principles in regards to adult learning that have been the building blocks for adult learning ever since.

The first principle introduced by Knowles was the idea that adult learners are self-directed (Tracey, 2010). This could not be truer for the most part although there are some adults that require or need outside direction. Adults have a tendency and need to be independent and make their own decisions without direction from someone else. Self-directed learning allows an adult to learn what they want on their terms.

The second principle states adults come into the learning environment with existing experiences they are going to use to associate with the training (Tracey, 2010). A natural tendency for an adult when they are presented with something new is to try to relate it to something they have done. Take me for example, in this class we are learning so much in depth information on training and development. With every assignment, I try to associate what I am learning with my past experiences so I can strengthen my learning process and hopefully successfully utilize the information in the future.

The third principle is that adults need to know why they are learning something (Noe, 2013). This hits the nail on the head with adult thinking. Why? That is one of the most common thoughts when an adult is told they need training for something. It is important to adults to know why they must endure training and potentially change a behavior they feel is working well already. If it is not clear to them why, they can become despondent and not participate in the training.

The fourth principle that adults are problem solvers therefore they enter into training with a problem oriented mindset where they want to utilize the information to solve real-time problems (Tracey, 2010). Problems are the general basis for training because they are created when training isn’t done correctly. Adults will take in the training and decide how to use it to solve problems.

The fifth principle is that adults are motivated to learn by both intrinsic and extrinsic factors (Noe, 2013). Adults can want to enter into training for the purpose to see promotion or for a raise which are extrinsic factors. Adults also enter into training for intrinsic factors such as self-growth and satisfaction. Regardless of the type of motivation, whether it is intrinsic or extrinsic, the adult will be motivated by one or both in the learning process.

**Pedagogy & Andragogy**

Pedagogy is the original foundation for learning which is based on teaching children and how they learn. Children tend to have less experience to bring to the table in the learning environment as well as less knowledge on the subject. In pedagogy, the teacher has considerable responsibilities “for making decisions about learning content, method, and evaluation” because children are dependent on them to learn knowledge they have never had before (Noe, 2013). Children are not self-directed and need guidance in the learning process to ensure they are actually learning.

Andragogy, “the theory of adult learning” is completely different from pedagogy as we have seen illustrated in this paper thus far (Noe, 2013). In pedagogy, the learner is bringing limited to no experience to the learning environment where in contrast, the learning is bringing real-world and work related experience to the learning environment. It is said that children are passive learners which contrasts with adult learning as well because adults prefer to take an active role in their learning processed. Methods used to teach children generally aren’t as effective on adults since adults learn in different ways than children.

**Learning Style and Personality Concepts**

Adults learn in different ways and not every adult learns in the same way. Learning styles are the different types of ways that adults learn. Learning styles include visual, auditory, and kinesthetic learning (Colorado Technical University, 2013). Visual learners benefit the most from visually seeing what is being trained and the most information is retained for them this way. Auditory learners retain the most information from hearing, being told, and participating in active discussion. Kinesthetic learners benefit most from hands on training. Reinforcement is best for them when they can actually do the task.

Personality will also make a huge impact on the learner’s ability to retain information. The type of personality someone has will determine their willingness to learn and how they learn. Introverted people learn best on their own and without much attention and direction as I can speak on from experience. Extroverted people on the other hand are more comfortable in a group learning environment and thrive on interaction from others.

Both of these concepts must be combined in order to design the most effective training and development program. One example of how these concepts would be combined would be putting extroverted adults in a learning environment that consists of acting out scenarios and group discussions. This would be perfectly paired concepts. As a true introvert, if I were put into a learning environment like this, I would be less apt to participate because of the anxiety that comes along with performing in front of other more outgoing people. I would be the person sitting in the back of the room hoping to not be called on.

**Organization Options**

Organizations have many options available to them when apply adult learning to their training and development plans. By knowing the needs of adult learners, organizations have the option to design training and development plans that accentuate adult learning styles. Organizations have the option to design training programs that offer hands on training, visual, and auditory training through many facets such as online learning, classroom learning, on the job learning, and self-directed learning. Because there are so many options available, organizations must take care to not give too many options as that may overwhelm the learners and be counterproductive as well. Instead, organizations can design a comprehensive training and development program that contains each type of learning so that all learners can get the most out of the learning experience.

**References**

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