

Teaching Methods for Adult Learners

Content

Introduction

The adult learner and the teaching learning process

Approaches to adult teaching and learning

Teaching Methods

Teacher centered methods of teaching

Lecture

Discussion

Demonstration

Student centered methods of teaching

Assignments

Computer Assisted Learning

Contract learning

Practical

Brainstorming

Role play and simulation

Group discussion

The Seminar

Project and case studies

Summary

Objectives

References

Introduction

Your readings in this course on the characteristics of adult learners and their learning styles should have revealed to you that teaching and learning methodologies suitable for secondary school students may not match with the characteristics of adult learners.

This reading introduces a number of teaching methods for adult learners that may be employed either in a single teaching session or in a number of sessions. It is necessary for the teacher to be proficient in the use of a variety of methods in order to provide stimuli to the students and to enable them to learn in ways to which they are best suited.

However before the teaching methods are introduced to you; the teaching-learning process in relation to adult learners and different approaches to adult teaching and learning are presented with the view to provide relevant background information that should help you in identifying effective teaching methods for adult learners. Further the lesson will guide you to see the relevance of each teaching method and to review the measures to be adopted to improve the effectiveness of each method.

The Adult Learner and the Teaching Learning Process.

The teacher-trainees who entered college three months ago should now be well acquainted with college surroundings. It is quite likely that they know each other well and have developed favorable interactive skills. Besides they should be well aware of what the teacher educators at college expect them to do in and out of college. Further majority of trainees should have developed a positive outlook towards activities organized at college.

The above description suggests that learning could have taken place in the teacher trainees.

What do we mean by **learning**?

We know that learning is a relatively permanent change in behaviour brought about by experience.

The experiences the teacher trainees have had at college (as given in the above description) should have brought about a change in their knowledge, skills and attitudes and thereby a change in their behaviour.

Bringing about changes in an individual's way of responding as a result of environmental experiences is indeed a process.

As Thompson (1974) observes learning is invisible. It is a mysterious and unreliable process which cannot be directly observed or reliably controlled.

Hirst and Peters (1970) define teaching as the intention to bring about learning. If this broad definition is adopted, it may be seen that any activity that is performed in order to produce learning may be considered to be teaching.

However it is important to note that informal and unintended teaching may occur in the process of human interaction and as a consequence informal and incidental learning too could occur.

Whether teaching is formal and intended or informal and unintended, the nature of the impact of teaching in bringing about learning and the effectiveness of the teaching-learning process depend on many conditions.

As a teacher educator I presume you are well aware of the conditions that ensure an effective teaching-learning process. The nature of the learning environment- physical and social, the availability of resources, motivation of the learner, nature of the subject content could be some of the factors that you are reminded of as important conditions of learning. However it is important to stress the differences between teaching adults and teaching children. The most obvious of these is the maturity of the adult learner.

The characteristics of the adult learner (Essential Reading 1) his/her learning style (Essential Reading 2) are two very important aspects that determine conditions of learning in adults. Further as Thompson (1974) has pointed out, the impressions of the learner's previous experiences will invariably influence learning, so that the output cannot be predicted from the input.

You may recollect your own experiences when your input in teaching failed to produce the planned or expected output.

We always plan our teaching with a set of objectives and hope to realize these objectives in the form of learning outcomes. It is when we are able to reach this situation that we generally conclude, our teaching as being successful.

However in relation to this phenomenon Jarvis (2002) observes that it is not the intention of teaching to produce a learning outcome, but it is the provision of any situation in which learning occurs. It is therefore, the task of the teacher to provide a facilitative environment in which learning could occur and the teaching-learning process needs to be geared to this end.

Considering the characteristics of adults as learners, it is important to note that there is relatively a greater possibility of getting adult learners to participate in planning and directing the structure of the teaching-learning process. Adult learners have a great deal of experience to bring to the learning situation and they are in the best position to know what their learning needs and learning styles are.

In the teaching-learning process there is a need for a compromise between the aims and objectives of the teacher and of the adult learner. Both the teacher and the adult learner should find such a contact a rewarding educational process.

In this connection the observations of Freire (1973) who has emphasized that the teacher has to reach out to the learners and learn from them in order to be able to contribute effectively to the teaching and learning process appear quite relevant. Freire regards the educator as the facilitator of learning and education as a process of change.

Continuous evaluation of both the teacher's teaching and the students learning could provide relevant feedback on the effectiveness of the teaching learning process. The adult learner could play a decisive role to evaluate the learning process and the final outcome.

I presume, the role of teaching and learning in adult education presented in the preceding section will provide a sound framework within which you could understand approaches to adult teaching and learning presented in the section that follows.

Approaches to Adult Teaching and Learning

Approaches to adult teaching and learning discussed in this section do not actually specify a particular teaching method, but provides a perspective that should be adopted in identifying effective teaching methods for adult learners.

Knowles (1978) acknowledges that since education is a humanistic process the humanity of the participant is paramount in the learning process.

Jarvis (2002)(p104) observes that ‘both the teachers’ role performance and the teaching methods they employ should never undermine, but always seek to enhance, the dignity of humanity of the learner. To do less than this is a misuse of the teachers’ position, immoral and falls below the high ideals of education.’

Table 1 explains clearly what links could be drawn between conditions of adult learning and approaches to teaching them. A thorough understanding of the links between conditions of adult learning and the approaches to teaching them given in the table can help you to develop a favorable insight in selecting teaching methods for adult learners.

The information presented in Table 1 suggests approaches to teaching in which exposition is less significant in teaching adults than it often appears to be in the education of children.

Table 1: The conditions of adult learning and approaches to teaching

Conditions of adult learning	Approaches to teaching
Learning is a basic human need.	Teaching is not essential to learning but may facilitate it.
Learning is especially motivated when there is disharmony between an individual’s experience and his perception of the world.	Teachers and learners need to structure the process of learning together so that it may be relevant to the experience/problem that created the felt need to learn.
Adult learners like to participate in the learning process.	Teaching methods should be socratic or facilitative rather than didactic in many learning situations.

<p>Adult learners bring their own:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - experiences to the learning situations. - meaning systems to the learning situation. - needs to the learning situation 	<p>Teachers should use these experiences as a learning resource.</p> <p>Teachers should try to build upon the meaning system, rather than seek to be contrary to it, so that students may integrate their new knowledge with their old: methods should be used that enable students to use their previous knowledge as a resource.</p> <p>Teachers should help students to be aware of the relevance of what they are learning: subject matter will be ‘applied’ rather than pure: learning will be individualized where possible.</p>
<p>Adult learners bring to the learning situation their own:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - self-confidence - self-esteem - self-perception 	<p>Teachers need to be empathetic and sensitive to the humanity of the learner at all times and, when appropriate, always anticipate a successful learning outcome.</p> <p>Teachers should ‘reinforce’ all ‘correct’ knowledge and understanding in order that students are enabled to maintain a high level of self-confidence and self-esteem. Teachers should provide opportunities for adult students to reflect upon ‘incorrect’ knowledge, so that they can ‘correct’ it for themselves, where this is possible.</p> <p>Teachers should encourage self-assessment rather than teacher-assessment.</p>
<p>Adults learn best when the self is not under threat</p>	<p>Teachers need to create an ethos in which no adult feels threatened or inhibited- this is especially true at the outset of any new course of learning. Cooperation rather than competition should be encouraged.</p>
<p>Adult learners need to feel that they are treated as adults</p>	<p>Teachers should not regard themselves as ‘the fountain of all knowledge’ but they should attempt to create and facilitate a teaching and learning engagement between all the participants.</p>

Source – Adult and continuing education (2002)

Jarvis(Table 5.1 – p103, 104)

According to McGregor there are basically two approaches to managing people, which McGregor terms Theory X and Theory Y.

Theory X assumes that the average human being dislikes work, needs to be controlled, directed or coerced in order to do what is required and prefers to be directed. Theory Y commences with the conception of the self motivated adult who seeks to fulfill his own human potential.

Referring to the work of McGregor, Jarvis (2002) observes that if teachers start with the perspective of Theory X, they will seek to manipulate the students either by a hard approach of threats or a soft approach of rewards and permissiveness, but teachers who adopt a perspective that derives from Theory Y, will be more concerned about the potentiality and growth of the students.

Jarvis(2002) further observes that McGregor's work is consistent with the emerging picture of the educator of adults as one who seeks to aid adult learning and to develop the full potential of the learner.

In the eyes of Stephens& Roderick(1978) the role of the teacher in adult education is to help the students fulfill themselves as human beings.

These views on the role of the educator of adults give us direction to the nature of approaches to be adopted to adult teaching and learning.

Adult education tends to emphasize the learner and learning more than the teacher and teaching.

'Humanist' psychologists like Carl Rogers and Abraham Maslow, and the adult educator Malcolm Knowles recognized the autonomy of learners to control and direct their own learning.

Jarvis(2002) rightly observes that adult education has tended to regard the teacher as an adjunct to learning, often necessary and frequently important but never as essential to it.

In performing his role it is recognized that the teacher of adult learners could adopt three main approaches, namely didactic, socratic or facilitative.

The teacher who adopts the didactic approach is expected to expound the knowledge to be learned by the students. What is to be learned is made by agencies other than the learner. The student is expected to learn that which is transmitted and be able to reproduce it. As the learner is not expected to participate in the selection of what is to be learned, the learner may not be able to learn and understand something relevant to the learner.

The didactic approach frequently results in the reproduction of the status quo. It could be argued that reproduction of the status quo through learning may not bring about an undesirable impact in initial education but it is much less convincing in the education of adults.

Observations of Paula Freire (1973) cited by Jarvis(2002) show the importance of active learning.

‘The educator is not the ‘fountain of all wisdom’ trying to fill the empty buckets; education is not a process of banking received knowledge. Rather education is an active process in which the teacher controls neither the knowledge learned nor the learning outcomes’.

It is evident therefore that although the didactic approach could find a place in the education of adults, this approach needs to be adopted to encourage learners to initiate the learning process. Effective learning may be facilitated with adults by encouraging the adult learners to ask questions. Further in order to ensure successful learning in adults, the teacher who adopts the didactic approach should be aware of how the learners construct their universe of meaning and what they see as their learning needs, start where the learners are and encourage them to explore and learn from their experiences. The teacher invariably must be responsive to the demands of the teaching situation in which he finds himself.

The socratic approach to teaching incorporates questioning into the teaching and learning process. According to Jarvis(2002) the teacher adopting this approach directs a logical sequence of questions at the learners, so that they are enabled to respond and express the knowledge that they already have. However Jarvis(2002) further observes that unless the teacher is actually skilful in the use of questions and also perceptive in responding to the students, this approach is likely to result in an

expression of knowledge reflecting the accepted body of cultural knowledge and therefore a type of conformity.

Nevertheless Jarvis(2002) explains that conformity to and expression of the established body of knowledge is by no means wrong and hence is useful to employ the socratic approach to teaching, especially in teaching adults, since it utilizes both their store of knowledge and their experience of life, which are quite essential learning resources in the education of adults. It is important to note that if this approach is employed with great skill especially with the use of thought provoking questions and the adoption of strategies to encourage learners to reflect on knowledge and ideas, it is possible to help the learners ‘create’ rather than reproduce knowledge. Besides the socratic approach to teaching could make the learners actively involved in the learning process.

The facilitative approach to teaching is invariably a learner-centered approach that suit adult learners best. Teachers adopting this approach may seek to create an awareness of a specific learning need in the students by either confronting students with a problem requiring a solution or by providing the students with an experience and encouraging reflection upon it. In either of the instances the outcome of the activity should be that leaning has occurred. Teachers employing the facilitative approach perform their role differently. As John Dewey has pointed out teachers might facilitate and guide the learning but they should not interfere with or control the process in the way a didactic teacher would.

Dewey maintains that teachers should be intelligently aware of the capacities, needs and past experiences of those under instruction, so that they may assist them in creating a co-operative learning exercise.

‘Teachers’ main task is to provide the conditions in which the students learn, and if teachers are actually directing the process when the students require help, then they are involved in a much more subtle process of control than that which occurs in traditional, didactic teaching’ (Dewey 1938 p. 71).

According to Dewey (1938), the teachers’ leadership responsibilities include,

- Being intelligently aware of the capacity, needs and past experiences of those under instruction.
- Making suggestions for learning but being prepared for the class to make further suggestions so that learning is seen to be a co-operative rather than a dictatorial enterprise.
- Using the environment and experiences and extracting from the learners all the lessons that may be learned.
- Selecting activities that encourage the learners to organize the knowledge that they gain from their experiences in subject matter.
- Looking ahead to see the direction in which the learning experiences are leading to ensure that they are conducive to continued growth.

Jarvis(2002) observes that many elements in the theories of teaching in adult education do reflect a progressive education perspective which can be traced directly back to Dewey.

Teaching Methods

In the light of the approaches to adult teaching and learning discussed in the preceding section we can now attempt to identify effective teaching methods for adult learners. Furthermore in this section I shall attempt to explain the relevance of each of these methods and discuss the measures to be adopted to improve the effectiveness of each method.

Teaching methods for adults could broadly be classified into two major categories keeping in view the two important approaches to teaching and learning-namely teacher centred and learner centred approaches. However it is important to keep in mind that a variety of methods might be employed in any single teaching and learning process. Furthermore, whatever methods are used the objective should be to facilitate learning. Adopting different methods could make learning more stimulating and also enriching.

Let us first look **at a few teacher- centered** methods

Teacher Centered Methods of Teaching

Lecture...

Some might question whether a lecture is really a teacher-centered method?

Lecturing is perhaps the most frequently employed teaching technique used for delivering information. This method is perceived to be efficient even in teaching adults when a large amount of information needs to be imparted quickly. Besides this is a way for a content expert to reach many learners at one particular time.

Lecturing still has its rightful place among dozens of other teaching techniques especially when it is necessary to provide structure and organization to scattered material, to help pace student learning, to reinforce assigned reading by providing an alternative perspective or source of information and also when it appears desirable to use the public speaking opportunity to motivate students.

When the content of a lecture is relevant to the needs of the learner and when the speaker is motivating and interesting, the lecture format as a method of teaching adults can be an effective learning modality.

Although the lecture method is a standard technique frequently employed in teaching it is a passive form of learning. We have seen that adults learn best when they can apply new information and skills to solve an immediate problem or need. Hence it is necessary that varying strategies are adopted to enhance the effectiveness of lectures with techniques of involvement and participation.

Suggestions for improving the effectiveness of lectures could include the following.

- It is best that you plan your lecture ahead of time and get your ideas logically sequenced. But it is important that you are prepared to adjust the content of the presentation to the needs of the learners during the actual lecture.
- A lecture should be designed with the students' perspective in mind. Students' current knowledge, assumptions, biases and perhaps misconceptions about the topic should be made note of. It is important that the lecture presented help the learners to find a way to build on the knowledge they bring

and also provide a means for students to reflect upon their biases and misconceptions.

- It is best to provide an overview of the objectives of the lecture and involve participants in determining the focus of the learning. This could not only help to sustain the interest of learners throughout the lecture but could make learning meaningful. Generating effective examples or analogies to illustrate a particular point and broaden students' understanding of the subject could also be useful in motivating and keeping learners alive.

Audio-visual stimuli- chalk board drawings, charts, slides, tapes, overhead transparencies – may be useful in helping students to clarify concepts and to remember and recall the information and ideas with which learners have been presented.

- Opportunities could be provided for periodic breaks, without getting learners sit and listen too long. Provision of such opportunities could enable learners to relax and also informally discuss the key ideas that have been presented. Learners could also be encouraged to engage themselves in a relevant activity that will enable them to reflect on or see how to apply what they are learning. You may also allow learners to record their own thoughts related to a specific topics.
- Opportunities provided for learners to share their experiences with each other could be rewarding. This can be done in the large group, in small groups or in pairs. Group discussions and group problem solving situations could be encouraged.
- With a view to allow for individual learning needs to be catered for, learners should periodically be provided a time for questions and answers. This will allow the teachers to detect and respond to any of the students' manifest learning needs. You could respond to each question in a way that lets the learner know that you appreciate that a question has been asked.
- **Before you conclude the lecture, involve the participants to actively summarize the key points of the lecture. A handout too could be**

distributed at the end of the session in order to further help the learners to remember the key points.

Discussion

Discussion is an organized opportunity for the learners to discuss selected topics/issues/ideas in a group setting.

Discussion is important to learning in all disciplines and is often used with lectures to provide variety and give an opportunity to learners to reflect on what they are learning. Discussions help learners process information rather than simply receive it. Discussions give a chance to learners to be more active and to have greater personal contact with members of the group as well as the teacher and thereby help to increase learning.

The goal of a discussion is to get learners to talk purposefully about a given theme/topic.

When conducting a discussion your role becomes that of a facilitator. You moderate the information rather than convey information. A discussion is a wonderful opportunity for students to share ideas and pool resources.

Guided discussion has been separated from the more general discussion techniques as a method that promotes active learning. As pointed out by Jarvis (2002) guided discussion is one of the approaches that epitomizes the socratic method.

If you wish to adopt this approach you should have a carefully prepared sequence of questions that are directed towards the objective of drawing from the learners the knowledge that they have implicitly crystallized but not articulated or related to relevant theoretical perspectives. Further if you are interested to elicit from students their understanding of some element of a practical work experience in which the students have participated and particularly if you wish to see how your students relate such experiences to relevant theory, guided discussion could give you affirmable opportunity to do so. However in conducting a discussion you should be careful not to artificialize the approach by being inflexible. If you feel that the discussion should be guided meaningfully according to students' responses, it might be favorable to direct the discussion along paths other than paths planned by you. Nevertheless it is

important to ensure that the steps prepared by you are followed keeping in view the selected theme.

This method appears simple and easy to prepare but adoption of this method requires confidence in the teacher as well as a great deal of knowledge and preparation. It is being pointed out that in contrast to guided discussion, controlled discussion is quite didactic. In this approach the teacher is at the centre of the scene and it is the teacher who sets the theme for the class. But students are encouraged to contribute to the learning process or to elicit information. Questions and comments are generally directed at the teacher.

In order to avoid a controlled discussion being dominated either by the teacher or a few learners, it is best that seating for a controlled discussion is arranged in a circular formation.

All forms of discussion require careful preparation on the part of the teacher. Before organizing a group discussion it is important to make sure that the learners have a certain level of understanding that will allow them to share their ideas in the group. It is best that a group discussion is initiated not too close to the beginning of an instructional programme in order to ensure that members of the group have the basic information to be discussed.

Further in order to ensure maximum learning outcomes being accrued, you may summarize and synthesize at the end of a discussion session. This will enable you to put back on track information relevant to the selected theme. At this stage of the session you may add any points to the discussion *that may have been overlooked*.

Demonstration

Levin. (1991) observes that demonstrations can be classified in two ways:

- i. Result demonstration
 - ii. Method demonstration
-
- i). Result demonstration shows the results of some activity, practice or procedure through evidence that can be seen, heard or felt. For example evidence of soil

erosion or devastation of forests may be seen or felt by students studying environmental sciences.

- ii). Methods demonstration illustrates how to do something in a step by step fashion. Method demonstration could be adopted as a favorable teaching method especially in disseminating technical information.

Demonstrations are most effective when learners are concerned with an issue or problem and are interested to find an answer. A demonstration that deals directly with concerns of the learners could not only motivate learning but also result in productive learning outcomes. However for a demonstration to be a successful teaching method, it is important that the person doing the demonstration knows the content very well and is able to answer questions as they arise during the demonstration. The demonstration should form a good role model transmitting perfect skills to students who endeavor to acquire them.

Now that we have reviewed the important teacher centered teaching methods for adult learners; let us focus our attention on some of the more important student centered methods of teaching adults.

Student Centered Methods of Teaching

We are aware that adults bring to the teaching learning situation a vast and unique experience of life. Adult learners have knowledge, reflections upon their experiences and an interpretation of meaning and purpose of life. Hence in teaching adults the teacher is generally in a position to capitalize on the resources of learners, although it should be borne in mind that related to certain disciplines there maybe technical knowledge etc. that none of the learners may know and that the teacher may have to play a more didactic role.

In student centered learning the teacher is a facilitator of learning rather than a source of knowledge. The teacher is responsible for creating the learning situation where the teachers do not control learning outcomes.

There are many different student centered teaching methods although only a few of these methods that are frequently used are discussed here..

Methods of teaching adults reviewed in this section are subdivided into two major categories namely individual student centered methods and group-based student centered methods.

I shall first focus your attention on **individual student centered methods**. It is proposed to discuss only four methods in this section, chosen in view of their significance to the educations of adults: the assignment, computer assisted learning, contract learning and the practical.

Each individual student centered method is reviewed briefly in the order listed above.

Assignments

Assignments form an integral component of most courses of teaching and learning. Writing an essay, a case study, or conducting a project are a few examples of assignments generally given as part of the teaching learning process. Assignments may also have a more practical application, and students may be asked to produce a teaching aid or a piece of equipment relevant to a course. An advantage of encouraging students to work on an assignment is that they are given an opportunity to bring to their learning their own interests and skills and these could be utilized to the benefit of the learning process. However in doing assignments, students need to be proficient in various skills, so that it is important that tutors help students acquire the necessary skills to undertake the task.

The title/topic of any assignment may be set either by the tutor or the student. If students are given the opportunity to select their own topic, they are likely to choose an area relevant to their learning needs or interests or both. However when students are allowed to choose title/topic, the tutor may have to offer help to the students to get sufficient precision into the titles suggested to enable them to do justice to the topic selected within the limitations imposed upon them. However tutor set assignments could ensure that the whole syllabus is covered and could also produce a standardization of grading at the end of the process.

Essays or structured essays are perhaps the most frequently employed type of assignment. But projects and case studies do assume a more important place in adult learning and teaching.

Project and case studies enable students to gain many beneficial learning outcomes. Jarvis (2002) lists the following uses of employing projects and case studies;

- ❖ Enable students to follow the sequence of the learning cycle
- ❖ Engage students in an analytical approach to the problem
- ❖ Provide an opportunity to the students;
 - to discuss a given theme/topic and its implications,
 - to collect data to construct an argument in response to the analysis,
 - to plan a structure in which learners can reveal the results of their reflections,
 - to evaluate data collected,
 - to show direction of the process of reflection during the sequence of the argument,
 - to reach conclusions and test them against a wider reality.

Jarvis (2002) observes that preparation of the written assignment is a method of learning and setting assignments is a technique of facilitating that learning.

Further a written assignment constitutes another medium through which teachers and learners engage in dialogue.

Marking an assignment may be regarded as part of that dialogue. When an assignment is marked the tutor may seek to correct misunderstandings that the adult students may have had. Experience suggest that to mark an assignment, it is useful to adopt a socratic approach whereby the tutor highlights strengths and weaknesses by means of questions; so that students are enabled to reflect upon what they have written; and reach conclusions of their own. Adopting the socratic method when marking assignments may be more beneficial to the self image and self esteem of learners than when they are being corrected in the traditional manner. In fact highlighting strengths and weaknesses of an assignment by means of questions could facilitate a continuing process of learning, whereas didactic comments might inhibit the learners from continuing to pursue ideas in the assignment that they have written. However it should not be interpreted that there is no place for didactic comments in marking assignments. Jarvis (1978) observes that didacticism should play a less significant role in marking than it frequently does.

Computer Assisted Learning ...

Many would consider this as a resources, like a book not as a teaching method as such?

Wherever educational institutions have facilities for adult teaching to be assisted by computer programs, it will be easier for educators of adults to employ this method. However adults who have not been familiar with the computer in their youth and who are not scientifically oriented may tend to be a little over anxious about using computers, so that computer assisted learning may have to be introduced to such students very Slowly.

But it is important to note that the potentiality of a computer program to respond to the learning needs of adult students is great, that this method could be encouraged.

Nevertheless the lack of personalized contact with tutors may prove least satisfying when learners get engaged in learning assisted by computer programs. Hence when adopting this method it is essential that the teachers take necessary steps to compensate for the lack of personalized contact in computer assisted learning. As a teacher you can do all sorts of interesting things with computer-assisted learning.

Learning Contract

A learning contracts is in many ways an extremely attractive approach to the teaching-learning process in adults, especially because adults bring a great deal of experiences to the learning situation, they are usually highly motivated to learn and are capable of being self directed in their learning.

A variety of aspects of what is to be learned are generally agreed upon when contracts are developed between the teacher and learners. Listed below are some of the important aspects to be considered;

- aims and objectives of the learning,
- the resources and resource persons to be used,
- the date by which learning is to be achieved,
- the mode by which the learners demonstrate that they have achieved the desired ends,
- criteria for assessing the learning outcomes.

The contract may be a written one or an informal agreement. An informal contract could be made during a normal face-to-face program when there is frequent contact between teachers and learners.

However when there is less frequent contact between teachers and learners it may be more advisable to write the contract.

If the contact cannot be kept, it becomes the responsibility of the party who cannot keep it to renegotiate the terms, with the other party. For example if learners cannot achieve the desired end by the agreed date, they should be able to take the initiative and renegotiate the contract.

Although adult learners could accrue many benefits through learning contracts, this approach is extremely time consuming for teachers especially when there are many students in the class.

Practical

It is only recently that there has been stress on learning practical skills through experience. There is today a great deal of emphasis upon the value of practice rather than making the learner copy the demonstrator and learn practical skills. Hence, prolonged periods of practical placements to enable learners to master practical skills under the guidance of a mentor, or an expert teacher, occupy an important place as a method of teaching adults in educational programs.

However since it is sometimes felt that learning relevant theoretical knowledge in practical situations is unnecessarily slow, and that students tend to have insufficient practice and feedback, there has been a gradual movement in certain areas of education to teach practical skills in a simulated situation. Belbin and Belbin (1972) emphasise that most adult students, left to learn at their own pace, can master skills especially if each skill is subdivided into separate elements and each element is mastered separately.

In certain educational institutions for adults the work undertaken in the laboratory constitute practicals in a program.. In such situations it is important that the tutor decides whether the purpose of the exercise is merely to learn the use of experimentation by repeating other people's experimentation or to help students

understand the process of experimentation. Depending on the purpose of the exercise, practical as a method of teaching could best be combined with other techniques of teaching and learning student centered group methods and could be used to bring about effective learning in adults.

Let us now review a few student centered group methods of teaching adults.

Brainstorming, role-play, simulation group discussions, projects, case studies and seminars are the **student centered group methods..**

Brainstorming

Brainstorming is a method that could be adopted when you would like to encourage the learners to freely share their ideas. Jarvis (2002) observes that brainstorming is an intensive discussion situation in which the quantity of ideas produced or potential solutions offered to a problem, is more important than the quality. All ideas are accepted at the beginning of the process and are generally recorded over the period of time mutually agreed by the group for the brainstorming to operate. No group member may criticize an idea or suggested solution during this period, regardless of how useless or impractical it may seem; since criticizing or making comment on the ideas might create inhibitions in the learners contributing to free expression of ideas. At the close of the agreed period, the group is generally expected to analyse the points raised and to arrive at a consensus, if possible about possible courses of action or solutions to the problem under scrutiny. The discussion that takes place at this point can include the development of spin-off ideas, the refining of ideas, the combining of ideas and reinforcing of existing ideas.

Brainstorming can be excellent to help a group of learners think creatively of new ideas to solve difficult problems and also think creatively in decision making.

Role Play and Simulation

Role-play can be employed when a tutor wishes students to experience something about which they are cognitively aware. In fact role-play is often a constituent element of simulation when a teacher could attempt to involve students in a rather complex problem and even relate it to a future occupational roles in a related field in education.

In role-playing, two or more learners are provided with a role to play and a situation in which they are involved that enables participants to practice a particular skill in a safe yet simulated environment.

Usually role-playing is a brief episode acted from someone else's life or from the role for which an individual is being prepared. For example in fields such as teacher training or in the training of counselors, this technique is the closest thing to actual application of skills that can be achieved in a classroom setting. This method involves the learner in practicing a skill and getting immediate feedback.

Role-play as a method of learning should be used naturally and it is important that students involved in role-play should feel that they are doing this logically into a planned learning sequence.

Role-playing can be done as a demonstration in front of the total group or if it is a large group, role-playing can be done simultaneously by small groups. Role plays often conducted in small groups of three, allows one person to practice, one person to interact with the person who is practicing and one person to be an observer and provide feedback. Roles can be rotated to allow each person the opportunity to practice; if time permits.

At the conclusion of role playing the learners should be given an opportunity to talk about how they feel, what they observed, what they learned and what they will do differently the next time. This concluding phase will provide an opportunity to reflect upon the experience; a stage in the facilitative teaching and learning cycle.

However it is important to note that the learning outcomes of role play as a method of teaching adults will vary with the role players especially because there are difficulties of relating role play to reality in some instances and also because role play cannot be predicted precisely.

Stock (1971) claims that role playing should not be used when the educational objectives are complex, where there is any danger that they may be obscured by the involvement and he notes that bad casting may destroy the learning situation.

Jarvis (2002) observes that the preparation of a simulation is extremely time consuming and unless the simulated situation relates closely to reality the objective of the exercise might be lost.

In reviewing the pros and cons of role-play and simulation it is evident that although these appear to be attractive and constructive methods of teaching adults; the related practical problems need to be recognized when choosing these methods in the teaching-learning process.

Group Discussion

We have already reviewed the importance of discussion as a teacher centered method of teaching adults. In the section that follows I wish to focus your attention on group discussion as one of the most frequently employed student centered group methods in the education of adults.

Group discussion is an organized opportunity for the learners to discuss selected topics/issues/ideas in a group setting allowing most of the learners to actively participate and thereby increase learning.

However before organizing a group discussion it is important to make sure that the learners have a certain level of understanding that will allow them to share their ideas in the group.

Bergevin et al. (1963) claim that a good discussion topic should meet four criteria; it must:

- interest all group members,
- be possible for participants to acquire sufficient information to discuss it meaningfully,
- be clearly worded and understood;
- suggest alternative points of view.

This criteria provides a useful guide in order to ensure effective learning through group discussion and to sustain the interest of learners on a theme/issue/selected topic.

When group discussions are conducted in the large group, the trainer could facilitate discussion. Someone from the group could help to record key points from the discussion.

A variation of the discussion technique is to divide the large group into smaller groups of 3-5 students and provide each group with one or more topics to discuss. Each small group could then elect a spokesperson to report the findings back to the large group.

Adult learners have a need to share their own experience, hear the experience of others, and relate these experiences to what they are learning. Group discussions provide an opportunity for adult learners to gain all these benefits. Further group discussions encourage the learners to accept responsibility for their own learning; facilitate group sharing, assist individuals to develop a sense of teamwork and help learners to develop a sense of self-confidence. However if the tutor fails to use the method with skill and the students fail to take the role of good discussion group members, group discussion as an aid to learning will fail to achieve the desired benefits.

Hence as pointed out by Jarvis (2002), it is incumbent upon teachers to ensure that they understand the technique of group discussion and are aware of group dynamics, so that they are able to help students prepare for the role that they play and to understand the reasons why this method is used in adult teaching.

The Seminar

Moving from group discussion, the seminar as a method of teaching adults is usually initiated by an introductory statement or paper by one or more students, or a visiting specialist and this forms the basis for group discussion.

The paper(s) presented should provoke discussion so that it may be controversial, provocative, topical and relevant. Jarvis (2002) observes that this method has all the advantages and disadvantages of lecture-discussion but it also results in active learning by the presenter(s) of the topic as well as passive learning by the remainder of the group, who are recipients of the presentation.

Project and Case Studies

Group projects and case studies are frequently employed in the education of adults. But it is widely recognized that it is difficult to use group projects and case studies as teaching-learning techniques in courses that are assessed and grades awarded individually. Nevertheless considering the productive learning outcomes associated with these techniques these techniques should be encouraged in adult learning - especially in social sciences, environmental, health and natural sciences.

A case study as a method of teaching is generally used to allow the learners to examine or analyze a specific situation that they may face. Usually the situation is prepared ahead of time and distributed in written form. The learners often working in groups, discuss the case presented and may seek to focus upon a specific phenomenon and may incorporate a multi disciplinary perspective to solve a given issue. A case study will allow the learners to apply knowledge acquired and information collected to specific problems/situations. Besides a case study could provide learners an opportunity to assess how much they have learned and how comfortable they will be, in using the information to solve problems in the future.

Jarvis (2002) observes that group projects and case studies assume an exciting and innovative ethos, in which the class learn by doing and then use the results in a practical manner.

Summary

Essential Reading No 4 on Teaching Methods for Adult Learners has reviewed a great deal of material related to teaching methods for adult learners.

At the beginning of the lesson the relationship between teaching and learning in the teaching-learning process with special reference to the adult learner was discussed. It was recognized that there is a need for a compromise between the aims and objectives of the teacher and of the adult learner. Thereafter this reading attempted to draw relationships between learning in adults and different approaches to teaching. The emerging picture of the educator of adults as one who seeks to aid adult learning and to develop the full potential of the learner was clearly brought to light. It was seen that the adult teachers' role is rather different from that of the traditional teacher. The teacher of the adult learner is expected to perform a role not only in a didactic manner

but also adopt Socratic and facilitative styles that are more appropriate when teaching adults.

Didactic, Socratic and facilitative teaching styles were reviewed and it was apparent that these teaching styles contain within them implicit philosophies with the humanistic philosophy being more consistent with adult education.

In the light of the approaches to adult teaching and learning the effective teaching methods for adult learners were reviewed, highlighting the differences between teacher-centered and learner-centered approaches. Lecture, discussion and demonstration were the important teacher-centered methods reviewed. Student-centered methods were subdivided into two major categories; namely individual student-centered methods and group student-centered methods. In view of their significance to the education of adults the assignment, computer assisted learning, learning contracts and practicals were reviewed as important individual student-centered teaching methods. Brainstorming, role-play, simulation, group discussions, projects, case studies and seminars were the student-centered methods reviewed. In reviewing each of the methods the relevance of each was discussed and suggestions made regarding measures to be adopted to improve the effectiveness of each method in facilitating adult learning.

It is incumbent on the teacher educator to be proficient in the use of a variety of methods in teaching adults, with the view to providing stimuli to the learners and enabling them to learn in ways that are best suited to them

Self-Assessment

Now that you have come to the end of this Reading see whether you are able,

- i). to outline the nature of the teaching learning process with special reference to the adult learner,
- ii). to discuss the main approaches to adult teaching and learning,
- iii). to identify teaching methods for adult learners,
- iv). to explain the relevance of each teaching method, and
- v). to discuss measures to be adopted to improve the effectiveness of each teaching method.

References

- Belbin, C., and Belbin, R. M. (1972). Problems in Adult Retraining, London: Heinemann.
- Bergevin, P, Morris, D. and Smith, R.M. (1963). Adult Education Procedures New York; Seabury Press
- Dewey, J (1938) Experience and Education, London: Collier Macmillan
- Freire, P (1973) Education for Critical Consciousness, London; Sheed and Ward.
- Hirst, P.H and Peters, R.S (1970) The Logic of Education, London: Routledge and Kegan Raul.
- Jarvis, P (1978) 'Knowledge and the curriculum in adult education: a sociological approach', Adult Education 51 (4), Leicester: NIAE
- Jarvis, P (2002) Adult and continuing education, London: Routledge.
- Knowles, M.S (1978) The Adult Learners: A Neglected Species, Houston: Gulf Publishing Co.
- Mc Gregor, D (1960) The Human Side of Enterprise, New York: Mc Graw Hill.
- Stephens M.D and Roderick G.W (eds:) 1978 Teaching Techniques in Adult Education Newton Abbot: David and Charles.
- Stock, A. (1971) 'Role playing and simulation techniques', in Stephens, M.D and Roderick, G.W. (eds) Teaching Techniques in Adult Education, Newton Abbot: David and Charles.
- Thompson, L. (1974) 'Adult Learning' in Stephens, M.D and Roderick, G.W (eds) Teaching Techniques in Adult Education, Newton Abbot: David and Charles.