

Chapter 10

Building on Trust in a Complex World: Educational Research and Technology

John A. Henschke
Lindenwood University, USA

ABSTRACT

The author began researching trust in the late 1980s. The technology of his practice and research converged in an instrument which indicated the strongest factor being “teacher trust of learners,” and which he sought to enact in practice as “my trust of learners” were quite consistent with each other. This instrument has been used in 16 doctoral dissertations with findings of the strongest factor being “teacher trust of learners,” including a study indicating the technology of his scholarship and practice being congruent. Trust is indicated in some of the general adult education literature, even in a highly unlikely place like a very brutal prison with its culture being transformed into a very humane place. To build upon the trust factor, the growing suggestions of the literature call for more research into the technology and practice of developing and advancing the reciprocal relationship of trust between faculty and learners.

INTRODUCTION

I have been researching deeply and specifically in the technology and practice in ‘teacher trust of learners’ in andragogy for about 15 years, starting in 1998. However, prior to that time, I had been developing the technology of practicing, writing and researching in the general field of adult education and andragogy. My practice in adult education and the andragogical process of ‘teacher trust of learners’ has been honed and refined since that time. The technology of my research and practice converged in an instrument with seven factors (teacher *empathy* with learners, teacher *trust* of

learners, planning and delivery of instruction, *accommodating* learner uniqueness, teacher *insensitivity* toward learners, *learner-centered* learning process (experience-based learning techniques), *teacher-centered* learning process), with the strongest factor being ‘teacher trust of learners’. This instrument (Henschke, 1989) has been used in 16 doctoral dissertations, and has been validated four times, with the strongest factor consistently throughout being ‘teacher trust of learners’. This is well documented and fully explained in (Henschke, 2013). Nonetheless, the objective of this paper is to emphasize the importance of adding to the research of supporting or refuting this trust

DOI: 10.4018/978-1-4666-6046-5.ch010

idea, in contrast to just presenting more writing (theoretical and/or think pieces) on ‘teacher trust of learners’.

BACKGROUND

Knowles (1970, 1995) provided the most articulate expression and most complete understanding of andragogy from the American perspective. The structure of the theory is comprised of two conceptual foundations: The learning theory and the design theory. The learning theory is based upon adults’: (a) need to know a reason that makes sense to them; for whatever they need to learn; (b) have a deep need to be self-directed in learning; (c) enter a learning activity with a quality and volume of experience that is as resource for their own and others’ learning; (d) are ready to learn when they experience a need to know, or be able to do, something to perform more effectively in some aspect of their life; (e) are orientated to learning around life situations that are task, issue- or problem centered, for which they seek solutions; and, (f) are motivated much more internally than externally.

Knowles’ (1970, 1995) conceptual foundation of the design theory is based in a process, and is not dependent upon a body of content, but helps the learner acquire whatever content is needed. The components of the design process are: (a) preparing the learners for the program; (b) setting a climate conducive to learning (physically comfortable and inviting; and psychologically – mutually respectful, collaborative, mutually trustful, supportive, open, authentic, pleasurable, fun and human); (c) involving learners in mutual planning; (d) involving learners in diagnosing their learning needs; (e) involving learners in forming their learning objectives; (f) involving learners in designing learning plans; (g) helping learners carry out their learning plans; and, (g) involving learners in evaluating their learning outcomes. The item that ‘jumped out’ and caught my eye,

which I finally considered most important, was the ‘mutually trustful’ aspect of the learning climate. However, I published some writing on preparing teachers of adults (Henschke, 1987) and developed the instrument (Henschke, 1989) mentioned above which became known as the Modified Instructional Perspectives Inventory (MIPI), with the ‘teacher trust of learners’ becoming the strongest factor in the instrument. I identified the eleven items that comprise this factor and illustrate those facilitators of learning who believe, internalize, and enact the foundation of trust will:

- Purposefully communicate to learners that each is uniquely important;
- Express confidence that learners will develop the skills they need;
- Trust learners to know what their own goals, dreams, and realities are like;
- Prize the learners’ ability to learn what is needed;
- Feel learners need to be aware of and communicate their thought and feelings;
- Enable learners to evaluate their own progress in learning;
- Hear what learners indicate their learning needs are;
- Engage learners in clarifying their own aspirations;
- Develop supportive relationships with learners;
- Experience unconditional positive regard for learners; and,
- Respect the dignity and integrity of learners.

Research Using the IPI with Doctoral Dissertations

To date, this instrument has become known in the field of adult education. At this writing it has been used in a total of 16 completed doctoral dissertations. Without exception, in each of these 16 completed dissertations the strongest factor re-

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