

## Chapter 24

# Arts Integration Techniques in the Adult Learning Environment

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### ABSTRACT

*The visual and performance arts can play an important role in the success of the learning environment. For example, research on arts-based techniques in business management programs using such approaches as artistic reflection, critique, or creating artifacts have been conducted. These studies suggest the use of arts integration techniques in the learning environment changes participants' beliefs about their content and deepens understanding around the context of the learning. This chapter will share both the theories related to arts integration and instructional strategies that focus on arts-integrated instructional approaches in the adult learning environment.*

### INTRODUCTION TO ARTS INTEGRATION

The combining together of two distinct content areas to create new learning through innovative instructional delivery and curriculum design is not novel in adult education practices and the classroom designed for adult learning. The combining of distinct disciplines expands on the long existing tradition of the humanities and arts joined as part of a comprehensive liberal arts preparation. Professional studies in higher education for adult learners have used this technique of multi-disciplinary integration as well, as in the example of the purposeful combination of the technology and health care disciplines for learners in the nursing profession to better serve patients in modern health care settings. Another example would be the study of world languages and business in order to create international business majors who are culturally competent for working throughout the world. Professional studies degrees that focus on combining two or more distinct content areas can create a distinct experience and preparation based upon the content studied. For example, a multi-disciplinary approach in business administration and music performance in an MBA preparation program can result in new ways of viewing management principles and leadership as described by Sutherland in Arts-based Methods in Leadership Develop-

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ment (Sutherland, 2012). This method has also been examined in *Understanding Arts-Based Methods in Managerial Development* (Taylor & Ladkin, 2009) in research on arts based techniques in business management programs using such approaches as artistic reflection, critique or creating artifacts.

Arts integration builds on this multi-disciplinary approach through the tradition of experiential learning theory. Arts integration incorporates Kolb's (1984) four stages of experiential learning: concrete learning, reflective observation, abstract conceptualization and active experimentation. In addition, this type of multi-disciplinary approach reflects more closely the reality of the work world that the adult learners are engaged outside of their educational experience or the experiences beyond completion of a degree that adults will experience. There is a need for individuals to not be specialists in a single field, rather, able to understand and use principles and concepts from other disciplines to be successful in serving the needs of organizations. For example,

- A health care provider may also be applying advanced understanding of technology design and adoption to health care best practices to improve patient services. This will assist the health care provider in understanding the implementation and adoption timeline for new technologies arriving in the nursing home or assisted care facility along with providing feedback and critique for future technology development.
- A non-profit leader may need an understanding of criminal justice practices and social work service models to be successful in his or her position when leading the design of a new facility that integrates law enforcement and social services personnel to serve a shelter for victims of domestic abuse.
- An engineer working in software design company will not only need to understand principles of engineering and game theory, but also the principles of art and design in order to contribute to the team development and launch of a new game or application.

A common content area among these three examples above is arts education principles of process, design, and critique. According to *Curriculum Leadership* by Glatthorn, Boshee, Whitehead, and Boshee (2015), the visual and performance arts can play an important role in the success of the learning environment.

## **RELATIONSHIP: ARTS INTEGRATION AND ADULT LEARNING ENVIRONMENTS**

For the purpose of this chapter, arts integration techniques will be focused on the visual arts and theatre with the reader having the option to explore beyond these arts additional application of the performing arts of music and dance as well. This chapter will share some practical definitions of arts integration, the instructional connections between arts integration and another content area, and argue for the purpose of the arts integration techniques in the adult learning environment. In addition to sharing research related to arts integration practices in adult learning environments, the chapter will also provide practical instructional strategies that focus on arts integrated instructional approaches in the adult learning environment, in particular the practices of artistic reflection, critique, and creating artifacts. These instructional strategies will be further described by the adult learner's and instructor responses to the experiences and sample outcomes provided. This will include personal experience of the chapter author in using arts

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