

Chapter 5

Connecting With the Adult Learner's Worldview

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ABSTRACT

Today's complex and fast-moving environment places the need for higher education educators to use flexible approaches in their teaching. Teaching may appear easy; the work is highly complex with many causes impacting the learning environment both internal and external. Every human being holds a worldview, and that worldview influences how students learn and how they present themselves. Learning how to navigate a student's worldview and helping the students themselves navigate their own worldview and those around them becomes an important task for teachers.

EFFECTIVE TEACHING STRATEGIES TO CONNECT WITH THE ADULT LEARNERS' WORLDVIEW

Today's complex and fast-moving environment places the need for higher education educators to use flexible approaches in their teaching. All educators know that teaching is a challenging yet rewarding task. Teaching may appear easy; the work is highly complex with many causes impacting the learning environment both internal and external. Every human being holds a

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worldview, and that worldview influences how adult learners learn and how they present themselves, especially in a classroom setting. Learning how to navigate adult learners worldview and helping the adult learners themselves navigate their own worldview and those around them becomes an important task for educators. While many of these forces are not controlled by the educator, this chapter shares strategies that work well with adult learners. The authors consider adult learners enrolled in higher education to fall into this category. Malcom Knowles has contributed widely to the field of adult learners and adult education (Knowles, 1968, 1980, 1984) and has defined adult learners as people of legal age who are in a learning setting. Knowles developed a theory of adult learning that he called androgogy which holds four basic principles which include involving adults in the learning process, helping adult learners draw from past experiences, create active learning experiences rather than memorization and understanding that adults want to use what they are learning right away.

Worldview

In order to help adult learners make the most of their educational experiences, it is important for both the instructor and the adult learner to better understand the worldview that each person in the learning dyad holds. Defining worldview can be a daunting task but the authors are choosing to define worldview as the view one person holds of the world around them and how that “view” is internalized to make sense of the world they are living in. An example of this could be identified when an adult learner is returning to school and perhaps had a negative experiences in previous classrooms, that adult learners might have a negative worldview of education. We see examples of this played out every single day across the world as people interact with others who are different from themselves be it gender, race, ethnicity, socioeconomic status, political or religious beliefs. We also see extreme examples on the news when we are witnessing shootings, horrific acts and other extreme examples of negative behavior. Previous experiences shape how we think and more importantly how we act. Each of us can certainly recall both positive and negative experiences in our own educational journey. These experiences are impacting the way the adult learner is understanding material, interacting with classmates and persisting in the educational journey. Combining these educational

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