# Chapter 44
# Integrating Technology for Effective Adult Education

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## ABSTRACT

*Teaching and learning anytime anyplace involves integrating technology into teaching and learning. Effective adult education would not occur without integrating technology into teaching and learning. Technological integration involves not only course instructors, adult learners, but also institutions. In addition, this chapter covers the evolution of technology, ranging from correspondence education to Web 2.0 technologies. By reading this chapter, readers will get to know under what circumstances integration of technology is possible and how to integrate technology into teaching and learning. More importantly, readers will change their mentality about integration into teaching and learning in the new century. They will come to the realization that integration of technology into teaching and learning will facilitate learning, not inhibit learning.*

## INTRODUCTION

In any books about information communication technologies and adult education, we have successfully addressed such pertinent topics such as *Online Education and Adult Learners, Conventional Online Teaching Versus Andragogical Teaching,* and *Effective Teaching with Technology in Adult Education*. If we take a closer look at these topics, we can come to the conclusion that these topics revolve around adult learners, principles of adult learning, and effective use of technology in the 21st Century. While these topics are indispensable, in this chapter, we should delve into integrating technology for effective adult education. Adult education would be meaningless in this information age if we don't know how to integrate technology into teaching and learning when learners, young and old, engage in learning, using technology, for the sake of obtaining a college degree, enhancing their professional development, or just for the sheer joy of learning.

Properly used, technology will enhance learning, and it will not replace instructors. Both instructors and learners need to learn how to maximize the use of technology effectively for the sake of improving their teaching and learning experience wherever it occurs and whenever it occurs in cyberspace. If used negatively, technology may inhibit learning. When this happens, both instructors and learners want to stay away from using technology to enhance teaching and learning.

However, integrating technology for effective adult education requires not just instructors and learners, but also institutions. If instructors, learners or institutions have prejudice against teaching and learning with technology, effective integration of technology would not happen. As the country is experiencing this unprecedented financial crisis (budget cuts and furloughs), it has become obvious that both instructors and institutions are expected to do more with less (as budgets are continually shorn while student numbers are expected to grow) (Brookfield, 2006). Given the larger bleak picture looming before everyone, I would imagine that every instructor, learner and every institution will be required to integrate some kind of technology into teaching and learning in this new century. It is not a matter of whether instructors, learners, or institutions like integrating technology into teaching and learning; it has become a matter of how instructors, learners or institutions can integrate technology for effective adult education. No longer is the University of Phoenix the only university that has been using technology to reach hundreds of learners worldwide, numerous other universities have joined in this tide of teaching and learning with technology. Wang (2008) predicts that it is not surprising that one third of all universities and colleges in the United States have put their traditional courses onto the computer screen. And this figure of one third of university and college courses may well become two thirds in the near future given the current budget crisis at all levels. We may just forget about the nationwide financial crisis. The sheer flexibility and convenience

technology has brought to learners, instructors and institutions are the number one reasons why technology should be integrated into teaching and learning. If adult learners have not used WebCT or Blackboard programs, they cannot be labeled as modern lifelong learners. Course registration, submitting paperless assignments, receiving immediate feedbacks, and grade posting have been easier with the upgraded features of WebCT or Blackboard programs currently used by numerous universities and colleges in the United States and worldwide.

To avoid isolation on the part of learners, institutions and instructors can always schedule teaching in a hybrid manner. Think about the following benefits that King (2006, p. 16) describes in her edited volume on *Harnessing Technology in Higher Education: Access, Equity, Policy, & Instruction.* What King describes is not just a definition of distance education. Rather, King lists the compelling benefits that only technology can bring to not just higher education, but also to adult education:

- The working mother in rural Nebraska completing her bachelor's degree online through her local state university while her children sleep at night.
- The single young man in New York City studying for the GED exam via public television and telephone tutoring.
- The mid-career business woman executive pursuing her doctorate in education via a hybrid online and residency program in order to change careers.
- The retired bus driver engaged in a collaborative webinar for his class through a University of Beijing class on the Eastern perspective of global issues.

Without integrating technology, the above benefits could not be enjoyed by adult learners. The above benefits would not be possible 150 years ago when correspondence education was

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