

THE
ADULT LEARNER
A Neglected Species

FOURTH EDITION

**MALCOLM
KNOWLES**



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About the Cover

To learn is to change. S-O-R, the crux of Dr. Knowles' theory, is a formula that explains how that change occurs in adult learning situations. **S** stands for stimulus to a response, **O** for the one stimulated and the one responding, and **R** stands for the response.

For a detailed explanation of the S-O-R formula, see Appendix B, pages 146-162.

The Adult Learner: A Neglected Species/Fourth Edition

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Foreword



Welcome to the Fourth Edition of what has become a classic in the field of adult learning (that is, Human Resource Development and Adult Education). You, the reader, will find some significant changes in this edition, as Malcolm has updated it with some of the more recent work in the field of adult learning and in related fields.

On reading this manuscript, several thoughts occurred to me that I would like to share with you. The first relates to his style. If you have heard him, you will hear his voice coming through the pages. For the most part, this is written as he speaks. It is not addressed to a general audience but rather to individuals. As you read this book, you will begin to feel that it is addressed to you.

We have somehow developed the idea that for material to be good it must be impersonal, difficult to read, and not enjoyable. Why should that be? In this book, the author is writing for the individual reader (many of them) so do not be too surprised if you feel that you are involved in a dialogue. At times, I am sure, you will feel like responding to some of the ideas and experiences he shares.

You may not agree with everything he has written. That is all right too. I know that there were times, as I read the manuscript, when I wanted to pick up the phone, call him, and get involved in a discussion. I still look forward to doing that the next time we get together.

When you read the book, you may feel the same way. If you do, by all means, make a note of your questions, and the next time you are at a workshop or similar activity that Malcolm is conducting, ask him.

You are not getting just Malcolm Knowles in this book. True, you will be able to share the more than half-century that he has spent in the field of adult learning. But it is more than just a personal document. This book is one of the few resources that contains, in one place, the wide range of research related to the field of adult learning.

He has provided rich appendices to supplement the points he has made. These are not just fillers, so be sure to read them in conjunction with his discussions in the book.

I know that some forewords are designed to march the reader through the book on a chapter-by-chapter basis. I have written some of those. Somehow, I did not feel that was the way to go with this book. I prefer that you walk with Malcolm.

Read, enjoy, and learn—that is what this book is about.

Leonard Nadler
Washington, DC