

Motivating Adult Learners

Learner Motivation Principles of Motivating Instruction

The Distance Education
Instructional Designer Project



In this section, we'll take a look at learner motivation. Through a better understanding of what motivation is, how it affects learners and things that instructors can do to elicit motivation, we can be more effective in designing and implementing educational programs.

You have read about why motivation is important and that adults choose vocational and practical education that leads to knowledge about how to do something. Let's look at some factors that explain differences in adult motivation.

Adult Motivation

- Intrinsic motivation makes the greatest difference.
- Adults need to connect who they are with what they learn for intrinsic motivation.



The Distance Education
Instructional Designer Project

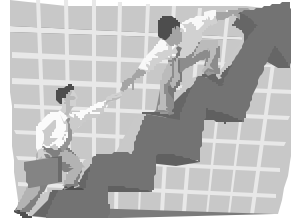
UNIVERSITY OF
FLORIDA
IFAS

Adult Learning and Intrinsic Motivation

- Intrinsic motivation is an internal energy called forth by circumstances that connect with what is culturally significant to the person.
- Rather than try to know what “to do to” learners, we work with them to deepen their existing intrinsic motivation and knowledge. Seeing learners as unique and active, we emphasize communication and respect, realizing that through understanding and sharing our resources together we create greater energy for learning.

Integrated levels of adult motivation

- Minimum level
 - Success + Volition
- Moderate level
 - Success + Volition + Value
- Highest level
 - Success + Volition + Value + Enjoyment



*Volition = Making a choice or decision

Raymond Wlodkowski, 1999 The Distance Education
Instructional Designer Project



How Motivation Relates to Adult Learners

According to Raymond Wlodkowski there are three integrated levels of Adult Motivation:

- For a *Minimal* level, there has to be: Success + Volition
 - Volition (Choice) provides learners' voice. It is difficult to feel responsible unless one has a choice to hold oneself accountable for.
- For a *Moderate* level of motivation, there has to be: Success + Volition + Value
 - The learner finds the learning meaningful and worthwhile
- For the *Highest* level of motivation, there has to be: Success + Volition + Value + Enjoyment
 - This instructor is truly masterful, helps make the difficult desirable. Learners truly take pleasure in attending, getting involved and participating.

What Motivates Adults to Learn



- What is motivation?
- Actions that enhance motivation

The Distance Education
Instructional Designer Project



So, What Motivates Adults to Learn?

- The core of motivation deals with “Why people behave as they do.”
- Socioconstructivism is a growing theoretical force in understanding ways to improve learning in formal settings such as schools and professional seminars. It acknowledges the impact of collaboration, social context, and negotiation on learning. Critical to this is the understanding that people learn through their interaction with and support from other people and objects in the world.
- Motivational strategies are deliberate instructor actions that enhance a person’s motivation to learn. *The strategy contributes to stimulating or creating a motivational condition: a mental/emotional state of being in which the learner is desirous of information, knowledge, insight, and skill.*

What Motivates Adults to Learn

Foundational principles of motivation

- **Inclusion**
- **Meaning**
- **Attitude**
- **Competence**

The Distance Education
Instructional Designer Project



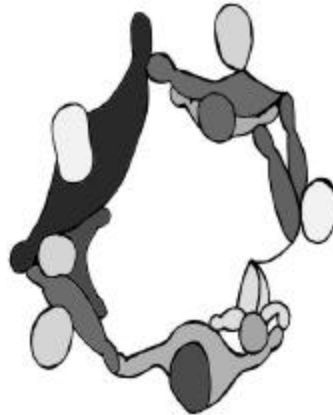
There are Four Foundational Principles that motivate adults to learn:

- Inclusion
- Attitude
- Meaning
- Competence

We will take a brief look at each of these...

Inclusion Fosters Involvement

- ***Inclusion*** is an awareness of learners
- ***Respect*** comes from no fear of threat or humiliation
- ***Connectedness*** is a sense of belonging



The Distance Education
Instructional Designer Project

UNIVERSITY OF
FLORIDA
IFAS

How Inclusion Fosters Involvement

- *Inclusion* is the awareness of learners that they are part of an environment in which they and their instructor are respected by and connected to one another. This is related to positive social climate.
- *Respect* occurs when learners know that they can express their true selves without fear of threat or humiliation. Unless this occurs, they will not be forthcoming with their perceptions of their own reality.
- If there is no meaningful dialogue and if no relevant action is possible, learners become less motivated, as well they should.
- *Connectedness* is perceived as a sense of belonging for each individual and an awareness that each one cares for others and is cared for. There is a shared understanding among group members that supports each other's well being.
 - Telling and hearing our stories is essential to human nature. This allows learners to be involved knowledge builders rather than alienated knowledge resisters.

Inclusion Fosters Involvement

Key:



Instructor-Student relationship

The Distance Education
Instructional Designer Project



In order for inclusion to occur...

- The instructor – student relationship is foundational – of utmost importance.

Attitude Influences Behavior



- **Attitude** results in a predisposition that can lead to a favorable or unfavorable response
- **Attitude** causes a powerful effect on human behavior

The Distance Education
Instructional Designer Project

UNIVERSITY OF
FLORIDA
IFAS

How Attitudes Influence Behavior

- An *attitude* is a combination of concepts, information, and emotions that results in a predisposition to respond favorable or unfavorable toward particular people, groups, ideas, events, or objects.
- Attitudes powerfully affect human behavior and learning because they help people make sense of their world and give cues as to what behavior will be most helpful in dealing with that world.
 - Ex: Someone telling you about a negative learning experience that you will be participating in. This will affect your attitude, participation and expectations.
 - On the other side of the coin, a favorable sharing would lead to a much different / more positive behavior on your part.

Meaning Sustains Involvement

- **Meaning** is a fundamental aspect of adult education
- **Deep meaning** elicits passionate feelings that lead to being absorbed in learning
- **Meaning** comes from challenging learning in engaging formats on relevant topics



The Distance Education
Instructional Designer Project



How Meaning Sustains Involvement

- Making, understanding, and changing meaning are fundamental aspects of adult development that continuously take place in a sociocultural context.
- Deep meaning implies that the experience or idea increasing in complexity is connected to an important goal or ultimate purpose.
- When we assist learners in the realization of what is truly important in their world, they access more passionate feelings and can be absorbed in learning.
- A good deal of foundational and professional knowledge is inert knowledge. It easily becomes boring. By recasting this knowledge in a context of goals, concerns, and problems relevant to adults, we can infuse it with deeper meaning. In other words, how do we apply learning to everyday problems and issues?
- A challenging learning experience in an engaging format about a relevant topic is intrinsically motivating because it increases the range of conscious connections to those interests, applications, and purposes that are important to learners.

Competence Builds Confidence

- **Competence** is a desire to be effective at what we value
 - Adults have a strong innate desire to be competent
 - Competence comes from applying and practicing
 - The spiraling dynamic of competence and confidence

The Distance Education
Instructional Designer Project



How Competence Builds Confidence

- Competency Theory assumes people naturally strive for effective interactions with their world. We are generally programmed to explore, perceive, think about, manipulate, and change our surroundings to promote an effective interaction with our environment.
- Practicing newly developing skills and mastering challenging tasks engender positive emotions; feelings of efficacy that are evident even in early infancy.
- This innate disposition to be competent is so strong that we will risk danger and pain to accomplish a more able relationship with our environment. It is part of shaping the course of our lives.
- Because adults enter educational programs with a strong need to apply what they have learned to the real world, they are continually attentive to how effectively they are learning. Therefore, they are more motivated when the circumstances under which they assess their competence are *authentic* to their actual lives.
- This sense of competence usually comes when adults have had a chance to apply or practice what they are learning. When they have evidence (through feedback) of how well they are learning and can make internal statements, such as "I really understand this" or "I am doing proficiently," adults experience feeling of efficacy and intrinsic motivation because they are competently performing an activity that leads to a valued goal.
- When people know with some degree of certainty that they are adept at what they are learning, they feel confident. This confidence comes from knowing that they have *intentionally* become proficient.
- Competence allows a person to become more confident, which provides emotional support for an effort to learn new skills and knowledge. Competent achievement of this new learning further buttresses confidence, which again supports and motivates more extensive learning. This can result in a spiraling dynamic of competence and confidence growing in continued support of each other.

Establishing Essential Motivational Conditions

- Establishing **inclusion**
 - *Creating an atmosphere of respect and connection*
- Developing **attitude**
 - *Creating favorable disposition to learning*
- Enhancing **meaning**
 - *Creating challenging, thoughtful experiences*
- Engendering **competence**
 - *Creating an understanding of learner effectiveness*

The Distance Education
Instructional Designer Project



Organizing the Essential Motivational Conditions: The Motivational Framework for Culturally Responsive Teaching

Applying The Motivational Framework for Culturally Responsive Teaching has four essential conditions:

- *Establishing inclusion*: creating a learning atmosphere in which learners and instructors feel respected and connected to one another.
- *Developing attitude*: creating a favorable disposition toward the learning experience through personal relevance and choice.
- *Enhancing meaning*: creating challenging, thoughtful learning experiences that include learners' perspectives and values.
- *Engendering competence*: creating an understanding that learners are effective in learning something they value.
 - In thinking about motivation, we find that People experience motivational influences polyrhythmically – that is, as a simultaneous integration of intersecting realities on both conscious and subconscious levels. Many feelings arise from a dynamic network, and it is hard to tell how many of them affect a person at any given moment.
 - As an Instructor, Motivational planning can (and should) be integrated with instructional planning, or it can be used in addition to instructional planning. Motivational planning helps us avoid a serious pitfall common to teaching: blaming the learners for being unresponsive to instruction. *Plan for in the beginning!
 - Motivational planning helps us keep our attention on the learning climate and on how we instruct and what we can do about that instruction when it is not as vital as we would like it to be.

Indicators of Intrinsic Motivation

- Beginning activities without resistance
- Spontaneously relate learning
- Asking questions
- Going beyond required work
- Pride in learning & consequences



The Distance Education
Instructional Designer Project

UNIVERSITY OF
FLORIDA
IFAS

IN summary, how do we know if learners are motivated?

Assessing Learner Motivation

Observable indicators of intrinsic motivation are that learners:

- Begin learning activities without resistance.
- Prefer challenging aspects of tasks.
- Spontaneously relate learning to outside interests.
- Ask questions to expand their understanding beyond the learning at hand.
- Go beyond required work.
- Find joy in the process of learning – the studying, writing, reading, etc.
- Are proud of their learning and its consequences.

Be keenly aware of these indicators so we can adjust our teaching to the benefit of learner motivation.

Acknowledgement

Material adapted from text by:

Raymond Wlodkowski (1999).

Enhancing Adult Motivation to Learn: A Comprehensive Guide for
Teaching All Adults – 2nd ed.

San Francisco, CA. Jossey-Bass Inc., Pub.

The Distance Education
Instructional Designer Project



The material for this presentation was adapted from:

Raymond Wlodkowski (1999).

Enhancing Adult Motivation to Learn: A Comprehensive Guide for Teaching All
Adults – 2nd ed.

San Francisco, CA. Jossey-Bass Inc., Pub.