

ADULT LEARNING

September/October 1992
Volume 4, Number 1
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**Preview of the
Anaheim Conference**



**Practicing Adult
Learning Principles
at Adult Education
Conferences**



**The Attrition
Problem in ABE**



A New ESL Model

ADULT LEARNING

September/October 1992

Volume 4 Number 1

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Practicing What We Preach

All adult educators benefit from as well as enjoy participating in adult education conferences. Otherwise, there would not be so many of us attending the myriad conferences we do. Each of us finds highly satisfying conference sessions that provide solid, relevant content while actively involving us in the learning process. Nevertheless, we have all come out of conference sessions and expressed or heard such comments as, "Why do we violate much of what—if not everything—we know about how adults learn?" or "We're the specialists, so, how come we don't practice what we preach about adult 'learning' or, 'Please, no more lectures!'"

In addition, many of us who present at adult education conferences have found ourselves guilty of the violations noted in the above comments. What adds to the difficulty is that we had struggled with the dilemma of saying to ourselves, "Do I have time in my session to engage actively participants?" or "Will the benefit really warrant my taking time to plan for involvement?" or, "How can I get it all said in the lim-

ited time available?"

The important fact of all this is that we as adult educators have not been very systematic in practicing our adult learning principles in conference settings. We can do something about this if we make that determination. The four articles in this issue of *Adult Learning* present suggestions and share each writer's personal experience for improving our conferencing from four points of view: presenter, participant/attendee, planner, and administrator.

Malcolm S. Knowles, in describing a presenter's view, encourages participant involvement in a process of active inquiry (rather than passive receiving) and building on attendees' backgrounds, needs, and concerns. In his theory, Knowles holds that the more and better the interaction on the part of the audience, and between the two, the greater the learning is likely to be. He details a number of designs to make this happen. Knowles also provides numerous personal examples from his own practice of engaging audiences in participatory

presentations and the gratifying outcome of the audiences getting "turned on" to collaborative thinking.

Ann Wegman, in looking at adult education conferences from a participant/attendee's point of view, insists on an early start in preparation for attending. She provides a step-by-step process for proactive involvement. In detailing her thoughtful suggestions, Wegman starts—even before receiving the conference announcement—to think through and actively approach the "boss" about attending. This may include our reasons for participating and the benefit it will be to our work. In a worksheet format, she seeks to help us answer such questions as: "Why go? What objectives will I seek to meet? Which sessions will help me meet my objectives? What are my expectations regarding how the sessions will be conducted?" and, "How to report my learnings?"

Barbara Emil helps conference planners include a variety of sessions that meet different educational needs. Finding what works in solving immediate problems, developing the skills needed for effective practice, comparing alternative issues as well as critically examining practices to choose what will work best. She suggests that sessions be provided for each level of learning: knowledge, comprehension, application, analysis, synthesis, and evaluation. In addition, she encourages planners to demonstrate understanding of each part of the conference and the total conference picture by asking if the content of the sessions could be practically applied in a variety of settings back home.

Beverly Grissom from an administrator's point of view, advocates that one of the best investments an adult education organization can make is aggressively supporting their adult educators' (staff members) interest in professional development through adult education conference participation. She emphasizes four principles of adult learning and related strategies that influence staff members' learning experiences. Grissom also says that staff

will benefit in numerous ways, such as their love of learning, self-improvement, colleague support, increased effectiveness as an instructor, and improved quality of life for the adult learners they serve.

The last word on practicing our adult learning principles has not been uttered, but we hope this material will encourage adult educators (you and me) to implement more of our principles in conference settings.

For those interested in some of the many additional printed resources available on this topic, consider the following:

- Planning, Conducting and Evaluating Workshops and Conferences by Larry Nolan Davis
- The Participant's Workbook and Learning Guide by Kenneth Cinnamon
- Getting Results Through Learning by Patricia McLagan
- The Small Meeting Planner by Leslie This
- Improving Conference Design and Outcomes ed. by Paul J. Isiev
- Getting the Most from Seminars and Conferences by Angus Reynolds ▲

—by **John A. Henschke**
Associate Professor of Education, University of Missouri-St. Louis, and Continuing Education Specialist, University Extension—University of Missouri and Lincoln University

The following members of the Adult Learning Editorial Board were the editors for the articles in this issue on "Practicing Adult Learning Principles at Adult Education Conferences": John Henschke, Mary Bruning, and Rochelle Kenvon.

Upcoming topics for special sections:
November/December—Current Trends & Social Issues, AAACE Tenth Anniversary;
January/February—Technology;
March/April—Administering Adult Education;
May/June—Women's Issues, Transitions;
July/August—Literacy; Continuing Professional Education



Conferences in the 1990s— How Far Have We Really Come?

Adult education has long viewed conferences as important educational tools. Emphasis on developing conference techniques goes back to the early days of the American Association for Adult Education in the 1920s. Much of the writing on this topic has focused on how to plan conferences and the introduction of adult education methods into the design. Of particular concern has been the consistent pleas for a shift away from stilted, dry presentations, to the design of more stimulating, active, learning experiences that allow for greater individual participation. Despite great interest in this area, little headway has been made.

Research in this area is amazingly sparse. Little systematic research has been done on the actual experience of the conference, although many books have been written on the planning of conferences and the adoption of adult education techniques. Starting in the 1950s, but really growing in the 1980s, there has been a shift in emphasis on the part of some researchers who emphasize the importance of thinking of the conference as a complex social network that requires certain competencies on the part of the attendee if it is to be a successful experience.

Surprisingly, although we often tend to think of conferences as a modern invention (or plague), the idea of using meetings as a means of disseminating information about research and implementation is relatively old, going back to at least the eighteenth century learned societies. In the United States, at least until the Civil War, such meetings usually combined the needs of the amateur and the "professional." There was a presumed connection between theory and practice, research and utility, which meant that the problem of innovation was closely connected to the issue of diffusion. Starting in the late nineteenth century, with increasing professionalization, conferences evolved as places at which specialists addressed each other, and the research presented was often less accessible to the educated layperson. With the growth of professionalization, the

direct connection between diffusion and innovation became more obscure. Thus, was born the art of popularization as distinct from diffusion and dissemination and the growing distinction between practical and theoretical research.

Research on the phenomenon of conferences touches on several different academic areas including adult education, educational psychology, social psychology, and communications. One of the fruitful avenues for the study of the conference has been to view it as a medium of communication. Then the task of adult educators is to refine the methods of communication, but only through a thorough understanding of the communication processes themselves. Although this approach has been promoted since the 1950s, we still know relatively little about the different communication processes and learning that take place at conferences. Recently, with the shift to a focus on participants as consumers and the development of audience skills, writers have come to see the conference as a form of self-directed learning.

One interesting approach deals with conference as a culture and says that an understanding of conferences involves an understanding of how individuals integrate this new, transient culture into their already existing frameworks. Thus, one author divides conference attendees into three groups: the tourist who never adopts the conference culture, the expatriate who turns on the home culture and enthusiastically embraces the conference culture, and the learner who recognizes the dual membership that participants hold in both the home culture and that of the conference and who is open to the conference while maintaining some distance and critical capacities.

Other writers have centered their research on the development of specific conference skills. One useful distinction is between conference consumers and attendees. While consumers are able to participate fully in the conference and thus learn from it, attendees

are observers who never fully engage in the conference. Becoming a consumer involves a set of skills that can be learned. The consumer views the conference as a totality, and strives to understand it as social system. Getting the most out of this system means not only attending sessions, but developing an understanding of the structure of the field and the interrelationships among participants. This includes an analysis of the group dynamics, networks, and norms of the organization.

The skills needed by the proactive consumer include self-knowledge, awareness of how outside influences affect participation and professional needs, and the ability to analyze the conference. This work provides a good basis for future work.

Research indicates that planners and organizers need to take the conference culture into account, especially to prevent the tourist reaction. They need to recognize that individuals are constantly weighing what they hear in terms of their back-home realities and they need to work on the inclusion of those who remain on the conference's periphery.

The most pervasive approach to the question of conferences has dealt with the different strategies that are deemed most effective. Borrowed from the work on self-directed learning, instruction, training, and workshop development, these strategies include brainstorming, buzz groups, case studies, debates, work groups, and audience reaction teams. Many of these approaches have been advanced to overcome the passivity and the lack of follow-through that are seen as principal problems of conference attendance.

But the research into the effectiveness of these approaches has not been adequately studied. Thus, while the emphasis is on participation and movement away from lectures and the reading of papers, there are no studies about conference outcomes that indicate effectiveness. Relying on studies in other circumstances, it is unclear that, for example, the lecture is not as good a tool for diffusion as discussion. In

fact, some studies have indicated that discussion at conferences is viewed as a waste of time by those seeking particular pieces of information rather than working through a problem. Thus, individual expectations become a key to effective planning. Entirely new formats such as the teleconference and the computer conference also need closer examination.

In terms of conference organization, the different functions of the conference also mean different roles among the planners. These can include content specialists, presentation specialists, planners, information coordinators, and management consultants. Much of the work on conference planning parallels that done on program development and administration.

One writer has fourteen steps to a successful conference, including idea for program, testing the ideas and seeking advice, small group feedback, advisory committees, decision to proceed or reject, planning committee establishment of clear goals, assignment of planning responsibilities, planning logistics and financial management, development and execution of plans, evaluation, wrap-up, follow-up, and future agenda identification. While these are certainly helpful to the novice planner, they need to be balanced with the broader issues of conference culture.

Conferences have become a vital part of American professional life, even as their very nature changes and evolves. The issues related to the conference as social system have not been studied as fully as necessary. Researchers need to examine more closely the dynamics of the learning community and exactly how and what people learn in this new cultural situation. The work of communications experts on stagefright or audience anxiety is indicative of the kinds of work that needs the attention of adult educators. This is often ignored, yet the behavior of the audience and the impact this has on the speaker, certainly has an impact

See *Directions for Research* p. 31

The Disappearing Student continued from p. 26

one tutoring, or even to another center (where they will probably drop out anyway)

Third, formative or regular feedback evaluation on RLs could be developed to enable counselors to monitor the RL's progress along with team, small group teacher, or tutor involvement.

Where do under-resourced programs get the resources to mount team approaches, create small group teaching, or develop one-on-one tutoring systems? Since the premise is that RLs need more attention than Ps, why not re-align resource time "unequally" but more fairly according to need? The more independent RL will rarely be interested in social aspects of the program, while the P typically will. Thus Ps may well respond to peer teaching or group projects which would free-up more one-on-one teacher time for RLs. Because Ps need very little counselor time, why not focus more follow up time on RLs from the beginning? As for adding small group and one-on-one tutoring supplements, one of the centers mentioned here added one-on-one tutoring using local volunteers in the evening and the small group class was supported through funding requests. More expensive? Compare it to the cost of attrition as part of your program's next budget submission. Accountability sometimes argues for diversity

Resistant Learners—Early Program Attention Can Make a Difference

RLs are easy to overlook in literacy/ABE, just as they were back in school. It is easy to label them "disinterested" after they leave, a label probably used when they attended school. Closer attention to these "disinterested" students in the first three weeks promises to make a difference. But for the future, this study presents many questions. We need to know why, if so many quit school with their belief in education "intact," why some return to literacy and ABE and others refuse to do so. We need to further investigate the attitudes of those who persist in ABE against all odds, those who quit and try and try again, and those who never come back to ABE/literacy. Thus, further research is needed to respond effectively to the expectations of those willing to enter, to more clearly reveal the complex dimensions of 'school,' and to understand better the life-long love-hate relationships so many adults, formally educated and undereducated, have with their past schooling. We need to turn attrition around in ABE and stop the "disappearance" of so many students who have the potential to do more, to be more. Breaking with tradition in programs and research may be the first step. ▲

Time Out continued from p. 30

materials (videos, audio tapes, readings) that explicitly challenge sexism.

How then would one conclude consciousness-raising fits into the adult educator's pedagogical approach towards the cognitive development of the adult female student? Consciousness-raising should not, whether formally in support groups or more informally within a fuller curriculum, be misconstrued as the ultimate goal of the learning experience. On the contrary, it would be wrong to see it as merely a beginning step. Only when we acknowledge and respect the raising of one's consciousness as an integration of our students' internal and external wisdom, will we be able to play a more

nurturing role in helping female students become holistic, creative, and critical thinking women. ▲

—by **Terri Massin**
Co-Director, Caregivers, VESL a training program in child-care for refugee and immigrant women in Oakland, California. Massin is also an ESL instructor at Golden Gate University in San Francisco.

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Directions for Research, cont'd. from p. 10

that goes beyond mere technique. Audience dynamics—the study of audience passivity, resistance, and one-way communication—must be integrated into our understanding of conferences. In other words, we need to examine more closely the precise situational aspects of the conference and the impediments and aids to learning, planning, and delivery. While these aspects have been raised in the literature, they all deserve further study. ▲

—by **Amy Rose**
*Northern Illinois University
DeKalb, Illinois*

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The seventh edition in a series of handbooks published by the American Association for Adult and Continuing Education (AAACE)

Sharan B. Merriam and Phyllis M. Cunningham, Editors

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Marketplace continued from p. 29

al learning, academic courses are provided in a classroom setting augmented by field trips. Rather than sightseeing, Elderhostel participants live and study in an area, getting a close-up perspective on the region. While Elderhostel tours are mostly domestic, the organization does sponsor study opportunities in over 43 foreign countries (at prices ranging from \$800 to \$5,000). In 1991, over 237,000 people participated in Elderhostel programs around the world.

Some participants in educational travel groups are able to arrange to receive continuing education or in-service credit for their tours. As David Love of ASTA points out, in these recessionary times people need, and are looking for, an excuse to travel, combining a wonderful vacation with a learning experience, and possibly even credit, can provide that excuse. ▲

This department covers topics of interest to adult educators and is designed to support related products and services advertised in this issue.



Applying Principles of Adult Learning in Conference Presentations

Malcolm S. Knowles

I have a deep commitment to applying principles of adult learning in everything I do—even in one-hour keynote speeches. Indeed, one of the most frequent (and gratifying) comments I get on evaluation sheets of my sessions is, “Malcolm practices what he preaches!” This makes me both happy and sad—sad that it should be such a noteworthy behavior.

My foundational principle of adult learning in making presentations is that the learners be active participants in a process of inquiry, rather than passively receive transmitted content. A second principle is that the process should start with and build on the backgrounds, needs, interests, problems, and concerns of the participants. My experience is that when people have the opportunity to learn by taking some initiative and perceiving the learning in the context of their own life situations, they will internalize more quickly, retain more permanently, and apply more confidently. And I am convinced that every learning experience should result in both some acquisition of content and some enhancement of their self-directed learning competencies.

Theory of Large Meetings

These principles also provide the foundation of my special theory of large meetings, which are a prominent mode in conferences. The additional basic premise of this special theory is that the educative quality of a large meeting is directly a function of the quantity and quality of interaction in the meeting. This is to say that the more

and better the interaction within and among the various elements of a large meeting, the greater the learning is likely to be. A second premise of the theory is that there are three areas in which interaction can be influenced: (1) the platform itself, (2) the audience, and (3) the relationship between the platform and the audience. Let us examine the possibilities of each in turn.

Interaction on the platform is at its lowest point with a single speaker or film. The amount of interaction can be moved up a notch by adding a chalkboard, flip chart, filmstrip, or some other visual aid for the speaker to use. Interaction can be increased another notch by adding one other person, so that two people are interacting in debate, dialogue, or interview. Maximum interaction can be achieved by introducing two or more people to the platform for a symposium, panel discussion, group interview, dramatic skit, or demonstration.

Interaction between the platform and the audience is at its first level up from passive with an invitation to the audience to ask questions of the speaker following the presentation. A still-higher level of interaction can be achieved by bringing representatives of the audience on to the platform to serve as “reaction” or “watchdog” teams. A reaction team is asked simply to listen to the presentation and then to give its reactions in a series of statements or through a panel discussion. A watchdog team is asked to listen for terminology or concepts it thinks members of the audience may not fully comprehend and to interrupt the presentation at any time to ask for clarification. To the extent that the people selected to

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The Assumptions and Process Elements of the Pedagogical and Andragogical Models of Learning

ASSUMPTIONS		
About	Pedagogical	Andragogical
Concept of the learner	Dependent personality	Increasingly self-directing
Role of learner's experience	To be built on more than used as a resource	A rich resource for learning by self and others
Readiness to learn	Uniform by age-level & curriculum	Develops from life tasks & problems
Orientation to learning	Subject-centered	Task- or problem-centered
Motivation	By external rewards and punishment	By internal incentives curiosity

PROCESS ELEMENTS		
Elements	Pedagogical	Andragogical
Climate	Tense low trust Formal cold, aloof Authority-oriented Competitive judgmental	Relaxed trusting Mutually respectful Informal warm Collaborative, supportive
Planning	Primarily by teacher	Mutually by learners and facilitator
Diagnosis of needs	Primarily by teacher	By mutual assessment
Setting of objectives	Primarily by teacher	By mutual negotiation
Designing learning plans	Teachers content plans Course syllabus Logical sequence	Learning contracts Learning projects Sequenced by readiness
Learning activities	Transmittal techniques Assigned readings	Inquiry projects Independent study Experiential techniques
Evaluation	By teacher Norm-referenced (on a curve) With grades	By learner-collected evidence validated by peers/facilitators/experts Criterion-referenced

The body of theory and practice on which teacher-directed learning is based is often given the label "pedagogy," from the Greek words *paid* (meaning child) and *agogus* (meaning guide or leader)—thus being defined as the art and science of teaching children.

The body of theory and practice on which self-directed learning is based is coming to be labeled "andragogy," from the Greek word *aner* (meaning adult)—thus being defined as the art and science of helping adults (or, even better, maturing human beings) learn.

These two models do not represent bad/good or child/adult dichotomies, but rather a continuum of assumptions to be checked out in terms of their rightness for particular learners in particular situations. If a pedagogical assumption is realistic for a particular situation, then pedagogical strategies are appropriate. For example, if a learner is entering into a totally strange content area, he or she will be dependent on a teacher until enough content has been acquired to enable self-directed inquiry to begin.

serve on the teams are truly representative of the main characteristics of the audience (in terms of age, gender, special interests, occupations, and geography), to that extent will the audience psychologically identify with the interaction on the platform.

Interaction among members of the audience can be promoted in several ways. The audience can be asked to meet in small groups of from two to five or six without moving from their seats and perform several functions: (1) Before a presentation, they can be asked to take a few minutes to pool the questions or issues they would like the speaker to address and have one member summarize the result—thus, in effect, outlining the speech

for the presenter; (2) before a presentation the audience can be asked to serve as "listening teams" according to the section of the room they are sitting in—one section to listen to the presentation for points requiring clarification (the clarification team), another for points with which they disagree (the rebuttal team), another for points they wish to have elaborated on (the elaboration team), and a fourth for problems of practical application they wish the speaker to address (the application team). After the presentation the teams are asked to "buzz" in groups of four or five to pool their thinking about the points they want raised, following which one member of each group gives a summary of its deliberations and the

speaker responds to each item in turn, until time runs out or all items are discussed; (3) following a presentation, the audience can be asked to form buzz groups to discuss for a few minutes how they plan to apply one or more of the ideas contained in the presentation, with the results being summarized by one member of each group.

Some Examples from My Own Experience

Want some real-life examples? Here are a few. Perhaps the most frequent presentation I am asked to make is usually titled something like "Modern Concepts of Adult Learning" or "Understanding and Working With Adult

Learners The audiences generally range from fifty to a few hundred. The first thing I do is to take five minutes or so getting a feel for the audience. I announce that I am going to shout out some categories, and anyone who fits into a category, raise your hand. The first set of categories has to do with the institutional setting in which they work: Elementary schools? High schools? Community colleges? Colleges and universities? Business and industry? Government agencies? Health agencies and hospitals? Voluntary organizations? Religious institutions? The second set of categories is about their roles in these institutions: Administrators? Supervisors? Teachers or trainers? Librarians? Materials producers? Counselors or consultants? Unemployed? (laughter) The third set concerns their background in education: Degrees in education? In adult education? Workshops and conferences? Extensive reading? How many of you could with confidence write a 1000-word article for your professional journal on "The meaning of andragogy"?

If the audience clearly has considerable background in education, I ask them to pull their chairs around into groups of four or five and take ten minutes pooling the questions, problems, issues, and concerns they have about adult learners that they would like this conference to deal with. I ask that one person in each group volunteer to serve as reporter for that group and give us a highlight summary of the points raised. At the end of ten minutes I call them back to order and invite a sample of ten or so reporters to give their summaries.

I then explain that I am not going to respond to each point individually, but will propose some general principles and concepts of adult learning and suggest how they might apply to the points they raised. I then ask them to take out their copy of the chart "The Assumptions and Process Elements of the Pedagogical and Andragogical Models of Learning" which they obtained when they entered the room (see figure). I then take about twenty minutes reviewing the assumptions and process elements of the two models, illustrating their application to the questions, problems, and concerns they raised at the beginning of the meeting. For example, if one of the questions was "How do I get students interested in the subject I have to teach?", when I get to the assumption about readiness to learn in my review of the chart, I point out that adults become ready to learn those things that are

relevant to their life tasks and problems, hence the andragogical process elements of involving the learners in diagnosing their learning needs, formulating learning objectives, and designing learning plans through mutual negotiation with the teacher.

On the other hand, if the audience clearly has had limited background in education (as is often the case with industrial trainers, medical personnel, pharmacists, government workers, and others, I use a different design. I still open with getting a show of hands on their institutional settings, roles, and educational backgrounds. Then I ask them to take out the chart on "Assumptions" and ask them to take five minutes looking at it and reflecting on it. Then I ask them to form groups of four or five, with one member serving as a reporter and take ten minutes pooling questions they have with the chart. At the end of ten minutes I invite each reporter to choose one question or problem raised by his or her group, and I respond to each item as it is reported. I deal with as many items as I can until time runs out.

Occasionally a session is scheduled to run for an hour and a half or two hours, in which case I have time to add another component in the design, which I think of as "back-home application," but which in the literature is usually referred to as "transfer of training." I ask the participants to reflect for five minutes on their experience so far and to select one or two ideas they have picked up that they think they would like to try out in their back-home situations. After five minutes I ask them to form groups of four or five and take turns describing to other members of their group (1) the idea they would like to experiment with, (2) the steps they would take in applying it, and (3) any obstacles or resistances they anticipate encountering in putting it into effect. After a reasonable amount of time (depending upon the time available), I call them back to order and invite volunteers to present their plans to the total audience. After each presentation, I invite members of the audience to react to the plan and, particularly, to suggest strategies for dealing with the obstacle and resistances. During the last five minutes or so I add my own ideas about strategies for bringing about change.

Another presentation I am frequently asked to make goes under a title such as "Looking into the Future of Adult Education" (or "Education" or "Training"). I open this ses-

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sion with the statement that professional futurists typically use two techniques for peering into the future: (1) *scenario-writing*, in which they dream about what they would like the future to be and write a scenario describing its main features, and (2) *forecasting*, in which they identify current trends and project them into the future. (I usually ask them to pick the year 2025 as the target date in the future.) I then explain that I like to divide the labor with my colleagues—and so I am going to ask them to be the scenario writers, and that after they have shared some of their dreams with us I'll do the forecasting and tell them how it's really going to be. (Laughter) I ask them to get into groups of four or five and take fifteen minutes sharing their dreams, with one member of each group volunteering to serve as reporter to give us a high-point summary of their dreams. After fifteen minutes I call them back to order and invite a sample of five or six reporters to give their summaries. (Incidentally, one of the most common dreams is that adult educators will occupy the highest-status positions in their organizations and will draw the highest salaries. But most of the dreams have adult education making a sig-

nificant contribution to the quality of life of all citizens and bringing about lifelong learning communities.)

In my forecasting I pick up such current trends as (1) the demographic changes in our society, such as an increasing proportion of the elderly and the increasing diversity of our population; (2) the accelerating pace of social and technological change; (3) the development of new means—particularly electronic—for delivering educational services; and (4) the explosion of research-based knowledge about learning—especially adult learning. I then invite the audience to brainstorm with me on some of the implications of these trends for the reorganization of our educational system and practices.

I'd like to conclude with the observation that when I first started experimenting with this kind of participatory presentation I was very nervous. What if the audiences refused to get into small groups? What if their responses were silly or irresponsible? What if nobody volunteered? I can testify that all of my fears were unfounded. I have never had an audience that failed to get turned on to the adventure of collaborative thinking. ▲

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Fostering Adult Learning Principles for Your Staff

one administrator's perspective of the value of conferences

G

Beverly McMurtry Grissom

iven that student success is the primary goal of adult educators, administrators have an obligation to train and nurture charismatic and inspired staff members who provide quality instruction and support services to adult students. Toward that end, administrators serve as leaders in providing professional development opportunities that not only deliver useful field-specific information but that also take into account that all staff members are in fact adult learners themselves. This precept has significant and defining implications for the types and structures of in-service programs that are selected, especially conferences.

Obligations and Opportunities

Adult education administrators worth their salt are members of local, state, and national profession-related associations. These associations provide valuable opportunities to affiliate with state, national, and global colleagues, and offer information on current issues and trends through publications and conferences, workshops, and seminars. In *Administration of Continuing Education* (1977), Curtis Ulmer stressed that in order for administrators to be of maximum assistance to faculty and staff they must have expertise in the theory and practice of adult education. He emphasized administrators' responsibility to continue their education through active participation in conferences. However, administrators are not the only members of an adult education program staff who might enhance program quality by incorporating what they learned at conferences. Ulmer recognized the

supervisors' obligation to work with staff to stimulate new interest and knowledge and to establish a school climate which fosters freedom of inquiry. Isn't that how we expect teachers to perform with adult students? Shouldn't administrators aggressively support staff members' interest in inquiry for professional development through conference participation? Absolutely!

A Gentle Reminder

In *The Modern Practice of Adult Education* (1980), Malcolm Knowles observed that it is extremely important to understand the various educational purposes that a conference can serve. Participants may acquire information on new materials and methods, become aware of new ways of looking at old issues and concerns, and learn how others deal with problems that are common to many adult education personnel. Just as important, however, and perhaps most important, is that participants renew their commitment—to action—to their programs, and ultimately to their students as a result of their attendance.

Practicing What We Preach in Adult Learning Principles

It is useful for administrators to help staff members develop awareness of four of the principles of adult learning that influence their conference learning experiences. These principles and related strategies to develop awareness of each are as follows:

1. *Adults learn what they really want to learn*, so administrators must assist their staff members in focus-

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ing their professional interests and needs. Cultivating their interest in professional renewal and development opportunities will surely enhance their positive experiences at workshops and conferences. Selecting a national conference that is consistent with their identified interests and needs will increase the potential benefit of the conference to them and the ultimate benefit to the students.

2. *Adult learners learn by doing and participating; their learning is never a passive process.* The workshops and discussions available at conferences usually offer the opportunity for attendees to interact with the presenters and among themselves, sharing ideas and ups learning from each other. Over the years, I have gained as much valuable knowledge from members of session audiences as I have from the presenters.

3. *Adults learn quickly because they have stronger reasons for learning. Their motivations are varied.* Administrators must be catalysts for staff members' enthusiasm for their work and interest in professional growth. They must be positive and persistent in overseeing the collaborative planning and implementation of professional development activities. Making available travel and professional development funds (limited though they may be) is a significant signal to staff members that broadened perspectives and expanded horizons are valued in the name of student success. Allowing staff members the opportunity to travel to a conference in an attractive location is a motivator in itself. It sends a strong message that they are worth investing in as professionals and team members. My staff members' morale is always boosted by the opportunity to attend a good conference. It is, in turn, most obviously reflected in their enthusiasm and energy in the classroom. The return on the investment will accrue to the students many times over.

4. *Adult learners have many and varied experiences that are valuable resources to enrich learning situations.* Teachers, counselors, support staff, and administrators from school districts, community colleges, universities, public and private community-based organizations, volunteer groups, correctional facilities, churches, and military installations all bring unique and extraordinary expertise and life experiences to the adult education setting. Each has a special perspective that, when shared within the conference context, can be

most enlightening, reinforcing, encouraging, and inspiring to those in attendance. An adult education teacher recently attested that her effectiveness as an instructor is directly related to her participation in national adult education conferences. She characterized the interchange with peers as very validating, particularly when she learns that strategies she employs to resolve students' learning problems are ones that are the subjects of concurrent sessions or are employed by colleagues near and far. I firmly believe that interaction with this diverse group of adult educators diminishes the risk of 'professional tunnel vision' and broadens our perspective. The friends I have developed through conference participation during the past twenty years have provided me with a wonderful extended family of people who are very important to me and who understand my life's work. I learn from them every time I am with them. I value my staff enough to want them to enjoy that same experience.

Additional Assets and Amenities

Direct instructional and ancillary strategies that are broadly accepted as effective with adult learners are usually in evidence at national conferences. The atmosphere of conferences is pervaded by mutual respect. Adult educators appreciate in each other the love of learning and self-improvement. Participants are eager to hear and share ideas, concerns, and secrets to success, in both formal and informal gatherings. How comforting it is to learn that others have the same problems, challenges, circumstances, and successes! I come away from conferences not only comforted that I am not the only person struggling with funding or student retention problems but flattered and warmed by the encouragement and kind words from my peers. After networking with colleagues, my professional batteries are recharged. Conference facilities are usually conducive to learning, with concurrent sessions held in *reasonably comfortable surroundings*. National conferences are held in attractive venues, utilizing first class hotel accommodations and often state-of-the-art meeting space.

Field trips and *guest speakers* are always beneficial instructional delivery mechanisms for adult learners and prove to be very effective ways to diversify the presentation of new concepts and skills. National conferences offer both. After a visit to an adult center at a conference, my staff members return full of good

suggestions on ways we can improve a variety of aspects of our programs.

Incidental learning is a frequent phenomenon in adult students. Certainly the opportunities for this type of learning are abundant at national conferences. As noted by Christine Knott and Wendy Cole in their 1989 article in *Adult Learning* entitled *Conferences: A Search for Quality*, interaction can be intense and challenging among the large numbers of people attending national conferences. People from diverse geographic areas and professional circumstances can be brought together to exchange ideas over refreshments. Sometimes, very useful program information comes serendipitously from conversations during social events. I encourage participation in conference special events. Sometimes we get our most useful new ideas for our programs during a friendly chat in a hospitality suite or over the din of the dance band.

Strategic Planning

Given the expense of travel, administrators should make every effort to plan carefully to receive the fullest return on the investment by assisting staff members in planning not only which conferences will be most beneficial to them and their students, but how to glean the most during the conference. It is wise to encourage staff members to seek out sessions or interest to them that are offered in a format that is most appealing. Staff should be encouraged to research the conference, ascertaining concurrent session schedules and formats. My frustration is that there are so many good session topics and only one of me! Scheduling conflicts don't allow for me to get to all the sessions in which I am interested. After every conference, I review the program book again. I write to presenters whose sessions I could not attend and ask for a synopsis of the presentation and copies of materials they distributed. People are delighted to share, and they respond promptly. Upon receipt of the information, I distribute it to my staff members so they, too, may benefit from these excellent resources.

It is also wise to review supplied conference information with the staff members and give guidance regarding particularly good presenters and special events. When more than one staff member attends, I encourage each member to review the program book and plan who will attend which sessions in order to ensure maximum coverage.

When a staff member returns, the adminis-

trator and the attendee may collaborate on the development of a presentation to other staff, sharing with them ideas, concepts, and strategies learned at the various sessions. I've found this practice to be an excellent foundation for good staff development programs.

And the Winner Is...

Most successful adult education programs are led by administrators who practice participatory management. Central to this approach is the involvement of staff members in the decision making process. The prospect of informed decision makers is increased by encouraging and facilitating participation in national conferences. The wise adult education administrator can thereby enhance the capacity of team members to contribute to good decisions by facilitating their (1) staying current on research initiatives and findings, (2) learning about new materials and best practices, (3) networking with colleagues, (4) participating in the exchange of ideas and perspectives, and (5) understanding the context in which they operate professionally. Ultimately, the students (both staff and clients) succeed. After all, isn't that the point?!

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Packing Your Brain: Pre-Conference Preparation

Ann Wegman

It's exciting to attend conferences. Travel time away from the routine, old friends networking, new ideas sharing—all are a part of a great conference experience. But as adult educators, we know that proactive preparation is also a big part of learning—including the learning we do at conferences. So, as an adult educator, when you pack your bags, do you remember to pack your brain?

As budgets tighten, adult educators must be accountable to their institutions and themselves when spending money on conferences. How do you convince your institution or company that a conference is worthwhile? How do you get the most out of a conference to satisfy yourself and the institution that you work for? How do you approach the boss to request money to pay for your trip? Believe it or not, some people never think through these important questions when requesting travel expense and time away from the job.

Develop a plan about six months in advance. Talk with your boss as you develop your plan—even before the conference brochure arrives. Then, when you get the conference brochure, use the information to close your sales pitch to the boss, convincing him or her to send you. The brochure will also help guide you as you plan a productive conference experience.

Remember the learning contract? It's an agreement with yourself that defines what you want to accomplish. A contract also implies that the learner is responsible for the learning—the learner is thinking in advance about

the benefits and outcomes of the learning experience. A learning contract is an excellent way to plan proactively to make the most of your conference experience. So let's begin.

Why Do You Want to Go?

First you must decide on your objectives. Most likely you will have personal objectives as well as job-related objectives. Some common reasons for attending a conference are listed below. Rank order the list to get a quick look at your own needs. Be sure to add in other objectives that may not be included on the list below.

- Professional development
- Networking
- Leisure/vacation
- Learn about new products/resources
- See old friends/colleagues
- Meet leading researchers and practitioners
- Enhance educational pursuits
- Other _____

What's Your Focus?

Take your top three reasons for attending a conference and write a descriptive statement about each. This will help define your objectives. You may even want to include actions and intended outcome is for each reason you list.

- Objective #1 _____
- Objective #2 _____
- Objective #3 _____

Ann Wegman is the Community Program Specialist with Cardinal Glennon Children's Hospital in St. Louis, Missouri.

Selecting the Sessions

Keeping your three main objectives in mind, review the conference schedule looking for sessions and activities that help you accomplish your intended outcomes. Record your choices on the contract sheet below. Complete the first two columns only. The other columns will be completed after you have attended each session at the conference.

Objective _____

Session/Activity	Day/Time	Met My Objective?	Rating	Best Idea Gained
1				
2				
3				
+				
5				

People to See	Vendors to Visit
1	1
2	2
3	3
+	+

Information my boss wants me to bring back

- 1
- 2
- 3
- +

There may be some overlap of dates and times. This will give you a quick look at all of your choices, helping you fine-tune your schedule once you have arrived at the conference. Many conferences—especially the larger national conferences—video and audio tape sessions. I suggest tapping into this information upon arriving at a conference so that you can resolve conflicting choices with the possibility of ordering the audio or video tape for later viewing. I have a colleague who even ordered a video tape of a session that was poorly presented in order to teach his graduate adult education students how *not* to teach adults. How's that for vicarious learning!

Be sure to list vendors, colleagues, and old friends that you want to see. I once arrived at a conference finding a note attached to the conference memo board from a friend in Minneapolis. She had simply left her name and hotel phone number with a quick note to call her when I arrived. I later found out that as routine practice she leaves notes to all of her out-of-town friends requesting a call. This saves her the time and trouble of trying to locate them through the crowds.

It's also a good idea to make a list with

your boss detailing the information that he or she wants you to bring back. Engaging your boss in the preplanning will elicit the buy-in that may help you get approval to go to the conference.

Remember this plan tacked along with your conference expense request is a winning duo. Sell-contracting not only shows the boss that you have been proactive in your thinking but indicates how the institution can benefit.

Fine-Tuning

Most preconference brochures give only titles of sessions and presenters and do not describe the session or activity. Once you have actually arrived at the conference, get your hands on the conference manual as soon as possible. Pull out your preliminary contract and begin fine-tuning.

Think about the following when narrowing your options:

- Will the session be presented in a style that hits with my personal learning preference?
- Does the session description give me clues as to whether there will be any interaction, collaboration, or hands-on application included during the presentation?
 - In what context is the information placed? Can I easily apply and transfer the information to my professional or educational roles?
 - Does the session provide new material or

is it a review of existing practice and theory?

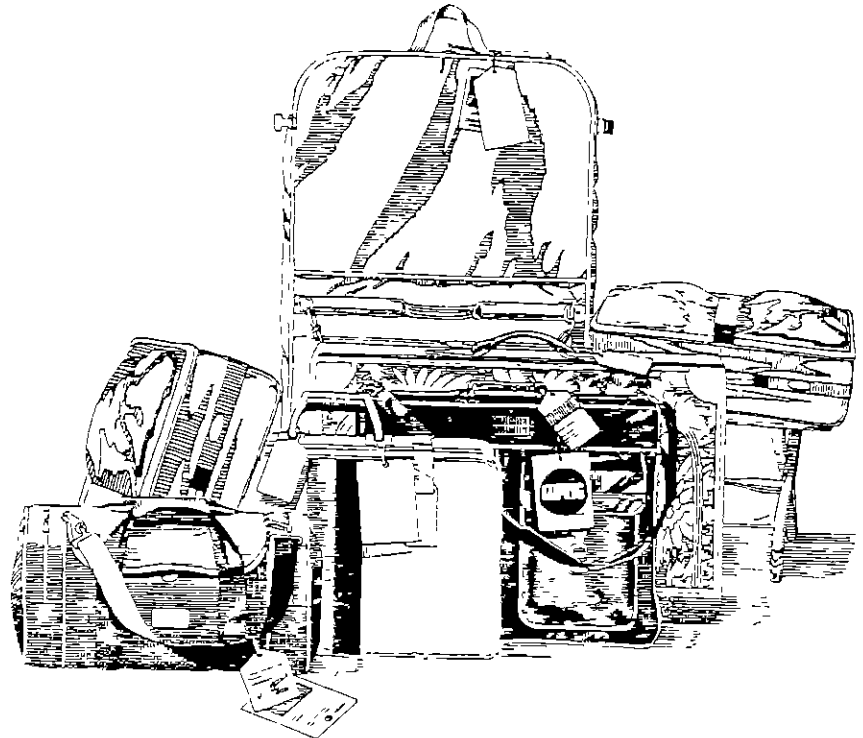
- Is the presenter a leading authority? Does this matter to me?
- Will the session give me new ideas to take back to my institution to improve practice?
- Are there any sessions that are intriguing that will help me explore new territory?

Using your contract, begin to make a schedule for each day of the conference. Indicate on the schedule your first and second choices for each time slot so that you will have a back-up plan in the event that a session is canceled or isn't what you expected.

And don't be bashful to attend sessions that tread on unfamiliar turf. Sometimes new worlds of information and thought are provoked by exploring topics that are not familiar or part of your repertoire. At a recent national conference I wandered into a session on cultural diversity presented by an educator from Taos, New Mexico. I went only because the title was catchy and the other sessions didn't meet my needs. The session was not only superb but has woven its way into my awareness and personal tenets of practice.

The Plan in Action

By now you have done a thorough job of thinking, planning, and fine-tuning. Not all breakout sessions or keynotes will be what you expected. What if you get to the session





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and after the first ten minutes the presentation style or information just doesn't fit in with your plan? You have two choices: stay or leave. Look back to your objectives and reasons for attending the session to help you decide.

If you stay:

- Read the handouts, or abstract
- Ask questions that may help you find relevancy
- Listen, acknowledging that we do learn from information that is not necessarily relevant and useful at the moment

If you leave:

- Do so politely. A friend of mine always sits at the back of the room at sessions that she's not sure about so that she can slip out unobtrusively.
- Rush to your second choice. You may have missed the first few minutes, but the substance of the presentation is probably yet to come.

- Visit one of the vendors on your must-see list.
- Visit the information center for an update on conference information, check for messages and get a copy of the daily conference newsletter.

- Use this time to leave messages for trends that you hope to see or for presenters that you want to talk with at the conference. Leave short notes stating your question or concern when corresponding with presenters. This will help the presenter prepare for the visit.
- Use the time to read handouts from other sessions and to make reflective notes and ratings on your contract.

- If you are lucky you might run into one of those old colleagues that's on your list of people to see.
- Network with strangers. They won't be strangers anymore.

What Now?

Once the session is over, go back to your contract form and make notes. This will help you to integrate your learning while it's fresh in your memory. Later, upon returning home, your learning will become even more meaningful as you begin to engage in reflective thinking. You will be able to glean the important concepts and information as it applies to your current concerns in practice.

If you have attended any sessions with colleagues from your own institution, you may want to discuss this session with them either at

the conference or when you return home. Collaborative learning can often prove to be much more enlightening as shared ideas escalate into innovative solutions or revelations!

Use your contract form to rate each session on a predetermined scale and list one main idea or skill that you learned from the session. Be sure to keep your notes and handout materials attached. Back at home, you will want to use all of this information to help you apply your learning, evaluate your experience, engage in discussions with colleagues, and report to the boss.

As a matter of housekeeping, keep your notes and handouts organized so that you can easily and quickly file the information after the conference. New and fresh learning often goes untapped as it wastes away inside conference satchels that are never unpacked after a conference is over.

A Word for the Presenter

• Don't lecture. We are so good at teaching others how to facilitate learning according to the principles of adult learning, but often throw all of this preparation out the window when in an audience of our peers! Just as students enjoy participative, collaborative and experiential learning, so do adult education conference participants.

- Consider the goals of the conference and attendees when preparing your session.
- Find a way to apply the information that you are sharing. This will make the experience meaningful for you and the learners.
- Request that the conference planners video or audio tape your session. There may be conferees who are unable to attend your session, but are interested in obtaining a copy of the video or audio tape.

In closing I'd like to share a story. I attended a conference a few years ago where one of the gurus of adult education was giving a breakout session. I went and it wasn't so good. He must have been having an off day. After reviewing my objectives, I decided to stay. I didn't walk away from the session with any new skills or ideas, but one of my objectives was met. After all, I had an audience with "God!"

Those opportunities don't come often; incidentally, a few years later I had the occasion to hear the same person speak again and he was brilliant. I'm glad I went to hear him—both times! Happy Adult Education Conferencing!

PS Don't forget to pack your brain! ▲



The Conference Planners' Dilemma

GIVE THEM A FISH,
TEACH THEM TO FISH,
OR HELP THEM SATISFY
THEIR OWN HUNGER

Barbara Battiste Emil

T

Three continuing educators were planning a conference for conference planners. They soon found their viewpoints about the conference objectives, content, and activities varied widely. Their discussion went something like this:

Continuing Educator #1

We must include information-sharing sessions so participants can learn from each other, what works. Adults have an immediate problem-solving orientation. I know I'm right about this because the roundtables with people talking about their problems and how they solved them always draw a packed house.

Continuing Educator #2

That reminds me of the adage: Give them a fish and they'll eat for a day, but, teach them to fish and they'll eat for a lifetime. You are suggesting we give them a fish. I say let's teach them the skills to solve problems typically encountered in practice. Our needs assessments clearly indicate people want practical information they can really use. What could be more practical than "how to" workshops and hand-outs with useful tips?"

Continuing Educator #3

That's easy. The most practical information of all helps people figure out for themselves what to do in unfamiliar situations. Neither the proverb nor your solutions go far enough.

What happens if someone is allergic to fish? Or the stream dries up? Or the number of people fishing exceeds the supply of fish? Only when individuals take information and turn it inside out and upside down, do they own the knowledge. We need thought-provoking sessions that encourage participants to compare alternatives, explore future trends and issues, and critically examine practices and philosophies. This will make them better problem-solvers—both now and in the future.

The conference planners sat in silence until someone came in looking for the C and I meeting. Thinking she meant the conferences and institutes meeting, they invited her to join them and explained their dilemma. As it turned out, she was looking for the curriculum and instruction gathering. On her way out, she suggested the group consider a model of classifying intellectual knowledge, skills, and abilities commonly referred to as Bloom's Taxonomy (*Taxonomy of Educational Objectives in the Cognitive Domain*, 1956).

A Refresher Course— Definitions and Distinctions

The continuing educators examined the six levels of the taxonomy: knowledge, comprehension, application, analysis, synthesis, and evaluation.

They learned the first three levels—knowledge, comprehension, and application—refer to the acquisition of specific information and the beginning of the intellectual

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skills and abilities that enable people to use the information

They discovered the upper three levels—analysis, synthesis, and evaluation—actively involve learners in taking knowledge apart, putting concepts together in new ways, and making evaluative judgments. They noted the distinction between evaluation—a result of the conscious application of criteria, standards, and values—and opinion.

The continuing educators could each find their viewpoints on conference objectives and activities expressed in the taxonomy with its informational base, application, middle, and “what if” nature of the upper levels of the hierarchy.

Are You Doing What I’m Thinking? —Demonstrating Understanding

They first applied the model to a content area—effective budgeting in continuing education—to see how it worked. They agreed practical budgeting tips, sample budget forms, a glossary of common terms, and a hands-on workshop could provide a knowledge and skill base for those who needed it, reflecting the first three levels of the taxonomy.

The implications of institutional context, marketplace variables, and cost-recovery requirements in program pricing could then be explored. This would encourage participants to stretch their basic budgeting skills to reach a more sophisticated level of financial decision-making.

This exercise increased the continuing educators’ understanding of the taxonomy and demonstrated its application to a given content area.

Apples and Oranges as Fruits of a Different Color—Looking at (and for) Relationships

Next, the continuing educators analyzed the taxonomy’s implications for the conference. They discussed its emphasis on cognitive rather than affective learning. They worried that some participants would consider the divergent problem-solving nature of the taxonomy’s upper levels a waste of their time. They speculated that some presenters might be

reluctant to design their sessions to include a range of learning opportunities.

They soon recognized the parallels between these issues and those faced by curriculum specialists and teachers in more formal educational settings. Their discussion of the taxonomy had reminded them of the dual nature of their responsibilities, all too easily dominated by the overwhelming logistical aspects of day-to-day conference planning.

Finally, the continuing educators concluded a conference design reflecting the different levels of the taxonomy and encompassing their varying expectations for this professional development experience—basic information for immediate use (give them a fish), practical skills for short-term problem-solving (teach them to fish), and critical thinking abilities for situational decision-making (help them satisfy their own hunger).

Some Assembly Required— Putting It All Together

As the planning proceeded, the group discovered their own awareness of adult learning and of the interaction between participants, content, and format was growing along with the conference design. Their varying viewpoints, which had surfaced in the initial planning meeting, reappeared from time to time.

For example, the group made two predictions about the conference participants: (1) they would bring their experiences with them, and (2) what they knew from experience would depend on the individual, the nature of the interaction, and the context or setting.

As a means of creating more homogeneous participant groupings, one planning committee member suggested a tracking approach to steer the novices toward the basic skill sessions and the experienced conference planners toward the “big picture” presentations. Another member advocated rather intensely a new definition of basic skills for conference planners in today’s changing world.

The group ultimately decided that a range of learning outcomes—from basic information acquisition to new ways of conceptualizing existing practice—are important to professionals at both ends of the experience scale

and that seniority has little to do with the levels of the taxonomy. The tracking concept was abandoned.

As the planning progressed, the continuing educators sometimes joked about the “good old days” before this experiment. At the end of a particularly demanding planning session, one asked, “Can we pick the coffee break menus now?” But most of the time the group was excited by the project.

Will It Play in Peoria and Pasadena?—Applying Multiple Perspectives

The continuing educators subjected their final design to a number of self-imposed tests. For example, they examined it through the perspective of participants to determine if it accommodated the unique and the shared characteristics of adult learners. They scrutinized the program to see if it upheld the standards of the profession and incorporated training and educational goals. And finally, they studied the internal consistency of the plan and the degree to which it provided opportunities for a range of learning outcomes representing the various levels of the taxonomy.

Fish, Fishing, and Food— The Dilemma Resolved

When last seen, the three continuing educators who planned the conference were comparing notes on different sessions and preliminary feedback from participants. The first reported those looking for information they could use—*today*—were satisfied. They would not go away hungry unless they refused to eat.

The second observed those interested in skill building had ample opportunities to practice. When their stomachs growled again, they would be able to find another meal.

The third was about to speak when the sounds of an animated discussion suddenly rilled the hallway. It seemed to have something to do with the differences between maintenance and learning organizations. The third member of the planning committee just smiled. When the food supply ran out, no one here would have to starve. ▲

have a deep commitment to applying principles of adult learning in everything I do—even in one-hour keynote speeches. Indeed, one of the most frequent (and gratifying) comments I get on evaluation sheets of my sessions is, "Malcolm practices what he preaches!" This makes me both happy and sad—sad that it should be such a noteworthy behavior.

My foundational principle of adult learning in making presentations is that the learners be active participants in a process of inquiry, rather than passively receive transmitted content. A second principle is that the process should start with and build on the backgrounds, needs, interests, problems, and concerns of the participants. My experience is that when people have the opportunity to learn by taking some initiative and perceiving the learning in the context of their own life situations, they will internalize more quickly, retain more permanently, and apply more confidently. And I am convinced that every learning experience should result in both some acquisition of content and some enhancement of their self-directed learning competencies.

Theory of Large Meetings

These principles also provide the foundation of my special theory of large meetings, which are a prominent mode in conferences. The additional basic premise of this special theory is that the educative quality of a large meeting is directly a function of the quantity and quality of interaction in the meeting. This is to say that the more and better the interaction within and among the various elements of a large meeting, the greater the learning is likely to be. A second premise of the theory is that there are three areas in which interaction can be influenced: (1) the platform itself, (2) the audience, and (3) the relationship between the platform and the audience. Let us examine the possibilities of each in turn.

Interaction on the platform is at its lowest point with a single speaker or film. The amount of interaction can be moved up a notch by adding a chalkboard, flip chart, filmstrip, or some other visual aid for the speaker to use. Interaction can be increased another notch by adding one other person, so that two people are interacting in debate, dialogue, or interview. Maximum interaction can be achieved by introducing two or more people to the platform for a symposium, panel discussion, group interview, dramatic skit, or demonstration.

is at its first level up from passive with an invitation to the audience to ask questions of the speaker following the presentation. A still-higher level of interaction can be achieved by bringing representatives of the audience on to the platform to serve as "reaction" or "watchdog" teams. A reaction team is asked simply to listen to the presentation and then to give its reactions in a series of statements or through a panel discussion. A watchdog team is asked to listen for terminology or concepts it thinks members of the audience may not fully comprehend and to interrupt the presentation at any time to ask for clarification. To the extent that the people selected to serve on the teams are truly representative of the main characteristics of the audience (in terms of age, gender, special interests, occupations, and geography), to that extent will the audience psychologically identify with the interaction on the platform.

Interaction among members of the audience can be promoted in several ways. The audience can be asked to meet in small groups of from two to five or six without moving from their seats and perform several functions. (1) Before a presentation, they can be asked to take a few minutes to pool the questions or issues they would like the speaker to address and have one member summarize the result—thus, in effect, outlining the speech for the presenter; (2) before a presentation the audience can be asked to serve as "listening teams" according to the section of the room they are sitting in—one section to listen to the presentation for points requiring clarification (the clarification team), another for points with which they disagree (the rebuttal team), another for points they wish to have elaborated on (the elaboration team), and a fourth for problems of practical application they wish the speaker to address (the application team). After the presentation the teams are asked to "buzz" in groups of four or five to pool their thinking about the points they want raised, following which one member of each group gives a summary of its deliberations and the

speaker responds to each item in turn, until time runs out or all items are discussed; (3) following a presentation the audience can be asked to form buzz groups to discuss for a few minutes how they plan to apply one or more of the ideas contained in the presentation, with the results being summarized by one member of each group.

Occasionally ~~the audience~~ ~~add a~~ component in the design, which I think of as "back-home application," but which in the literature is usually referred to as "transfer of training." I ask the participants to reflect for five minutes on their experience so far and to select one or two ideas they have picked up that they think they would like to try out in their back-home situations. After five minutes I ask them to form groups of four or five and take turns describing to other members of their group (1) the idea they would like to experiment with, (2) the steps they would take in applying it, and (3) any obstacles or resistances they anticipate encountering in putting it into effect. After a reasonable amount of time (depending upon the time available), I call them back to order and invite volunteers to present their plans to the total audience. After each presentation, I invite members of the audience to react to the plan and, particularly, to suggest strategies for dealing with the obstacle and resistances. During the last five minutes or so I add my own ideas about strategies for bringing about change.

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EXERPTS FROM
Applying Principles
of Adult Learning
in Conference
Presentations

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