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Book Review: *Methods for Facilitating Adult Learning: Strategies for Enhancing Instruction and Instructor Effectiveness*

Editors: Joellen E. Coryell, Lisa M. Baumgartner, and Jeremy W. Bohonos (Routledge, 2024, 404 pages) ISBNs: 978-1-642-67496-5 (hardcover), 978-1-642-67497-2 (paperback), 978-1-003-44601-9 (eBook), <https://www.doi.org/10.4324/9781003446019>

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Introduction

In a rapidly transforming educational landscape characterized by technological advancements and the shifting needs of adult learners, the book titled *Methods for Facilitating Adult Learning: Strategies for Enhancing Instruction and Instructor Effectiveness* stands out as an invaluable contribution. Edited by Joellen E. Coryell, Lisa M. Baumgartner, and Jeremy W. Bohonos, this book bridges foundational theories with contemporary trends, making it a vital resource for educators navigating face-to-face, hybrid, and open and distance learning (ODL) environments. It gives considered discussion on a wide range of topics affecting adult learning education. Some topics are well established in the canon of education research and practice. Some have a shorter but still rich history of research, such as arts-based learning, e-portfolios, MOOCs, and gamification. Some topics are in response to the ever-changing plethora of digital social media platforms over the past two decades, including their effect on critical thinking skills and the blurring of lines between fact and opinion.

The book addresses critical challenges in adult education, such as inclusivity, learner engagement, and technology integration. Its thoughtful blend of theoretical depth and practical insights offers a roadmap for creating effective and transformative learning experiences in diverse contexts. This is in line with what the editors say in the book's preface, which is that the purpose of this book is to provide practitioners/teachers with practical and relevant teaching methods for today's learners in a variety of contexts.

The writing is bright, and the approach is fresh, adeptly presenting these topics in this solid 404-page book. The editors pay homage to important books on adult learning that have been published since 2002 and then state that their book was designed "to have additional methodological breadth and depth, links to adult learning theory, and contemporary instructional approaches." Not all of the topics covered in this book will be mentioned in this review. Here are three of the 22-chapter topics that exemplify the breadth: bell hooks, critical reflection, and diversity; prior experiences informing adult learning; and the opportunity of educational settings to create community. The chapter authors ground their explorations of topics in

relevant theories and distill their main ideas into practical guidelines without being prescriptive. Because of this approach, the book may appeal to both experienced and inexperienced instructors.

Overview of Content

The book is divided into five distinct parts, each tackling essential aspects of adult education. From theoretical foundations to emerging pedagogical trends, the book's structure reflects a deliberate effort to balance breadth with depth. "Part I: Fundamentals of Adult Teaching and Learning," sets a strong foundation by addressing the core principles of adult learning. The content is structured around a comprehensive exploration of the andragogical model, emphasizing the differences between adult and child learning. Strategies for creating a learner-centered environment are highlighted, focusing on fostering engagement and motivation. It stresses the importance of creating a supportive, respectful atmosphere where learners feel their experiences are valued. This approach is critical for adult education, as it empowers learners to take ownership of their learning journey. The book's discussion of an instructor's role emphasizes the need for flexibility, adaptability, and continuous self-reflection. It encourages instructors to develop skills such as active listening and empathy.

In "Part II: Collaborative Methods in Teaching and Learning," the focus shifts to practical strategies for implementing the theories discussed in Part I. This part provides actionable techniques for educators to improve their instructional methods. It highlights the importance of active learning techniques, such as collaborative learning, problem-solving, and case-based learning, which are particularly effective for adult learners who bring a wealth of life experience to the classroom. By incorporating these methods, educators can create dynamic, learner-centered environments that foster critical thinking and skill development.

This part also explores the role of technology in adult education, providing insights into how digital tools and online platforms can enhance learning experiences. This is particularly relevant in today's increasingly digital world, where adult learners often engage in blended or fully online learning environments. It does not discuss technology just in abstract terms but offers concrete examples of tools that can support adult learning, from learning management systems (LMS) to social media groups that facilitate peer learning and communication.

One of the standout features of "Part III: Methods for Facilitating Autonomous Learning" is its detailed exploration of transformative learning theory. This part provides a comprehensive analysis of how transformative learning can shift adult learners' perspectives and encourage critical thinking. It discusses how instructors can facilitate learning experiences that challenge learners' assumptions, broaden their understanding, and encourage self-reflection.

By focusing on hands-on, real-world learning, this part highlights how adult learners benefit from direct engagement with content that relates to their personal or professional lives. It outlines various experiential learning strategies, such as internships, simulations, role-playing, and service learning, that can deepen the learning process and increase motivation. Part III also explores the importance of fostering emotional intelligence in adult learners.

A significant strength of “Part IV: Community-Based Teaching and Learning Methods” is its exploration of how educational institutions and organizations can align their policies and structures with the needs of adult learners. It highlights the importance of designing flexible, accessible learning environments that consider the diverse responsibilities adult learners often juggle, such as work, family, learning, and other personal commitments. Suggestions include offering hybrid learning options, scheduling flexibility, and tailored support services. This part also explores how educational leaders can advocate for resources and create professional development opportunities to promote learner-centered approaches within their organizations.

The final part, “Technology-Enhanced Teaching and Learning Methods,” covers innovative methods for leveraging digital tools for immersive learning experiences such as simulation-based and serious gaming adult learning experiences. For instance, the authors note, “The serious gaming approach using technodevices melded into an educational learning event can be a very formative and memorable experience for the participating learners” (p. 355). This speaks to the book’s practical, forward-thinking approach to integrating technology in adult education.

Conclusion

Methods for Facilitating Adult Learning: Strategies for Enhancing Instruction and Instructor Effectiveness is an invaluable resource that helps adult learning instructors to empower their learners to succeed. It provides a well-rounded approach, combining theoretical foundations with practical strategies, and addressing the evolving needs of adult learners in a rapidly changing world. The book’s clear structure, insightful content, and focus on actionable techniques make it an essential read for anyone looking to enhance their practice and improve learning outcomes. This book bridges the gap between long-standing educational theories and the current challenges of digital-age learning, making it a valuable resource for educators looking to adapt to a world where technology plays an ever-increasing role in education.

