

Facilitating Adult Learning in Private Educational Institutions in Singapore: A Singaporean Perspective

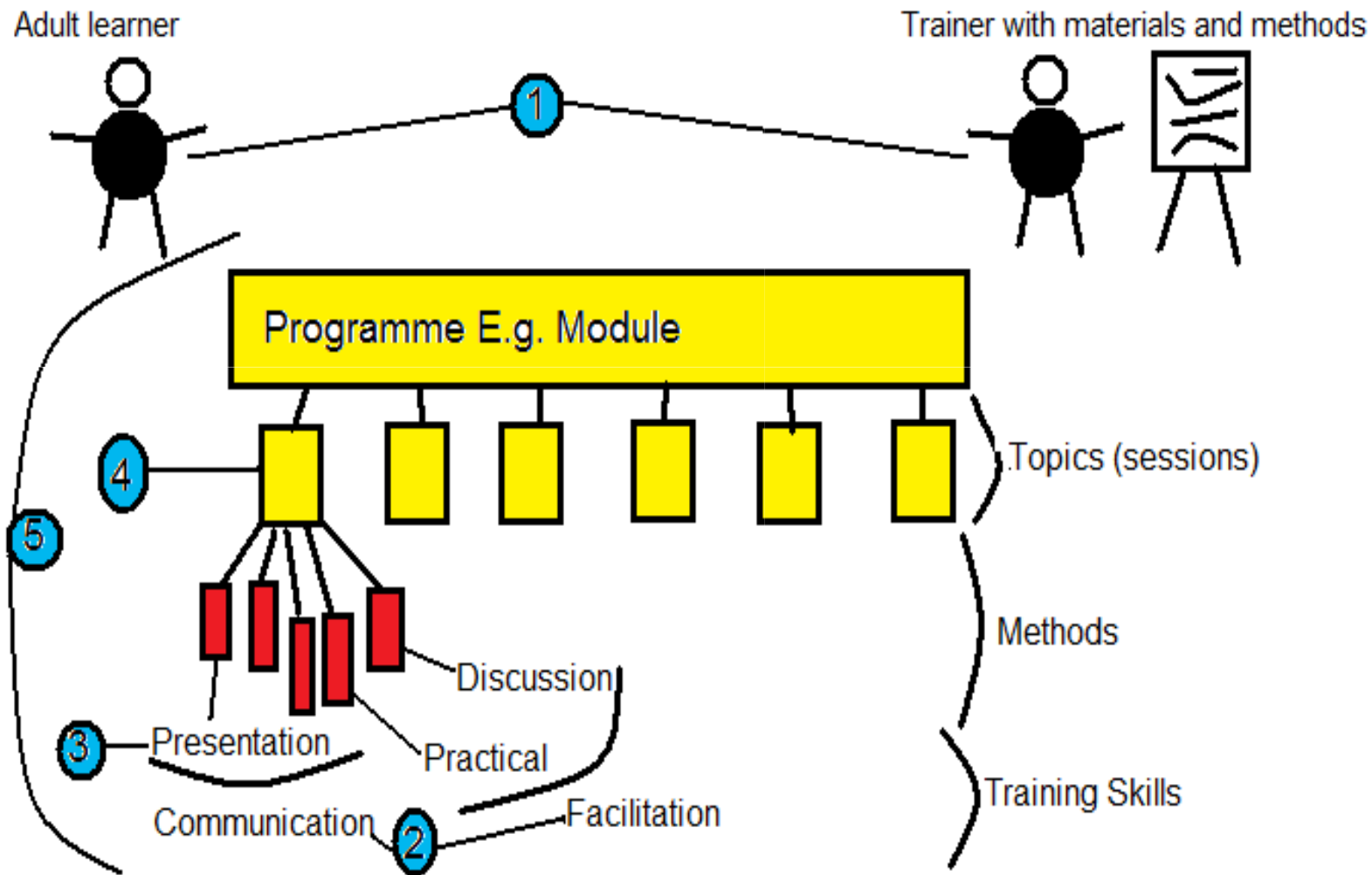
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What this paper cover?

- how adults learn
- different types of learning skills
- communication and facilitation
- the logistics of pulling resources together into an effective learning experience

Visual outline of Adult Learner



Methodology

This qualitative study is concerned with facilitating adult learners in PEIs in Singapore as well as the challenges they faced in their learning in higher education. The use of interviews as the main data collection tool held the greatest possibility of exploring the adult learners experience in detail

Adult learning and training

Overview

- The paper consider characteristics of adults learning and learning styles.
- They then delve into teaching styles, pinpointing those appropriate for adult learners.

Singapore's economy evolves to become more knowledge-based

- Lifelong learning has become a fact of life in order to substantiate their skills, earning potential and career advancement.
- There have been some huge shifts in recent years in the Singapore's education sector which have changed the cultures of both public and private institutions - these have impacted on the role of and expectations from teachers especially in the private education sector.
- Given a more affluent and integrated society, the capacity to work together collaboratively has become one of the core survival skills in the global workforce (Foyle & Shafto 1995, Collazos et al 2007)
- Educational landscape have undergone fundamental re-structuring, one of which is teaching students how to communicate, collaborate effectively and to engage in self learning has become the basis of education
- Learners invariably are expected to acquire life skills such as critical thinking skills, ability to communicate, work collaboratively and utilising information, media and technology skills are the competencies (p.21, 2011).

Singapore's SkillsFuture Credit

What Is SkillsFuture?

- SkillsFuture is a national movement to enabling Singaporeans to develop to their fullest potential throughout life.
- At a national level, SkillsFuture play an important part in charting Singapore's next phase of development towards an advanced economy and inclusive society. Every individual's skill, passion and contribution counts.

Source: <http://www.skillsfuture.sg/> (accessed on 28 Apr 2016)

- With the help of the SkillsFuture Council, education and training providers, employers, unions – all can own a better future with skills mastery and lifelong learning. Your skills. Your asset. Your future.

Key challenges for adults to learning

Include:

- Fear of failure
- Lack of time, money, confidence or interest
- Lack of information about opportunities to learn
- Scheduling problems
- Red tape
- Re-adjustment of lifestyle
- Domestic problems

Pedagogy

Definition: An educational approach characterised by teacher-centred instruction.

- Teacher is viewed as an authority figure who imparts knowledge and skills to the students.
- Students are not generally involved in decisions or actions in regard to learning.
- Method generally follows a lecture structure with students recording the information and compounding it through individual exercises.

Andragogy

Definition: A learner-centred educational approach.

- The participant's needs and wants are central to the process of teaching.
- Learning is self-directed: participants are responsible for and involved in structuring their learning.
- A humanist philosophy underlies this teaching style, it considers personal development as the key focus of education.

Which did they chose?

- Andragogy is considering the most effective way of teaching adults.
- It takes into account their already well developed sense of self and prior knowledge.
- It also encourages practical activities and participation.

...let's look closer at adult learning theory.

Adult Learning Theory, Speck (1996)

- Adults will commit to learning when the goals and objectives are considered realistic and important to them.
- Adults want to be the origin of their own learning and will resist learning activities they believe are an attack on their competence.

Adult Learning Theory

- Adult learners come to learning with a wide range of previous experiences, knowledge, self-direction, interests, and competencies.
- Adult learning has ego involved. Professional development must be structured in such a way as to get support from peers and to reduce the fear of judgment during learning.

Adult Learning Theory

- Adult learners need to see that the professional development learning and their day-to-day activities are related and relevant
- Adult learners need direct, concrete experiences in which they apply the learning in real work

Adult Learning Theory

- Adults need to participate in small-team activities during the learning to move them beyond understanding to application, analysis, synthesis, and evaluation.

Small-team activities provide an opportunity to share, reflect, and generalize their learning experiences.

- Adults need to receive feedback on how they are doing and the results of their efforts.

Malcolm Knowles states 4 simple ideas

- Adults need to be involved in the planning and evaluation of their instruction
- Experience (including mistakes) provides the basis for the learning activities
- Adults are most interested in learning subjects that have immediate relevance to their job or personal life
- Adult learning is problem-centered rather than content-oriented (orientation to learning)

Putting principles into practice!

- **Readiness**

- Adults must be ready and willing to learn before teaching can increase knowledge.

Implications for Instructor. Must show that:

- the course is for participants' benefit
- the training can help solve or avoid a problem
- the new knowledge will provide new opportunities as well as personal or professional growth.

Putting principles into practice!

- **Experience**

- Adults already have a wealth of knowledge and experience.

Implications for Instructor

- should take account of this; otherwise risk losing participants' interest and insulting them.
- exploit this unique resource
- provide opportunities for participants to contribute and share their experiences
- Allows instructor to manage course appropriately.

Putting principles into practice!

- **Autonomy**

- Adults have the power to make their own choices.

Implications for Instructor. Must:

- allow as much autonomy as possible; otherwise participants may feel undermined and alienated.
- provide lots of opportunities for participation in the training session.
 - e.g. games, simulations, discussions etc. where participants can figure things out for themselves, reflect on materials and potential uses, etc.

Putting principles into practice!

- **Action**

- Adults need to see how new skills will be put into action in their work. If not, they will lose interest; learning will decrease.

Implications for Instructor. Must:

- clearly explain how and when skills learned can be applied to the participants' own work.
- incorporate an environment close to participants' work setting into practical exercises.

Adult Learners respond best to learning that is:

- Experience-based
- Active
- Recognizing them as experts
- Independent
- Real-life centred
- Task-centred
- Problem-centred
- Solution-driven
- Skill-seeking
- Self-directing
- Internally and externally motivated

Learning styles

- *Activists*: involve themselves fully and without bias in new experiences. The “I’ll try anything once” type.
- *Reflectors*: stand back and ponder experiences and observe them from many different perspectives.
- *Theorists*: adapt and integrate observations into complex but locally sound theories.
- *Pragmatists*: search out new ideas and take the first opportunity to experiment with them.

Learning styles (more)

- Another way of describing learning styles is:
 - Visual
 - Auditory
 - Tactile

Learning style

- It is important to recognise that people learn differently.
- And that all training groups will include a variety of learning styles.
- To provide effective training one must stimulate all of the senses and thus access all learners.

Motivation

- Understanding participants' motivation is important.
 - what they expect from the course
 - allow you to tailor it to meet those expectations.
 - help you to make the participants “ready” to learn by enabling you to show them that the course can correlate with their needs.

Motivation of the adult learner

Includes:

- *Social relationships*: make new friends, meet a need for associations and friendships.
- *External expectations*: comply with instructions from someone else; fulfill expectations or recommendations of someone with formal authority.
- *Social welfare*: improve ability to serve mankind, prepare for service to the community, and improve ability to participate in community work.

Motivation of the adult learner (cont.)

- *Personal advancement*: achieve higher status in a job, secure professional advancement, and stay abreast of competitors
- *Escape/Stimulation*: relieve boredom, provide a break in the routine of home or work, and provide contrast to other exacting details of life
- *Cognitive interest*: learn for the sake of learning, seek knowledge for its own sake, and to satisfy an inquiring mind