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IDENTIFYING APPROPRIATE ADULT EDUCATOR PRACTICES: BELIEFS, FEELINGS AND BEHAVIORS

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ABSTRACT:
        The literature of adult education provides a broad spectrum of characteristics necessary for adult educators to practice in this emerging field. It was the purpose of this study to take some major steps toward developing an assessment instrument indicating the beliefs, feelings and behaviors adult educators need to possess. The instrument emphasizes the teacher's personal and contextual identification, actions and competencies in the classroom, and philosophical beliefs for guiding practice. Two major groups totaling six hundred adult educators were used to test and refine the instrument: faculty in an Adult Basic Education/General Education Development/English as a Second Language Program in Chicago City Colleges (CCC); and, faculty at the St. Louis Community College (SLCC). The instrument was developed into a Likert type scale. Each questions became "How frequently do you...?" The answer for each item had four choices: Never, Rarely, Sometimes, Often. The factors analysis for the CCC group from top rank in descending order were:

Factors	Mean
Teacher empathy with learners	3.79
Teacher trust of learners	3.53
Planning and delivery of instruction	3.50
Accommodating learner uniqueness	3.28
Teacher insensitivity toward learners	2.86
Learner-centered learning processes (experience-based learning techniques)	2.75
Teacher-centered learning processes	1.89

        The factor analysis for the SLCC group from top rank in descending order were:

Factors	Mean
Sensitivity to learner differences	3.82
Teacher trust of learners	3.45
Teacher-centered learning process	3.10
Experience-based learning techniques	2.70
Teacher insensitivity toward learners	2.42

IDENTIFYING APPROPRIATE ADULT EDUCATOR PRACTICES:
BELIEFS, FEELINGS AND BEHAVIORS

The literature of adult education provides a broad spectrum of characteristics necessary for adult educators to practice in this emerging field. On the one hand, emphasis is placed on the adult teacher identifying her/himself as a co-learner with other learners (Gessner, 1956). On the other hand, focus is placed upon the actions of the adult teacher in the conduct of the classroom activities (Conti, 1982). Still another point of view emphasizes competencies necessary for adult educators (Knowles, 1980). Again, an additional opposing view "debunks" competencies in favor of philosophical knowledge as being necessary (Collins, 1980). Although there is hardly a question that each of these views has some basic important considerations, each appears to leave a gap in necessary abilities for adult educators.

However, when taken together, these ideas have some elements of cohesion. For a teacher to identify her/himself as a co-learner with other learners connects solidly with a context which is dynamic. Emphasizing important actions of a teacher in conducting classroom activities indicates that the behavior of a teacher is crucial in relationship to the learning process. The competencies of the teacher could generate various feelings in her/himself or the learners depending on the level of functioning. And philosophical knowledge undergirds beliefs which in turn guide professional practice. This scope of characteristics necessary for adult educators to practice in this emerging field would include: contextual and personal identification, actions in the classroom, competencies for functioning, and philosophical beliefs for guiding practice.

The Research Question

This study was initiated to answer the following question: what beliefs, feelings and behaviors do adult educators need to possess to practice in the emerging field of adult education? The purpose was to take some major steps toward developing an assessment instrument.

Background

Over a period of two decades this author has been drawing upon the adult education literature, observing the practice of others in the field as well as developing and testing ideas of his own through practice and research that arises out of practice which will work in the field and help to answer the above research question. In 1987, out of the known practice of a variety of adult educators, the rich literature in the field as well as his own adult education practice relating to a variety of subject matters and his own research, he developed a model which identified five major elements as being necessary for an adult educator to practice in the field. The five elements are: beliefs and notions about adult learners; perceptions concerning qualities of effective teachers of adults; phases and sequences of the adult learning process; teaching tips and adult learning techniques; and, implementing the prepared plan.

Methodology-First Round

To achieve balance in developing the original instrument, five negative and five positive questions were generated for each of the five major elements above, for a total of fifty questions.
When the fifty items were developed, it became apparent that there was not a clear separation of each of the five elements. There were ideas from all elements that overlapped into other elements. Also, it became clear that some of the ideas needed to be categorized as beliefs,

others as feelings and still others as behaviors. They were not all
just action or learning, or competencies or philosophical knowledge.
However, this then became problematic in that the original five
categories did not hold if the inventory were to emerge into a useful
instrument. The best organization of the items at this stage of
development was to divide the items between positive and negative
characteristics. The result became thirty-three positive and seventeen
negative characteristics.

The instrument was developed into a Likert type scale. Each
question became "How frequently do you...?" The answer for each item
had four choices: Never, Rarely, Sometimes, Often; with the numerical
value of 1,2,3,4 given respectively.

The opportunity came to test the instrument with nearly six
hundred adult educators. Three hundred eighty-nine of those are adult
learning specialist (ALSP) instructors in one major institution. They
completed these forms voluntarily. These instructors teach in the
Adult Basic Education (ABE), General Educational Development (GED),
and/or the English as a Second Language (ESL) programs at the Chicago
City Colleges. These programs are conducted both on and off all the
campuses in the system.

After the data was generated the positive characteristics measured
to 3.3 on the 4.0 scale and the negative characteristics measured a 2.2
on the 4.0 scale. Although this indicated a general direction desir-
able more for the positive and less for the negative characteristics to
be scoring on the scale, the meaning of these positive and negative
measures seemed somewhat vague unless one looked at each item separate-
ly.

Findings-First Round

As a result, it was decided at this point to conduct a factor
analysis on the data gathered from the three hundred eighty nine adult
educators involved with teaching at the Chicago City Colleges. Seven
factors emerged from that analysis as follows:

Figure I

	Factors	Mean	Standard Deviation
1.	Planning and Delivery of Instruction	3.50	0.39
2.	Learner-Centered Learning Processes (experience-based learning techniques)	2.75	0.51
3.	Teacher Centered Learning Processes	1.89	0.53
4.	Teacher Empathy With Learners	3.79	0.29
5.	Teacher Insensitivity Toward Learners	2.86	0.58
6.	Accommodating Learner Uniqueness	3.28	0.24
7.	Teacher Trust of Learners	3.53	0.46

A quick observation from this profile of adult educators shows
that this group is mainly concerned with benefit to the learners rather
than themselves. This kind of professional attitude would be the
desire of any organization wishing to serve people well.

The top ranking item for each factor was:

Figure II

Factor	Item—Asking "How Frequently Do You...?"
1.	Integrate Teaching Techniques with Subject Matter Content;
2.	Conduct Role Plays;
3.	Believe that your teaching skills are as refined as they can be;
4.	Express appreciation to learners who actively participate;
5.	Have difficulty getting your point across to learners;
6.	Expect and accept learner frustration as they grapple with problems; and,
7.	Demonstrate specific skills for learners.

It must be noted that in the factor analysis the highest scoring item for each factor was positively correlated with the factor with the exception of factor number seven. The highest scoring item for factor seven was negatively correlated with the factor. In fact, although there were three items that clustered in factor seven analysis on teacher trust of learners, the first two items were negatively corre- lated and the third item positively correlated with the factor. That positive item was: How frequently do you purposefully communicate to learners that each is uniquely important?

Methodology – Second Round

Following the factor analysis, eleven out of the total of fifty items were dropped because they did not fit into any of the seven factors. It was felt that for the sake of instrument brevity as well as maintaining the strength, validity and integrity of each factor, no more than five items were necessary for any one factor. To further strengthen and refine the instrument each factor that had more than five items, the lower scoring items were eliminated. Any items nega- tively correlated with a factor it was clustered with were eliminated. There was one item negatively correlated with factor six and two items negatively correlated with factor seven. This is indicated as follows:

Figure III

Factor	Total Items	Positively Correlated Items	Negatively Correlated Items	Items Dropped	Items Remaining
1	9	9	0	4	5
2	9	9	0	4	5
3	6	6	0	1	5
4	5	5	0	0	5
5	3	3	0	0	3
6	4	3	1	0	3
7	3	1	2	0	1

New items were developed to strengthen factors five, six, and seven. It was felt that for each new item needed to survive a subse- quent factor analysis process, a minimum of two and a desired three items needed to be developed and included. Consequently, the first four factors needed no additional items. Factors five and six each had four new items developed and added. Factor seven had ten new items added, the revised assessment form then had a total of forty-five items.

The process by which the new items were added was as follows: for each item needed, three statements/questions were developed relating to that category. For instance, for factor number five, "Teacher insensitivity toward learners" there were two new items needed. Hence, six items were developed. The items were then submit-

ted to members of a 1989 winter semester graduate adult education course entitled "Foundations of Adult Education" at the University of Missouri-St. Louis. These people represent beginning as well as advanced levels of practice in the adult education field. They were asked if each statement/question reflected a clear focus on the particular factor in question. Answers were to be "Yes" or "No". Any items that received more than two "No" responses were eliminated.

The second group which was available to use the assessment instrument was two hundred ten of the teachers/faculty members at the St. Louis Community College (SLCC). The people teach in the regular daytime program and teach in a wide variety of subject matter areas. There are three campuses within the SLCC system.

Findings-Second Round

A factor analysis was conducted with the data which was gathered with this group of two hundred ten teachers. Five factors emerged as follows:

Figure IV

Factors	Mean	Standard Deviation
1. Teacher trust of learners	3.45	0.66
2. Experience-based learning techniques	2.70	0.82
3. Teacher insensitivity toward learners	2.42	0.68
4. Sensitivity to learner differences	3.82	0.46
5. Teacher-centered learning process	3.10	0.79

A quick observation from this profile of community college teachers (who in some sense are adult educators) shows the group as being very sensitive toward learners and possesses high trust in the learners. There is a strong showing that these teachers think it important that they are in control of the teaching/learning process.

The top ranking item for each factor was:

Figure V

Factor	Item-Asking "How Frequently Do You...?"
1.	Promote positive self esteem in learners;
2.	Use buzz groups (learners grouped together to process information from lectures);
3.	Have difficulty with the amount of time learners need to grasp various concepts;
4.	Establish instructional objectives, and,
5.	Believe that your teaching skills are as refined as they can be.

Following the factor analysis, six out of the total of forty-five items were dropped because they did not fit into any of the five factors. Again, any items negatively correlated with a factor it was clustered with were eliminated. There was only one item which was negatively correlated with any factor and that was number four.

Summary and Applications of the Findings to Practice

It was the purpose of this study to take some major steps toward developing an assessment instrument to answer the following question: What beliefs, feelings and behaviors do adult educators need to possess to practice in the emerging field of adult education? Some steps toward that goal include: emphasis on the teacher's personal and contextual identification, actions in the classroom, competencies in the classroom, and philosophical beliefs for guiding practice; and developing items to be included, gathering data from specific groups of adult educators, conducting two factor analyses, along with refining the instrument between the two analyses.

The instrument is still in the process of being developed, refined and improved. Presently it is in a useable form available from the author, and has some clear and beneficial factors. Discussions have been held by the first organization using it, to use it in a dual function: as a screening device to identify adult educators they wish to have as part of their organization; and as a basis for identifying inservice education needs for the teachers who are weak on one or more of the factors.

Other institutions in a number of states have already agreed to use the instrument with adult educators for the above mentioned purposes. Some are considering other uses for the instrument. One state wide institution in another state has committed to use the refined instrument in a major research study which would inquire if there are any links connecting particular items and/or factors in the instrument with programs effective in retaining participants and their passing rates or test scores.

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INSTRUCTIONAL PERSPECTIVES INVENTORY

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Listed below are 45 statements reflecting beliefs, feelings, and behaviors beginning or seasoned teachers of adults may or may not possess at a given moment. Please indicate how frequently each statement <u>typically applies to you</u> as you work with adult learners using the codes:

A = Never   B = Rarely   C = Sometimes   D = Often

<u>How frequently do you...</u>

____1. Use a variety of teaching techniques?

____2. Use buzz groups (learners grouped together to process information from lectures)?

____3. Believe that your primary goal is to provide learners as much information as possible?

____4. Feel fully prepared to teach?

____5. Have difficulty understand-ing learner points-of-view?

____6. Expect and accept learner frustration as they grapple with problems?

____7. Purposefully communicate to learners that each is uniquely important?

____8. Express confidence that learners will develop the skills they need?

____9. Search for or create new teaching techniques?

____10. Teach through simulations of real-life settings?

____11. Teach exactly what and how you have planned?

____12. Notice and acknowledge to learners positive changes in them?

____13. Have difficulty getting your point across to learners?

____14. Believe that learners vary in the way they acquire, process, and apply subject matter knowledge?

____15. Really listen to what learners have to say?

____16. Trust learners to know what their own goals, dreams, and realities are like?

____17. Encourage learners to solicit assistance from other learners?

____18. Feel impatient with learner progress?

____19. Balance your efforts between learner content acquisition and motiva-tion?

____20. Try to make your presen-tations clear enough to forestall all learner questions?

____21. Conduct group discussions?

____22. Establish instructional objectives

____23. Use a variety of instructional media?

A = Never   B = Rarely   C = Sometimes   D = Often

How frequently do you...

___24. Use listening teams (learners grouped together to listen for a specific purpose) during lectures?

___25. Believe that your teaching skills are as refined as they can be?

___26. Express appreciation to learners who actively participate?

___27. Experience frustration with learner apathy?

___28. Prize the learner's ability to learn what is needed?

___29. Feel learners need to be aware of and communicate their thoughts and feelings?

___30. Enable learners to evaluate their own progress in learning?

___31. Hear what learners indicate their learning needs are?

___32. Have difficulty with the amount of time learners need to grasp various concepts?

___33. Promote positive self-esteem in learners?

___34. Require learners to follow the precise learning experiences you provide them?

___35. Conduct role plays?

___36. Get bored with the many questions learners ask?

___37. Individualize the pace of learning for each learner?

___38. Help learners explore their own abilities?

___39. Engage learners in clarifying their own aspirations?

___40. Ask the learners how they would approach a learning task?

___41. Feel irritation at learner inattentiveness in the learning setting?

___42. Integrate teaching technique with subject matter content?

___43. Develop supportive relationships with your learners?

___44. Experience unconditional positive regard for your learners?

___45. Respect the dignity and integrity of the learners?

SCORING
A = 1
B = 2
C = 3
D = 4

INSTRUCTOR'S PERSPECTIVE INVENTORY
FACTORS

(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)
4 ___	7 ___	1 ___	6 ___	5 ___	2 ___	3 ___
12 ___	8 ___	9 ___	14 ___	13 ___	10 ___	11 ___
19 ___	16 ___	22 ___	15 ___	18 ___	21 ___	20 ___
26 ___	28 ___	23 ___	17 ___	27 ___	24 ___	25 ___
33 ___	29 ___	42 ___	37 ___	32 ___	35 ___	34 ___
TOTAL ___	30 ___	TOTAL ___	38 ___	36 ___	TOTAL ___	TOTAL ___
	31 ___		40 ___	41 ___		
	39 ___		TOTAL ___	TOTAL ___		
	43 ___					
	44 ___					
	45 ___					
	TOTAL ___					

FACTORS		MEAN	TOTAL	POSSIBLE
(1)	Teacher Empathy With Learners ———————	3.8	= 19.0 ——	20
(2)	Teacher Trust of Learners ———————	3.6	= 39.6 ——	44
(3)	Planning and Delivery of Instruction—	3.5	= 17.5 ——	20
(4)	Accomodating Learner Uniqueness ———	3.3	= 23.1 ——	28
(5)	Teacher Insensitivity Toward Learners —	2.9	= 20.3 ——	28
(6)	Experience Based Learning Techniques (Learner-Centered Learning Processes)—	2.7	= 13.5 ——	20
(7)	Teacher-Centered Learning Processes ——	1.9	= 9.5 ——	20

INSTRUCTOR'S PERSPECTIVE INVENTORY
FACTORS

(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)
4 ___	7 ___	1 ___	6 ___	5 ___	2 ___	3 ___
12 ___	8 ___	9 ___	14 ___	13 ___	10 ___	11 ___
19 ___	16 ___	22 ___	15 ___	18 ___	21 ___	20 ___
26 ___	28 ___	23 ___	17 ___	27 ___	24 ___	25 ___
33 ___	29 ___	42 ___	37 ___	32 ___	35 ___	34 ___
TOTAL ___	30 ___	TOTAL ___	38 ___	36 ___	TOTAL ___	TOTAL ___
	31 ___		40 ___	41 ___		
	39 ___		TOTAL ___	TOTAL ___		
	43 ___					
	44 ___					
	45 ___					
	TOTAL ___					

FACTORS

(1) Teacher Empathy With Learners _____

(2) Teacher Trust of Learners

(3) Planning and Delivery of Instruction

(4) Accomodating Learner Uniqueness

(5) Teacher Insensitivity Toward Learners

(6) Experience Based Learning Techniques
     (Learner-Centered Learning Processes)

(7) Teacher-Centered Learning Processes