

# PARTICIPATIVE ADULT BUSINESS TEACHING



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*"It is fun to teach adults. They are the most responsive, critical, concerned, creative, stubborn, challenging, pleasant two-footed animals on this planet. They will help you with anything from room arrangement to doing their own teaching. They will get along without you. They will tell you what they want to learn if you give them half a chance"*

*(Kreitlow)*

*Dit is waarom hierdie artikel handel: andragogie — leiding aan die volwassene om te leer. Die skrywer toon aan dat, hoewel daar 'n sterk ooreenkoms is tussen pedagogie en andragogie, juis vanweë die gemeenskaplike basis van die mens se leerproses, daar ook verskille tussen hulle is.*

## A. ANDRAGOGY VERSUS PEDAGOGY

Much has been written about pedagogy, i.e. leading the child learner, the suffix 'agogy' means 'to lead', but leading the adult learner to learn, *andragogy*, is a very recent field of specialisation in the field of education. When adult business teaching is evaluated there is almost a complete dearth of published work.

Andragogy endeavours to find a theoretical basis for that type of adult leadership which should enhance, supplement and accelerate the natural development of adults. Despite the many similarities between pedagogy and andragogy, due to the common base of human learning, there are differences too.<sup>1</sup>

In pedagogy authority is asymmetrical because in the adult-child relationship, the child is predominantly dependent on the adult for guidance, advice, tuition and his education in general. The andragogical situation is more symmetrical, the teacher is not necessarily in a position of authority over the learner.

The teacher is normally not in charge of his 'learners'.

Whereas the child is not yet fully accepted into society because he is still preparing for adulthood, adults are co-responsible participants of society.

Finally, whereas pedagogy is child-centered and every endeavour and effort is aimed at the development of the child, andragogy is a matter of adults leading other adults not merely for the sake of adult development but for one or more pre-determined institutionalised goals.

The business teacher in his role as a leader of adults must bear the following four basic assumptions in mind on which andragogy differs from pedagogy:

- (1) *Self-concept*: the point at which an individual achieves 'that is, when his concept of himself changes from one of dependency to one of autonomy'<sup>2</sup> a self-concept of essential self-direction is the point at which he psychologically becomes an adult.<sup>1</sup> Thus the effective business teacher must not only permit but also encourage all his students to know all the attendant factors in a decision-making situation, to design viable alternatives and to select the one that appears to have the greatest probability of success. It is just not feasible to demand acceptance of the alternative selected by the teacher. (see 'role of teacher'.)
- (2) *The Role of Experience*: Because living can be thought of as the accumulation of experience, the teacher must continuously deliberately draw upon the various experiences, knowledge and skills that exist in the members of his class. This means that the teacher must spend considerably more time listening than talking.
- (3) *Readiness to learn*: In andragogy the assumption is made that learners are ready to learn those things which they need to because of the development phases that they are approaching in their roles as workers, organisational members, leaders and the like.<sup>3</sup> The teacher must therefore be sensitive to the different stages of development and interest of the various members of his class. With children, of course, the teaching schedule is primarily based on their biological and scholastic development.
- (4) *Orientation to learning*: Whereas children are generally exposed to subject-centered learning, adults in most instances require that their learning be addressed to a problem or problems which they are facing or expecting to face.<sup>4</sup>

## B. THE ADULT AS A LEARNING INDIVIDUAL

Any business teacher must have a basic understanding of the adult as a learning individual if he wants to achieve more success in helping his class to learn, which means 'to participate'.

The adult feels slighted and resists situations in which others try to unilaterally impose their will on him. This is why the symbols of childness that adults react to most negatively are

1. regimentation
2. lack of respect for them as unique persons
3. being talked down to
4. lack of concern for human needs such as comfort and
5. depersonalisation of relationships.

Because of the adult's self-image, he is

1. able to determine his own needs
2. whether he wishes to read and if so
3. what, and
4. he is able to evaluate his own achievements.

This leads to the very important implication in terms of andragogy, that adults must be involved in the carrying out of their own learning — they must be engaged in mutual self-directed enquiry.<sup>5</sup>

The adult brings to the business classroom a far greater range of experience than does the child. He may have more extensive knowledge in certain business fields and possess skills that his teacher does not possess. It is essential that his knowledge and these skills are effectively utilized when teaching adults. This is even more important because the adult places so much value on his experience. He is upset and regards it as an attack on his person and his development if others ignore his experience, run it down or do not take it into consideration when teaching him. That is why the emphasis must be on reality based experimental methods and techniques. There must be less use of transmittal techniques such as lectures and assigned readings and more learner's experiences such as simulation exercise, laboratory training, the case method, role playing and the wide variety of discussion techniques. The emphasis must be on action learning and participative learning.<sup>6</sup>

In contrast to the child who learns for future usage, the time perspective with the adult is completely different. The adult is keen to apply what he has learned as soon as possible. He is therefore also interested to exchange ideas and participate on feedback of what has been learned. He likes to ask questions and listen to problems and possible solutions by his group members.<sup>7</sup>

The adult sees himself, because he is a co-participant, as having co-responsibility for the problem solving. No wonder that enjoyable study and self respect are the two critical elements of student motivation in adult education.<sup>8</sup>

## C. THE AVAILABLE BUSINESS TEACHING TECHNIQUES

The business teacher has a whole battery of techniques available to help him achieve learning objectives. Depending on what the objectives are for a specific learning experience, the following methods are most effective.

*Development of Knowledge:* Purposeful reading. Lectures. Audiovisual aids. Field Trips. Exhibits. Socratic discussion. Recitation. Research Projects.

*Development of Understanding:* Problem-solving discussion. Case study. Team inquiry projects. Written assignments. Laboratory group analysis.

*Development of Skills:* Demonstration-Role playing practice. Discussion practice. Drill. Participant observation. Practice — Laboratory experimentation.

*Development of Attitudes:* Role-reversal role playing. Permissive discussion. Feedback laboratory groups. Counselling Field trips. Intercultural collaborative projects.

*Development of Interests:* Satisfying exposure to new interests. Field trips. Exhibits. Demonstrations. assignments. Group projects. Visits, etc.

*Development of Values:* Biographical reading, Sermons. Visits with great personalities. Value-clarifying discussions.

No matter what the learning objective is, it is essential that this be achieved as far as possible by 'reality or experienced based' methods. These methods all have in common that general principles can be mastered by involving individuals in a complex, constructed reality situation. The student is confronted with multiple, interwoven, but sometimes also with less complex but yet interesting and typical facets of business. He has to comment on these facets, take decision about them or even get involved in them. The situation that the participant is involved in should have a very close resemblance to real life so that maximum transference can take place from the teaching situation to the actual future work place. These methods are especially aimed at guiding and training professional persons to collect, to evaluate and use data in the decisionmaking and problemsolving process while they are working in a team along with other people.

The leader plays a completely different but yet very essential, role in the business learning situation. He is not any more so much a lecturer and information feeder but a co-ordinator of the whole learning situation.

These methods hold many advantages for the learning adult of which the most important is that the participant because of his emotional involvement, is being prepared for a leadership role in his later business career. This is achieved by changes taking place in his interest attitudes, and values, as well as by

the development of appreciations and adequate adjustment to his emotional environment.

Some of the other advantages of these methods are the following:

- (1) They are very stimulating and motivating because of the emphasis on realistic business situations and the element of excitement which is brought into academic work.
- (2) They offer the opportunity for maximum integration of knowledge with the reality of the participants.
- (3) They emphasise the process or structure of study and not only the end product of business learning.
- (4) They offer the opportunity to practise and develop business skills.
- (5) They are a preparation for participation in business decision-making.
- (6) They require of the student an acceptance of the consequences of his actions, and,
- (7) They encourage introspection and self-evaluation.

#### Generally Used 'Experience- or Reality-Based' Methods

These are:

simulations including 'in-basket' exercises  
role play  
case discussions and  
laboratory learning

*Simulations:* These can vary from simple arithmetic to complex 'games' for which a computer is required, to practical assistantship (or 'internships') which relate specifically to the position for which the candidate is being prepared.

- (5) The high degree of feedback which is part of simulation techniques and which result in the participant accepting responsibility for his decisions in a situation where his group members are present in critical-appreciative roles.
- (6) Experience can be gained within a very short period of time which would take considerably longer in practice.
- (7) Students are able to, like in very few other methods, to evaluate their own performance.

#### The Case Study Method

Possibly no other method of teaching has been more misused than this method which was originally, in 1870, used by C.C. Langdell in the Harvard Law School. Often teachers say that the case method does not work or cannot be used in their subject but when one critically looks at the situation, you find that it is not the case method which is at fault but the teacher. He does not know how to use the case method and like any other unskilled workman blames his tools.

The main objective of the case method is,

"to open the way for participants to make positive contributions to thought and by doing so to prepare themselves for action"<sup>9</sup>

Other objectives are:

"The ability to analyse problems in a complex situation, try selecting the relevant factors from a series of complicated events and determining their importance in the overall context.

The ability to utilize different opinions.

The ability to use previously gained information in problemsolving situations.

Being able to communicate with group members in such a way that their thoughts are stimulated."

The crucial characteristic of the successful case is that the narrative or dramatization must capture the learner's interest and emotion so that he is motivated to invest thought and energy in seriously contemplating the denouement. The case must have discussion value, it must be written objectively and it must lend itself to interpretation.

When the case is used in a learning situation, class members:

Study and analyse the case

They identify problems

Consider alternative solutions

Select and implement one solution and

Evaluate its future impact.

The teacher must refrain from taking decisions or offering judgement. By doing this, he deprives participants the opportunity of independent thinking.

#### Role play

This is another technique which shows considerable similarity with simulation and case studies. Once again a given problem situation is reconstructed by the group but in role play the group members dramatize the problem situation.

Role play is usually done without a text or rehearsal but when the time is limited or if a specific aspect has to be mastered, the roles can be more precisely described. Role play is a very effective case presentation technique. It must be borne in mind that if the situation is too well structured, the role players will have no scope in which to explore the problem or seek solutions.

When using role play, the following sequence should be followed:

Choose and specify a skill that has to be practised or define the problem or a case.

Plan the teaching situation.

Allocate the roles.

Give directions to participants and observers.

The actual role play.

Feedback by observers.

Analysis and discussion of the situation.

Repeat the role play, if necessary by a possible rearrangement of the roles.

Evaluation of the technique by members of the group.

A major advantage of role playing as a business educational method is that it can bring out data about human behaviour and human relations which are not made available by more traditional methods.

### Laboratory learning

This method includes T-Groups and all other forms of the, so called 'Human Interaction Laboratories'. Laboratory learning has many objectives of which some of the main ones are:

- developing leadership approaches
- communication patterns between group members
- decision-making
- handling conflicts, and,
- the influence of group norms.

Laboratory learning is still a controversial subject. The term itself is unfortunate because of its vagueness. It appears that its very impreciseness and beguiling simplicity are the qualities that have helped it gain wide usage.<sup>10</sup> It can be defined as an instructional system, or procedure, in which a group of learners is placed in a situation usually having some of the elements of reality simulation. The learners' behaviour in dealing with the problem on hand produces data that are organised and fed back to the group to form a basis for analysis and interpretation by themselves. This type of activity only forms part of Human Relations courses and cannot form part of the majority of business courses taught.

### D. THE ROLE OF THE TEACHER

Participative learning is too often seen as an opportunity for the instructor to come along for the 'roller coaster ride' because the students do all the work and the instructor is just around.

As Andrews puts it, "Students seem to do all the thinking, most of the talking and make for themselves the relevant discoveries. If they originate the ideas, organise the discussion, and establish their own rate of progress, their instructor need not prepare lectures, prescribe texts, serve up precepts in palatable form, or test for regurgitation of fact and principle. If the end is not knowledge, the instructor need not know at all"<sup>11</sup>

The outlook and behaviour of the teacher are of cardinal importance in establishing effective student participation:

- The teacher has to have self-confidence, otherwise he sees the class as a threat.
- He has to be patient in order not to discourage many slower participants from communicating.
- He has to be enthusiastic.
- He has to be approachable.
- He has to have a sense of humour.

He must be articulate.

He has to create and keep interest, not only in the subject but also in the discussion and in the fellow course members.

He must achieve quick and extensive empathy with his class.

He must be a fellow student not a lecturer.

He has to ask questions.

He must make restatements of what has been said so that the individual students still feel it is what they said and yet the meaning is clearer to everybody else. In doing so he will try to keep the direction of the discussion broadly flowing to the common objective.

He has to judge participant performance.

He has to give short lectures on important concepts or difficult techniques.

He must constantly review his performance and adapt where necessary.

In conclusion let me quote Kreitlow from his book *Materials and Methods in Adult Education*.

"It is fun to teach adults. They are the most responsive, critical, concerned, creative, stubborn, challenging, pleasant two-footed animals on this planet. They will help you with anything from room arrangement to doing their own teaching. They will get along without you. They will tell you what they want to learn if you give them half a chance."

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