

# ADULT AND PROFESSIONAL EDUCATION: AN OVERVIEW

This chapter provides information on the fields of adult education and continuing professional education -- the philosophical assumptions, terminology, and purposes of each. The information presented should provide judicial educators with a better understanding of the adult and continuing professional education elements of their practice. This chapter will provide some of the theoretical bases for the work that adult educators do and will enable the judicial educator to reflect on how theory can inform his or her practice (and vice-versa). Therefore, this chapter will be somewhat more theoretical in nature than other chapters in this manual.

Adult education focuses on people whose major social roles (i.e., parent, worker, community member) are ones traditionally assigned to adults. Usually, adults engage in an educational activity with a specific purpose in mind, such as learning word processing programs on a computer or attending parenting classes.

Continuing professional education is a specialized area of adult education that primarily evolved in response to the educational needs of professionals in their efforts to keep abreast of new techniques, skills, and knowledge. Both of these areas will be discussed in detail in the following sections.

## Adult Education

As an academic discipline, adult education is relatively new, with formal beginnings in the early 1900s. The creation of the Adult Education Association in 1926 is often cited as the formal beginning of adult education as a profession (Darkenwald & Merriam, 1982). Prior to that time, most adult education activities were not considered part of a profession, and were usually conducted through community facilities such as churches, libraries, lyceums, museums, cooperative extension facilities, and public schools.

World War II brought on two major program changes in adult education: (a) the rapid creation of information and technology in the professions, especially medicine, creating a knowledge gap between new and seasoned practitioners; and (b) the GI Bill made it financially possible for many men and women to change their career paths by attending college or pursuing vocational education (Stubblefield & Keane, 1990).

The practice of adult education is carried out in many locations and under various names. Human resource development specialists, literacy teachers, volunteer coordinators, and judicial educators all provide adult education services. These activities can range from a one-hour workshop to weeks of intensive training.

The theory of adult education draws from the disciplines of psychology, sociology, business, and management; the field also has developed its own theories. The end result of blending theories from various perspectives is a field of practice that both contributes to and incorporates theory. In this section, information on adult education's purposes, philosophical assumptions, and terminology will be presented in question-and-answer format.

### **What Are the Purposes of Adult Education?**

There are four main purposes of adult education, according to Beder (1990). These are:

- *To facilitate change in a dynamic society.* Information and necessary life skills are rapidly changing, creating changes in role expectations for adults. As a result, many adults seek to understand topics such as parenting, coping with divorce, or computer literacy. These courses are often provided through community education. Changes in professional knowledge and technology necessitate educational updating via continuing professional education programs.
- *To support and maintain the good social order.* This purpose has its roots in the concept of democracy. In a democracy, an informed citizenry makes the decisions that guide society. Adult education can help people gain skills and knowledge needed to function in a democracy.
- *To promote productivity.* Technical and scientific knowledge is changing, affecting entry level, as well as experienced, employees. In order to promote productivity, schools and employers are challenged to update the skills of employees. Human resource development, continuing professional education, and vocational education are all branches of adult education that focus on the improvement of workers' productivity.
- *To enhance personal growth.* This purpose is based on the humanist theories of Rogers and Maslow. According to them, a primary goal of adulthood is "self-actualization," i.e., striving to become all one is capable of becoming. For instance, judicial educators may offer a program that assists judges in reflecting on their decision-making processes.

## What Does the Term “Lifelong Learning” Mean?

*Lifelong learning* is a philosophical assumption underlying adult education. It is common for lifelong learning and adult education to be used interchangeably when referring to the education of adults. Lifelong learning refers to the idea that adults can and will seek learning activities throughout their lives. These activities may be formal (e.g., classroom), informal (e.g., reading a book), or non-formal (e.g., study group with friends); independently directed or teacher-led; or free or fee-based. Lifelong learning assumes that adults continue to seek out and learn new skills and information.

## What is Andragogy? What is Pedagogy?

*Andragogy* is a set of assumptions created by Malcolm Knowles (1970) that addresses the way adults learn. The four basic assumptions of andragogy are:

1. Adults see themselves as self-directed learners.
2. Learning focuses on solving immediate problems and improving performance.
3. An adult’s readiness to learn is based on his or her need to cope with life tasks (i.e., job, family, civic responsibilities).
4. Life experiences form the foundation for understanding new information.

While these concepts apply to most adult learners, they may vary or perhaps not apply, depending on the learner, topic, and learning context. For example, presenting textual changes in familiar statutes may not lend itself to the use of personal experience as a learning approach.

*Pedagogy* refers to the teaching style most commonly used when educating children (Knowles, 1970). The four assumptions underlying this educational philosophy are:

1. The learner is dependent upon the teacher for direction regarding the content of the learning activity.
2. Subject matter is learned for future use.
3. Learning occurs when society states that it is time to learn (age of learner), thus, uniform curricula can be created.
4. Life experience is of little use in a learning situation.

With andragogy, learners have more influence on how learning occurs than with pedagogy. Adult educators have challenged the assumption that the learner's age is a primary factor in deciding whether to employ pedagogical or andragogical teaching methods. Knowles has altered his original perspective that andragogy and pedagogy are dichotomous approaches. He now views andragogy and pedagogy as two ends of the spectrum of teaching approaches that can be implemented with both adults and children. Elements of both andragogy and pedagogy are frequently present in educational programs for adults.

### **How is Andragogy Used in Planning Programs?**

Learner participation is usually high in adult education programs. This stems from the belief that adults are self-directed and want to take an active part in the learning process. Adult educators typically use participatory teaching methods such as group discussions. They may also involve the learner in planning the educational activity. Some adults may not feel comfortable in a participatory teaching/learning experience. If so, the educator may employ a more traditional teaching method, such as lecturing, to convey the needed content.

Adult educators frequently structure learning activities that utilize the experiences of participants. New information that challenges held values is integrated slowly; educators should pace the course content according to each individual group. The backgrounds of the learners become a resource for faculty in presenting new ideas. For instance, an instructor could use judicial practice examples when illustrating theoretical concepts on verbal and non-verbal demeanor to a class of judges.

Adults often seek knowledge and skills for their immediate use. Therefore, adults are less interested in survey courses and instead prefer a single topic focus.

The educator should refer to the learners' needs when planning a learning activity under the concept of andragogy. One of the dilemmas for educators in selecting course content is choosing among the educational needs of a variety of stakeholders, which may include learners, employers, educators, legislative bodies or societies in general. Issues can and do arise in determining which set of needs guides the content of a course.

### **Are There Major Philosophies Other Than Andragogy Guiding Adult Educators as They Plan Programs?**

There are four general philosophies or paradigms (patterns of thought or behavior) that underlie adult education practices: (a) analytic, (b) practical, (c) critical praxis, and (d) market-driven. These are not exclusive to adult education; one can find examples of these paradigms in all forms of education. Each of these paradigms can be used in planning adult education programs.

The first philosophy, *analytic*, focuses on the purposes, methods of delivery, and evaluation of the learning activity. Analytic is clearly the dominant paradigm that undergirds the educational system for children and adults (Schubert, 1986). Faculty control over the educational content and process is central to this philosophy. Information is viewed as something that can be prescribed and is presented as being value-free, scientific or technical, and objective. Within this environment, information is created independent of context and the experiences of learners. The focus is not on challenging existing knowledge, beliefs or values but on accepting the prevailing beliefs as normative.

The second paradigm, *practical*, emphasizes communication among all parties involved in the learning activity (Schubert, 1986). Learners are seen as the creators of knowledge, implying that it is not a static or universally accepted entity but one that evolves. By engaging in rational discourse, groups will discover their educational needs. Reality is viewed as a creation of historical, political, and social influences. Knowledge does not originate from any one source or perspective, nor is created by experts, but is found in everyday experiences and interactions. The direction of the learning activity evolves via conversation between and among teacher and learners.

Exposing and challenging often-ignored inequities in society is the focal point of the *critical praxis* paradigm (Schubert, 1986). This philosophy involves questioning and looking below the surface of societal dynamics, especially at situations that involve the power structure among individuals and groups. This philosophy can empower the disenfranchised by giving voice to their reality through the development and delivery of education according to their world view. Often, there is an element of action within this paradigm that prompts individuals to work toward changing both their perspective and their everyday reality.

With the *market-driven* paradigm, educators seek to conduct workshops that “pay the bills” (Beder, 1986). Programs are provided according to the expressed needs of learners, usually those who will pay to attend workshops. Success is measured by numbers of participants and the ability of the program(s) to be self-supporting. This paradigm overlaps with the analytic philosophy in its adherence to faculty-centered planning, although program purposes, objectives, and evaluation are based on learners’ needs.

## Does the Learning Environment Have an Influence on Adult Learners?

Adult learners respond better to uninterrupted time periods (two hours or more, including stretch breaks) than short sessions to allow for focusing on the topic (Zemke, 1981). The room can be configured in any manner as long as it is in keeping with the topic and the presentation style of the faculty. Room lay-outs that encourage face-to-face conversation are more successful in facilitating adult learning.

The classroom atmosphere should be non-competitive, particularly early in the program when learners are unfamiliar with one another. This is important because adults often apply old solutions to new problems before attempting a new approach. Employing a familiar problem-solving approach does not mean that adults avoid being intellectually challenged. They simply may be hesitant to try new approaches. A supportive, non-competitive learning environment encourages adults to take the needed risks to learn new skills and knowledge.

A general rule regarding the learning environment is: *Make it appropriate for the learner and the topic.* If working with a group of judges, schedule the program in a suitable location and hire speakers who will be well-received by judicial personnel.

## What Motivates Adults to Participate in Learning Activities?

There has been extensive research on this topic beginning in the early 1960s. The first major study, conducted by Houle (1961), identified three types of motivated adult learners. Subsequent studies have supported Houle's research and provided more detail about each type.

Goal-oriented learners are the most common type of adult learner. Learning decisions are guided by clear-cut goals, as the learner takes a “utilitarian” stance toward education. An example of a goal-oriented learner is a judge attending a workshop to learn about changes in legal statutes.

The second type of adult learner is the activity-oriented learner. For these, participation is based on reasons other than the stated purpose of the learning activity. Examples of activity-oriented learners are a full-time worker who attends evening non-credit courses with a friend and a professional who attends conferences to network and visit colleagues.

“Knowledge for its own sake” could be the motto of the third type of adult learner, the learning-oriented. For them, education is a way of life, and as such, is an intrinsically valued activity. Since this type of learner focuses on the content of a learning activity, he or she can participate either within a group or individually.

Often the reason for participating in a learning activity incorporates more than one type of motivation. However, there is one motivation that usually influences the learner more strongly than the others.

A recent study on reasons for adult participation in learning activities cites that adults tend to engage in educational activities before, during, or after a transition (Aslanian & Brickell, 1980). Often, personal or professional transitions influence adults to pursue learning activities. For example, when a lawyer becomes a judge, he or she may seek to attend workshops on how to maintain control in the courtroom.

## **Who Are the Primary Providers of Adult Education Programs?**

According to the U.S. Department of Education (1986), most adult education courses are held at traditional educational institutions such as community or four-year colleges and universities. Business and industry is a close second in overall educational efforts. Vocational schools are the third most common location for adult education programs. The fourth are private organizations, such as the YMCA, and fifth are government agencies and consulting firms.

## **Summary**

The education of adults continues after they complete their formal education. Usually, adult educators plan programs that are participatory, based on the learners' immediate needs, and incorporate the personal and professional experiences of the learner. However, there are times when pedagogical approaches (e.g., lecture) are more appropriate than andragogical methods. The analytic paradigm most often guides the planning and implementation of adult education programs.

In designing and presenting learning activities, adult educators need to remember that learners are sensitive to their environment, which in turn influences how they experience the content and delivery of a program. According to the research on participation, cited earlier, adults involve themselves in learning activities according to three overall motivations: when education is a means to an end (goal-oriented), when the context or interaction within classroom is attractive (activity-oriented), and when they are interested in the content for its own sake (learning-oriented).

## **Continuing Professional Education**

### **What is Continuing Professional Education?**

*Continuing professional education (CPE)* is one of the areas of practice in adult education, along with other areas such as adult literacy, personal enrichment education, and religious education. The focus of CPE is to provide new information and skill development pertinent to a specific profession's membership.

Practitioners are kept “current” on new research, legal requirements, and changes in practice. Frequently, this type of education is offered through employers or professional organizations (e.g., American Bar Association).

The majority of the people organizing CPE programs are content experts in specific fields, such as law, medicine, or pharmacy (Cervero, 1990). Only a few of those organizing CPE programs are trained as educators. Still fewer CPE coordinators are trained in both a specific discipline and as an educator. As a result of hiring content experts, CPE programs generally stand a greater chance of being technically sound but are often structured in educationally traditional ways (i.e., lectures).

### **What Are the Underlying Assumptions of CPE?**

As mentioned, CPE is a branch of adult education, so it adheres to the concept of lifelong education. However, adult educators generally use the term lifelong education to refer to the learning activities possible during a person’s life-span. Continuing professional educators view the concept of lifelong education as referring to the duration of one’s membership in a profession. Due to CPE’s focus on professional development, lifelong learning is limited to the years of one’s professional practice.

Another assumption is that the generation of new knowledge is a given reality for most professions, based on the knowledge explosion in many professions that occurred after World War II. While formal education (e.g., graduate school) provides the basis for one’s professional knowledge, practitioners require continual updates to keep up with recent changes. However, without the foundation of a knowledge base provided by formal education, knowledge and skill updates presented through CPE programs could not be integrated and applied.

Acquiring topic-specific information is the essential criteria for becoming a member of a profession. It is assumed that membership in a profession is based on an individual’s mastery of that profession’s knowledge base. Continuing professional education offers the opportunity for professionals to maintain their membership in a chosen field by providing ways to acquire new knowledge and skills, thereby keeping current in their professional discipline.

Additionally, continuing professional education helps to maintain professional standards along with protecting consumers from receiving services based on outdated or even dangerous practices. During the 1960s, there was a loss of trust in professionals when abuses of professional power were made known (Cervero, 1990). Often, these indiscretions occurred because of incompetency or the use of obsolete methods.

Many states now require specific professional groups to attend mandatory CPE programs in order to practice. For example, 33 states currently mandate participation in continuing professional education sessions for lawyers (Phillips, 1989). Those who support mandatory CPE generally do so for two

reasons: (a) it maintains professional standards, and (b) it protects consumers (Lenz, 1982). However, there is controversy regarding who maintains control over the standards of a profession -- the government or the members of the profession.

Another assumption of continuing professional education is that while each profession is based on a specialized body of knowledge, the methods or processes used in educational programs are similar, regardless of the academic discipline. For instance, one can use small group discussion techniques with lawyers, doctors, and realtors. As a result, there is an increasing acceptance of CPE as a separate field of study.

### **What Are the Purposes of CPE?**

As part of their employment role, professionals frequently dictate (judges) or prescribe (doctors) what other people need or will do. Society grants the professions permission to influence people's lives. Cervero (1990) indicates that there are three basic approaches to CPE: (a) functionalist, (b) conflict, and (c) critical. Each of these viewpoints addresses the professional's role in society, but from different perspectives on the professional's right to dictate to others. Each has differing implications for continuing professional education.

The most common approach to CPE is the "functionalist" approach, which focuses on providing current scientific and technical information to professionals so that they can maintain their expert status. Clients benefit when professionals are aware of new techniques and legislation because diagnoses or recommendations will be more consistent with what is considered good practice. New information is viewed as objective and concrete. For a judicial educator working from a functionalist perspective, programming presents information that will help practitioners improve their practice by keeping them up-to-date in their field.

According to the "conflict" approach, the power and societal rewards available to members of professions are challenged. Instead of designing programs that advance professionals' competency levels, the power imbalance between client and practitioner is examined. The goal is to create a more equitable relationship, thus reducing the professional's prerogative to prescribe to the client. For example, mediators work to share the power in a situation, to encourage participants to make their own decisions.

The "critical" approach addresses how professionals make choices on what problems they solve and how to solve them. This approach suggests that there are different values within a specific profession, unlike the functionalist viewpoint which assumes a consensus among members. Knowledge and practice are created from the situation. If a judicial educator were to operate from the critical approach, the content of the program would present different, sometimes conflicting, perspectives on a topic, such as discussing child sexual abuse from the viewpoint of the perpetrator, the victim, the enforcement officer, and society.

## Who Are the Primary Providers of CPE Programs?

According to Houle (1980), there are four primary sources of CPE programs: (a) universities and professional schools, (b) professional associations, (c) employers, and (d) independent providers. These are not listed in any rank order because there is no mechanism to track the organizations that offer programs or to find out how many learners attend CPE programs.

### Summary

Continuing professional education has been “around” for a long time, but only in the last 30 years has it been recognized as a field for academic study. It focuses on the continuing education of people who affiliate with professional groups, after they have completed their formal education. While two approaches of CPE -- the conflict and the critical perspective -- challenge the objectivity of information and the power ascribed to professionals, the most commonly accepted is the functionalist approach, where emphasis is on upgrading practitioners’ knowledge. CPE programs are offered through a variety of sources, with little standardization, except where state governments or professional credentialing require it.

## DEFINITIONS

***Analytic Paradigm:*** views knowledge as objective, value-neutral, and applicable to many situations; the teacher is responsible for disseminating information.

***Andragogy:*** the art and science of helping adults learn; an educational approach that utilizes the learners' experiences, needs, and readiness to learn as guides for creating the content for an educational activity, regardless of the age of the learner.

***Continuing Professional Education (CPE):*** a form of adult education that is provided through a variety of sources. It is most frequently offered for the purpose of assisting members of the professions maintain their status or skill level.

***Critical Praxis:*** knowledge is created by examining the underlying cultural and political assumptions of one's situation for the purpose of transforming one's world.

***Lifelong Learning:*** used to refer to adult participation in learning activities and as another term used to describe adult education.

***Market Driven Paradigm:*** perspective from which programs are provided to meet the expressed needs of learners who usually pay to attend.

***Pedagogy:*** the art and science of helping children learn; an educational approach in which the teacher is primarily responsible for the content and pace of the learning activity, regardless of age.

***Practical Paradigm:*** situational knowledge generated by both teacher and learner in a particular context through conversation; knowledge is affected by social, historical, and political influences as they apply to everyday experiences.



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