Assessing of Ways to Strengthen Adult Education

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Abstract: Adult learners have a different approach to learning. By the time you reach adulthood, you're most likely responsible for your own success and you're perfectly capable of making your own decisions once you have the information you need. Adults learn best when learning is focused on them, not the teacher. This is called <u>andragogy</u>, the process of helping adults learn. Types of content and educational resources in various parts of adult curriculum materials motivational book, course materials, supplementary materials, track materials (continued) participatory form and materials. Incentives aimed at providing content that audiences are produced primarily to attract different groups of adults interested in design, so that their participation in learning programs are encouraged. Motivational training materials for learners and have great importance even in support of successful applications over learners, planners and executors for educational programs is important.

Keywords: Adult Education; learn; course

Introduction:

The field of adult education and literacy is plagued by confusion about definitions. Over the years definitions have evolved from provisions in federal law and initiatives of groups advocating particular methodologies or the needs of specific adult populations. The result is that definitions tend to merge statements about the goals to be achieved (e.g., improving the literacy of a particular population) with a particular means (e.g., adult basic education) to achieve the goal.

Therefore, it is helpful to distinguish between at least these dimensions of the issue:

1. "Literacy" refers to the knowledge, skills, and competencies of individuals. The federal Adult Education and Family Literacy Act (Title II of the Workforce Investment Act)1 defines literacy as "an individual's ability to read, write, speak in English, compute and solve problems, at levels of proficiency necessary to function on the job, in the family of the individual, and in society." Literacy is often defined in terms of specific domains such as "basic academic skills," "workplace skills," "life skills," "parenting skills," or skills necessary to exercise one's rights and responsibilities for citizenship. Different dimensions of literacy are often categorized by terms that cluster several dimensions of literacy important for different clients. Examples include workplace literacy (combining both basic academic skills and workplace skills), and family literacy (combining basic academic skills and other skills essential for successful parenting).

2. "Education attainment" usually refers to the numbers of years of schooling completed or the level of credential (e.g., high school diploma or associate degree) an individual has obtained. Despite concerns about the meaning of credentials, there is a strong correlation between educational attainment and literacy.

3. "Literacy initiatives" often are defined in terms of the needs of a particular target group. These may be parents of young children, youth who have dropped out of high school without earning a high school diploma, welfare recipients, persons with limited English-speaking ability, incarcerated adults, or adults in the workforce.

4. Other literacy initiatives are defined in terms of a particular educational service, strategy, or means to address a target population's literacy problems. "Adult basic education" and "family literacy" are examples. These initiatives are often defined in terms of a particular configuration of services for the target population (e.g., assessment and information and counseling services).

5. The term "lifelong learning" is often associated with "literacy." Lifelong learning is a means to the goal of maintaining necessary levels of literacy throughout one's lifetime. The goal of lifelong learning has implications for both individual adult's learning behavior as well as education policy and the design of the education system.

Goal six of the National Education Goals illustrates a broadly stated goal that incorporates expectations about both adult literacy and the kinds of policies and services that should be in place to improve literacy. Goal six, "Adult Literacy and Lifelong Learning," states that, "By the year 2000, every adult will be literate and possess the knowledge

and skills necessary to compete in a global economy and exercise the rights and responsibilities of citizenship." The objectives related to this goal touch on several of the common elements of definitions listed above, for example:

- Different dimensions of literacy (e.g., academic and workplace skills),
- The level of education attainment (e.g., increasing the number of persons who complete postsecondary degrees),
- The needs of target groups (e.g., parents, minorities, or part-time learners),
- The need to increase the availability of particular educational services, strategies or means (e.g., accessibility of libraries to part-time learners or opportunities for parental involvement), and
- The importance of lifelong learning, both in the learning behavior of individuals and in the educational system's responsiveness to the needs of adult learners.

Characteristics of adult education:
Flexibility in time:

In the past, usually one of the obstacles in the way of learning and development of adult education was being inflexible and time courses were programs. But now most countries have to consider that the speed limit of time and learning ability and facilities must be adults. Flexibility in time means that not only should the time classes and programs for adults is appropriate, but necessary facilities should be provided for independent study.

Flexibility in the location:

One of the aspects of flexible space is that individuals can, regardless of their residence to the study and advancing their knowledge and skills pay. For example, adults in remote villages should like people who live in the city use of educational programs. After flexibility in other places is that the issue of specificity of location is not considered primarily educational.

Flexibility in age:

Educational opportunities for certain age should not use it for all regardless of their age, is possible. In fact, educational programs must use people of different ages to prepare.

Flexibility in admission:

No adult should not only be deprived of education because of the necessary conditions for admission in the class does. Of course this is not such a person without academic records to participate in university classes is accepted, Adoption order is that

the adults in educational programs at different levels, according to the possibility of using the opportunity that is provided must be based on the experience and knowledge and their knowledge is.

To combine education and job responsibilities:

Adults should be able to work during that time engaged in training classes take them. In other words, their presence in the class should be considered part of their work. This means that low-literate or illiterate working people who are allowed to work an hour of your daily spending surpassed participation in educational programs.

Ways to Strengthen Adult Education
1- Create a culture that supports adult study
1. Communicate that learning is intrinsic to faith development. Lift up ongoing study, including adult education, as an essential function of any Christian community.
2. Reinforce the expectation of study participation from the pulpit and with new members.
3. Make Bible study a part of other church activities such as committee meetings and mission activities.
4. Use scripture meaningfully in worship. Don't assume your worshippers know the context of the passages read. Use sermons as an opportunity to teach the Bible.

2- Offer a variety of formats, schedules, and approaches
5. Experiment with a variety of times -- Sunday morning classes, weeknight groups, retreats, oneday events, and breakfast-hour or noon-time classes – depending on lifestyles in your congregation.
6. Consider scheduling some classes or small groups in homes or other community locations. Christian education doesn't happen only in church buildings.
7. Start new studies and groups often. Despite their best intentions, ongoing groups have a tendency to become cliquish. Newcomers are far more likely to feel comfortable joining something new.
8. Have as your goal a Bible study program that exposes church members to the entire biblical witness over time.
9. Recognize different learning styles among individuals and age groups. Older folks tend to be most comfortable with traditional classroom structures. Boomers are inclined to question authority and enjoy discussion. Younger persons are more accustomed to media and technology and prefer a fast-paced, informal style.
10. Make use of a variety of different approaches, including lectionary-based studies, topical studies, character studies, etc.

11. Incorporate different learning strategies, such as role playing, dramatization, guided meditation, even memorization.

12. Churches too small for a large number of groups can vary their approach by rotating different studies and curricula with groups.

13. Don't teach "about" the Bible in a way that doesn't allow people to encounter the texts for themselves. Encourage individual reading or make it part of the group's time together.

14. Encourage active, discussion-based learning. Break into small conversation groups frequently.

15. Allow for diversity in perspectives.

16. Encourage the use of a variety of different biblical translations. Those less experienced in Bible study may find it helpful to read from a paraphrase.

3- Meet people where they are

17. Acknowledge biblical illiteracy among many adult church-goers – even the well-educated – and strive for methods that straddle this paradox.

18. Recognize that some beginners will be turned off by "homework." Use videos, in-class readings, dramatizations, or audio tapes as alternative ways of getting everyone "on the same page" and ready for discussion, all the while encouraging the habit of daily scripture reading.

19. Provide short-term classes for those who won't commit to a long-term study or ongoing class, but make these short-term learning experiences "stepping stones" toward greater involvement.

20. Conduct "taster" classes for those who want to try out the experience before they commit to it. Select topics that will appeal to those new to Bible study.

21. Break an ongoing class into shorter, defined segments, each with a clearly identified focus. With each new segment, take the opportunity to publicize the topic and invite newcomers.

22. Teach stewardship of time to counteract "busyness." Just as with financial stewardship, persons need to be encouraged to make Christian education a priority. Encourage "first fruits" commitments of time.

23. Be clear about expectations with regard to attendance, participation, and preparation.

4- Promote participation effectively

24. Link group study topics to sermon series and encourage participation from the pulpit.

25. Emphasize study during Lent. Select a topic or curriculum for church-wide study during this period and encourage all to take part. Tie the topic into preaching and worship.

26. Lift up study leaders and participants. Celebrate every time a new group starts or completes a study program. Use the newsletter, a photo board, or a dedication service in worship.

27. Ask class members to write a newsletter article or testify about the significance of their learning experiences.

28. Remember that personal invitations are usually the most effective way of getting someone involved in any activity.

29. Capitalize on the current popularity of book clubs and films by creating opportunities for those who enjoy these activities. Check out "Reel Time" from Cokesbury.

5- Foster strong leadership

30. Recruit leaders as the first step toward forming groups. Groups will often form around a gifted leader.

31. Stress the group leader's role as facilitator, rather than teacher. Setting up one person as "the expert" creates a poor group dynamic and discourages new people from stepping into leadership. Thinking of group leaders as facilitators allows Scripture and the Holy Spirit to do the teaching.

32. Expect your pastor to model the importance of ongoing adult education by leading and participating in study, but don't reinforce the notion that only the ordained can lead study groups.

33. Take advantage of the leader training opportunities provided in conjunction with many popular study curricula.

34. Provide orientation and ongoing support for group leaders.

35. Train leaders in group process so they can keep their groups on track, being sensitive to the need to keep more outspoken participants in check and draw out the more reserved using phrases like, "Let's hear from some of the others," or "You look like you have something to say."

36. Emphasize the importance of leader preparation, especially mapping out discussion questions in advance.

37. Encourage team leadership. Experienced leaders should invite a newer person to pair with them in leading groups to develop the less experienced leader.

38. Rotate the leadership responsibility within a group so that all participants get experience leading sessions.

39. Know that Sunday School classes and small groups are one of the best places to develop lay leaders and lay relationships that strengthen the church.

6- Use resources effectively

40. Stay abreast of new resources, including those available from other denominations or traditions and the secular press.

41. Don't be afraid to introduce ideas and resources from a variety of theological perspectives. Trust the discernment abilities of individuals and the group.

42. Use workbook-style studies creatively. Nothing is more boring than a lesson read straight out of a leader's manual. Find ways to make pre-packaged lesson plans come alive.

43. Use videos to bring expert perspectives to bear and to get everyone "on the same page" for discussion. But avoid class sessions that are no more than viewing a video, or participants will soon wonder why they shouldn't stay home and watch their own TV.

44. Create a resource center with reference materials, maps, and other items to support your leaders and participants.

45. Don't allow your church library to become a museum. Update the collection. Offer books and resources linked to sermon topics and congregational study themes.

46. Consider a book sales kiosk and stock it with things you'd like your congregants to be reading. Many busy people would rather buy a book than worry about due dates and library fines.

7- Stress spiritual formation

47. Remember, the goal is formation, not information. Every class should be deliberate in helping members accept God's grace, grow in faith, deepen their relationship to the Christian community, and answer Christ's call to discipleship.

48. Include prayer as part of every study session and encourage group members to pray for one another daily.

49. Encourage a covenantal relationship within study groups.

50. Nurture a sense of Christian community and connectedness within groups. A Sunday School class or small group can be a "home" for individuals within a larger church.

Conclusion:

As indicated earlier, a strength of adult education is the dedication of the many teachers often serving under difficult conditions, without adequate support, and often with compensation and benefits less than teachers in the public schools. Testimony before the task force characterized the work of adult educators as "missionary" work. Recognizing the seriousness of the adult literacy issue in Kentucky, it should be a major concern that the Commonwealth does not have a comprehensive approach to the

professional preparation, development, and support of adult educators.

The challenge for Kentucky will be to move from a system that still depends on teachers with limited training in working with adults, to one in which professional competence in working with adults is a basic requirement. Any strategy to make this transition must involve both professional development and support for the teachers now in the field as well as a new system for a new generation of adult educators.

Beyond the issues relating directly to DAEL(Department of Adult Education and Literacy), the task force heard a number of concerns about the Commonwealth's overall approach to adult literacy.

- Lack of coherent statewide leadership and coordination among multiple complementary initiatives aimed at the same problem.

- Lack of continuity in state leadership. Cited in particular was the difficulty sustaining a high level commitment to the issue long enough to make a difference because of changes in priorities of the state's political leaders. A high level of turnover in the leadership of the Department of Adult Education and Literacy has also contributed to the instability.

- Tendency to think of adult education as a separate categorical program rather than a strategy that cuts across the mission and responsibility of multiple Commonwealth programs and initiatives (e.g., early childhood education, welfare reform, economic development, and corrections).

- Multiple uncoordinated categorical federal initiatives that tend to drive (and fragment) policy for an overall state effort that is largely funded by Kentucky.

- A tendency to commingle and confuse different functions. The most important distinction is between functions focused on the needs of clients (adult learners, employers, communities, regions, and the Commonwealth as a whole) and functions associated with the operations and performance of providers. It is important that each of these functions receive attention, yet the tendency is for one (e.g., overseeing a network of providers) to drive out attention to overall system strategy.

- Inadequate coordination of services to meet the needs of individual adults, communities, employers, and regions is hindered by:

- Vertical financing and regulatory relationships between separate federal and state programs and local providers and administrative units. These vertical

relationships can hinder the horizontal coordination of services for individual adult learners, communities, and employers.

- Turf wars among providers, local politics, and long-standing conflicts among neighboring counties.

- Inadequate links with and leverage of other public and private initiatives and investments to reach the target population. Major sources of help include employers, postsecondary education, and workforce development.

- Lack of a state financing policy and strategy for provider performance incentives and collaboration, and tax and other employer incentives for leverage of non-state resources.

- Lack of programmatic and administrative flexibility to meet the rapidly changing needs of adult learners, employers, regional economies, and communities.

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