

# The most important challenges faced by adult learners

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## Introduction

Adult education is a process in which adults undertake systematic and sustained learning activities with the aim of bringing about changes not only in knowledge but also in attitudes, values and skills (Darkenwald and Merriam, 1982). It refers to the process of acquiring knowledge, skills and abilities by adults. The daily life of most people in the world requires learning not only in a classroom, but also in our daily activities (Tennant, 2002). The way we communicate with others, deal with our personal and family problems, work, and build our communities all require us to learn new information, new processes, and new technologies (Merriam & Bierema, 2014).

There are at least four forms of adult education, formal education, non-formal education, informal education and incidental education. People learn continuously, formally and informally, in many and varied settings, in workplaces, families, recreational or community activities, and political action (Foley, 2020). One of the main characteristics of education is that it has no age. People are never too young or too old to learn. Education is a life journey and for some people the path they choose as a young person is usually not the same path they take in the end.

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## The adult learner

Adults choose to continue learning later for many reasons, such as learning at their own pace, flexibility in scheduling, or the ability to choose courses that suit their needs. Lindemann (1937) points out that adult education is a distinctly social endeavour in which adult learners are not merely engaged in the pursuit of knowledge, but are experimenting with themselves, testing their motives in the light of knowledge and changing habits (Briton, 1986).

Adult learners participate in adult education for a variety of reasons, requiring different support than traditional age learners. They participate because they are motivated by the need for help in dealing with all their needs and the support of the community in their participation in adult education (Taylor, et al., 2000). Reasons for motivation are also the establishment of inclusion in a group, the development of a positive attitude, the enhancement of the meaning of life and the creation of competence (Wlodowsky & Ginsberg, 2017). Other reasons may be related to life roles, their characteristics, their socio-political context or the acquisition of knowledge and confidence and the development of skills.

## Challenges faced by adult learners

.Adult education refers to a wide range of learning environments together with a range of adult co-learners and facilitators (Conolly, 2008). It is a distinctly social endeavor in which adult learners are not merely engaged in the pursuit of knowledge, but are experimenting with themselves, testing their motivations in the light of knowledge and changing habits (Wood Jonson, 2024).

Adult learners participate in adult education for a variety of reasons, requiring different support than traditional age learners. They participate because they are motivated by the need for help in dealing with all their needs and the support of the community in their participation in adult education (Lahey, 2020). Reasons for motivation are also the establishment of inclusion in a group, the development of a positive attitude, the enhancement of the meaning of life and the creation of competence. Other reasons may be related to life roles, their characteristics, their socio-political context or the acquisition of knowledge and confidence and the development of skills (Rose et al., 2024).

## Conclusions

.When adults learn in a group, they get to know each other and find themselves participating in an interesting and creative activity (Brookfield, 1986). The exchange of our ideas, values, beliefs, actions, relationships and resulting social forms show us not only our humanity, but also an open, democratic and healthy society.

There are enormous limits and challenges in preparing for the unknown future. Like basic education, adult education needs to prepare for the unknown by having a broad scope beyond immediate needs. This, of course, cannot be achieved when the decisions of political and economic leaders are short-sighted (Käpplinger & Robak, 2017).

Continuing education programs need to be developed not only by education and training institutions, but also by professional bodies and employers. Lifelong learning should be seen as an investment by government, donors and individuals (Burns, 2020).