Interactive Learning Environments

Towards Flexible Learning for Adult Learners in Professional Contexts: An Activity-Focused Course Design
By Sarah Cornelius, Carole Gordon, and Aileen Ackland
“This article argues for a flexible model of learning for adults which allows them to make choices and contextualise their learning in a manner appropriate to their own professional practice whilst also developing as a member of a learning community. It presents a design based around online “learning activities” which draws on ideas of constructivism, collaborative learning and reflective practice. The model was developed for adult learning in Higher Education, and has been adapted and extended to a number of different programmes. Implementation of the model... has been the subject of an interpretative evaluation using a multiple methods approach. Learners’ experiences of this programme together with issues associated with the application of the model to other programmes are discussed.”

Journal of Adult Education
Leading Online Learning Initiatives in Adult Education
By Kathy Olesen-Tracey
“Adult learners often face barriers to participation in traditional classroom instruction. As technology access grows and adults naturally incorporate technology into their daily lives, adult education programs are finding innovative ways to blend technology with instruction through quality online learning opportunities. This article highlights the tips, strategies, and best practices learned from the deployment of GED-i, a nationally recognized online GED test preparation curriculum developed at the Center for the Application of Information Technologies at Western Illinois University. However, the procedures presented are applicable to all online/distance learning options and are based on solid administrative leadership strategies such as determining benchmarks, establishing and communicating clear processes and procedures, and setting professional development goals.”

Journal of Continuing Higher Ed.
Faculty Perceptions of Adult Learners in College Classrooms
By Beverly Woodson Day, Stella Lovato, Candace Tull, and Jovita Ross-Gordon
“The number of nontraditional students on college and university campuses continues to increase. Therefore, faculty members need to become aware of issues regarding adult learners in the college classroom. Interviews were conducted with faculty...
at a large community college and a four-year public university in south central Texas. This study focused on faculty members’ perceptions of adult learners in the college classroom, their preparation for teaching in higher education and for teaching adult students in particular, and the strategies they found to be effective for teaching adults. Three themes were identified, including conceptions of adult learners, faculty preparation for college teaching, and teaching adults.”

Journal of College Student Retention

Persistence of Adult Undergraduates on a Traditionally-Oriented University Campus: Does Donaldson and Graham’s Model of College Outcomes for Adult Students Still Apply?
By Wendy Samuels, Andrea L. Beach, and Louann Bierlein Palmer
“The purpose of this study was to explore the social and academic experiences of non-traditional students pursuing a bachelor’s degree at a traditionally-oriented residential university and how these experiences promote or impede their persistence to graduation. The study explored components of Donaldson and Graham’s Model of College Outcomes for Adult Students and confirmed their proposed influences, including prior experience and personal biographies, adult cognition, psycho-social and value orientation, life-world environment, and the connecting classroom. Three additional specific findings focused on a strong personal striving characteristic among students, the motivation to attend and stay in college to be role models for their children, and gender difference regarding the use of and expectation for faculty support.”

Innovative Higher Education

The Adult Student and Course Satisfaction: What Matters Most?
By George F. Howell and Jeffrey M. Buck

“Student satisfaction with a course is important because it can contribute to student retention, and it can also be used as one way to assess faculty effectiveness. This investigative work suggests that course satisfaction among non-traditional, adult students seeking business degrees is positively influenced by giving attention to four specific service-based factors. Based on feedback from 1,725 such students and 214 instructors at five institutions of higher education, a service-based model of course satisfaction is proposed. This model focuses on four manageable variables that are observed as influencing adult students’ satisfaction with a business course: relevancy of subject-matter, faculty subject-matter competency, faculty classroom management, and student workload.”

Teaching in Higher Education

Re-Conceptualizing College and University Teaching through the Lens of Adult Education: Regarding Undergraduates as Adults
By Mark D. Halx
“In this paper, I advocate for enhancing critical thinking skill development in undergraduate education by taking advantage of the increased experiential maturity of today’s students. I argue that many undergraduates are in fact “adults”, by virtue of their age or experiential maturity, and they should be educated as such. Undergraduates who have not yet transitioned into “adulthood” would also benefit greatly from exposure to the adult education teaching techniques that emphasize critical thinking development. The demographics of higher education today demand a reexamination of outdated pedagogical practices. Considering college and university students to be the adults that most of them are, or soon will be, would more effectively educate all of today’s undergraduate students.”