



Are instructors of adult learners hearing voices?

They should be. Again we delve deeper into andragogy and what makes adult learners tick. Listen.

Many academicians agree that the common denominator that defines andragogy—or adult learning—is the perspective and experience that adult students bring to the classroom. Just as adults are certainly different from young people, they are also different from one another. Those instructors who can differentiate among adults are better able to teach them more effectively.

Dr. Carol Kasworm, head of the Department of Adult and Higher Education at North Carolina State University, conducted a study among 90 adult undergraduates. Of them, 29 were community college students; 38 were adult degree students attending liberal arts colleges; and 23 were university students. From that sample, she has identified five “voices” that help differentiate adult learners.

Entry voice: “You’re the boss. What do I need to know?”

Younger adults may be somewhat

intimidated by the college environment. Or they may be intimidated when tackling brand new subject matter. These adults often assume that academic knowledge is different from real world knowledge. They often view their learning task as memorization. They may not believe their existing knowledge and expertise are related to classroom content. They may even expect introductory courses to make no sense initially. Perhaps after more advanced coursework the subject matter may connect with their lives.

Instructors can recognize students with an Entry Voice because they always defer to the instructor’s lead. If they associate academic success with establishing a relationship with the instructor, they’ll sit in the front of the classroom. They may develop non-verbal cues to build the relationship. They may exhibit highly ritualistic note taking habits and study strategies, even mimicking and comparing notes with students they perceive to be the good ones. The Entry Voice student may be well suited to classroom lecture learning.

Outside voice: “I have some ideas, but I’m not going to share.”

A degree or certificate seems necessary to these students, but they find college a “culturally unique” place with scanty connection to their work or adult life. They accept that knowledge is valuable, but only if it reflects their world experience. Hence, Outside Voice students screen content for relevance and importance to their world. They may even believe they are more knowledgeable and expert than the academic world gives them credit.

Since they are reluctant to voice their opinions, Outside Voice students may be difficult to recognize. Yet, when recognized a skilled faculty member can make a real difference with this student. A skilled instructor will take the initiative, building scaffolding to address discrepancies and creating an open environment in which an Outside Voice student confidently shares views and experiences with others.

Cynical voice: “This is such @#%\$*.”

This student views the academic world as populated with incompetent and unknowing faculty and naive or manipulated students. Often he or she is near graduation on the way to receiving a “societal ticket” for access to preferred jobs, or to validate his/her expertise or alleviate some social pressure.

Cynical voice students often feel the classroom is an arena for playing a faculty-student game. They may rarely attempt to make meaning of the classroom learning experience. Once recognized, a skilled instructor will intervene deliberately with helpful assistance that helps a cynic recognize and appreciate undeniably relevant knowledge.

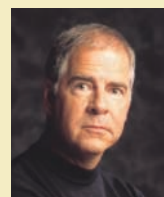
“ **Once recognized, a skilled instructor will intervene deliberately with helpful assistance that helps a cynic recognize and appreciate undeniably relevant knowledge.** ”

Straddling voice: “This so-o-o makes sense to me.”

Adult learners with a Straddling Voice value both the academic world of knowing and the real world of doing. Unlike students with the previous voices, Straddlers do not consider knowledge as something solely for the classroom or solely for the job.

They like to deal with the instructor as a peer, and they exhibit a desire to interact with others in the class. An instructor can help them with collab-

continued on p. 55



TOM ROBINSON is a research, marketing and communications consultant with higher education clients. He can be reached at trobenson@androbison.com.

Maurer

Continued from p. 54

“It is important to remember,” says the URMIA white paper, “that during the Spanish Flu pandemic of 1918, most colleges and universities shut down and sent students home.”

The foreseeable impacts on college and university operations of a significant pandemic may include unprecedented demands on student health services, relocation of students within residence halls, the establishment of quarantine sites, severe reductions in the work force, and significant loss of tuition revenues.

The Greentree Gazette began publishing a series of avian flu planning articles in March, which may be read at www.greentreegazette.com. As thoughtful campus executives and managers give attention to the subject, we expect one topic after another will move out of the ‘unforeseen’ column into your business continuity plans. ■

Robinson

Continued from p. 50

orative and applied instructional strategies and with self-directed projects that bridge the academic and practical worlds.

Inclusion voice: “Where can I learn more?”

Inclusion Voice learners actively seek immersion in the academic world. They may aspire to graduate work or a professorship. They are self-motivated, generating new knowledge outside the classroom, doing unassigned reading and engaging other resources. They burrow through layers, meanings and contexts to knowledge in intellectual pursuits and in their work when possible.

They value instruction without requiring a particular strategy or format, since the classroom is but one platform of intellectual activity. Skilled instructors can help them find alternative sources and simply share in the joy of those who consider learning a transformational experience.

Sorting through the voices

Dr. Marsha Rossiter is assistant vice chancellor at the University of Wisconsin, Oshkosh with expertise in adult education. She says she believes that adult students do not necessarily remain long in one voice or the other. Instead, they move

“ **The transformation of the classroom instructor from lecturer to listener and voice recognizer may be difficult.**

between them. Occasionally, she says, there are “converts,” even from the cynical voice.

The transformation of the classroom instructor from lecturer to listener and voice recognizer may be difficult. Since adult learners and their baggage occupy so many seats in college classrooms, it is also essential. ■



“Recruitment PLUS has helped the university become more competitive—raising our average SAT® score by 50 points, expanding the size of freshman classes by 30 percent, and enhancing ethnic, gender, and geographic diversity. We attribute this success in large part to the personalization and one-to-one marketing that Recruitment PLUS enables us to do.”

Karen Guastelle, Dean of Undergraduate Admissions, Sacred Heart University

Want your admissions office to work smarter not harder?

Recruitment PLUS™, the College Board’s best-of-breed recruitment and admissions software program, helps you build your class by building meaningful relationships with prospective students.

Shape your incoming classes using customized and automated communication!

Call us at **800 927-4302** or e-mail enrollmentsolutions@collegeboard.org for more information.

www.collegeboard.com



CollegeBoard
connect to college success™