The ways of improve the professional development to adult educators in adult education field: In the approach of adult learners’ learning character.

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Abstract

Despite Adult educators’ professional development has been paid much attention by the authority of adult education in Taiwan, adult educators’ profession do not have a set of systems and complete methods to improve. The situation may be criticized for the professional level about adult educators and adult education. As adult learners are crucial to adult educators’ profession; the study adapts the approach of adult learners’ learning character. Suggestion of this study are six point:(1) Adult educators must see that the adult learners and the pupil of learning character are different (2) Researching and studying the adult learners’ learning character and need are vital to the adult educators’ professional development (3) Curriculum must be collectively designed by adult educators and adult learners (4) The contents of curriculum have to get the adult learners’ interested (5) Adult educators must learn how to design and use a variety of teaching materials (6) The meaningfulness teaching materials to adult learners should be chosen by adult educators.

Keywords: adult educator, adult learner, professional development

1. Introduction

Recently, adult educators’ profession has been put emphasis gradually by scholars. The reason why many scholars will to research about adult educators’ professions? It is an important issue that the trend towards fewer children, the situation will account for decrease pupil in school. As a part of schools begin to accept adult learners’ enrolment, adult learners suddenly accelerated in school. Despite incremental the number of adult learners enrolls, the teachers didn’t understand adult learners’ characters and use traditional method of instruction to teach them. The situation will lead adult learners can’t adapt for learning process and decrease study performance. Hence, it is of paramount importance that how to search the ways to improve adult educators’ profession. The study will adapt the approach of adult learners’ learning characters to research, because the teachers can use adequate instructional method which will make enable to adult learners to have pleasure to learning.
2. Literature review

2.1 Improve the adult educator’s profession

2.1.1 The reasons of improving the adult educator’s profession

Over the last decade, educational policies worldwide have given significant attention to teacher accountability. Public and government are interested in teacher education in Australia as well as have been evident in several major reports on teacher education. They have promoted a model of professionalism that is rooted in the growth of a scientific knowledge base, and have mapped professional standards in practice. Systematic recommendations for continuing professional development have been presented with the intention of advancing teachers’ professionalism, the reasons of improving the adult educator’s profession as follows (Kwo, Ora W.Y, 2004; Gore, 2001; Malmberg, 2006; Tafa, 2004).

(1) Adult educators play an important role to learners’ learning

Previous researches have demonstrated that students who perceive their teachers as supportive of learning, they enjoy their studies, feel competent and utilize adaptive study strategies, and the teacher who experience their actions as self-determined, i.e., are intrinsically motivated, have a higher sense of well-being, and feel higher levels of collegial.

(2) Adult educators must own the profession which about how to development curriculum with adult learners

The kind of conclusion is that teaching methods schools are rooted in the dominant positivist view of curriculum knowledge as uncontested facts to be installed into the passive students. This view is held by curriculum developers as well as by teachers and students. For that reason, colleges are incapacitated from reflectively engaging student teachers in ‘cognitive dissonance’ during their training. Furthermore, school climates, student rules and regulations and student–teacher relationships are undemocratic, as structures for students’ voice do not exist and caning is legalized and reutilized.

2.1.2 The ways of improving the adult educator’s profession

As we known, adult educator’s profession development is very important to adult education working and adult learners studying. Hence, a growing number of research studies suggest many ways to improving the adult educator’s profession (Barr Jean, 2007; Kwo, Ora W.Y, 2004; Fletcher, 2007; Hutchinson, 1996; Kane, 2003; Iceman Sands, 2005; Laurie, 2005; Vavrus, 2001).

(1) Adult educator’s profession development must establish the goal which is lifelong learning

Adult educators became professional agents of ‘adult lifelong learning’. The implied premise is that successful educational reform hinges on teachers with both the disposition and the capacity to grow, learn and expand their repertoires as professionals.
(2) The courses of adult educators’ profession development have to hold international context.

Adult educators’ profession development that recognize the value of mapping dimensions and stages for teachers’ engagement in learning has taken hold in international contexts of teacher education.

(3) Reflection and awareness are important issues to adult educators and adult learners

Student-teachers learn about reflection, develop reflection in their own teaching and can be spurred into adopting a reflective approach through sharing the reflections of an experienced teacher educator. Zeichner and Gore report the preserves teachers valued reflective teaching for its contribution to self-awareness and awareness of their students.

(4) Expanding self-study is a used way to establish the adult educators’ profession

There is an ongoing example of the expanding self-study in teacher education movement that probably the single most significant development is ever in the field of teacher education research. Teacher education is more realistic to students preparing to become teachers. Teachers understand that there are a variety of ways typical learner receive, process, retain and apply the attitudes, skills, and dispositions. When a learner is diagnosed with a disorder, it is imperative that an educator understand how best to support the learner. Although as educators we have all taken classes describing some of the more typical diagnoses we will come across in our careers, it does not prepare us to meet the needs of each individual learner.

(5) Adult educators should understand the living environment of teachers

Learning as the focus of the profession calls for understanding of the environment in which teachers’ lives are situated. In addition, how teachers react to the environment reveals the core of this learning that cannot be understood without addressing their inner lives. The teacher education community has developed more rigorous standards, this action of heightened attention to internal accountability of programs mirrors over a decade of multifaceted research and scholarship devoted to improving the quality of teacher preparation.

1.2 Adult educators’ profession with adult learners’ characteristics of learning

2.2.1 Adult learners’ characteristics of learning

Students need to acquire knowledge that can be adapted so that it serves as a basis for solving problems and acquiring new knowledge (Franke, 1998; Hayes, 2007)

By adult educations mean the international interdisciplinary study of adults as learners and/or trainees of all types and in all environments (Sifakis, 2003).

A review of the literature indicates that adult learners have three learning characteristic (Shannon, 2003; Merriam, 1999; Jarvis, 1999; Sue, 1998; Mezirow, 2000).

(1) Andragogy is an important theory to adult learners learning.

Andragogy was first introduced by Knowles in the 1970s. Knowles proposed the
Andragogy in order to distinguish it from Pedagogy. It is important because this theory focuses educators on understanding the learners. The principle that adults are self-directed and can identify what they need to know has not been proven. Knowles’s assumptions about adult learners are they true?

I. Adults are self-directed in the planning and evaluation of their learning.

II. Adults learn through experience.

III. The readiness of an adult to learn is closely related to the developmental tasks of his or her social role.

IV. Adults have a problem-solving approach to learning.

V. Adults learn best what is relevant and useful.

VI. Adults are motivated to learn by internal factors rather than external ones.

(2) Self-directed learning to learn for adult learners is an adaptive way.

Tough proposed the self-directed learning for adult learners. Many public schools and colleges and universities have used the concept to describe one of the major goals of their institutions to enable their students to be lifelong, self-directed learning learners.

Houle in his book “The Inquiring Mind” combined with studies on participation rates of adult learners that affirmed that adults engage in many learning activities outside formal institutions. Spear claimed the process of self-directed learning could be concluded to seven principal components:

I. Residual knowledge: knowledge the learner brings to the project as a residue from prior knowledge.

II. Acquired knowledge: knowledge acquired as part of learning project.

III. Directed action: action directed toward a known or specific end.

IV. Exploratory action: the learner chooses without knowing what the outcomes may be or with certainty that any useful outcome will ensure.

V. Fortuitous action: action that the learner takes for reasons not related to the learning project.

VI. Consistent environment: includes both human and material element that are regularly in place and generally accessible.

VII. Fortuitous environment: provides for chance encounters that could not be expected or foreseen and yet affect the learner and project.

(3) Transformational learning can shape adult learners’ cognitive process of learning.

Transformational learning theory was proposed by Mezirow. The theory is based on the assumption that adults have acquired a coherent body of experience- assumptions, concepts, values, feelings, conditioned responses.

Transformational learning often follow some variation of the following phases of meaning becoming clarified:

I. A disorienting dilemma.

II. Self-examination with feelings.
III. A critical assessment of assumptions.
IV. Recognition that one’s discontent and the process of transformation are shared.
V. Exploration of options for new roles, relationships, and actions.
VI. Planning a course of action.
VII. Acquiring knowledge and skills for implementing one’s plans.
VIII. Provisional trying of new roles.
IX. Building competence and self-confidence in new roles and relationships.
X. A reintegration into one’s new perspective.

In conclusion, Andragogy, self-directed learning, and transformational learning are three most important theories for researching adult learners’ characteristic of learning. Any educators who want to instruct adult learners must understand the three concepts, because adult learners’ learning process follows these theories.

2.2.2 Adult educators’ profession can help the adult learners’ learning

Three adult studies theories which are Andragogy, self-directed learning, and transformational learning have suggest adult learners have unique character above researches.

A significant issue is adult education, adult education is about possibility. As adult educators must study how can help adult learners, they have to development profession in order to understand some approaches which interact with adult learner. There are a lot of ways which can be used by adult educators to assist adult learners’ learning (D’Orsie, 2007; Kwo, Ora W.Y, 2004; Gibson, 1998; Rossiter, 2007; Newman, 2007; Franke, 1998; Kane, 2007; Hayes, 2007).

(1) Adult educators need to understand the distinguished from adult learners to pupils

Teachers tend to instruct pupils differently than adults. When teaching adults; teachers spend less time on instructions, less time on discipline; provide less structure on activities, and emotional support. Pupils and adult learners exhibit specific traits. Pupils expect questions to be answered by a source outside of them. Adults expect at least part of an answer to come from within. Pupils expect to be told what to do, while adults want to figure it out themselves. Additionally, Pupils are content to go along with learning for some undefined future purpose. Adults want immediate application.

(2) The lifelong learning is an important instructed goal for adult educators and learners

The willingness and capacity for lifelong learning, which adult educators expect from students, ought to also be reflected in teachers. Every adult educator should be a continuous learner in order to advance the quality of our education system and the quality of adult learners’ learning. Continuing professional development of adult educators today is crucial to preparing the citizens of tomorrow.

(3) Adult educators need understand adult learners’ properties

If adult educators can not understand adult learners’ real learning property, adult learners comes with different levels of preparedness to learn, teachers can be criticized for treating the
students like they are second graders. Adult educators need to understand the psychology of the adult learner and to know more about the impact of adult education that reaches beyond classroom settings, workshops, and continuing education institutes into the work where adult learning is most fully realized.

As Dewey and Lindeman and others did, that education is not preparation for life; it is life. All lived experience is the classroom for continuous learning and growth. With Vaill, we know that learning is a way of being in the world that describes our capacity to respond constructively to the constant change in our lives. It is the capacity to find the potential for learning in every new event and iteration of our environment. As we live, we learn our way into new possibilities for ourselves.

(4) Adult educators are the learning assistants of adult learners

Adult educators we can encourage people to do just that. No matter what the subject, learners must analyze problems and make choices, and to help them do so we can teach straightforward forms of commonsense reasoning. Faced with a problem or challenge, teacher with student sift research, analyze, reflect and then act. Then they set about gathering together the facts. They examine the salient facts, listing the issues that flow from each of them. They prioritize those issues and select the ones we consider the most important or most pressing. They take these major issues and develop a number of options for addressing and dealing with them. They choose those options their self consider will most effectively deal with the most important issues. And they act in order to put those options into effect.

(5) Adult learners’ learning demands are very important for adult educators

We begin to conceptualize teacher change not as acquiring a fixed set of teaching skills or learning how to use a particular program of instruction. The kind of change we envision involves teachers changing in ways that provide a basis for continued growth and problem solving. Financial self-sufficiency, personal growth, career advancement, empowerment, self-worth, and transformation are among the goals named by students and teachers alike in this field. Those goals are expressions of possibility: hope, expectation, potential. Our field is deeply rooted in the belief that learning and development are ever present, in actuality or potentiality, throughout every person’s life span.

3. Discussion and Conclusion

3.1 Discussion

As discussed above, it is very important of the adult educators’ profession development method to meet adult learners’ character and need. For this reason, a lot of studies place much more emphasis on the proper ways of he adult educators’ discipline improving. The following are the content of adult educators’ profession development.

(1) In instruction views
I. Adult educators must see that the adult learners and the pupil of learning character are different

Adult learners and the pupil of learning character are very different. Without respect to the aspects of physiology, psychology and society situation, Adult learners and the pupil are not the same. Adult learners are independent character, abundant experience and active learning. Hence, Adult educators can’t use the traditional teaching method to adult learners; it will lead to an ill learning performance of adult learning. Adult educators should not blame, control and dominate adult learners. On the contrary, Adult educators ought to encourage, respect and assist adult learners learn what they want to learn.

II. Researching and studying the adult learners’ learning character and need are vital to the adult educators’ professional development

Researching and studying the adult learners’ learning character and need are crucial in the adult educators’ profession development. As I pointed out at the above-mentioned that adult learners and the pupil of learning character are different, adult educators must clear know the adult learners’ quality and do their best to research and study. Therefore, adult learners should to learn the methods which can research and study adult learners. When adult learners are familiar with adult learners, adult learners will please to learn.

(2) In curriculum development
I. Curriculum must be collectively designed by adult educators and adult learners

II. In tradition pedagogy, teachers can play a dominated role in curriculum and teaching. But in the way of adult learning, adult learners have themselves’ ideas to curriculum designed. Adult educators ought to respect and accept adult learners’ good view about any curriculum’s goal, content and structure, that is, adult educators and adult learners would design curriculum collective.

III. The contents of curriculum have to get the adult learners’ interested

One of the adult learners’ learning character is “Adults are motivated to learn by internal factors rather than external ones”. The learning character is show that adult learners doesn’t participate learning unless they feel interesting and make profit. Hence, adult educators should not lead adult learners learn they don’t like and care to the knowledge in curriculum. Instead, adult educators do not only use the adult learners’ interesting information but also design helpful knowledge to adult learners.

(3) In teaching materials design
I. Adult educators must learn how to design and use a variety of teaching materials

In traditional, teacher always use teaching materials which are chalk talk. But, adult learners, especially old learners who are due to the bad visional function can not fixate blackboard for a long time. For this reason, adult educators must know how to use the other teaching materials, for example, radio, theater and panel. On the other hand, adult learners have different between each other. To sum up, adult educators should design or use variety teaching materials to satisfy every adult learner’s learning need and diversity.
II. The meaningfulness teaching materials to adult learners should be chosen by adult educators

As was mentioned above, Knowles’s assumptions about adult learners are “Adults learn through experience and adults learn best what is relevant and useful”. For this reason, adult learners always pay attention to the knowledge which is closed and meaningful to them. This kind knowledge is easy to be accepted and absorbed by adult learners. Hence, adult educators ought to design teaching materials to instruct the knowledge which is meaningful for adult learners.

3.2 Conclusion

Above from the literature review to the discussion, the profession development in adult educator field is very important. A professional adult educator dose not only leading adult learners like to learning but also helping adult learners to study what they want. For this reason, the study suggests six ways to improve adult educators’ profession. Synthesize the suggests of the study, adult educators should recognize every adult learner is special, and adult educators have to do their best to meet adult learners’ character and satisfied adult learners’ need.

In traditional education, there have a kind of formal and structural teachers’ profession developmental curriculums; even has a law to formulate teachers’ profession developmental system and process in Taiwan. On the contrary, adult educators’ profession developmental curriculums and laws lack to be formal design and establish. Future work will hopefully set up adult educators’ profession developmental curriculums and laws.

Reference


