Learning and Change in the Adult Years: A Developmental Perspective

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Abstract

Originally published in Contemporary Psychology: APA Review of Books, 1996, Vol 41(6), 616. This brief book (see record 1995-98329-000) provides an easy-to-read set of answers to four questions posed by the authors: Does the capacity to learn increase or decrease over time? How does the sense of self and identity change over the adult years? What are the educational implications of that change? How can teachers acknowledge the experience their adult students bring to the classroom? The goal of this book is to place an educational applications slant on the adult development and aging literature on cognition and learning. This approach would be a very valuable one for people engaged in teaching adults and aims to fill a gap in the practical literature. By the same token, it offers a developmental perspective to educators, making the dialog a mutual one. Beyond the introductory chapter, the book is organized into three parts: the development of thought and knowledge, the development of the self, and the relationship between adult development and adult educational practice. Throughout the first part of the book, although the most basic elements of its topics are presented, the authors do not typically cite the most recent or, by most standards, the most important work in the various areas presented. Similar criticisms can be raised about the later chapters as well. On the positive side, Tennant and Pogson do a much better job at pointing out how the developmental literature can inform educational practice. This section of the book would be an excellent initial source for faculty who are teaching adult students for the first time and who would profit from a brief discussion on how these students are different from the traditionally aged college student. (PsycINFO Database Record (c) 2006 APA, all rights reserved)
Hammill Institute on Disabilities Learning Disabilities: An Adult Development Perspective 
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Source: Learning. 

To achieve such a perspective we must study adult development in the same way the initial study of younger learning disabled persons must begin with an understanding of child development. Consequently, the key question is no longer: did he/she outgrow a given problem? But rather, how does this adult adapt and deal with demands made on him/her, and/or what facilitates success or leads to failure in this person's adult life? Accordingly, analysis begins from a perspective of variation on normal developmental events rather than pathology. Developmental Psychology, the study of age-related changes in behavior, examines the psychological processes of development, which means it describes the sequence of biological, cognitive, and socio-emotional changes that humans undergo as they grow older. In more recent years developmental psychology has studied the entire life span of individuals. The Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD) requires adults or peers to provide assistance to students, who cannot complete the assigned task without help. Piaget advocates learning as construction, whereas Vygotsky believed in the “activity theory perspective that sees learning as appropriation” (Dahl, 1996, p. 2). Piaget’s theory refers to qualitative periods or stages of development. 