Learning and Change in the Adult Years: A Developmental Perspective

Mark Tennant; Philip Pogson;

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)
Child development theories focus on explaining how children change and grow over the course of childhood. Such theories center on various aspects of development including social, emotional, and cognitive growth. The study of human development is a rich and varied subject. We all have personal experience with development, but it is sometimes difficult to understand how and why people grow, learn, and act as they do. In order to understand human development, a number of different theories of child development have arisen to explain various aspects of human growth. The Background of Child Development Theories. Theories of development provide a framework for thinking about human growth and learning. But why do we study development?