Learn to Learn

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Learn to Learn – Avoid Obsolescence

Foundations of Adult Education – Quote 4 of 5

For this reflection assignment I have selected my first quote (Merriam and Brockett, 2007, p. 84) see the graphic below, from the Foundations of Adult Education (item 4 of 5).

4. “the overriding goal of educational institutions at any level would be to learn how to learn, since specific content becomes obsolete in a fast-changing society” (p. 84) The Profession and Practice of Adult Education: An Introduction (2007), Merriam, S.B. & Brockett, R. G.
**Objective:** The above quote has two separate ideas. The first is the goal of “all” educational institutions to “learn to learn” (prepare for lifelong learning). The second point is content (facts) become obsolete extremely quickly in today’s world. The quote caught my attention because it reinforces what I have been learning throughout this course. Technology has accelerated knowledge at an alarming rate. Educators must “learn to learn” to provide adult learners with the tools they need to achieve the personal goals they have targeted for themselves.

**Reflective:** When I reflected on this quote further, I realized that it is important for me at the start of a new course or workshop to investigate if there is any new information which should be incorporated into the training. After deeper contemplation, I noticed some of the tools we use to help plan for future change, can still catch us by surprise. For example in my post of March 12, 2014 about “flipped classrooms (FC’s)”, I mentioned I was very intrigued by the NMC 2014 report. Previous annual reports from this watch dog group did not even alert us about FC’s and suddenly this new teaching method was at the top of their list of impending trends.

**Interpretive:** Educational institutions need to be forward thinking. They need to be an example for educators and learners about the idea of “learn to learn”. Fink (2003) summarized Dolence and Norris’ 1995 report on Transforming Higher Education in the information age as follows: “Society and individual learners now have different needs, both in terms of what people need to learn and how they can and should learn.” Educational institutions need to learn to adjust to new learning methods and tools. At the same time they must also balance individual learners’ needs with Gardiner’s (1994) list of “critical competencies” for citizens and workers from leaders in business, industry and government:

- personal responsibility,
- ability to act in principled, ethical fashion,
LEARN TO LEARN

• skill in oral and written communication, critical thinking and problem-solving,
• interpersonal and team skills,
• respect for people different from oneself,
• ability to change, and desire for lifelong learning.

A key insight I realized after reading and researching the original quote (Merriam and Brockett, 2007 p84), was it is important to strike a balance. If instruction involves just facts from five or ten years ago (without validating accuracy) our learners receive a lopsided education with obsolete information. Educational institutions need to “learn to learn” to avoid obsolescence and at the same time insure that the learners develop the “critical competencies” for a balanced education.

Decisional: After reading and researching this quote further, I realized I must be a catalyst for change. I need to be an example as an instructor/trainer and constantly update my own skills, and the tools I use. The information I am pointing my clients to must remain relevant and up to date. I also have a responsibility to include the “critical competencies” as part of the training for my clients. I am better equipped now to address the idea of “learn to learn” and assist my clients to hone the skills they need to avoid obsolete content.
References


