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Foundational Reflections on Higher Education and Adult Learning

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Abstract

This paper explores foundational reflections on doctoral studies for higher education and adult learning. Introspection from course experience will be applied to goal oriented work to manage, monitor and motivate studies in the area of technology and teaching. Course reflections will also include critical thinking strategies regarding the experience and ideas for application.

Course impact on thinking

Wind in the sail versus wind in the face describes my learning experience with the preparatory concepts of doctoral work in *EDUC-8100-7 Foundations: Higher Education and Adult Learning* at Walden University. Initial anxieties over formats, expectations and tools are now channeled into purposeful use of clear writing, documented sources, and applied use of research. This matches one of the goals outlined at the start of the course for our transformation from consumers of research and data into problem solvers and builders of knowledge in others.

One specific example of my applied use of scholarly studies comes from two different research works that share a common idea. The discovery will be shared following this brief overview of the works.

Edgar Dale tested the retention of learning and showed a hierarchy of recall based on student involvement and engagement with the content (1969). While many charts have been published to demonstrate the range of learning experiences and retention based on his work, percentages attributed to those activities was not quantified by his research (Thalheimer, 2006, Molenda, 2004).

Howard Gardner's (1983) work titled *Frames of Mind: The theory of multiple intelligences* explored the idea of the mind being composed of interrelated intelligences (as cited in Smith, 2008). He expanded analysis beyond the traditional measures of linguistic and logical-mathematical skills to include musical, bodily-kinesthetic, and spatial understanding along with interpersonal and intrapersonal abilities. Gardner and Hatch shared how this expanded view of multiple intelligences was difficult to evaluate by isolating intelligence characteristics due to the

influence of how previous experience and talents affected some of the student performance (1990).

The discovery from both these studies is that practical application can be derived even while debates may exist on specifics. Educators embraced multiple intelligence theories because they provided a connection to the experience they had with students in the classroom and provided common ground to discuss approaches to learning between teacher and student (as cited in Smith, 2008). In a similar way, instructors and students can benefit from Edgar Dale's hierarchy of learning strategies for retention through active involvement such as taking notes during a lecture (1969).

Managing, monitoring and motivating success

One of the keys to my success plan for doctoral work is the identification of an area of study. The combination of technology and teaching is something that ignites my imagination and fuels immediate application through my work as an online instructor and distance learning specialist. Milestones for me in the program will be the degree of application of each assignment in the context of a growing body of work related to the theme of technology and teaching. What motivates me is an opportunity for my work to serve as an active foundation to help teachers, students and society now and beyond the degree. In a recent conversation about my studies, advice from the head of a company included the admonition to write and publish papers. I've seen the benefit of this through my attendance at conferences and I plan to apply the counsel.

Course critique

Higher order thinking is a HOT idea based on critical analysis and reflection. Here are notes as I reflect on the course and critique the value of the experience. The concept of forming

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study buddies was new to me, but it has been a valuable addition to my experience as a student and as a teacher. It empowers colleagues to serve as mentors and resources while they benefit from the additional involvement in the subject matter. It demonstrates the concepts shared previously regarding Dale's work on engagement of the learner and connects with new social learning strategies. Brown and Adler's work demonstrated a shift from content of the subject to learning activities and the effectiveness of study groups (2008). This course provided me with the construct to engage in learning activities guided and coached by a knowledgeable facilitator who has been on the path we are now on. The idea of developing a preferred scenario is what Egan (1986) identified as a characteristic of a skilled helper (as cited by Brookfield, 1987).

Conclusion

The degree of application of the learning is the measurement of my success. This course has provided a good foundation to embark on the doctoral journey with a sense of purpose and resources to succeed.

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