

Chapter 86

The Boshier's Education Participation Scale Factors Reflected in History: Adult Motivations to Learn in the 19th American Chautauquan Movement compared to those of the 21st Century Boshier Education Participation Scale

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ABSTRACT

In the literature of andragogy and adult learning numerous authors have attempted to explain why adult learners decide to enroll in courses. Houle in 1961 started this line of research classifying adult motivations to learn into 3 categories. Later researchers, attempting to refine Houle's work, began using factor analysis to determine additional underlying causes of adult participation. Boshier, with his 6-factor, 42-item scale, is central in these later studies. This chapter takes another look at the EPS (Education Participation Scale) of Boshier but this time through the lens of history. Specifically, this chapter delves into the largest of the adult education phenomena in America in the latter 1800s, the Chautauquan Movement. Comments from adult learners who participated in Chautauqua are compared to the 7 factors and the 42 items of Boshier's Education Participation Scale, Form-F. Results of this study show a good fit between historical and modern motivations of learners.

INTRODUCTION

According to adult education scholar Malcolm Knowles, adults learn differently, and are motivated differently from children (Knowles, 1990).

For children, Knowles believes, the correct approach is pedagogical; it is an application of the art and science of *teaching* children. For adults, however, the appropriate set of principles and assumptions is andragogical, and involves the art

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and science of *helping* adults learn. These andragogical principles, or assumptions as Knowles calls them (1990) in his work *The Adult Learner: A Neglected Species*, are six in number. First, the Need to Know. Adults, much more than children, want to know why they are learning, and what, and how. Second, adults, more than children, have a more independent Self-Concept. Next, adults bring a great deal of Experience to the classroom, with a greater variety of experiences, and more depth in each kind. Also, adults have a Readiness to Learn that is based on their life development. Fifth, adults have an Orientation to Learning that is not subject centered, but rather problem-centered. Sixth, and finally, adult Motivation is fundamentally different from that of children. Adults are mostly internally motivated.

The term *motivated* brings us to the subject of this paper. Just what is the motivation of the adult? Just why do adults decide to enroll in a particular course? Why does one adult, in, say a university extension program, take a class in C++ Programming, and another adult decides to enroll in a chess class, or a yoga class or a course in the history of Florida? Maybe we could say the person was motivated to learn chess, or to learn how to write computer programs using C++. But if we just say the motivation is to learn chess, or biology or first aid, we are perhaps missing the point. With that kind of motivational explanation, and the thousands or tens of thousands of different courses available to adults in the myriad programs across the world, our overly precise explanation would not help us very much. Besides, just to take the example of one course, chess, the motivation for enrolling could be very different for different individuals in the same class. Maybe one person is taking the chess course, so that he can exercise his or her mind; another is enrolled because his son is good at chess, and he would like, as a father, to better understand and to help his son; and maybe yet another is there because his best friend has enrolled in the course. Though this lens on our chess course, we can see different

perspectives of motivation. Some motivators seem to be psychological, other sociological. Evidently, more analysis is needed.

Fortunately, inside and outside the field of adult education, scholars have tried to explain the motivations of adult learners. This information is important at many levels. For the administrator, he or she needs to know why students come to the adult courses program. For materials developers, they need to know which approach works best, and what materials educate better. For teachers, they can better adapt to the situation as shown by the scholars Grow and Pratt. And even when we think about promoting courses, if all our chess players are coming to the course exclusively to meet other smart and nerdy people, it would probably be a mistake to promote and advertise the course a great way to help your kids, or an effective way to exercise your mind and keep it in shape.

Learning about motivation, then, can be useful in developing successful programs and teaching effectively. Fortunately, scholars in the field of adult education have been discussing adult motivation for the last 50 years or so. In this next section, we will review some of the main strands of research in adult motivation. Later, we will show how adult motivations of more than 100 years ago in the adult courses in the Chautauquan Movement sufficiently correspond to those posited much more recently by Boshier in his Education Participation Scale (EPS).

BACKGROUND

Previous to Boshier, one of the first authors to discuss adult learning motivation was Cyril Houle (1961). Houle was curious as to why some people are especially dedicated to learning, to being *lifelong learners* as we may say today.

Houle believed that learners could be classified into three basic motivational categories. These categories are called *goal-oriented learners*, *activity-oriented learners*, and *learning-oriented learners*.

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