

Chapter 3

Arts Integration Techniques in the Adult Learning Environment

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ABSTRACT

The visual and performance arts can play an important role in the success of the learning environment. For example, research on arts-based techniques in business management programs using such approaches as artistic reflection, critique, or creating artifacts have been conducted. These studies suggest the use of arts integration techniques in the learning environment changes participants' beliefs about their content and deepens understanding around the context of the learning. This chapter will share both the theories related to arts integration and instructional strategies that focus on arts-integrated instructional approaches in the adult learning environment.

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INTRODUCTION TO ARTS INTEGRATION

The combining together of two distinct content areas to create new learning through innovative instructional delivery and curriculum design is not novel in adult education practices and the classroom designed for adult learning. The combining of distinct disciplines expands on the long existing tradition of the humanities and arts joined as part of a comprehensive liberal arts preparation. Professional studies in higher education for adult learners have used this technique of multi-disciplinary integration as well, as in the example of the purposeful combination of the technology and health care disciplines for learners in the nursing profession to better serve patients in modern health care settings. Another example would be the study of world languages and business in order to create international business majors who are culturally competent for working throughout the world. Professional studies degrees that focus on combining two or more distinct content areas can create a distinct experience and preparation based upon the content studied. For example, a multi-disciplinary approach in business administration and music performance in an MBA preparation program can result in new ways of viewing management principles and leadership as described by Sutherland in *Arts-based Methods in Leadership Development* (Sutherland, 2012). This method has also been examined in *Understanding Arts-Based Methods in Managerial Development* (Taylor & Ladkin, 2009) in research on arts based techniques in business management programs using such approaches as artistic reflection, critique or creating artifacts.

Arts integration builds on this multi-disciplinary approach through the tradition of experiential learning theory. Arts integration incorporates Kolb's (1984) four stages of experiential learning: concrete learning, reflective observation, abstract conceptualization and active experimentation. In addition, this type of multi-disciplinary approach reflects more closely the reality of the work world that the adult learners are engaged outside of their educational experience or the experiences beyond completion of a degree that adults will experience. There is a need for individuals to not be specialists in a single field, rather, able to understand and use principles and concepts from other disciplines to be successful in serving the needs of organizations. For example,

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