Chapter 5
Instructional Design for Adult and Continuing Higher Education:
Theoretical and Practical Considerations

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ABSTRACT

The field of adult and continuing higher education has lagged behind in the development of new theories and approaches of instructional design and curriculum development, creating an urgent need for new perspectives and practices among practitioners and instructional faculty. This chapter provides a comprehensive review of instructional design and curriculum development trends, approaches and theoretical/conceptual perspectives and approaches that could be useful in adult and continuing higher education. Based on the review, the chapter proposes contemporary views and implications for practice and research.

INTRODUCTION

The field of adult and continuing higher education includes two harmoniously conjoined and evolving academic disciplines in education. Both disciplines address curricular and academic issues mostly at the postsecondary level and share many common subject areas targeting college and continuing adult learner populations (Knust & Hanft, 2009; Zawacki-Richter, Röbken, Ehrenspeck-Kolasa, & von Ossietzky, 2014). However, since the seminal work of Pratt and Associates (1998) on the five perspectives of teaching and learning in adult and continuing higher education, there has been little significant development of new theoretical perspectives and practical know-how in advancing the field compared to other fields of education (e.g., instructional systems design, instructional technology, K-12 education). Thus, when it comes to instructional design approaches that can be used in adult and continuing higher education, many faculty members borrow practical techniques from the instructional systems design (ISD) field such as the ADDIE (Analysis, Design, Development, Implementation, and Evaluation) model and Dick and Carey's ISD model (Dick, Carey, & Carey, 2014) since practical models at postsecondary education institutions are still limited (Lim, 2012; Ponton, Derrick, & Carr, 2005).

As Pratt and Associates (1998) argued, instructional designers helping adult and continuing higher education learners should consider how their designed instruction can (a) effectively deliver learning content, (b) model ways of being, (c) cultivate ways of thinking, (d) facilitate self-efficacy, and (e) contribute to forming a better society. The purpose of this chapter is to review theoretical perspectives of adult and continuing higher education in multiple ways and propose viable approaches for instructional design that can best support faculty members in designing effective instructional programs and learning experiences for adult and continuing higher education learners. It addresses the guidelines of instructional design and accommodates the emerging trend of theoretical development and practical instructional design know-how in adult and continuing higher education learning. We propose the following guiding questions for this book chapter:

1. What are the significant instructional design issues in adult and continuing higher education?
2. What and how are theoretical perspectives of learning and teaching are utilized in adult and continuing higher education?
3. What and how are curriculum development and instructional design approaches can be used for adult and continuing higher education instructors and practitioners?
4. What are critical considerations for instructional design in the rapidly changing educational environment, as well as practical and academic implications?

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