

# Chapter 10

## Designing an Adult Entrepreneurial Competency Learning Strategy: An Autoethnography

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### ABSTRACT

*Adult learning has become a dominant emerging trend of contemporary education systems across the globe. Indeed, the pandemic, globalization, deskilling, and increasing migration trends have re-focused academic and applied scholarship on adult learning strategies. But till date adult learning lacks a comprehensive holistic learning theory that focuses solely on fulfilling the dynamic needs and expectations of adult learners. Written from a first-person perspective, this chapter offers a behind-the scenes look of designing an adult entrepreneurial competency learning strategy that encompasses traditional learning principles and unique adult learning characteristics and needs. The chapter details existing learning theories followed by the author's account of how she developed and designed an integrative adult learning strategy.*

### INTRODUCTION

This chapter is an autoethnography which colors and shapes how the author develops her research problem, chooses supportive academic literature, analyzes, and discusses her data, and feasible solutions. Written from the perspective of the author who is an experienced higher education instructional designer, this chapter is an autoethnographic account of the process of designing an integrative adult learning strategy. The author begins her account with a vivid description of her research method: autoethnography which

DOI: 10.4018/978-1-6684-7712-0.ch010

frames the chapter outlook, narration, language, and organization. This approach, though uncommon for authoring chapters, is a preferred organizational style for autoethnographic researchers (Tullis, 2021). The reason being that describing the research method before detailing the event and/or chapter explains the why, how, what, and when of the study. The methodology section flows into a detailed research problem and gap followed by a descriptive background section which discusses various adult learning theories. The latter half of the chapter comprises three sections of, a) main focus of chapter which discusses in-depth the process of designing the adult learning strategy. The author provides a step-by-step approach describing how she designed an integrative adult learning strategy from scratch to fruition. The remaining final two sections focus on future research directions and a summative conclusion. The author hopes that her autoethnographic study contributes to the scholarship of adult learning in society and brings to the fore the problem and challenges of designing a comprehensive adult learning strategy.

## **The Autoethnography**

This is the author's journey... her account and perspective of developing, designing, and implementing an adult learning strategy in a General Education (GE) course for adult learners at a career college in southwest region of United States. The themes explored and discussed in the chapter are a) the purpose of developing an adult learning strategy, b) the supportive academic evidence or literature, c) the process of development, and d) the product of developing an adult learning strategy. As such the focus of the autoethnography method is not the physical and situational context and boundaries but the researcher—their inner recesses of thought, biases, and feelings (Connelly & Clanidinin, 1994, Kelley, 2014).

An autoethnography is a qualitative research method where a researcher studies and analyzes a process, usually a personal experience, to make sense of a social, cultural problem and/ or issue (Turner et al., 2018, Ellis & Bochner, 2011). It identifies as a cross or hybrid between an autobiography and ethnography wherein a practitioner researcher tells a personal story of what happened, why and how of an experience or process and influences future research and scholarship. An autoethnography usually enjoys a dual perspective and is written in hindsight allowing the researcher to dispassionately view the personal research process (Duncan, 2014). At the same time, it also enables practitioner researchers to observe and record their daily emotions, thoughts, and activities when engaging in product and process development. An autoethnography is, thus, a factual story which follows an organized step-by-step approach and enables future research. Autoethnographic accounts describe an insider's perspective-rich, evocative, detailed, methodological, analytical, and valid (Connelly & Clanidinin, 1994).

Unlike other research methods which are clearly distinguishable and color a research study during research design and methodology choice, the autoethnographic method allows the researcher latitude and flexibility to be selective and direct how the research study is presented to an audience (Ellis & Bochner, 2011). An autoethnography is not a research method of data collection and interpretation but a process of delving deep into self and decoding inner thoughts, choices, behavior, attitude, actions, and reactions. It is, perhaps, a highly biased, influenced, and interpretive form of research that evaluates events and/or phenomena from a personal perspective (Kelley, 2014). Autoethnographic researchers are, thus, subject to bias and convictions, and unconsciously defend and present their singular and one-sided view in a positive and feasible light. In a nutshell, an autoethnography is a biased, frank, and candid disclosure of private emotions, perspectives, reactions, and cognition experienced during an event, study, or process. The researcher becomes the research instrument transitioning smoothly between an etic and emic perspective. The researcher has the autonomy to discuss personal bias, question choices whilst observing,

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