

## Enhancing Adult Motivation to Learn, 2nd Ed

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### Abstract

*Enhancing Adult Motivation to Learn* explores a new and different approach on the issues surrounding adult learning with a key focus on the impact of cultural diversity on adult motivation. The main theme or purpose of the book is to identify and show how instructors can awaken the desire to learn in adult learners by understanding and appreciating their different cultural backgrounds. Based on various theories of motivation, the author proposes different motivational strategies that can be used by instructors to; create, enhance and maintain the learners' interests.

According to Wlodkowski the author of the book, motivation refers to the energy that drives adults to become naturally inclined to compete for things they consider very important to them. The author further adds that, there is a very close relationship between motivation and the learner's cultural background which in turn affects the ability and willingness to learn.

**Keywords:** *enhancing adult motivation*; adult motivation; energy

### Introduction

*Enhancing Adult Motivation to Learn* explores a new and different approach on the issues surrounding adult learning with a key focus on the impact of cultural diversity on adult motivation. The main theme or purpose of the book is to identify and show how instructors can awaken the desire to learn in adult learners by understanding and appreciating their different cultural backgrounds. Based on various theories of motivation, the author proposes different motivational strategies that can be used by instructors to; create, enhance and maintain the learners' interests.

According to Wlodkowski the author of the book, motivation refers to the energy that drives adults to become naturally inclined to compete for things they consider very important to them. The author further adds that, there is a very close relationship between motivation and the learner's cultural background which in turn affects the ability and willingness to learn. Adult learners come from diverse backgrounds in terms of their culture, ethnic origin, race and gender, and instructors must clearly understand and appreciate this fact if they are to motivate and encourage adult learning. The author supports his view on the impact of motivation on learning using his own personal experiences, assumptions and facts from reviewed literature and research studies that explore the use of motivation as an enhancement tool for learning.

The book is a revised edition of the same and it mainly focuses on the effect of ethnic differences, racism and gender on the motivation of adult learners. According to the author, every learner possesses some intrinsic motivation characteristics which emanates from within and can thus

become positively motivated for as long as they are able to view themselves as the center (locus) of the causes and effects of their learning. In simple terms, adults are able to learn as much as they are willing to learn.

Based on this presumption that learning motivation must come from within, the book seeks to explore way in which instructors can elicit and stimulate the already present intrinsic motivation characteristics in order to encourage learning among adult learners. Reviewed from edition one which was published in 1985, this revised edition is more comprehensive and responsive to the issue of ethnic, racial and cultural diversity and its impact on adult learning.

The issue of cultural diversity is carefully interwoven with the issue of motivation in each and every chapter of the book giving rise to a comprehensive and practical guide for instructors involved in adult learning programs.

The book is carefully organized into eight comprehensive chapters. The first three chapters are somehow delineated from the other five chapters as they address the issue of motivation from a multi-disciplinary perspective. The remaining five chapters mainly focus on practical examples on motivation of adult learners and they also give workable strategies on how the issue can be addressed more conclusively.

### Evaluation

*Enhancing Adult Motivation to Learn* is one of the few books in the field of Adult Education that directly address the issue of motivation so clearly

and comprehensively. The book is scholarly written and it serves as a rich source of reference for instructors and trainers in the field of adult learning. With eight comprehensive chapters, the book is organized in a logic manner which is easy to read and understand.

The first chapter of the book reviews the background information surrounding the term motivation. This chapter also provides a summary of the issues surrounding adult learning in relation to motivation and cultural diversity. In this chapter, the author uses the term motivation to refer to a learner's willingness to be attentive in class and to learn in some cases while in other instances, he uses it to refer to a situation where a learner willingly applies what is learnt in class to situations outside the classroom.

In chapter two, the author explores the five key characteristics of an effective instructor that enhance learner motivation. These qualities include; enthusiasm, expertise, clarity, empathy and responsiveness to the learners' cultural diversity. He further develops these five key qualities that every effective instructor must possess in order to be able to motivate the students based on the motivational theory and literature from cultural and ethnic studies. According to Wlodkowski, an instructor should first be an expert in the field that he or she is teaching so as to be able to share the knowledge to the students in a way that all the learners will understand clearly. Moreover, the instructor should be able to understand each of the learners and be able to apply different teaching approaches to meet each learner's individual learning needs. To be able to capture and maintain the learners' attention, the instructor should be enthusiastic and should also communicate with clarity in a way that every learner is able to understand.

In chapter three, the author explores the factors to consider when designing a motivating learning model. These factors include; attitude, stimulation, competence, emotional state, needs and reinforcement. Based on these factors, Wlodkowski proposes a "Motivational framework for culturally responsive teaching" aimed at assisting instructors to enhance the motivation of their students. The framework outlines four conditions for culturally responsive adult teaching which include; cultivating positive attitudes, enhancing meaning, establishing inclusion and engendering learners' competence. According to the author, these four conditions form a common culture base on which all the needs of the learners are valued and addressed equally.

The next four chapters; 4, 5, 6 and 7 form the main body of the book as they continue exploring the four conditions of the motivational framework in detail. These four chapters are consistent in format with each chapter covering one of the conditions mentioned above. In each chapter, the author first provides the background information on the condition to be discussed before giving practical examples and workable motivational strategies on how the condition can be incorporated into the actual teaching process. Throughout the four chapters, the author proposes various motivational strategies which are aimed at enhancing adult learner motivation in each area discussed.

A total of 60 motivational strategies are discussed in chapters 4, 5, 6 and 7. One example of such a learning strategy is Strategy 1 which proposes that, for an instructor to cultivate a positive learning attitude in the students, he or she should constantly share valuable information with the learners. This will make the learning process more entertaining and the learners will be more interested hence motivated to learn.

The last chapter; chapter 8 serves as a summary for the entire book where the author explains how all the various motivational strategies discussed in the four previous chapters can be applied in enhancing adult learner motivation. This chapter also provides additional examples for instructional planning and guidelines for assessment by on adult learners.

## Strengths and weaknesses

The book is well organized and the ideas easily flow from one chapter to the other making it a comprehensive and interesting guide for instructors. Having practical examples to illustrate the key points, the author's ideas are explicitly presented with excellent clarity which makes them easy to understand and apply across all settings. The sixty proposed motivational strategies are particularly helpful for instructors as they contain wisdom and practical skills which if properly translated and applied can guarantee excellent results in terms of enhancing adult learners' motivation and interest in learning.

In addition, the author does not disappoint in delivering the proposed ideas and concepts and despite being a great scholar in the field of psychology, he avoids the use of psychobabble and jargon words which would complicate the text. In addition, the author employs humor and many practical examples which help drive the point home by attracting and maintaining the interest of the reader.

However, the book is too a bit too choppy. The author spends too much time explaining and justifying the motivational strategies and some of the learning strategies even tend to overlap. For instance, Strategy 42 which states that; "when possible, the instructor should state and demonstrate to the learners the possible advantages of learning" has a more or less similar meaning as Strategy 67 which states that; "the instructor should help the learners to be aware of the natural consequences of learning and the impact of such consequences."

## Recommendation

*Enhancing Adult Motivation to Learn* is a great read for instructors in the field of adult learning. It not only provides excellent resources on motivation but it also provides a practical framework and strategies for motivation of adult learners. I would therefore strongly recommend this book to any instructor who is already involved or interested in developing a new course in the field of adult learning as the book serves as an excellent instructional tool regardless of the stage of their teaching career. However, most of the techniques and strategies proposed in the book are more applicable to small groups and would not work very well on large groups of learners. I would highly recommend this book to teachers, instructors, trainers and anyone who is interested in motivating adult learners.

## Author

The author Dr. Raymond Wlodkowski has a rich background in the field of psychology and is a licensed psychologist. He is currently a professor at Regis University in Denver where he is also the Founding Director of the commission for accredited programs.

## Reference:

1. Wlodkowski, Raymond. (1999) *Enhancing Adult Motivation to Learn: A Comprehensive Guide For Teaching All Adults* (Revised Edition). San Francisco: Jossey-Bass Publishers

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