



PRESIDENT'S PAGE

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CONDITIONS FOR ADULT LEARNING

As a follow-up to last month's column about some basic concepts of learning, I would like this month to talk with you about the conditions which are essential to adult learning. I would like to discuss some assumptions Dr. Malcolm Knowles, of Boston University, has said we can make about adults as learners and the implications of these assumptions for training methodology.

— Adults enter a learning activity with an image of themselves as self-directing, responsible grown-ups, not as immature, dependent learners. *Therefore*, they resist situations in which they are not treated with respect. *Implication for methodology*: if adults help to plan and conduct their own learning experiences they will learn more than if they are passive recipients.

— Adults enter a learning activity with more experience than youths. *Therefore*, they have more to contribute to the learning activity and have a broader basis of experience to relate new learning. *Implication for methodology*: those methods which build on and make use of the experience of the learners will produce the greatest learning.

— Adults enter a learning activity with more intention to apply learning to life problems than do those who are younger. *Therefore*, adults require practical results from learning. *Implication for methodology*: Learning experiences focused on life problems are perceived by adults as being more relevant than those organized around subject topics.

These three assumptions make it possible to identify some conditions required for effective learning:

1. **Motivation (Drive)** — People need to be and can be motivated to learn. Such motivation should be related to drives of individuals (i.e., belonging, status, affection, achievement, recognition and meaning.)

2. **Previous ways of behaving are unsatisfactory** — People need to be dissatisfied with present state of knowl-

edge and behavior so as to want to improve.

3. **Guidance to the learner** — Trial and error methods are too time consuming, and guidance, properly done, is desirable.

4. **Appropriate materials for learning** — Situations, problems, tools, and so forth are needed to assist the learner.

5. **Time to practice the learning** — To internalize, to give confidence, and to practice the new skills is required of all of us.

6. **Secure satisfaction from learning** — To provide achievement, satisfaction, and confidence will tend to cause the learning to remain with the learner.

7. **Learning should be varied** — To prevent boring repetition, vary the training experience and development situation so that learning becomes questful.

8. **Standards of performance for the learner** — Goals for achievement by the learner, usually set by himself, will be helpful to learning.

9. **Learner needs to have means of assessment of self-behavior** — Feedback, standards of judging his own behavior, and other self-development methods will reinforce the learning process.

10. **Learning process is a human transaction involving the resource person, learner and learning group.** — The learning process is an active one and peer learning is one of the most valuable ways of learning.

11. **Learning is a process of change** — The goal is a dis-equilibrium to a real state of being oneself by the learner.

These basic essentials about learning remind all of us of the complexity, the challenge, and the variety that exists in the never ending life process of learning.