

Authors: Fei-Fei Hwang

October 27, 2006

Rogers, A., (2003). What's the difference? *Adults Learning*, 15 (2), 15-17.

Article Critique of “What’s the difference?”

Summary

The author of the article, Rogers, argues that there is no profound difference between adults' and children's learning processes. Those processes are 'acquisition learning' and 'formalized learning', and the author prefers to use the terms 'task-conscious' learning and 'learning-conscious' learning. Adults and children engage in 'task-conscious' learning and 'learning-conscious' learning that both are according to their experience, the constructions, and expectations. The difference in teaching adults and children lies in different power relationships between teachers and learners. Those relationships come from the identities they both construct.

When entering into an educational or training situation, both children and adults would play the role of student and submit the teaching. Both the child-student and the teacher are involved in hierarchical relationship. The construct of 'an adult' has autonomy, responsibility, and maturity opposed to the construct of 'a student' with incompleteness, dependency on the teacher, and deficiency. Adults will construct the teacher in different way and the teacher will also construct their students in particular ways. The two in the learning situation meet with

their experience created by their constructs.

Implications for Impact on Adult Education

Krashen (1982) identified there are two distinct and independent ways of learning that have been recognized by many. Sarangapani (2003) referred to 'acquisition learning' as largely unconscious and 'formalized learning' as conscious. The author proposes more concrete descriptions in the process of these two learning methods than those of former researchers. The first learning should be 'task-conscious' learning because we learn through the tasks, activities, and experience, although we are not always conscious of that learning. The later one should be 'learning-conscious' learning because we learn more formally in the classroom or workplace where there is a conscious intention to learn something.

The author thinks that both methods have value and both have limitations. He suggests 'task-conscious' learning is largely unconscious and can not be applied in other contexts, while 'formalized' learning can be transferred to other contexts but it remains abstract and theoretical. The author suggests that the mixture of both kinds is more appropriate because the learners are becoming conscious of the tasks which they want to learn and achieve.

The author indicates that the difference between teaching adults and teaching children lies more in the power relationships than in the learning processes because of the different identities they both construct. This article provides a new view and also can develop more research such as the types of relationships and the effectiveness in these types.

Personal Opinion

Sometimes children obtain knowledge directly from experience as play, exploration, imitation, and experiments, similar to adults get a new position or nurture children. Both engage in 'task-conscious' learning. The other one, 'learning-conscious' learning, is knowledge acquired through propositions and articulated such as learning in the classroom, workplace, and community. The learning is taking place everywhere, every day, no matter what is conscious or un/subconscious. Conscious or un/subconscious learning actually happens and becomes a learning experience, and then knowledge construct and mind development will be established gradually. For adults, they intend to learn what they are interested in or what they can see the meaning and importance of. That is very different to children's learning that is often arranged in learning programs or in school. Teaching adults is more similar to friends' or peers' dialogue. Adult-students have lots of life and work experience to share and their mature attitude appropriately reflects to teachers, and teachers respectfully give feedback to students. That is a good circulation for the interactions of the mentor and adult learners. "The mentor builds a nurturing relationship and a holding environment, which foster development" (Johnson, 2006, p. 64). Today, educational neuroscience can demonstrate the essential role of a trusting and safe holding environment for promoting learning and development (Johnson, 2006, p. 64). A holding environment enables us to "consolidate each new sense of self so that we can maintain meaning and

coherence in the world and yet remain open to a lifetime of fresh wonders” (Daloz, 1986, p. 190). Adult’s learning and teaching adults bring more development and hope for individual growth and societal progress. Being an adult, if he or she has the identities of autonomy and responsibility, it is more exciting and free for themselves, or family, or society.

References

Johnson, S., (2006). The neuroscience of the mentor-learner relationship. *New directions for adult and continuing education: The neuroscience of adult learning*, (110), 63-69.

Daloz, L., (1986). *Effective teaching and mentoring*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, p. 190