Book Review

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Theories in Adult Learning and Education

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The book starts with the rejection of the notion of "inventory learning", which posits that learning has certain age limitations, specially claiming that people over 30 years are unable to pursue education. Instead, the book promotes the idea of life-long learning to replace the concept of inventory learning. The book categorizes adult education as a field of practice and academic discipline. As a field of practice, Belanger explains that adult education provides learning opportunities for adults. As an academic discipline, adult education identifies the conditions that support or constrain adults' learning. The author provides two important questions to address the state and conditions of adults' learning. These questions are: what is specific about adult learning? How can adults be motivated to take part in adults' learning and education? Furthermore, the book examines the international trends of adults' participation in learning.

The intended audience of this book are post-secondary students, educators, colleges professors, high school teachers, principals and other school/university-based educators. In the first part of the book, the author introduces the three major theories of learning. The author labels these three theories as theories of general learning, behaviorism, cognitivism, constructivism-socio-constructivism. After the discussion of the general learning theories, the book presents learning theories that focus specifically

on adults' learning. The author devotes more time and effort to inform the intended readers about the theories of adults' learning. The book assigns terms to the adults' learning theories as humanist theory, experiential learning and transformative learning. In the second part of the book, the author addresses the issues of participation in adults' learning from empirical and analytical perspectives. The focus of the book is on the differences in adults' learning participation rate globally based on criterions such as age, gender, basic education and occupation. In other words, the author provides an explanation to the international trends of adults' participation in learning.

The book takes a form of study guide that offers not only an overview of adult learning theories, but also engages the intended readers in exercises to examine the text closely. The organization of the book doesn't follow the traditional chapters classification, but the book has two parts, each part divided into numbers such as 1, 2 ,3 and so on. The book also challenges the intended readers with tasks to highlight some important literature on adults' learning and participation globally. The feature of study guide appeals to educators across the globe. This book is relevant to international education, specially to the international adults' education.

In part one, the book explores the theories of adults' learning to provide a frame of reference to understanding and improving the development of adults' learning. The author initiates the discussion about the learning theories by offering a useful visual illustration to simplify the concepts of learning theories and its main, original authors. For example, behaviorism learning theory associated with authors such as Watson, Thorndike, and Skinner. Cognitivism has authors such as Bruner and Gagne, while social cognitivism associated with Bandura . Constructivism learning theory associated with authors Vygotsky, Piaget, while social constructivism associated with Lave and Wegner. The author follows the exploration of the learning theories with exercises. The purpose of these exercises is to invite the intended readers to engage deeply with the learning theories and to review the literature related to adult learning.

Unlike the traditional chapter books, this book represents the genre of study guide. The book is divided into two parts, each part takes on a single concept of adult learning. After the explanation and exploration of a learning theory, the author provides key concepts of the learning theory, visual illustrations, charts and exercises to aid the intended readers to understand the theory and its sub-concepts. The exercises also encourage the readers to reflect on their own life-long learning experiences. Moreover, the author challenges the intended readers with tasks. The tasks reinforce the understanding of what are the learning theories and how these theories can help educators understand adult learning. the charts are useful in providing pedagogical implications of each learning theory. The key concepts define the learning theory by stating the key words associated with each learning theory.

In part two, Belanger, the author describes the trends of adults' learning participation internationally. The author considers two perspectives to examine the question who participate and in what kind of activities related to adult learning globally. The two perspectives are empirical and analytical. In the empirical perspective, the author uses the international adult literacy survey to explore the trends of adult learning participation. However, in the analytical perspective, the author focuses on social, socioeconomic, cultural and institutional factors that impact adults to participate in learning.

Belanger's book is a great reference to both students and educators who are involved in adults' learning and teaching. As a useful reference, the book offers explanations on applying theories into practices in adults' education. The book employs methodology that makes the reading easy and enjoyable. The strength of the book is its organization. The author organizes the book differently. Unlike traditional chapter books, Belanger divides the book into two main parts, part one and part two. The author devoted each part to deal with one issue in adults' learning. This book is recommended for pre-service teachers, community college teachers, undergraduate and graduate students who intend to work with adults' learners. The book is also recommended for any educator who are involved in teaching and learning because of the clear explanation of the learning theories.

One potential weakness of this book is that it departs from the traditional organization of the chapter books. As study-guide book, the intended readers will read two parts, both parts of the book are too long with many theories and concepts. The intended readers must read two parts, but both parts of the book are too long, and require carefully reading and connecting many theories and concepts. Critical reading is required for this book; however, the length of each part may impede such critical reading. Moreover, the book discusses the adult learning theories as well as the international trends of participation of adults in learning. The book appeals to educators globally. In countries where basic education for adults is unattainable and unfeasible, this study guide will encourage educators in these countries to recommend educational policies that consider and include the importance of adults' learning. The book introduces and advocates for the concept of life-long learning. In underdeveloped and some developing countries, the concept of life-long learning doesn't take the center stage among the legislatures. The book encourages educators in these countries to pay attention to adults' learning and to the concept of life-long learning to recommend educational policies that advocate for more resources to adults' learning. As in many African and Middle Eastern countries, adults' learning and life-long learning have not taken seriously by the policymakers. The alienation of educators from the policy making processes in such countries affects the state of adults' learning and the participation of adults in learning. In addition, the literature in adults' learning in these countries is very scarce. Higher education systems in countries where adults' learning and the idea of life-long learning are viewed as peculiar, need to advocate for and to add the discipline of adults' learning to their curricula.