

**Listening survey**

This type of survey allows you find out more about the attitudes and beliefs of the target group and assist in deciding mode of communication with them. It is an informal way of speaking to the people on the issue at hand and listening to their opinions. Its major advantage is that people speak freely about their feelings in an informal setting. Some people are not in support of this type of survey since they believe it is deceptive as you are not oppotuned to tell people why you are doing the survey. It concentrates on exploring knowledge, attitudes beliefs other than quantitative facts.

**How to conduct a listening survey**

- Go to where people gather and talk
- Start a conversation
- Be careful not to be too obvious
- If possible work in pairs
- Listen to what people say
- Ask questions about what people think rather than saying what you think
- Record your findings after you have left the group.

# Extending the use of adult learning principles from training to extension activities

( *By Richard Fell, Managing Consultant (Low Hill Enterprises)/Adjunct Lecturer, Centre for Regional and Rural Innovation – Queensland, University of Queensland Gatton Campus*)

## Learning theories for training and extension

Fell (1986 & 1996) developed his adult learning principles based on the work of Knowles (1972) and Rogers (1973).

**Principle one:** Build on local experience; use the knowledge within the group/individual.

Adults come to educational or training activities for a variety of reasons. What they bring with them is a wealth of experience that is there to be built on and used in the particular activity (Malouf 1993, Knowles 1990 and Rogers 1973). It is important to tap into this experience, to see what they already know and to then develop the material that you have from this base.

**Principle two:** Make the learning environment comfortable and encouraging.

When adults are faced with a new (learning) experience they are often anxious about their own perceived deficiencies and about showing this in public (Rogers 1973). Any learning experience should be structured to take these feelings into account. It is important therefore to create an environment that is comfortable and drawing out their experience is one starting point.

**Principle three:** Ensure that the learning activity meets the needs and relates to the problems of the client group.

An important aspect to remember in any learning activity is that adults feel a need to learn (Malouf 1993, Knowles 1999) and they usually have problems or issues that they are concerned about. Thus they come into activities looking for answers to their concerns. The learning therefore needs to have practical pay off for the adults who are at the learning experience. The activity has to be relevant to these needs and to ensure this involve them in planning.

**Principle four:** Involve the audience in planning their own learning experience.

Involvement and participation in the learning process is also important for adults; activities need to be designed that cater for the four learning styles (Honey & Mumford 1986). The action learning process provides a basic framework for involving people and ensuring participation.

**Principle five:** Activities need to actively involve people, be stimulating and participatory.

Adults come to these learning experiences wanting to learn, so we must make it possible for them to do so. Activities should therefore challenge and stimulate the individual in the learning process. It is also necessary to ensure that all four learning styles; pragmatist, activist, theorist and reflector are covered by exercises, activity, reflective practice and planning.

**Principle six:** Allow time for people to reflect on what they are learning, take difficult subjects slowly and always be open to questioning.

Reflection on what is being learnt is a key element when using adult learning principles – people need time to think about what they are learning and what it means to them and/or their work. The time for reflection needs to be deliberately set aside in the schedule.

**Principle seven:** Build group and individual confidence by letting them know they are right, building a confidence that they are making progress towards their learning goals.

All people need to feel they are making progress in their learning – for example, see the student who wants to have their marks for an assignment as quickly as possible. It is possible to let people know they are making progress by rewarding “success”. Praise the individual or group when they do things right – take more time to do this than to correct their mistakes.

**Principle eight:** Learning must involve effective two-way communication

It is difficult to undertake any learning if there isn't two-way communication. Dialogue between trainer and participant, between participants themselves and then between participant and client is inherent in the learning process. This must be central to the training or learning experience.

Practical examples of the way that adult learning principles have been used in learning project/extension activities. The course and in particular the Adult Learning in Regional Development subject was, and is, developed using adult learning theory and practice and reflects a good learning experience for the majority of participants who attend the subject. Some examples of the practical ways that adult learning principles are used and the evaluation of that use are presented below