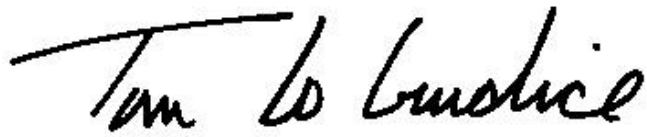


ADULT EDUCATION: PROGRAMS ON GROWTH

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Tom Lo Guistice". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, sweeping initial "T" and a long horizontal line extending from the end of the name.

Approved

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# ADULT EDUCATION: PROGRAMS ON GROWTH

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by

Jason P. Watson

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## ABSTRACT

### ADULT EDUCATION: THE PROGRAM ON THE GROWTH

Under the supervision of *Tom Lo Guidice, Ph.D.*

The current economic downturn (2008-09) as well as the changing nature of the economy in the late 20<sup>th</sup> and early 21<sup>st</sup> century, adult education is a growing and changing field. Adults who have worked in traditional industries for many years are hampered with a lack of education face new challenges.

Lack of education also becomes a problem when people choose to take on a new career field due to change of heart for their profession or other lifestyle changes such as family, financial, and location problems. Job security is a very important aspect of everyone's professional career and lack of education can very much jeopardize the future of employment for some people with the changing of technology and environmental issues.

Within the adult education program, certain concerns need to be met by the adult educator such as time commitment, job, and family needs to ensure the continuing education for the adult learner. Finding jobs for immigrants who do not speak fluent in the English language is also a growing concern where the continued education in the English language will allow for these people to have an increased chance of finding employment within the United

States. Research done for this paper has found theories and practices that have worked as well as some areas that are in dire need for improvement.



## TABLE OF CONTENTS

APPROVAL PAGE.....	i
TITLE PAGE.....	ii
ABSTRACT.....	iii
TABLE OF CONTENTS.....	v
Acknowledgement.....	1
CHAPTER	
One. INTRODUCTION.....	3
Statement of the Problem	
Delimitations of the Research	
Method of Approach	
Definition of Terms	
Two. REVIEW OF LITERATURE.....	7
History of Adult Education (with special attention to the role of adult education during times of change)	
Higher Education and Job Security	
Adult Education Support and Teaching Strategies	
Three. CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS...	15
Four. REFERENCES.....	17

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

I thank the person who gave me the idea for this paper. This person is my mother who had a personal experience with adult education. From my personal experience with having my mother taking on a new career field which involved using technology in computers and having no previous experience with them was a troubling time for her while learning how to use computers. Luckily, the company she was working for had brought in a computer educator who helped all of the new employees learn how to properly use the computers and the databases they were using. Without having this computer educator to help her, she would have never been able to work at this particular job. I feel this is a form of an adult education program so I know first hand what adult education is all about when it comes to helping adults further their education to ensure future employment.

## CHAPTER ONE

### INTRODUCTION

What is the meaning of adult education? At least part of the answer is that adult education is a growing field due to current economic downturn and also the changing nature of the economy in the late 20<sup>th</sup> and early 21<sup>st</sup> century. In some of the older and traditional industries in the United States many employees have limited education, often limited to high school or high school equivalency. Without post-high school these people who may have lost their jobs are having problems finding new jobs. Whether a person is looking for different options in their life or just a change of heart in their job field, it is very hard to find jobs due to lack of education. Another reason for adults seeking further education is to ensure job security.

Post-high school education including community or technical college education makes a difference. When there is a problem at a workplace where jobs are being dropped, the people with more education will more likely be kept due to their educational background than others who lack in the area of education. There is also a need to be concerned with adult needs as the adult student takes course. Needs such as time commitment, job, and family that cause conflict with being able to attend adult education classes all need to be considered by the Adult Educator.

The needs of adult learners are especially dramatized during periods of economic and technological change. For example, the surge in technology education prior to the current economic downturn began when the use of computers became involved with the

Workforce. Employees who had taken classes to become more knowledgeable with computers were more likely to maintain their jobs for longer periods of time unlike those who did not take advantage of learning more about computers.

Another large area of adult education is in the field of the English language.

Most immigrants who seek jobs here in the United States are not very fluent with the English language. This may cause a problem with finding a job due to the fact that most jobs involve communication with clients and or other employees. Immigrants who choose to take part in English speaking language classes are more likely to become more fluent with the English language thus will have a better chance of finding a job than other who do not become fluent with the English language. Immigration laws state that immigrants must have an education that is equivalent to at least a high school education for them to be eligible to become a United States citizen.

#### Statement of the Problem

The problem to be addressed is “How is the lack of education affecting job security for persons between the ages of 18 and up who do not have continued education past high school?” Also addressed are the nature of effective programs for providing job security and the necessary support systems, including teaching strategies, that result in limited educated adults becoming educated or special skills such as English language acquisition helping adults achieve job security.



### Delimitations of the Research

The research will be conducted in and through the Karrmann Library at the University of Wisconsin-Platteville. Primary searches will be conducted via the Internet through ERIC, and Academic Search Elite as the primary sources. Key search topics included “adult education”, “job security”, and “continuing education”. Past papers by students in the University of Wisconsin-Platteville Adult Education program will also be reviewed.

### Method of Approach

A brief review of literature on the history of adult education will be conducted. A second review of literature relating to research, studies, and anecdotal evidence of adult education and the impact on job security will be conducted. The findings will be summarized and recommendations made.

### Definition of Terms

**Basic Skills** are the ability to use mathematics to a certain level which allows someone to function in society as well as in the work force. The ability to speak, read, and writes fluently in the English language.

**Job Security** is the probability that an individual will keep his or her job; a job with a high level of job security is such that a person with the job would have a small chance of becoming unemployed. It is dependent on economy, prevailing business conditions, and the individual's

personal skills. It has been found that people have more job security in times of economic expansion and less in times of a recession. Also, some laws (such as the Civil Rights Act of 1964) bolster job security by making it illegal to fire employees for certain reasons. Unemployment rate is a good indicator of job security and the state of the economy and is tracked by economists, government officials, and banks.

**Adult Education** is the practice of teaching and educating adults. This often happens in the workplace, through 'extension' or 'continuing education' courses at secondary schools, at a college or university. Other learning places include folk high schools, community colleges, and lifelong learning centers. The practice is also often referred to as 'Training and Development'. It has also been referred to as andragogy (to distinguish it from pedagogy). A difference is made between vocational education, mostly undertaken in workplaces and frequently related to up-skilling, and non-formal adult education including learning skills or learning for personal development.

**Secondary Education** is the stage of education following primary school. Secondary education is generally the final stage of compulsory education. However, secondary education in some countries includes a period of compulsory and a period of non-compulsory education. The next stage of education is usually college or university. Secondary education is characterized by transition from the typically compulsory, comprehensive primary education for minors to the optional, selective tertiary, "post-secondary", or "higher" education (e.g., university, vocational school) for adults. Depending on the system, schools for this period or a part of it may be called

secondary schools, high schools, gymnasia, lyceums, middle schools, colleges, vocational schools and preparatory schools, and the exact meaning of any of these varies between the systems.

## CHAPTER TWO

### REVIEW OF LITERATURE

#### History of Adult Education

(NOTE. Special attention to the role of adult education during times of change)

Early adult education focused on needs such as reading and writing. Adult education is defined by student population rather than content of a learning program which is different than other types of formal education. “The need for adult education began to take root in the 1920s with the return of soldiers after World War II and Lindman’s theories, the field of adult education has been refined up through the late 70s and early 80s, there was research and an increased desire to increase the literacy rate and reduce the high school drop-out rate (Albert, 2008, p.6).

With times of change and economic problems, people who once had a job were now looking for new jobs but found themselves uneducated and were unable to meet certain criteria to make them an acceptable candidate for employment positions. There are several goals of adult education that include at least the following:

### 1. Self Directed Learning

- Self-Directed Learning (SDL) is any increase in knowledge, skill or performance pursued by any individual for personal reasons employing any means, in any place at any time at any age.

### 2. Critical Reflection

- Reflection is thinking for an extended period by linking recent experiences to earlier ones in order to promote a more complex and interrelated mental schema.

### 3. Experiential Learning

- According to the experimental learning model, for learning to occur and be internalized, the learner has to go through the four modes of learning.

### 4. Learning to Learn (Brookfield, 1995, p. 1).

- Learning to learn (LTL) is unique program that enables students and others to become active learners.

Through using these four goals educators can meet the needs of adult learners to help students achieve exactly what they want out of their adult education programs.

## Higher Education and Job Security

Higher education refers to a level of education that is provided by universities, vocational universities, community colleges, liberal arts colleges, institutes of technology and

other collegiate level institutions, such as vocational schools, trade schools and career colleges, that award academic degrees or professional certifications.

For adults that are having problems with holding on to their job during economy problems or who are just having a change in heart in their career, the lack of education may be affecting the likelihood of them being able to find another career. They have the option to go back to school to get a high education to help them achieve a future career.

One adult educatory (Isserlis, 2008) has well summed up the opportunity and need by saying “Many learners return to educational settings with hesitation: ‘Having failed at school a first time, finding the confidence to try it again poses significant challenges, and often causes intense anxiety for learners before even entering the adult classroom. For adults who have had experiences of violence, have been told by abusers that they are stupid, these anxieties and self-doubts can be overwhelming” (p.19).

Job security is dependent on economy, prevailing business conditions, and the individual's personal skills. It has been found that people have more job security in times of economic expansion and less in times of a recession. Also, some laws (such as the Civil Rights Act of 1964) bolster job security by making it illegal to fire employees for certain reasons. Personal factors such as education, work experience, job fictional area, work industry, work location, etc, play an important role in determining the need for an individual's services, and impacts their personal job security. Since job security depends on having the necessary skills and experience that are in demand by employers, which in turn depend on the prevailing

economic condition and business environment, individuals whose services are in needed by employers tend will enjoy higher job security.

### Adult Education Support and Teaching Strategies

One of the major problems that adult learners come across is finding financial aids that can allow them to take part in the adult education program. When the adult learner has a family to support, necessary support for paying for higher education may be difficult. However, there are sources of support. Examples are explained below.

- Federal Work-Study (FWS) provides part-time jobs for undergraduate and graduate students with financial need. A Federal Pell Grant, unlike a loan, does not have to be repaid. Pell Grants are awarded usually only to undergraduate students who have not earned a bachelor's or a professional degree. Sometimes a student enrolled in a post-baccalaureate teacher certification Pell Grants are considered the foundation of federal financial aid. Additional aid from other federal and nonfederal sources could be added (Marzette-Bell, 2009, p.12).
- The U.S. Department of Education administers the Federal Family Education Loan (FFEL) Program and the William D. Ford Federal Direct Loan. These loans are known as the Stafford loan for students and the Plus loan for parents (Marzette-Bell, 2009, p.14).

With these forms of aid, adult learners will have the opportunity to enhance their education without possibly jeopardizing their financial need.

Another problem with taking adult education classes is commuting to and from adult education sites. When adult learners have daily schedules such as work, family, and travel it is hard for them to find time to drive, sometimes long distances, and sit in a classroom for hours. This also includes finding a babysitter which also costs money. This is where online classes come into play.

A student of the impact of hard economic times makes the point we. (Kowlich, 2009) says “Economic storms historically have prompted more adults to seek shelter in the classroom. But this time around, two-year colleges and private for-profit institutions are especially optimistic about attracting more students – and many of those older students will probably take courses online” (p.19), according to one of the authors of a recent survey. The 2008 Sloan Survey of Online Learning, released in November before the extent of the recession was clear, found that while all types of colleges anticipate enrollment bumps because of high unemployment, two-year and private for-profit institutions expect to increase their rolls more than others since they tend to offer programs that have traditionally been tailored to serve working adults

Having the option to take classes online, this allows for older people who face problems with family, job, and other time consuming complications to be able to take the class without being in the classroom.

There are a few different teaching strategies that are useful in education due to the fact that not everyone learns in the same ways. Whether you are a child or an adult, some people



learn better visually, aurally, reading or kinesthetically (VARK). For an educator to find out which way their students learn, he/she can have a better chance to helping them learn.

One teaching strategy to discuss is self directed learning. Noted adult educator Knowles breaks down this strategy into six areas:

1. The establishment of an effective learning climate (Beda, 2004, p. 95).

It is very important to have an environment for adult learners to feel comfortable and have a feeling they are there to learn and have a feeling of being at home.

The environment should be a place where the adult feels free from punishment and can express their ideas freely (Knowles, 1980, p. 47)

2. Learners are involved in the mutual planning of curriculum and teaching content (Beda, 2004, p. 95). The adult learner has chosen to come back to further their education so they have an idea of what their needs and wants are in choosing areas of their education. They set their own learning objectives and set goals of what they want to learn and how they want to learn it. They also are able to choose their own methods of how they will learn the material (Albert, 2008, p.8).
3. Learners are involved in their own needs assessment (Beda, 2004, p. 95).

The adult learner needs to be able to be apart of the assessment portion of the class because they know better than anyone else about what their needs are for the education they are seeking. With the help of the instructor the learner should do a self diagnosis of needs. This will help the learner better understand

their areas of competencies and let them know what they really need to learn (Knowles, 1980, p.47).

4. Learners are encouraged to formulate their own learning objectives and to devise their own resources and strategies to meet these objectives (Beda, 2004, p. 95). The adult learner knows what they want to get out of the class so it is very important to allow the learner to do work on their own so they can feel that they are achieving something from the class and not having the educator do all of the work for them.
5. Learners are offered support and facilitation to carry out their learning plans (Beda, 2004, p. 95). The adult educator should be there for guidance when guidance is needed. If the learner feels like the educator is helping too much, they will feel that they are not capable of doing it on their own. They do not want to be treated like children; rather they want a place to continue their education through sharing experiences and self direction (Knowles, 1980, p. 47).
6. Learners are facilitated in the evaluation of their learning (Beda, 2004, p. 95).  
When the course is coming to the end, the educator should sit down with the learner and assess how the course has gone. The learner then can explain what they received from the class and what they learned. Then a discussion of grading should take place with the educator allowing the learner to express what they feel they should get for a grade. This does not mean that the grade the learner

says they should receive will be the grade they are awarded but it should be around that area of grading.

## CHAPTER 3

### CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Adult education is and will still become growing since more adults are choosing to continue their education for future success in their lives, as well as in their career. From the research provided, one of the main reasons for adults going back for continued education is because they want to learn and, in the long run, improve their lifestyle. With the current economy having such problems, this is causing a great increase in the population taking part in adult education programs due to downsizing of companies and loss of jobs.

It is also clear that family situations are becoming a problem when jobs and careers are being jeopardized. If jobs are being taken away then the ability to support your family is very hard to do without a steady source of income. This is also where the adult education programs across the world are becoming a “must” to ensure the likelihood of keeping jobs and job security.

As far as recommendations go for this research, it is clear that there are a few areas where adult education programs can become more effective if these areas were implemented. First, having educators who look deep into what each learner has for goals and wants out of the program. The educator needs to be there for guidance and be seen more as a peer instead of a teacher. This will make the learner feel more comfortable, rather than feel like they are in a traditional education system. The increased availability of technology based courses is a good way of gaining more people to take part in the adult education program. This area will take out

travel as well as other factors which may hamper the likelihood of someone having the opportunity to participate in the adult education program which in the long run will help or make their future career.

Orientation for learners beginning the adult education program will also help the transition into the program. Most learners who join the program will have very little knowledge of technology and resources. Orientation will cover basic learning skills as well as how to use basic technology that will be used in the program. After the orientation, the learners will feel more comfortable with what the program is all about and will have a better chance of continuing with the program for further their education.

Financial help is also an area for concern. "There are obvious financial barriers. Adult workers with no college credentials do not make much money at all. Paying even \$300 to \$500 in tuition and fees per course as a community college (much less \$800 to \$1200 or more for one course at a public four-year college) competes very poorly against other necessary living expenses" (Bosworth, 2007, p.13) is very sobering. "From, 1980 to 2000, there was virtually no increase in the percentage of individuals ages 25 to 34 with a high school degree or better and, among males, that percentage has actually declined over the period"(Bosworth, 2007,p.7). With financial opportunities which listed in this research paper, these financial barriers can be taken care of for the adult learner.

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