

Evidence-Based Principles and Strategies for Engaging Older Learners

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Abstract:

Rapid population ageing in Singapore and globally, as well as swift technological advancements and escalating pace of change are creating a perpetual need for older adults to engage in continuous learning, to function efficaciously in societies. Against this backdrop, a study was conducted in Singapore to investigate the strategies employed by successful instructors to engage older learners within the classroom context.

Methodology: The study employed the interpretivist research paradigm, adopting symbolic interactionism as its theoretical framework. Primary sources of data were in-depth, semi-structured interviews and non-participant classroom observations. The sample comprised nine instructors of diverse backgrounds. They were tracked through an entire 90 hours of an instructional programme. A total of 25 interviews (27 hours) and 17 observation episodes (51 hours) were carried out.

Results: Findings revealed seven R's principles employed by these successful instructors. These are: Respect, Relevance, Review, Regulate, Reciprocity, Resource, Re-examine. These principles are underpinned by employing a variety of strategies to create a supportive environment throughout the learning process.

Conclusions: The findings from this empirical study offer salient principles and strategies to guide instructors of older adults in effective engagement of older learners. These principles appear to be relevant for healthcare and community care practitioners tasked with the responsibilities of coaching older learners.