



A PROPOSED FRAMEWORK FOR DESIGNING ADULT EDUCATION PROGRAMS FROM THE PERSPECTIVES OF ADULT EDUCATION PROFESSIONALS

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Abstract

This grounded theory research aims to generate a theoretical model by developing frameworks for designing adult education courses and trainings in higher education institutions (HEI) in an Asian country through the perspective and experiences of adult learners. Using purposive sampling, the participants were 13 HEI middle managers who were sent to the University of Toronto in Canada to be trained on how to meet the emerging needs of adult education professionals. The participants were asked to write down their reflection based on guide questions that asked about their insights regarding the success and challenges they encountered during their two-week adult education training. The data were analyzed using Glaser and Strauss's (1967) model of grounded theory analysis that includes theoretical sampling, constant comparison, and theoretical sensitivity. The findings of the study generated a multi-level theoretical framework, an iterative process from the conceptual stage to the evaluation stage of an adult education program, that will assist HEIs in crafting sustainable adult education programs that exemplify best practices from the academe, industries, and businesses. The model will be useful for HEIs who are looking for innovative adult education models.

Keywords: Adult education, model, multilevel framework, curriculum design

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1. Introduction

The pandemic has exacerbated the educational inequality being addressed by the education sector. While there is an Alternative Learning System provided by the country's Department of Education in which teachers go to remote areas and isolated places to reach adult students, this program was put to a halt for two years during the pandemic. The Department of Education has estimated that about five million students missed enrollment in school year 2021-2022 as pandemic uncertainties continue to affect the education sector. However, even before the pandemic, there has already been a high number of out-of-school youths estimated at 3.5 million in 2017. It has been observed that it is easier to bring back early grade dropouts to school than students in their teens. If these teens fail to return to school, they are likely to look for jobs and stay there until such time that they have enough money to finance for their education. Such is the reason for adult education. Adult education programs in the country aim to reengage adult students who want to return to school. These programs attempt to fill a gap, provide a second chance, and help adult students get back on track (Rose, 2013). Nevertheless, the adult education programs do not get a lot of attention or notice in the larger spectrum of education (Rose, 2013). This is because adult education programs are navigating layers of inequity to provide an environment that can breed success for its students who are seeking to find hope, success, and a new pathway forward. Fears-Hackett (2012) and Bridgeland and Milano (2012) explain that many students who drop out of high school find their way back into formal education through adult education programs.

According to Comings, Sum, and Uvin (2000) there are different reasons, including not having a high school diploma, why adults return to a formal education program. Oftentimes, it is because they want to acquire new skills necessary to meet the needs and requirements of employers and today's economy and demands. In fact, according to Comings, Sum, and Uvin (2000), "Each year, tens of thousands of adults who want to improve their basic skills enroll in adult education programs for help" (pp. 11-12). Additionally, students who have not completed their high school or college desire to return to school because they understand the benefits of having a high school or college diploma today (Bridgeland & Milano, 2012). Therefore, with great numbers of adults who are looking to return to formal education, it is critical to understand what these students are seeking to achieve and how adult education programs could support the needs, desires, and orientations of the adult learners they serve. There are a few higher education institutions that are strong on adult education in the country. These HEIs have already spearheaded the adult education initiative by offering evening and weekend classes on cooking, bread and pastry production, food processing, Excel program for adults, accounting for non-accountants, how to use solar energy in homes, and how to invest in the stock market, among others. Moreover, other universities are teaching farmers and market vendors literacy and numeracy skills so that they can earn a living or not be exploited by traders because they are unable to read and write.

With technological advancements in the education system, more opportunities have become available for HEIs to expand their courses to include adult education programs so that adults will be able to re-skill, up-skill, or cross skill. Thus, a number of educational institutions have opened various adult education programs that they deem in demand to adult learners, only to close them again for lack of enrollees. The failure of these adult education programs to thrive may be due to a number of factors. It could be lack of practitioners to teach a particular job skill, lack of data to back up the need to offer the program, or poor course design that would not develop the expected skill that learners should acquire. Regardless of the reason, HEIs continue to offer adult education programs because the numbers show that there is a need to serve adult learners who are seeking education opportunities. In an adult education conference in 2018, CHED Chairman Prospero De Vera III said that while the student population remains relatively young, the demographic trends now show that increasingly adult population is becoming bigger. He added that this scenario provides the higher education sector an opportunity to go further with adult education. Due to this situation, the Commission on Higher Education (CHED) has recently shifted its focus on adult education programs (AEPs) to be offered by higher education institutions either through their extension programs or paid short course trainings that would benefit adult learners. Adult education programs, as defined by CHED, are innovative programs that aim to develop and foster the skill set that adult learners want to have so that they can create more meaning in their lives and become more active participants in their community.

To boost adult education in the country, CHED sent 30 higher education representatives from 30 colleges and universities to Canada in 2018 to understand adult education programs. The goal of this program was to learn from the best practices of Canada's robust adult education programs and eventually replicate and customize similar programs in the HEI representatives' universities and colleges once they return to the country. The 30 university representatives recently met with CHED officials in Davao City to discuss the Roadmap for Adult Education that is expected to be implemented by these universities.

The CHED partnered with Canadian Bureau for International Education to bring together HEI officials and CHED representatives to be trained on the best practices of adult education in Canada. Through the experiences and learning provided to them, the participants crafted a Philippine adult education framework. The outcome of the training was indeed a Philippine adult education framework collaboratively done by the training participants. With the framework in place, CHED Chairman De Vera pushed to prioritize adult education in HEIs. In fact, a number of HEIs in the country have formed their own adult education centers that aim to offer customized programs for adult learners, be it short courses, trainings, or diploma courses through formal or informal modes of learning. However, as mentioned earlier, not all programs have been successful as they fizzle out due to poor program design, lack of enrollees, lack of qualified trainers, or lack of preparation for program launching. Many factors led to unsuccessful attempts of HEIs to reinvigorate adult education programs. While

the absence of a Philippine adult education framework has been addressed already, there is still much to be gleaned from the experiences and reflections provided by the participants in the adult education training that can contribute to improving and promoting adult education programs in the country. For one, there is no proposed adult education framework yet that individual HEIs can use in designing adult education programs, one that could guide designers as they venture into the complex program design for adults. What program designers usually use is Bloom's Taxonomy, among others, which is generally used in designing general education curriculum.

According to Armstrong (2010), Bloom's Taxonomy is a framework that has been applied by generations of K-12 teachers and college instructors in their teaching. The framework elaborated by Bloom and his collaborators consisted of six major categories: knowledge, comprehension, application, analysis, synthesis, and evaluation. The categories after knowledge were presented as "skills and abilities," with the understanding that knowledge was the necessary precondition for putting these skills and abilities into practice. (Armstrong, 2010). Because adult learners have certain characteristics that are different from young learners, program designers may need a model that is suited to the unique needs of adults. Adult learners do not start from remembering then end in creating. Their learning is not hierarchical because most of them have already accumulated so much knowledge and information both from formal and informal education. They usually start from their own experience. Because of this, designing adult education programs are much more complex than that for young learners because the needs and characteristics of adult learners must be considered. Given the lack of adult education models developed primarily for adults that HEIs can use in designing adult programs, this study aims to develop a theoretical model that will serve as a model for designing adult education programs in higher education institutions. The model aims to serve as a guide for program developers in designing the content of adult education programs or trainings.

2. Review of Literature

The research literature emphasizes the importance of experiential learning in adult education context (Hancock et al., 2010; Phillips et al., 2013; Stater & Fotheringham, 2009). Adult learners' perspectives play a critical role in curriculum development and instructional design (Cook-Sather, Bovill, & Felten, 2014; Könings, Seidel, Brand-Gruwel, et al., 2014; McLeod, 2011; Wei, 2017). However, there is a dearth of studies about adult learners' perspectives on their experiential learning experiences (Werder & Otis, 2010). By developing a deeper understanding of adult learners' perspectives about their own learning, instructional programs can be enhanced to focus on the varying needs of adult students.

2.1. Adult Learners' Perspectives in Educational Design

There are many challenges why learner feedback is not incorporated in program designs. Among these are lack of overall institutional awareness, a lack of program designers' support, lack of students' willingness, and a lack of opportunity for students to provide effective feedback. A few of these challenges interfere with program designers reaching out to students for feedback. Additionally, recruitment, training, and supervision take time and resources (Werder & Otis, 2010). At the same time, from learners' perspectives, there are challenges related to motivation, experience, or skills needed to contribute to the various participant roles (Werder & Otis, 2010). Further, the nature of relationships between program designers and students can make it a challenge for program designers to listen to students. For instance, power difference (e.g., status, position) and interpersonal differences (e.g., age, power) (Werder & Otis, 2010) can affect the interactions between the program designer and the students. Altogether, learning cannot take place without learners' willingness to participate (Arghode et al., 2017). Learner motivation needs to match effective educational design to promote learning (Arghode et al., 2017) and it is at the institutional level that the tone is set.

The bottom line is that these challenges can be addressed by communicating with various stakeholders and showing willingness to listen to the other party. As Baker and Griffin (2010) noted, "In an environment that promotes conversational learning, people can transform their collective experiences and difference into new knowledge through the sense they make together" (p. 6). From an institutional and instructional point of view, it is particularly important to know how students are thinking about and processing their experiences in order to promote learning and design programs (Werder & Otis, 2010). As Mezirow (2000) explained, "It is not so much what happens to people but how they interpret and explain what happens to them that determines their actions, their hopes, their contentment and emotional well-being, and their performance" (p. xiii).

2.2. Adult Education Theories

This study is anchored on key theories relevant to adult learning, namely: (a) pedagogy, (b) andragogy (Knowles, Holton, & Swanson, 2005), and (c) transformative learning (Cranton, 2016; Mezirow, 2000; Mezirow & Taylor, 2009). These three theories provide a basis for how adults learn. The first, pedagogy, has been defined traditionally as an instructional method for teaching children; however, within the field of adult learning, theorists such as Knowles et al. (2015) have identified various uses of pedagogical strategies. Second, andragogy focuses on adult learners and provides insight into adult learning principles. Lastly, transformational learning theory is discussed because its primary audience is adult learners and educators (Mezirow & Taylor, 2009). Each theory provides a perspective for understanding adult learning theories. Practitioner concerns and the changing educational marketplace are pressuring colleges to provide more skills-based learning. There seems to be a widening gap between

industry needs and the manpower being supplied by higher education institutions. This is because higher-order thinking skills are greatly in demand in the workplace. It is therefore important to examine program offerings for adults if they produce the skills that the programs promise to deliver.

Using Bloom's taxonomy, education programs can be examined whether these are founded on higher-order thinking skills of analyzing, evaluating, and creating. The exercises and activities provided in learning courses can be investigated to support and illustrate this important concept and show how these skills can be developed in a classroom setting. One such study is conducted by *Healy, Taran, and Betts (2011)* who examined two courses in a successful professional sales program through the lenses of experiential learning theory and Bloom's taxonomy of educational objectives. They combined the two frameworks to show how experiential learning cycles can incrementally move adult students to higher levels of learning. Similarly, this study used the same theories, that of experiential learning and Bloom's taxonomy that they use in designing their adult education courses. *Niazi (2020)* meanwhile, used Bloom's taxonomy in designing English as a second language courses for college students. The study concluded that incorporating Bloom's objectives of teaching improves English language learning among students at the tertiary level. It was recommended that teachers be provided training workshops that incorporate Bloom's objectives into their teaching methodology.

The traditional learning theories—behaviorism, humanism, cognitivism, social cognitivism, and constructivism—provide directions to improve educational design (*Yelich Biniiecki, & Conceigao, 2016*). The traditional learning theories inform the three learning theories, pedagogy, andragogy, and transformational learning, that are significant to the research of this study. The fundamentals of the traditional constructivist approach are used throughout the adult learning theories of andragogy, and transformational learning which both embrace the application of knowledge into practice through dialogue and reflection. Both theories emphasize the ideas that students develop meaning from their experience through thinking and reflection to validate the experience (*Boud, Cohen, & Walker, 1993; Cranton, 2016; Knowles et al., 2015*). Central to these adult learning theories is the idea of the learner taking an active role in learning, reflecting, and applying their learning (*Dewey, 1933; D. Kolb, 2015; Mezirow, 2000*). For instance, “the process of transformative learning may vary according to context and those involved; however, the outcomes remain similar” (*Stuckey et al., 2013, p. 213*). Altogether, these traditional and adult learning theories inform adult experiential learning. Experiential learning is an additional framework that supports the constructivist approach like andragogy and transformational learning, and “has the potential to lead to transformational [transformative] learning” (*Finch, Peacock, Ladowski, & Hwang, 2015, p. 24*). Research has confirmed the benefits of experiential

learning opportunities for students, institutions, and communities (Hancock, Smith, Timpte, & Wunder, 2010; Jettner et al., 2017, Phillips et al., 2013). Also, the importance of experiential learning to educational, academic, and program learning outcomes has been documented (Al Barwani, Al-Mekhlafi, & Nagaratnam, 2013; Carson & Domangue, 2013; Yorio & Ye, 2012). However, there is a gap in the literature relative to the value of obtaining students' perspectives about the impact of their experiences (Werder & Otis, 2010), particularly in adult education programs. Because of this, there is no adult learning model particularly developed for adult learners that can guide program developers in designing courses.

To address this literature gap, the purpose of this qualitative grounded theory study was to generate a model, a taxonomy of learning that may be used as a guide in designing adult courses offered by higher education institutions through the perspectives of adult learners who participated in a training entitled, "Meeting the Emerging needs of Adult Education Professionals" at the University of Toronto in Canada, and through their perspectives, develop a taxonomy of adult learning that may be used as a guide in designing adult courses and trainings offered by higher education institutions.

3. Method

3.1. Research Design

This grounded theory research aims to generate theory by developing frameworks for designing adult education courses and trainings in higher education institutions through the perspectives and experiences of adult learners. The focus of this grounded theory is to develop a taxonomy of adult learning similar to Bloom's taxonomy of learning. While there are adult education frameworks such as those proposed by Knowles, it alone could not capture the complexity and breadth of adult education. According to Creswell (2013), grounded theory appears to develop a process theory when existing theoretical frameworks do not address the particular subject area. Moreover, no framework yet exists on how to design adult education courses similar to Bloom's taxonomy that guides course designers on how to develop effective learning content that target adult learners' various level of needs. The researcher aims to generate a model through the perspectives of adult learners and their experiences in trainings. Thus, grounded theory is deemed appropriate for the purpose of this study.

3.2. Respondents and Sampling Design

The participants who were included in this study were identified based on their direct experience with the adult education training at the University of Toronto in Canada entitled, "Meeting the Emerging Needs of Adult Education Professionals (Donalek & Soldwisch,

2004). The population consisted of a total of 30 adult learners who were sent to Canada for the training. This population is divided into two cohorts, Cohorts 1 and 2, with 15 participants each. Using purposive sampling, the participants were selected using the following criteria: a) the participants should belong to Cohort 2; b) the participants should have submitted the ten daily reflection logs; and c) the participants should have been involved in teaching adult learners in their respective HEIs. Based on the following criteria, only 13 participants out of the 15 qualified. Out of the total participants, 10 came from private universities, one from private college, and two from state universities. According to Creswell (2013), qualitative studies range from “5 to 25 individuals who have all experienced the same phenomenon” (p. 81).

3.3. Research Instrument

Interview protocol. The instrument used in the study is a list of reflection questions provided to participants every after the training for each day of the 10-day training. The reflection questions remain the same for the 10 days. The traditional methods of establishing reliability of a data collection instrument were not applicable in this study since the interview protocol was designed specifically for this study. The original set of questions on the interview protocol was designed by the CHED Committee on Adult Education. Among the reflection questions were: What part of the course did you find most valuable and why? What part of the course are impactful for you? What might be improved in the training and how can I provide feedback? What are my recommendations about designing adult training programs? Careful consideration was given to design the protocol questions to be collectively exhaustive and mutually exclusive.

3.4. Data Gathering Procedure

The data were collected by gathering the written reflection of participants through open-ended questions that allowed the researcher to consider the participants’ experiences and perspectives on adult education (Creswell, 2014; Moustakas, 2010). The collected data represent participants’ insights regarding the success and challenges they encountered during their adult education training. The researcher began the data collection process by getting the consent of adult learners to participate in the study. The researcher messaged each participant, inviting him/her to participate in the study. Once participants accepted, their full contact information was requested, and the researcher asked permission to use their daily reflection on the training as a rich source of data. Clarifications were made for responses that needed follow-up questions.

3.5. Methods of Data Analysis

This study used at least two coding phases: "an initial phase involving the naming of each line of data, followed by a focused, selective phase that uses the most significant or frequent earlier codes to sort, synthesize, and organize large amounts of data" (Charmaz, 2003a, p. 93). This study implemented focused, theoretical, and open coding procedures to investigate relationships among ideas and to link ideas and concepts in developing the theory. Data analysis proceeded through the following stages: (a) the first stage which consists of preliminary data collection and open coding procedures; (b) the intervening stage consisting of focused and selective coding procedures that were applied to integrate categories and their properties; (c) the third stage, the thematic analysis, in which the relationships between categories were compared and analyzed to develop propositional hypotheses and themes; and (d) the last stage, writing the theory.

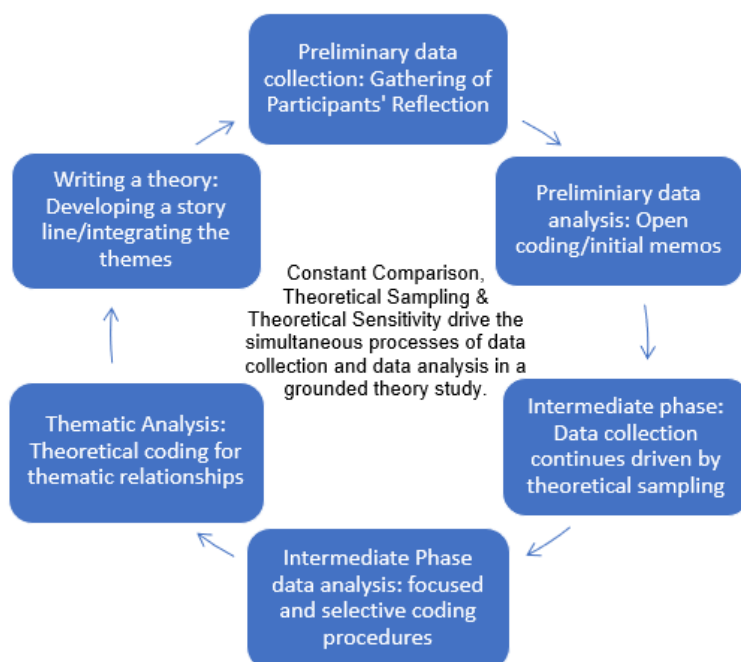


Figure 1. Analytical Model

4. Results and Discussion

The implementation of constructivist grounded theory research paradigm and data collection and analysis procedures produced five emergent themes that represent the outcomes of this study. The five themes, indicative of practitioners' practices, are the following: 1) learning the best practices on adult education, 2) planning adult education programs, 3)

anchoring planning on adult education framework, 4) knowing your learners, and 5) Creating a framework for designing adult education programs. Five emergent themes constitute the findings of this grounded theory study. Out of these five themes, the following multilevel theoretical framework was developed:

4.1. A Framework for Designing Adult Education Programs

Based on these five themes that emerged from the analysis of the data, namely: 1) learning the best practices on adult education, 2) planning adult education programs, 3) anchoring planning on adult education framework, 4) knowing your learners, and 5) creating a framework for designing adult education programs, a model that can be used by HEIs to design adult education programs has been created.

Figure 2 presents the first framework for designing adult education programs at the program level, the hub and spoke model.

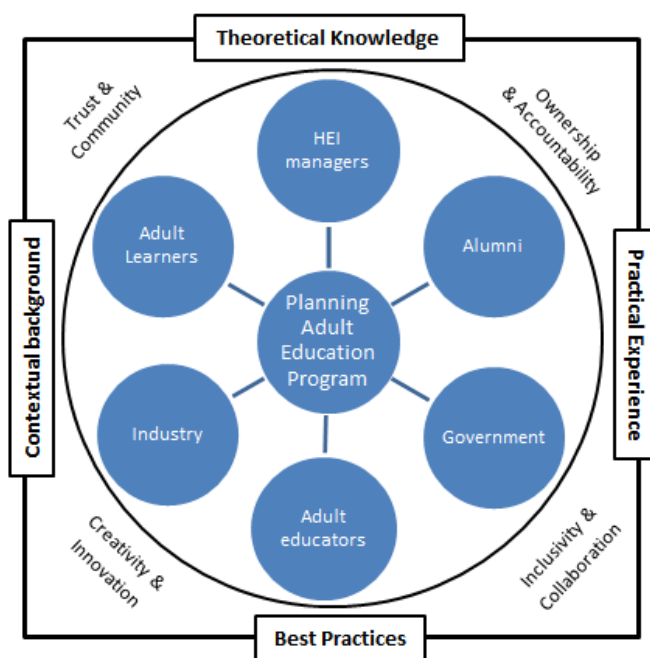


Figure 2. Framework 1, the Hub and Spokes Model

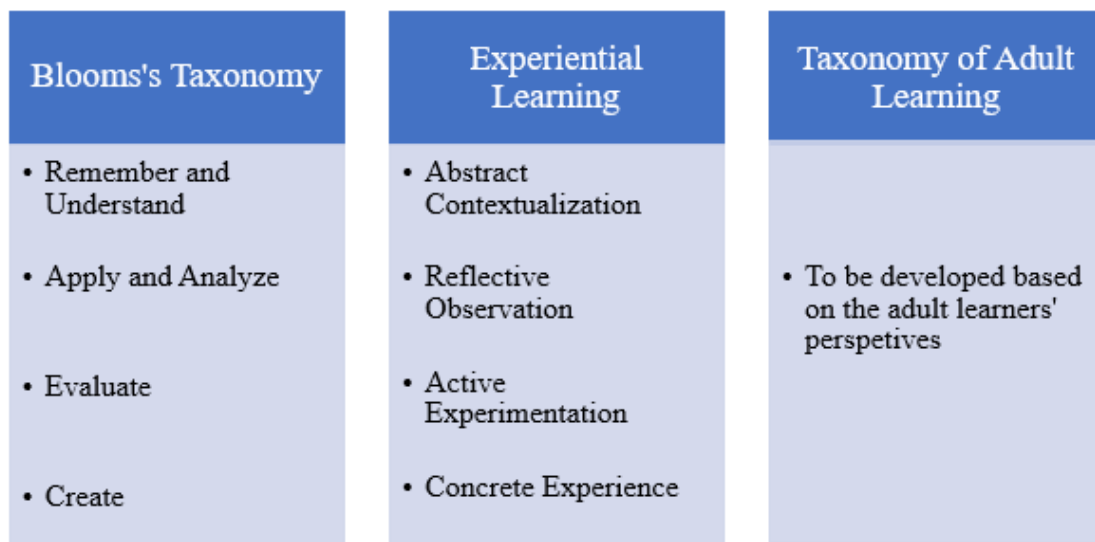


Figure 3. Conceptual Paradigm of the Study

This framework was based on the first three themes generated: Theme 1, Learning the Best Practices on Adult Education; Theme 2, Planning Adult Education Programs; and Theme 3, Anchoring Planning on Adult Education Framework. The framework used the hub and spoke model in illustrating the relationship of the various elements in designing adult education program. As can be seen in Figure 3, the model contains the four pillars of designing effective adult education programs, the characteristics of successful planning on the outskirts of the wheel, and the hub and spoke model that exemplifies collaboration and connectedness among stakeholders.

The hub and spoke model demonstrate collaboration among stakeholders, namely: HEI managers, alumni, government, adult educators, industry, and adult learners. The elements for a successful continuing education are superior and innovative programming, teaching staff who are thinkers and practitioners, connectedness through partnerships, a community of motivated students, and a collaborative model. The last element, the hub and spoke model is a collaborative model that holds the other elements together. This model provides a centralized approach to adult education program planning, in which an HEI central unit dedicated to adult education program planning is the hub that holds all stakeholders together. This means that stakeholders work together for a common purpose, to plan effective adult education programs. The relationship of this central unit with other stakeholders is essential to hold the whole unit together and to sustain the success of the plan. The HEI leadership is also on the top spoke of the model, illustrating the leadership function that directs the course of the wheel.

The hub and spoke model shows planning at the center, serving as a hub, and all stakeholders connected to the hub, which means they are engaged, involved, and included in providing inputs to the adult education plan. The HEI managers should demonstrate the characteristics of successful planning by establishing trust and community, sharing the vision with all stakeholders, encouraging inclusivity, owning up to problems by being accountable, and inspiring creativity and innovation. This is the first step in the design process, looking at design from a macro level point of view. It entails engaging stakeholders, getting them on board, eliciting inputs, and sharing the vision. Regular communication to them will be conducted throughout the whole planning process up to implementation and revision of the plan. The contributions they provide were used as inputs in the next stage of planning, which is demonstrated in Figure 2, Framework for Designing Adult Education Courses. The process illustrated in this framework is also in response to research question no. 2, What is the proposed process for designing effective adult education courses?

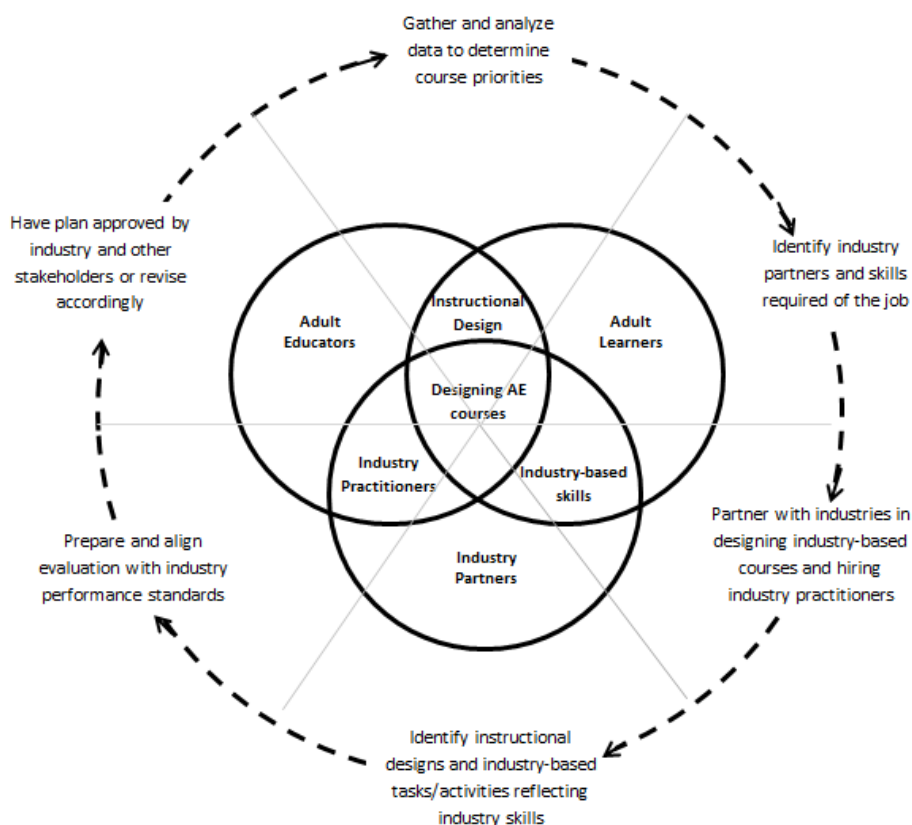


Figure 4. Framework 2, Breaking Ranks Process Circle

Figure 4 shows Framework 2, the breaking ranks process circle for designing adult education courses. If Framework 1 looks at the macro elements of adult education program planning, Framework 2 demonstrates the meso-level of planning with the aim of designing a course within a program. It presents two main elements: the overlapping diagrams at the center, and the process by which to develop adult education courses at the outskirts of the big circle. It integrates three themes: Theme 2, Planning Adult Education Programs; Theme 4, Knowing your Learners; and Theme 5, Creating a Framework for Designing Adult Education Programs. The three overlapping circles illustrate the collaborative nature of designing courses, with adult educators at the left frame, overlapping with the right circle, adult learners, and again overlapping at the bottom circle, which is industry partners. Based on the themes generated, these are three important factors to consider in designing adult education courses.

It is a best practice to hire industry professionals even without the necessary academic credentials as long as they are skilled in a particular competency or area that the adult learning course targets. Adult educators should have the contextual background, theoretical knowledge, practical experiences and best practices to develop efficient curriculum and strategies for an effective adult education course. It is also crucial that designed courses are learner-centered and address the needs of adult learners. Courses should be customized based on learner characteristics, learner contexts, and learner needs. The merging of adult educators and adult learners as shown in Figure 4 are instructional models fit for learners' contexts and needs. Thus, adult educators should have solid knowledge on adult learning theories and instructional strategies to meet this unique need. Industry professionals is one of the stakeholders in which meaningful partnerships could be created to ensure the program's success. Industry partners are a good resource for course designs as they dictate the skills needed by adults. They should not only have a say in the curriculum design but should be involved throughout the process from beginning to end. Their involvement is significant as they provide inputs relevant to skills that adult learners need to develop. Their participation is also crucial towards the last stage of the training as they provide an environment for adult learners to gain practical skills through hands-on practice and immersion in their respective industries.

Aside from this, the HEI can also tap industry professionals as part-time instructors for their industry-based courses. As shared by participants, among the best practices of successful adult education programs in Canada are educators who are industry professionals. Thus, the overlap between adult learners and industry partners is the development of industry-based skills through industry immersions and experiences as provided by partner-industries. Industry partners then assess the skills demonstrated by participants and sometimes employ them as part of the partnership. Outside of the diagram is the five-step process of developing an adult education course beginning from data gathering and analysis of pertinent data and ending with having the plan approved by industry partners and other stakeholders, exemplifying an inclusive, collaborative, and transparent process that builds trust and community among members. The five-step process includes: gather and analyze data to determine course

priorities, partner with industries in designing industry-based courses and hiring industry practitioners to teach the course, identify instructional designs and industry-based tasks/activities reflecting industry skills, prepare and align evaluation with industry performance standards, and have plan approved by industry, learner representatives, adult educators, and other stakeholders.

Providing stakeholders with a sense of ownership is one of the best practices of successful adult education programs. Because course designs thrive on collaboration, inclusivity, and shared vision, stakeholders should be consulted from the planning to the approval of the course. As Charles Pascal said, an individual cannot develop a strategic plan. It has to be groups of individuals coming up with a plan. It should be a collaborative effort.

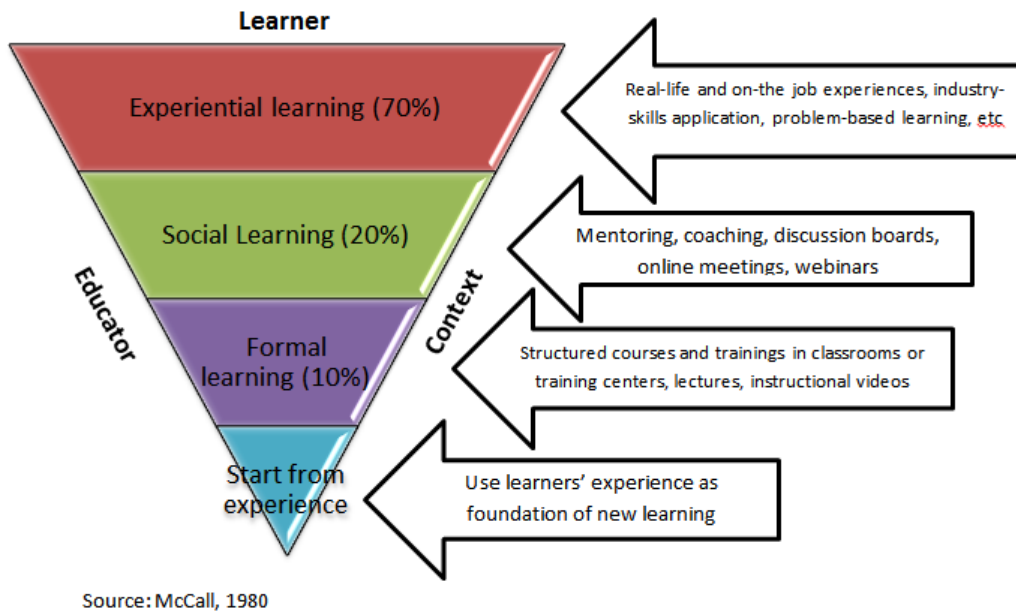


Figure 5. Framework 3, Taxonomy of Adult Learning

The last framework is a taxonomy of adult learning that can be used in designing adult education modules. It also answers the third research question RQ3: How may learning experiences be incorporated in designing learning modules for adults? Figure 5 presents the model. [Figure 5. Framework 3, Taxonomy of Adult Learning]. This framework is the micro level of design planning. It is inspired by Bloom’s taxonomy of designing learning objectives, Kolb’s (1984) experiential learning theory, and McCall’s (1980) 70-20-10 model for learning and development as demonstrated in the theories presented by participants under Theme 3, Anchoring Planning on Adult Education Framework. This design is a revised version of other forms that are already existing. As can be seen, the figure is an inverted Bloom’s taxonomy,

with only four levels. The pyramid is inverted to highlight McCall's (1980) 70-20-10 model for learning and development. The highest and largest level represents the dominant instructional strategies that can be used to design learning activities. These activities are characterized by adult learning principles, learner-centered theories, constructivist learning, and experiential learning that takes the largest chunk, getting the 70% share of the learning time.

Thus, teaching strategies that may be employed include activities where students can direct their own learning, using active participation and groups for social interaction, using a variety of teaching and learning methods, including hands-on practice. In relation to Framework 2, this is the time allocated to actual demonstration of skills acquired in the course through industry immersions of partner industries and other real-world application of skills that may either be actual or simulated. The second level from top signifies social learning, which comprises 20% of allocated time. According to Knowles' theory of andragogy, adults prefer social interaction. This includes discussion with peers, getting mentored, group discussions, among others. According to Talbert (2019), active learning that uses discussion groups, practice by doing, and teaching others provide the highest retention rate of learning from 50 to 90%. The third level from top is allocated for classroom discussion or lectures, which comprises 10% of the total module time. This means that the last time, about 10%, should be spent in lecturing. Thus, in designing modules, lectures and discussions by adult educators should occupy only 10% of the total learning experience. Adults are problem solvers and prefer social interaction. Therefore, passive teaching strategies such as lecture, reading, audio-visual presentations, and demonstrations are passive forms of learning that should take only the smallest portion of the learning experience. The last level is experience. All adult learning starts with experience. They want to use their life experiences in the classroom and to integrate new ideas with existing knowledge. Thus, needs assessment is important for adult educators to gain an idea where they need to start in the lesson.

Outside of the inverted pyramid are the three important elements in the teaching-learning process, the learner, the educator, and the context. The characteristics of the learners must be understood based on the principles of adult learning. Educators should be familiar with the emerging and current needs of learners, must know various instructional strategies that meet this unique need, and employ active teaching strategies and experiential forms of learning. Then, contexts should dictate the form of learning mode applicable to learners whether these should be online, face-to-face, or blended learning models. All these decisions are anchored on the data gathered from framework 2.

Integrated Frameworks: Multilevel Planning

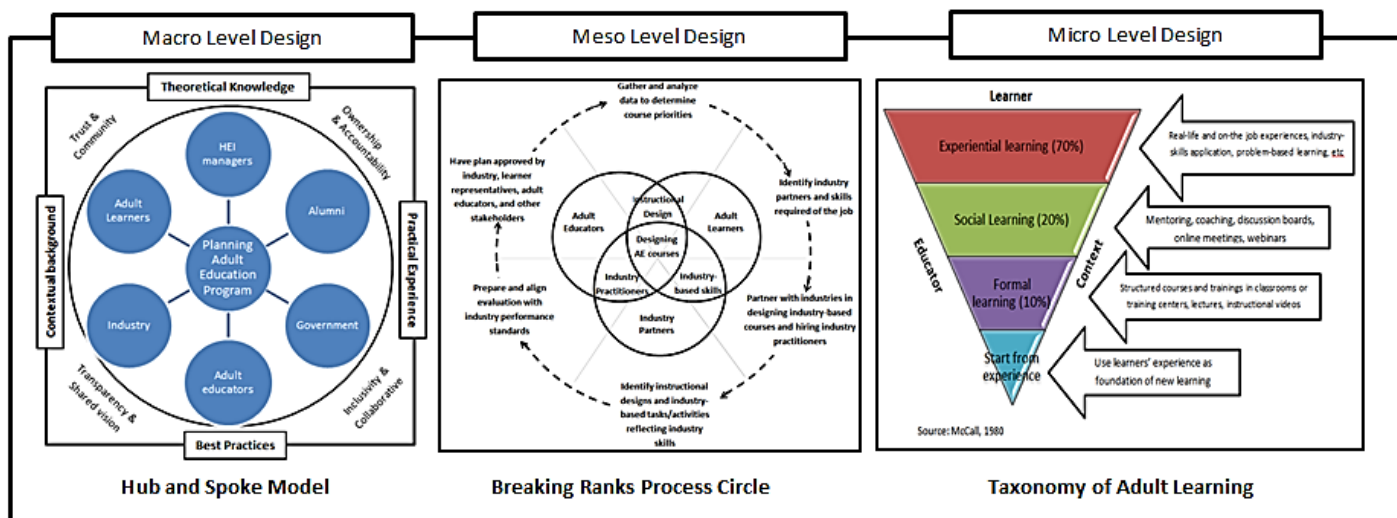


Figure 6. Integrated Framework for Designing Adult Education Programs

When the three frameworks are merged, it looks like the one illustrated in Figure 6. [Figure 6. Integrated Framework for Designing Adult Education Programs]

Figure 6 shows the integrated design of the three frameworks. These three frameworks can also be used separately depending on the need of the HEI but these can also be integrated. When integrated, this framework is called the Multilevel Planning Model or MPM, which reflects the three integrated frameworks, with multilevel representing the different levels of planning: the macro level, the meso level, and the micro level, which when followed provides a systematic, inclusive, and participative method of adult education program planning and implementation.

4.2. Implications for Policy and Practice

Many HEIs have been offering adult education programs through formal or informal means using various modes, online, face to face, and blended learning. However, some programs are offered without sufficient evidence for its need using only limited metrics to justify the course offering. This multilevel theoretical model proposes a comprehensive and multi-stage planning of adult education programs that start with the macro (program level), meso (course level), and micro (module or lesson level) of designing a program. While the intent of this study is to simply create a theoretical model, the richness of the data generated three models that may be used separately or together to guide the design process. The frameworks are based on best practices witnessed by participants in the best universities and colleges in Canada which is known for its robust adult education programs. Aside from best

practices, the participants are adult professionals themselves, leaders in the HEIs who have solid background and experience in teaching adults in their respective fields. The participants were also trained on the different adult learning theories which they applied in simulated and actual settings. The profile of participants provide a contextual background as they shared their perspectives and experiences. They come from both private and public HEIs from the different regions of the country. Thus, the experiences and reflection they provided were wide and far-reaching in terms of adult education practice given their respective contexts.

Implications for policy. Using the developed framework will have several implications. First for CHED. The Commission is currently looking to strengthen adult education in the country. It spent a huge amount of money to send a total of 30 HEI representatives in Canada in two batches for two weeks just for learners to be exposed to the best practices of Canadian colleges and universities in terms of planning, designing, and implementing successful adult education programs. The training of these participants continued a year later to consolidate all their learning and provide a recommendation on how each HEI can implement their adult education programs in their respective HEIs. The theoretical model provided in this study are based on the emergent themes that came from the reflection and experiences of participants in the training. This study can serve as inputs to CHED as they improve and revise the Philippine adult education framework and may be recommended for use by HEIs who intend to design adult education programs that are innovative, collaborative, and industry-immersed. The difference of this framework with other adult education frameworks is that the three models focus on how to design effective adult education programs, courses, and modules, according to various levels of granularity. It looks at planning from a micro, meso, and micro perspective to align the program to courses and the courses to modules.

Aside from CHED, this study will also have implications on higher education institutions who offer adult education programs. For SUCs, opening adult education programs require a rigorous process to be accepted. Being approved by CHED is one thing, but having enrollees is another. Even if a program is approved, enrollees do not come in automatically. Thus, the programs lie dormant. It exists, but there are no takers. Framework 1, the hub and spoke model, highlights the partnership between and among the HEIs, industries, alumni, government, and other stakeholders in planning adult education programs. If this will be followed as proposed in the framework, more industry-relevant courses will be offered; thereby eliminating the chance of offering courses with no takers. It will also ensure ready employment for adult learners who finish the courses since the industries can immediately hire them after graduation from the certificate courses.

Another implication for HEI is to provide a budget to further relations with various industries including alumni. A trust and a relationship has to be built so that the relationship would last. This would entail additional budget in terms of public relations expenses. Nevertheless, the outcome would definitely outweigh the cost as this would translate to viable adult course offerings that would not only

benefit the school but also the individual adult, the community, and the industry for making available the skilled adults they need who are job-ready. Following the Framework 2, the breaking ranks process circle, in designing adult education, would also have an implication on adult education course designers. Using this framework would ensure that all decisions are informed by data since the first step of the process is to gather all pertinent data pertaining to the course including environmental scanning, learner persona, market conditions, acceptability of the course and other metrics necessary in making decisions that are backed up by evidence. The process ends with the approval of all stakeholders to highlight ownership of the plan, especially the industry partners who assist in developing the courses. This will guarantee that adult education courses that will be offered are relevant to the needs of the industry and of the workplace. The findings of this study also has implications for adult education teachers. Framework 3, the Taxonomy of Adult Learning provides a guide for adult educators on how to balance content and activities in the module and provides instructional strategies that would work best with adults. When modules are designed based on this framework, learners will have more hands-on practice and experiential learning which is what works best with adult learners. Using this framework as a reference in designing course modules would make it easy for adult educators to find a balance with content and activity in the lessons they design.

Implications for practice. Adhering to the created frameworks will definitely impact adult education practice in the country. While the goal is not to copy the best practices of Canadian colleges and universities that excel in adult education offerings, we can replicate their best practices and customize them based on the Philippine context. This would entail creating a culture of transparency, trust, community, inclusivity, collaboration, shared vision, and a sense of ownership and accountability as exemplified in Framework 1, the hub and spoke model. This will definitely revolutionize the adult education practice in the country. Moreover, this will also have implication on professionalization of adult educators in the country. The practice of HEIs when it comes to hiring educators is to look at the academic credentials of the applicant. Vertical and horizontal alignment, specialization, advanced graduate degrees, research and other academic qualifications are given premium. However, using Framework 2 in designing adult education courses will somehow shift the focus not so much on academic credentials but on the skills the educators possess since adult learners are heavier on practice and skill-based competencies.

The strategy used by many educators will likewise change when Framework 3, the Taxonomy of adult learning, is applied by adult educators in their classroom. There will be less discussion and more on practical activities and experiential learning. While this has been practiced already by some, this does not always happen in practice. Therefore, designing adult education modules using the newly developed taxonomy would ensure a balance of content and activities that are meaningful and relevant to adult learners. Moreover, the practice of collaboration, linkages and industry partnerships would become the norm in HEIs if the multilevel theoretical framework is used in designing courses. Adult education courses would become more known as industry-based skills, experiential learning, practical schooling,

career-based training, and other nicknames that would identify it with industries. This will provide a seamless integration between HEIs and industries and would exemplify a symbiotic relationship in which each party would benefit from the other.

Implications for programmatic policies. The findings of this study indicated the need to broaden the participation of stakeholders during the planning stage of adult education programs to include government, alumni, and industries as presented in the hub and spoke model. Thus, if implemented, this will support the need for programmatic policies from CHED or from HEIs. Currently, CHED requires, based on CMO No. 10, s. of 2005 a feasibility study, budget allocation, program specifications, faculty profile, list of facilities, among others, in offering new programs. If CHED would adopt this model, this would need new policies to specify the multi-stakeholder planning approach in designing adult education programs. If adhered to, the policy will ensure the alignment of the program with evidence-based practices for identifying and meeting the emerging needs of adult learners. However, if HEIs want to adopt the model, they also need to create new policies on how to design adult education programs, courses, or modules/lessons using this model. This policy needs to specify the creation of a unit or department that will be responsible for the mobilization of partnerships and linkages, if these are non-existent yet in the HEIs. This will entail additional budget to the school but is expected to result in better yields in terms of relevance and sustainability of the program offerings, strengthened industry-academe partnerships, and robust adult education programs.

5. Conclusion and Recommendations

The integrated model combines adult learning theories, best practices, adult professionals' experiences, and contextual background as well as values that can guide adult education planning and inform decision making. Moreover, the integrated model is responsive to the emerging needs of adult education professional as courses offered are based on industry needs and skills demanded by market. Table 1 shows the integrated multi-level planning model of adult education programs derived from the themes. Adult education programs are usually designed according to K-12 design principles. The most widely-used framework is Bloom's Taxonomy that has been applied by generations of K-12 teachers and college instructors in their teaching. However, adult learners have unique characteristics and needs different than that of young learners which require new theoretical models that are fit to the needs of adult learners. While there are already existing adult education theories that could guide the design of adult learning programs, there has not been a theoretical model that integrates these theories to design adult education programs down to their level of granularity, from macro to micro approach. With CHED's thrust of strengthening adult education programs in the country, this theoretical model would help adult education program designers develop new programs, courses, or lessons steeped on adult learning theories and best practices with high chances of success. According to Charmaz (2006, p. 135), "The content of

theorizing cuts to the core of studied life and poses new questions about it.” Thus, the multilevel theoretical model in generated by this grounded theory study illuminated the processes by which adult educators can design adult education programs, courses, and modules/lessons that are anchored on adult education theories, best practices, learner experiences, and contextual background. As such, the emergent grounded theory reflects new perspectives on how to design collaborative, creative, and innovative adult education programs that are relevant and responsive to the current and emerging needs of industries, the market, and adult learners. The whole process exemplifies the virtues of trust and community, shared vision, and collaboration, in which each stakeholder experiences a sense of ownership and accountability.

Recommendations

The grounded theory and theoretical model emerging from this research suggests five general recommendations for contemporary policy and practice at designing and offering adult education programs.

1. Adopt the proposed theoretical model to customize planning and designing adult education programs, courses, and lessons. This would ensure the relevance of programs being offered as the need would be informed not only by the needs of adult learners but also by the industries, the alumni, the government, the market trends, and other pertinent data.
2. Create new policies for offering adult education programs to include other stakeholders during the planning stage to make the program design consultative, inclusive, and collaborative. The emerging needs, not only the current needs of adult learners should also be considered in offering new programs to meet future industry demands.
3. Widen the selection of adult educators not only from those having academic qualifications but also from industry professionals who are practitioners and who are highly skilled in trades relevant to market needs.
4. Implement programmatic policies and practices that support a systemic and collaborative model for planning and designing adult education programs as well as in identifying and meeting the current and emerging needs of adult learners.
5. Determine financial and resource allocations related to additional funding that will be incurred in strengthening stakeholder partnerships in the planning stage of program development and in creating corollary services to make this endeavor possible.

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