

Rethinking Adult Learning

The Science of Adult Learning Explained

The Science of Adult learning is a rethinking of the way we teach adults. To understand why it's proven to be dramatically more effective than old ways of teaching, we need to look at how we used to believe learning took place.

We used to think that the brain was like a computer, taking in facts as inputs and putting them into the short-term memory. With enough memorization and rehearsal, these facts could be transferred to your long-term memory, and this is how you learned effectively. While this method was great at regurgitating figures, it wasn't an effective way of learning skills.

The question of how to best teach people concrete skills gave rise to a new science, learning science, centered around the theory of **Constructivism**. Constructivism theorized that instead of remembering facts, the brain instead retains experiences, and our knowledge base is constructed from the many experiences we have lived through as we grow. New information is assimilated or adapted to fit our previous experiences. What this means is instead of learning rules, we create connections in our memory, in order to construct guidelines to help us navigate the environments and contexts we live in day to day.

Learning Science found people best retain information through **situated cognition**. This means that our knowledge is intertwined with the physical, sensory activity happening in our social circles, cultural events, and physical environments. When it comes to learning skills, we learn best and deepest through active experiences. This means the environment activities take place in is incredibly important.

According to learning science, there are 5 key points to truly successful learning

1. Learning happens best in a complex, realistic, environment that's relevant to the skill.
2. Social negotiation is an integral part of learning.
3. Multiple perspectives and modes of representation help retain the core concepts.
4. Learners should be aware they are actively trying to construct new knowledge in their head.
5. Learners should feel real ownership in learning.

The focus of learning should be less on quizzes and tests than on creating situations that let learners put their skills and critical thinking to use in "real life" situations. This creates **adaptable expertise**, where the learner is such an expert on the subject that they can apply skills successfully in new and unexpected situations.

In addition, studies have found the more **personalized an environment** you can make for a specific learner, the more effective they will be in knowledge retention. Technology can greatly aid in personalizing the environment. It's also been found that through this active learning process, long term retention is increased, and **skill decay is dramatically decreased**.

You've used this active learning process many times in your life, even if you didn't know it. When you're learning to ride a bike, throw a football, dance, or play piano, **you learn best by doing**. You have your parents, coach, or teacher demonstrate for you how to do the thing you're trying to learn. Then you attempt it for yourself. They've created an environment where you feel free to fail and safe from harm. Only after physically attempting the act multiple times does it become part of your **MUSCLE MEMORY**, and such a part of you, you don't even think about performing the act anymore, you just do it. This is the methodology behind SalesBoost, and why we work better than any LMS on the market.

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