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Synergetic Learning Model

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Abstract: Adult education scholars often focus research on a factor that is expected to improve educational outcomes. The Synergetic Learning Model combines the work of many scholars.

Keywords: learning model, synergy, learning design, end-to-end learning, performance support

Introduction

For years, academics and practitioners alike have espoused adult education as an important component of human resources development. Along with job analysis, job design, recruitment, selection, and communication (Hargrove, Becker & Hargrove, 2015), adult education, training, and development is expected to be a performance improvement driver across organizations. Similarly, for years, academics have studied a wide variety of factors that can improve adult education outcomes in organizations. The research is typically focused on a single factor like feedback (Bakken, 2002; Ende, 1983), reflection (Jackson, 2015; Jonker, 2012), or on-the-job learning (Jacobs, 2012; Johnson, 2001). While the efforts aimed at identifying and determining the value of these adult education approaches reside in the literature, they are presented as individual research efforts only.

The challenge for practitioners who try to apply research to practice, is a myriad of research findings with little clarity or guidance on how to combine research findings to create synergy in adult education interventions. Perhaps the most significant obstacle practitioners face in creating synergy when applying multiple research findings is the long-term organizational focus on training ‘events’. This focus is supported directly and indirectly in the literature. Lee and Jang (2014) wrote a comprehensive paper that offered four critical dimensions and ten synthesized procedures for developing instructional design models. The instructional design models were typically applied to the design of training events as opposed to end-to-end learning solutions that include such components as engagement, preparation, acquisition, reflection, application, and performance support.

The Model

The Synergetic Learning Model combines the work of many scholars and is suitable for both application purposes and additional research. The conceptual learning model is an example of where the sum is greater than the value of the individual parts. The Synergetic Learning Model (see Figure 1) is a conceptual model that aligns previous which practitioners can apply to enhance learning transfer, and scholars can study and refine.



Figure 1. Synergetic Learning Model

The Synergetic Learning Model generally follows a left to right application, however, performance support is intended to support learning throughout model application. The goal of *Engage* (Brinkerhoff & Apking, 2001; Brinkerhoff & Montesson, 1995; Brinkerhoff & Mooney, 2008) is to prepare learners to become intellectually involved in a learning solution by answering four key questions:

1. What am I going to learn?
2. How am I going to apply what I'm going to learn?
3. How will what I am going to learn benefit me?
4. How will what I'm going to learn benefit the organization?

The *Prepare* (Choo, 2005; Spear & Mocker, 1984) phase exposes learners to new concepts and theories that are foundational to achieving the desired learning outcome. This is often accomplished through pre-reads or pre-work that take place prior to a formal learning event. *Acquire* (Bakken, 2002; Ende, 1983; Sheckley, Kehrhahn & Grenier, 2007) consists of applying new concepts and theories using real-world examples, cases and settings. Acquire typically includes facilitator or technology-led simulations, trial and error, and real-time feedback. *Reflect* (Ericsson & Charness, 1997; Roberts & Bea, 2001) is a time to consider the Engage questions and answers, the Prepare concepts and theories, and the Acquire application efforts with a goal of cementing new learning and developing unresolved questions for future resolution. *Perform* (Enos & Kehrhahn, 2002; Kolb, 1984; Sheckley, 2007) is the on-the-job application and use of new learning to improve performance by improving productivity, accuracy, results or capability.

Performance Support (Gottfredson & Mosher, 2011; Hochwarter, Witt, Treadway & Ferris, 2006; Rhoades & Eisenberger, 2002) are the resources, processes, practices, and tools the organization provides its learners for them to learn and perform their work successfully and efficiently over time.