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Advancing Self-Efficacy and Intuitive Decision-Making Calls to Action

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Abstract: *The purpose of this paper is to gain a better understanding of the connection between self-efficacy and intuitive calls to action as it relates to adult learners and adult learning contexts.*

Self-Efficacy

Albert Bandura (1997) provides a description of social cognitive theory that helps explain how individual judgments affect decisions. These decisions occur while activity within the organization continues to take place along with social and self-evaluation consequences (Wood, Bandura, and Bailey, 1990). Intuitive decision-making rules must be learned through a process of discovery and exploratory experiences that take place within and external to the individual. This process of psychosocial functioning occurs through a regulative process of triadic reciprocal causation in which behavior, personal and cognitive factors, and the environment influence each other.

One of the central constructs in social cognitive theory is self-efficacy (Bandura and Jourden, 1991). Self-efficacy is concerned with individual beliefs about one's capability to use motivation, cognitive abilities, and the potential courses of action to exert control over the environment. Individuals with high self-efficacy beliefs tend to exhibit greater situational adaptability and are much more confident in their intuitive decision-making. Those with low self-efficacy beliefs may forego opportunities or not implement workable courses of action.

Activities calling for the development and execution of complex problem solving skills require a mechanism to get from knowledge structures to action (Bandura and Wood, 1989). Knowledge structures provide the rules and strategies of effective action that serve as cognitive guides for the behaviors. These knowledge structures are the result of "observational learning, exploratory activities, verbal instruction, and innovative cognitive syntheses of acquired knowledge" (Bandura, 1997).

Intuitive Decision-Making

Perception of how intuitive decisionmaking occurs in adults evokes keen interest in educators and adult learners. Individuals confront the conundrum posed by Polanyi (1958) in his theory of personal knowledge that "we can know more than we can tell..." A naturalistic inquiry complements social cognitive theory where intrinsic interest and metacognition can enhance self-reflection and personal adaptation. The context of "I know this!" sensation may attune a mental model that is usually tacit into a more explainable model. Notwithstanding, Polanyi states that no knowledge can be made entirely explicit.

Gestalt theory proposed a holistic incident as a meaningful dynamic process of integration and reciprocal action between and among conceptual parts *and* the whole. Wertheimer (1945) placed great interest in thinking about thinking and meaning: "What may be the decisive features and the steps?... Whence the flash, the spark? What are the conditions, the attitudes, favorable and

unfavorable to such remarkable events?” More than mere perception, understanding gestalt principles can indicate a wholeness of personal experience or camouflage true meaning of stimuli.

Personal narrative encourages self-reflection to discern awareness of cues on how a self interprets experience. Educators may be able to impart a prudent trust in intuitive decisionmaking while associating the value of critical thinking. Assessing praxis can yield trust in sensing novelty and appreciate that much of personal knowledge is tacit knowing.

Self-efficacy in intuitive decision-making can be enhanced through observing, modeling, and critically reflecting on unusual circumstances. A context of self is collective agency that can result in effective social participating, reflecting, and adult learning. Having personal confidence in an apparent automatic decision can be a valued perspective of adult action and accountability. Qualitative inquiry, combined with empirical study, may expand avenues of research to better understand how tacit knowing and intuition emerge from implicit sensations to explicit expression. The resulting personal insights and self-efficacy can be a profound opportunity for appreciating novelty, synthesizing domain specific meaning, and enacting lifelong learning.

Unanswered Questions

Much of the literature about self-efficacy and intuitive decision-making indicates mental models that require further qualitative and empirical research. Some questions for future research include: How can educators identify adult learner needs to develop self-efficacy beliefs? How can educators address adult learner needs to improve self-efficacy beliefs? What does literature say about cognitive bias in appreciating tacit knowledge structures and self-efficacy beliefs? How can a learner apply an understanding of intuition to impact personal choice and action? What types of professional development opportunities can higher education organizations provide to improve self-efficacy or intuitive decision-making strategies? What responsibility and accountability does the learner have in developing self-efficacy?

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