

# Malcolm Knowles - Characteristics of Adult Learners

## *Autonomous & self-directed*

- Adult learners prefer to be free to direct themselves. Actively involve them in the learning process and serve as a facilitator for them.
- Get learners' perspectives about what topics to cover and let them work on projects that reflect their interests.
- Allow learners to assume responsibility for presentations and group leadership.
- Act as a facilitator and guide learners to their own knowledge rather than supply them with facts.
- Show learners how the class will help them reach their goals.

## *A foundation of life experiences & knowledge*

- Learners need to connect learning to their knowledge and experience base (family relationships, professional life, and previous academic experience).
- Draw out participants' experience and knowledge relevant to the topic.
- Relate theories and concepts to the learners' lives; recognize and acknowledge the value of experience in learning.

## *Goal-oriented*

- When enrolling in a course, learners usually know what goal they want to attain. Good organization and clearly defined elements are much appreciated.
- Show learners how your class will help them attain their goals.
- Clear goals and course objectives should be presented early in the course. (Course syllabus).

## *Relevancy-oriented*

- Learners must see a reason for learning something new. It has to be applicable to their work or other responsibilities to be of value.
- Try to relate theories and concepts to a setting that is familiar to learners.
- Allow learners to choose projects that reflect their own interests.

## *Practical*

- Learners may not be interested in knowledge for its own sake. Let them know explicitly how the lesson will be useful to them on the job.

## *Respect*

- Acknowledge the wealth of experiences that learners bring to the classroom. Learners should be treated as equals in experience and knowledge.