CURRICULUM FOR ADULT EDUCATION LEADERSHIP SPECIALIZATION
KNOWLEDGE AREA MODULE 6
CRITICAL ISSUES FOR ADULT EDUCATION LEADERS

Introduction

Adult education leaders function in a variety of settings. Some are community organizers who work with grassroots groups to improve the lives of adults in the community. Others are trainers in business and industry settings and are asked to represent both the needs of employees who are learners as well as the interests of the larger organization. Still others work in military or other government agencies, directing programs that serve the public good, such as public safety or community health. Adult educators take leadership positions in prison education and adult literacy initiatives. Others take responsibility for teaching in adult vocational education and college or university degree programs. In each of these settings, the adult educator becomes a leader by integrating two significant aspects of adult education: (1) the teaching-learning transaction, and (2) effective program planning and implementation.

KAM 6 continues the dual focus that you have experienced in previous KAMs. The intention of this KAM is to integrate what is known about adult learning (and teaching) into effective programming. KAM 6 builds upon your understanding of adult development from KAM 2, systemic approaches to organizational study from KAM 3, and philosophical and historical developments in the adult education movement from KAM 5.

Therefore, KAM 6 should be the last KAM that you complete before beginning your dissertation. KAM 6 culminates your work to date; as such it holds responsibility (as does the dissertation) for demonstration of your scholarly development as reflected in all four of the specialization outcomes:
“Evaluate the general roles and interconnections among the roles of the adult learner, adult educator, the administration, the organizational system, and the local-to-global context in which the organization operates.”

“Integrate adult learning theories with program and instructional design research to implement, evaluate, and improve instructional practices and learning outcomes for diverse populations of adults.”

“Identify and evaluate elements of program design and implementation that contribute to an organization’s integrity, effectiveness, and mission fulfillment.”

“Analyze, within an historical and global perspective, the local practice of adult education in order to engage learners in promoting social justice and social change.”

Overall Objectives for This KAM

Your scholarship in KAM 6 should allow you to meet the following objectives:

1. Evaluation of the teaching-learning transaction, including an analysis of adult learning theories and how those theories contribute to program structure.

2. Provide an analysis of current research on program planning in adult education contexts, including program philosophy and other foundations, program administration, and assessment and evaluation.

3. Demonstration of the intersection of adult learning theory and program planning to a specific context.

Plan to accomplish objective #1 in the Breadth component of the KAM, objective #2 in the Depth component, and objective #3 in the Application component. These
objectives are further explained with examples in the discussion of each component that follows. Adult education programs are intrinsically linked to social change. Therefore, attention should be given to the significance of the community-based nature of adult education (broadly defined by your own professional context) and social change.

Challenges and Opportunities in This KAM

At first glance, this KAM appears to be about two distinctive areas of research: an in-depth study of adult learning theory and an analysis of literature that focuses on effective program planning. Indeed, most adult education doctoral programs separate these foci in the curriculum with separate courses devoted to each topic. The Walden curriculum emphasizes the dual nature of adult education: it is a field of study and a field of practice. The Walden KAM process asks that students synthesize theory, research, and application. In KAM 6, you are asked to integrate what you learn about the teaching-learning transaction into an analysis of effective program planning models.

The Breadth component of this KAM should focus on a thorough examination of adult learning theory and how various theories contribute to the teaching-learning transaction. You should enter the study of adult learning theory with a critical eye. Indeed, there is not a common understanding of adult learning theory and many scholars argue that – despite significant research in this area– we do not at this point fully understand how adults learn. Therefore, analyzing the literature is more than simply reporting what the writers say. You need to demonstrate your understanding by using higher levels of thinking such as comparing and contrasting, analyzing, synthesizing, or evaluating them.
In the Depth component, you will examine effective program planning. This KAM is distinctive from others in the specialization in that you will want to begin the Depth component by reviewing significant contributions to program planning literature. Much of this literature is found in books rather than journal articles, although the texts are really not theoretical in nature. In fact, it can be argued that program planning does not have a theoretical base at all and is, instead, a mixture of philosophy and application. Nevertheless, there are influential adult educators who write about program planning and seminal texts that can inform your understanding of program planning processes.

Current research on program planning devotes considerable attention to the political aspects of adult programming, either at the macro level (social justice issues) or the micro level (elements of power and control in local organizations). In many instances, adult education focuses on a mission of social change; therefore, issues of power and control in program planning are significant elements for the adult education leader. One unique aspect of program planning in adult education concerns the involvement of the learners in planning, conducting and evaluating both the program and its impact on the community. A review of Participatory Action Research will provide insights as to how community perspectives can be integrated into program planning.

It is impossible to think about program planning (one aspect of the teaching-learning exchange) without considering research on adult learning theory. You will need to write about both aspects, adult learning theory and program planning informed by that theory, in this section of the KAM. You will also be required to demonstrate that you are able to identify how research is, or is not, helpful, perceptive, and well grounded.
In the Application component, you will have an opportunity to apply your mastery of adult learning theory and understanding of effective programming to plan, revise, or evaluate a specific adult education program. This is an opportunity to integrate what you know from both sides of the teaching-learning exchange (the programmatic side and the learner side) into a specific professional context.

Breadth Component

EDUC 8614 Principles for Adult Education Leaders (5 cr.)

There are a number of established and emerging theories of adult learning. These theories may not be discrete, and how we refer to key elements of adult learning is often ambiguous. For example, one central aspect of adult learning theory has been the notion of “self direction”. But exactly what is self-direction in learning? Is self-direction a particular way that adults learn, possibly a unique process associated with cognition? Or does it more accurately describe a characteristic of the adult learner, so that some adults are self-directed and others are not? Is self-direction a skill set? If so, what skills comprise self-directedness and can we increase (or decrease) the ability to be self-directed through various program structures? How do different contexts contribute to the adult’s ability to be self-directed – on other words, is a capable adult learner always self-directed or does the content and context affect self-directedness in learning? The Breadth component of KAM 6 should allow for inquiry into significant theories of adult learning, including critical theory, self-direction, constructivist learning theory, situated cognition, and transformative learning theory, among others. Listed below are some suggestions for the kinds of issues you might want to pursue in the Breadth component of this KAM.
They are intended to be suggestive only but will give you an idea of the kinds of topics your paper should address.

1. How do selected theories of adult learning view the aspects of learner, context, and process?
2. How do elements of adult development (cognitive, psychosocial, moral, etc.) inform significant theories of adult learning?
3. How do philosophies associated with adult learning (perhaps investigated in KAM 5) contribute to the development of adult learning theory?
4. How is the tension between socially constructed knowledge and individualized learning presented in one or more adult learning theories?
5. What are the significant components of an adult learning theory (for example, critical theory or transformative learning theory) and how do those components align with the work of a classical theorist, like John Dewey?

Demonstration of Competence

Using the knowledge resources covered, write a scholarly paper that demonstrates an understanding of the adult learning theory in general or as theory relates to a particular phenomenon or group of phenomena. The emphasis of the paper is not on summarizing the content of various theories but on a critical assessment of them including comparisons, contrasts, evaluations, and a synthesis of different theories, assumptions, concepts, ideas, and elements encountered during the theoretical literature search and
review. The expected length of the paper for the Breadth component is approximately 30
double-spaced pages, plus references. The paper is considered equivalent to 5-quarter
credit hours of graduate work.

*Learning Resources*

A bibliography of possible references for this KAM can be found at the Walden
Library site accessed through the faculty or student personal start page/campuscruiser.
Once in the Walden Library site, click on Get KAM Research Help and look for the
appropriate program or KAM. The Resources links will take you to general references
that will provide an overview of the field or key thinkers. The Bibliography link will take
you to a list of possible writings. The books and authors listed here are meant only to
provide examples of the kind of literature you should be accessing. You can compile your
own bibliographic references using this list as a starting point. If you have difficulty
compiling a bibliography or choosing relevant readings, consult with your faculty mentor
or KAM assessor and the Walden librarians.

**Depth Component**

**EDUC 8624 Current Research in Program Planning and Delivery (5 cr.)**

The Depth component provides an opportunity for you to explore program-
planning literature that is specific to adult education and to consider the connections
between adult learning theory and program planning. You should begin your study by
revisiting systems theory from KAM 3, then extend your scholarship with an overview of
program planning literature. Finally, you should investigate current research in both
adult learning theory and program planning in order to fully examine the teaching-
learning exchange. Depending upon your area of inquiry you might want to consider research into one of the following areas:

1. Examine the relationship between the community, the organization, and its leadership in effective program planning.

2. Consider the role of lived experience in adult learning and how programs integrate that concept into instructional planning.

3. Evaluate how adult learning theorists deal with the element of “discourse” and how educational programs are influenced by that theory.

4. Evaluate research on critical theory and adult education. How does critical theory inform the leader’s perceptions of best practice in program planning?

5. How does teacher theorizing about adult learners contribute to the teaching-learning exchange?

6. How can program evaluation processes be informed by what we know of adult learning and development?

7. Synthesize the recurring themes of “best practice” in program planning and evaluation literature.

**Demonstration of Competence**

Compile an annotated bibliography that includes a minimum of 15 recent refereed or peer-reviewed research journal articles (or older articles if they are a particularly good fit) on a particular theme related to (a) adult learning theory and/or (b) program planning.
For each source included on your list, prepare a critical analysis. Arrange the bibliography in alphabetical order. Suggested length is 1 to 1½ pages per annotation.

Write a 25-30 page double-spaced typed scholarly paper describing, analyzing, and explaining the selected theme and relating it to effective management of the teaching-learning exchange in adult programs. In this paper, be sure to include evidence of higher order thinking (comparison and contrast, analysis, and evaluation). The total Depth component assignment is equivalent to 5-quarter credit hours of graduate work.

Learning Resources

A bibliography of possible references for this KAM can be found at the Walden Library site accessed through the faculty or student personal start page/campuscruiser. Once in the Walden Library site, click on Get KAM Research Help and look for the appropriate program or KAM. The Resources links will take you to general references that will provide an overview of the field or key thinkers. The Bibliography link will take you to a list of possible writings. The books and authors listed here are meant only to provide examples of the kind of literature you should be accessing. You can compile your own bibliographic references using this list as a starting point. If you have difficulty compiling a bibliography or choosing relevant readings, consult with your faculty mentor or KAM assessor and the Walden librarians.

Application Component

EDUC 8634 Professional Practice for Adult Education Leaders (4 cr.)

In the Application component of the KAM, your focus should now turn to your own professional context—your work with adult learners in community-based settings, schools, non-profits, business and industry, or other adult-focused institutions. In order
for the Application component to be the most productive learning experience possible, it is useful for this component to draw on the themes and findings from the Breadth and Depth components of this KAM. You are encouraged to review the resources presented in previous components of this KAM as well as the annotated bibliography compiled as part of the Depth component. In addition to these resources, you are urged to reflect on your own professional practice and firsthand experiences with program planning and administration.

Some suggestions of Application projects you might consider:

1. Trace the historical and conceptual development of the writings and suggestions for practice of a seminal adult educator (such as Stephen Brookfield, Malcolm Knowles, Jack Mezirow, Phyllis Cunningham, Peter Jarvis, Michael Newman, or other significant figure. Analyze practice recommendations in light of the writer’s changing perspective on adult learning.

2. Design an adult education program and show how you might integrate a specific learning theory into the program design. (For example, consider economic development in a rural community; integrate critical pedagogy and collaboration as instructional approaches.)

3. Identify an urban literacy program and create a program evaluation protocol based upon both the needs of the funding agency and the needs of the adult learner.

4. Take one element that is significant to adult learning (such as collaboration) and trace its application through program design,
implementation, evaluation and community-based research initiatives (such as P.A.R.)

5. Prepare an evaluation of an adult program that you currently operate, using best practices from program planning literature. Link significant aspects of the program to adult learning theory.

6. Document a case study: identify an adult program that focuses more on the learning needs of the organization (i.e. business and industry training, military training, etc.) than on the needs of the individual. Develop strategies for focusing on the adult learner in this context.

7. A major work you have previously completed (e.g., a master’s thesis, curriculum design, or professional project) may demonstrate your ability to apply the theories, concepts, methods, and research findings that are the focus of this KAM. Such a demonstration of your competence may be submitted along with an essay that explains how the project illustrated a particular facet of the adult learner and your mastery of this domain. In addition, provide a brief rationale for the project and comment on how the situation might have changed since the project was first undertaken and what you might do differently if you were to plan and implement something like this again.

**Demonstration of Competence**

The Application component of the KAM gives you the opportunity to put the theories and research pertaining to adult learning into practice. Adult education is about social change, so think in terms of developing a project that addresses change in your
setting. Your final demonstration should include both the project and reflective commentary on it, where you show how it is informed by the theories and research studied in the earlier components of this KAM. The Application is considered equivalent to 4-quarter credit hours of graduate work in a traditional program.

Remember to secure Institutional Review Board approval to conduct research using human subjects.

Learning Resources

The resources you will use in this component are very specific to your particular project. If a theory or research paper is the foundation of the project, be sure to reference it. If you have difficulty compiling a bibliography or choosing relevant readings, consult with your faculty mentor or KAM assessor and the Walden librarians.