Resources

Technology and Innovation in Adult Learning: A Book Review Essay

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Living in a rapidly changing digital era, we frequently experience emergent technology issues and trends. We are involved in learning whether intended or unintended since technology is easily available to us. Technology and Innovation in Adult Learning, written by Kathleen P. King, removed these learning myths by providing comprehensive, example-rich, and instructional information. The author has 20 years of experience teaching with technology and the book was written specifically about using technology in adult education. The book topics range from the digital era's current issues to trends in real-life contexts and theories that incorporates adults learning. King distinctly views the digital age as a great opportunity for adults. She states that " learning is like breathing; in order to survive one better keep doing it" (41). The author offers compelling illustrations, strategies, and activities for educators and adult learners who are interested in technology and innovation in adult learning. The book is organized into three sections, inviting the readers to overview the digital age for new learning, engage in learning with essential skills, and step forward to a digital world.

The first section contains four chapters. Each chapter begins with a narrative drawn from an adults' personal life experiencing technology, from the touch-screen checkout to Kindle illustrations. These stories welcome readers to engage in different perspectives throughout the book. The first chapter briefly introduces the premise, orientation, and theories that are addressed in the next chapters. Chapter 2 discusses the three major areas that generate trends and emergent technologies in adult learning. The author explores (1) social adoption, (2) political change and globalization, and (3) influential sectors of technologies including e-commerce, e-learning, social media, and virtual reality. Further, the

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third chapter discusses the importance and expansiveness of technology and its influence in adult learning. It includes examples of learning under pressure in daily life and the workplace and shows the need for adults to understand technology. Approaching from a biological perspective, chapter 4 presents development stages and delivers the results that "adults continue to be active learners during their mature years"(p. 82). With the hope of living in the digital age, the author suggests an active and important role of educators in instructional programs, strategies, and learning designs that should be provided to adults.

In the second section, the author articulates in detail the learning skills demanded of adults to successfully survive in a rapidly changing technology world. Introducing the theory of andragogy in chapter five, King addresses how our days are filled with challenges to learn and the needs of self-directed learning in order to cope with the demands of each day. In the following chapter, extrinsic and intrinsic motivation are discussed as "critical roles" in adult learning. The author provides essential strategies and activities that could support adult learning by leveraging the power of motivation. In a similar vein, self-directed learning (SDL) is introduced and the necessary background needed to cultivate these skills in adults is provided. Since adults no longer rely on mandatory education, SDL is viewed as powerful skill set for adult learners. Another important feature of living in the digital age is exposure in a globally connected world. A scenario introduced in chapter 9 shows the influence of media on adults' perspectives to other countries and its contributions to their knowledge about foreign affairs and cultural differences. King emphasizes the needs for diversity awareness and intercultural competency skills within adult learning contexts. Introducing transformative learning as "valuable explanations of learning in exciting, heartbreaking, frightening, challenging, and thrilling experiences" (p. 173), King asserts that the digital age needs transformative learning because this theory provides a valuable framework for adults to cope with challenges living in the complex and demanding digital era.

The last four chapters suggest new venues in a digital world. King discusses the contexts of mind, body, and spirit, which have gained a great deal of attention in recent adult learning literature. The author specifically addresses this subject with an illustration of how adults have blurred boundaries between work and private life. The ways for cultivating mind, body, and spirit awareness are explored with three models including eastern philosophies, holistic perspectives, and contemplative practices. Reflecting current e-learning models, King examines distance,

virtual, and mobile learning. Two out of the five strategies offered in this chapter focus particularly on collaborative learning. In the virtual world, the role of facilitators may require more attention in supporting learners to create shareable knowledge and build collaborative learning. Guidelines related to real-life scenarios will offer a motivating format to learners online. Concluding the book, chapter 14 discusses learning needs, models, and research opportunities that are available in the digital age. King suggests the model of researching adult learning and innovation (MoRALI) to facilitate the nature of mainstream technology and explore new dimensions of adult learning in the digital age.

As a whole, this book offers the foundation to understand ongoing learning innovation related to technology. Kegan (1994) describes these challenges for adults and articulates the mental demands of an adult's underlying life: playing multiple roles at work, school, or home. Illustrations presented in this book clearly show that adults experience difficulties, challenges, opportunities, and the potential for adoption of technology in their personal and professional lives. With this approach, although the primary audience for this book is academic, this book could benefit adults who share the need of adult learning for their own survival in the continuous and rapidly changing era of technology. Furthermore, each chapter provides strategies and activities with detailed instructions that guide readers to gain a better understanding of applying technology to adult learning.

The book is well written, an excellent resource, and a comprehensive analysis of technology and adult learning. Learning theories are discussed in detail in the second section. Addressing ethical issues related to e-learning settings and social issues in technology would be a useful addition to this book. Above all things, Technology and Innovation in Adult Learning effectively blends technology skills with adult learning and efficiently delivers methods to learners, researchers and practitioners. This book expands upon the field of adult learning with new possibilities and hopes of teaching and learning in the digital era.

References

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