Education Quarterly Reviews

The online version of this article can be found at:
https://www.asianinstituteofresearch.org/

The Asian Institute of Research *Education Quarterly Reviews* is a peer-reviewed International Journal. The journal covers scholarly articles in the fields of education, linguistics, literature, educational theory, research, and methodologies, curriculum, elementary and secondary education, higher education, foreign language education, teaching and learning, teacher education, education of special groups, and other fields of study related to education. As the journal is Open Access, it ensures high visibility and the increase of citations for all research articles published. The *Education Quarterly Reviews* aims to facilitate scholarly work on recent theoretical and practical aspects of Education.

ASIAN INSTITUTE OF RESEARCH
Connecting Scholars Worldwide

Assessment of Acquaintance Techniques at the First Meeting of Adult Education

Nikolaos O. Nikitidis[1]

[1] School of Pedagogical and Technological Education (Aspete), Thessaloniki, Greece

Correspondence: Nikolaos Nikitidis, K. Karamanli 26, 54639 Thessaloniki Greece. E-mail: nnikitidis@yahoo.gr

Abstract

The knowledge and the skills acquired in basic education are not sufficient for the entire life as technological and social conditions change rapidly. The solution to this problem is adult learning actions. An essential component of these actions is the first meeting. In order for this process to be implemented without difficulties, the literature provides some techniques. This study assesses these techniques and to highlight their particular characteristics in order to clarify which one is best for each educational program. For achieving this, these techniques are sought in the literature and evaluated by specific criteria. Finally, 15 techniques have been found, differentiating about time, space and media, secondary goals, and the dangers they pose. Based on these data, the adult trainer can choose the most appropriate technique for his educational program.

Keywords: Acquaintance Technique, Adult Education, Assessment, Evaluation, First Meeting, Lifelong Learning

1. Introduction

It many cases the adult trainer has difficulty in making the members of the educational group knowing each other. Furthermore, many adult educators use always the same techniques, which lack originality and make the educational process less interesting. It is therefore useful for the adult educator to know many acquaintance techniques which make the educational process more pleasant and effective. This knowledge is important because time is generally limited, and in a short time, the trainees have to learn each other. This procedure is crucial in establishing a good educational climate.

It is generally accepted that the knowledge and the skills gained from basic education are not sufficient for the needs of life and the profession. Therefore, there is a need for an update. For this to be achieved, adult learning actions are being implemented in the context of lifelong learning.

According to the Greek law, "lifelong training" is defined as "training and retraining of human resources, which in the context of initial vocational training provides basic professional knowledge and skills, for integration, reintegration, occupational mobility into the labour market and the overall development of human resources. In the context of Continuing Vocational Training, complements, modernises and/or upgrades knowledge and skills

acquired by other vocational education and training systems and/or work experience, with a view to integrating and/or reintegrating into the labor market, guaranteeing work, professional and personal development" (Government Gazette, 2005). The concept of "lifelong learning" is wider than the term "education," and that implies the continuous and endless nature of learning (Papadimitriou, 2014).

The first meeting is of great importance in adult education and determines the outcome of the educational process (Tsioli, 2005). It is the first trainers encounter with the trainees. According to Galanis (1993), the first contact of the instructor with the members of an educational team is crucial for the outcome and the success of the training program. In this meeting, key actions are taking place. In particular, it sets the foundations for team collaboration, builds communication channels among the participants, shapes the climate in which the educational process will take place and, finally, leads to the draft of the "learning contract." A doubtful first meeting can have a significant impact on the smooth progression of the program and can lead to failure.

The objectives of the first meeting of adult education are of great importance (Mouzakis, 2006; Papanis, 2008; Psachou, 2010). The initial meeting is designed to reduce the stress and anxiety of learners and to establish a pleasant climate of confidence that promotes learning. So, they must have the opportunity to speak and express themselves and have all their questions answered. Furthermore, the trainer must get to know the trainees, and the trainees must get to know each other. Another goal is to explore the expectations and needs of learners as well as the particular learning methods they prefer. Lastly, the learning contract must be drafted by the interaction between trainer and trainees.

More specifically, the planning for the first meeting must take into account the characteristics of the trainees, their needs, and their expectations. Initially, the acquaintance of the trainer with learners and between learners themselves is encouraged. The trainer usually presents himself by mentioning some information about himself (studies, occupational status, interests, etc.), followed by trainees in the same pattern. For the acquaintance of the members of the group, various techniques have been proposed such as self-presentation, acquaintance with couples, chain, characteristics, etc. (Archondaki and Philippou, 2003; Marcheli, 2009).

Then, follows the detection of the training needs of participants, which can be done orally or by writing with a structured questionnaire. Each trainee states what he expects from the learning process, what are his objectives, what educational gap intends to cover, and where he is going to use the acquired knowledge. Also, it is worth discussing the barriers to learning, which the trainees employ, and how can these be solved or addressed, for the learning process to go forward without problems. The information provided is recorded to be used properly. The investigation of educational needs is an important task in adult education and affects the success of the learning programme (Tsimpoykli and Phillips, 2010).

Finally, the next and last phase aims at the preparation of the learning contract. The term "contract" is used to show the commitment by both sides regarding the fulfillment of the agreed points. In learning contract, the organisation of the learning process is discussed. On the one hand reflects the intention of the instructor to organise the process in a certain way and on the other, the acceptance of learners (Rogers, 1999). The learning contract includes a diagnosis of the learning needs and expectations of learners, the definition of the programme objectives, the determination of the functioning rules of groups and the group and individual evaluation (Tsimpoykli and Phillips, 2008). For the preparation of the learning contract, the information will be used that gained during the first two stages of the process.

The initial actions that we can apply to a learning program, apart from the acquaintance techniques, may cause team building, assess the knowledge and the experience of participants and result in the direct involvement of participants in the educational process (Silberman and Biech, 2015).

From the above, it becomes clear that the acquaintance between instructor and learners and between learners themselves is an essential element of the first meeting and must be implemented in the best possible way. It is evident that the instructor of adults should have an in-depth understanding of acquaintance techniques, to apply the appropriate one.

2. Method

The purpose of this study is the discovery of acquaintance techniques that the adult trainer can use in the first meeting of adult education, as well as their characteristics, that show which technique is the best in each case. This study aims to provide the adult trainer with all the information that is necessary to make the optimal choice, depending on the nature of the educational process, the characteristics of the learners and the resources available. In order to find acquaintance techniques in adult education, a search at related books and journals is conducted. Then the findings are recorded and assessed according to some parameters.

Initially investigated the time needed for implementation, i.e., how much time the specific technique requires to be used in a specific group. We have to highlight that the necessary time varies depending on the group size and other parameters. However, a rough value can be provided. The activities are divided into short duration, when, in general, can be implemented in 15 minutes or less (1/3 of the lesson time), medium duration, when can be completed in 45 minutes (a lesson time) and long-duration when they require more time than a lesson time.

Other assessment parameters are: available educational space required for conducting the activity and the means and the materials that are required. Furthermore, some activities require teamwork (the whole group works together), while others can be done in couples or even individually. So they are classified accordingly.

The primary objective of acquaintance techniques is the trainer and the trainees to get to know each other. However, there are co-benefits, such as the promotion of communication, participants activation, the achievement of non-verbal communication, and detecting emerging issues and desires. Some techniques may have a positive impact on other objectives of the first meeting as the clarification of objectives. In addition, the potential risk of this techniques is identified.

3. Results

The search resulted in fifteen acquaintance techniques, which are described below (Galanis 1993; Markelli, 2009; Archontaki & Philippou,2003; Tsimboukli, 2012; Tsimboukli & Phillips 2010).

Party
Participants meet informally before the start of the educational process in a bar or another similar place. So there they have plenty of time to discuss, to come closer and to get to know each other. This technique is beneficial when the educational process is too short in duration, and there is no time for acquaintance techniques.

Letter
The participants of the educational process are self-presented as if they complement a letter. The data that are presented are name, job, marital status, and interests.

Self-presentation
In this technique, the trainer presents himself by providing information about his educational and professional career as well as personal details and experiences to create intimacy. It provides an opportunity for the asking questions. Then, the trainees present themselves.

Getting acquainted with couples
The trainer invites the participants to form pairs. Then, he asks each one to interview the other member of the pair. Consequently, each participant presents to the team the other person of the pair. The information that is provided is the educational and professional background and the reasons for participating in the educational process.

Chain

The first participant says his name. The second says his name after saying the name of the first participant. Each participant says his name after he has mentioned the names of all the previous participants. The trainer takes part last.

Characteristics
Each participant writes on a paper some information, e.g., the name of a favourite movie or favourite food. Then the trainer searches and finds people with common characteristics. After he discusses for a few minutes, he tells the team what the common characteristics are and why these preferences exist.

The ball
The participants form a circle. The first trainee tosses the ball to someone else while saying his name. The participant who receives the ball is doing the same, and the process continues until all receive the ball. In the second stage, the participants change position in the cycle, and the process is repeated.

The recommendations
The trainees are asked to walk randomly in the room. When they meet another person, they introduce themselves by saying their name. Then they continue walking. In this way, the participants get to know each other quickly.

The box with the name
The participants form a circle. Somebody with his hands forms an imaginary box. Another person opens the box and pulls out the name and tells it to the others.

Tell it with a motion
The participants form a circle. One of the participants enters the centre of the circle and says his name while he makes a move. The rest participants observe the movement and try to repeat it. The participant, who is in the circle, observe the imitation and invites the guy who implemented it better to enter the circle and continue the game. Because in this technique, the participants express themselves with the body, some may feel uncomfortable. A good idea is to start the trainer first by making an excessive movement.

I know that... I guess that ...
A participant chooses someone who does not know him well, and says what he knows about him and then what guesses for that particular person. The people to whom he refers, can at the end correct any mistakes that have been made. Then the next person is chosen, and the game goes on until everyone has participated.

The initials
Each person draws his initials on a piece of paper. After that he draws a picture using the initials. At the end, everybody presents the painting to the group. This technique is useful when the activities of the meeting include painting.

Convey the message
Each trainee takes a piece of paper and writes his name. Next, he starts walking in the room. When he meets another person, he gives him the paper with the name, and he provides three pieces of information about himself. The other person does the same. When he meets someone else, she gives him the paper with the name and says the information he had been given. The procedure is repeated many times.

Name stories
The participants are divided into couples. Everybody talks for a while about his first name, e.g., why it is given to him, if he likes it, etc. Subsequently, the other person presents to the group what he heard.

Expectations
The participants are divided into couples. Everybody talks about his name and what he expects from the team. Then together form a circle, and everybody tells what he has been told.
To avoid repetitions, the results are presented in table form (table 1).

Table 1 Assessment of acquaintance techniques

Technique	Duration*	Group	Space	Means Materials	Other Objectives	Dangers	Comments
Party	No time	The whole group			Communication		Appropriate activity when there is no time to get acquainted in the program
Letter	Medium	The whole group					
Self-presentation	Short	The whole group					
Getting acquainted with couples	Medium	Couples			Communication, activation		
Chain	Short	The whole group				Some may feel discomfort if they do not remember the names of the other trainees.	
Characteristics	Medium	The whole group		Paper, pencils			
The ball	Short	The whole group	Big without obstacles	Ball or some other similar object	Activation		
The recommendations	Short	The whole group	Big without obstacles		Activation, non-verbal communication		
The box with the name	Medium	The whole group			Activation, non verbal communication	Personal issues may emerge	
Tell it with a move	Medium	The whole group			Activation, non-verbal communication	Individuals are exposed with their body	
I know that ... I imagine that...	Long	The whole group			Communication		
The initials	Long	The whole group		Paper, paints, markers	Communication, emergence of topics		Suitable for painting activities, because the participants get familiar with materials
Convey the message	Medium	The whole group		Paper, pencils	Activation, Communication,		
Name stories	Long	Couples			Communication		
Expectations	Long	Couples			Emergence of desires topics, clarification of objectives, communication		

(*) short duration <=15 minutes, medium duration<=45 minutes, long duration >45 minutes

4. Discussion

From the methods described above, the "self-presentation," the "chain," the "ball" and the "recommendations" are brief and can be implemented in less than a third of the teaching hour. The "party" technique requires no time all as it does not influence the seminar schedule. The "acquaintance in pairs," the "characteristics," the "box with the name," the "tell it with a move" and "convey the message" can be implemented within a teaching hour. The remaining techniques, "I know that / I imagine that," the "initials," "name stories" and "expectations" require more time than a teaching hour.

Some techniques such as "getting acquainted with couples," "name stories," and "expectations" require work in couples. On the other hand, the other techniques are implemented in the whole group.

Most techniques have not specific demands regarding the room size and the means they need to be implemented. One exception is the "ball." This technique requires large open space so the trainees can throw and receive the ball. Another exception is "recommendations" where adequate space is needed to enable the participants to walk seamlessly. Particular materials require "characteristics" and "convey the message." The former requires paper and pencils, and the latter requires coloured pencils and markers. Finally, "the ball" to be implemented requires a soft ball or another soft object that can effortlessly and safely be tossed to learners.

The primary objective of all techniques mentioned above is the acquaintance. Some of them have additional objectives. The techniques "getting acquainted with couples," "I know that / I imagine that," the "initials," convey the message," "name stories" and "expectations" promote communication, which is a basic feature of the interaction in each relationship (Olympic Training and Consulting, 2016). On the other hand, the "recommendations," the "box with a name" and "tell it with a move" promote non-verbal communication.

Almost all techniques, more or less, give the participant an active role. There are also techniques such as "the initials" and "expectations" in that desires to emerge. Finally, "expectations" also helps to form the objectives of the meeting, and that is regarded as a significant contribution to the learning process.

Finally, some techniques are associated with risks. The "chain" may cause discomfort when the trainee is unable to remember the names of the other participants and the "box with the name," where personal issues can emerge. Risky is also the "tell it in a move" because it requires movement and can cause embarrassment as participants are physically exposed.

5. Conclusion

Undoubtedly one of the requirements of the adult first meeting is trainers acquaintance with trainees and the acquaintance among the trainees. The acquaintance is a critical step in the group formation, an essential task for the smooth progress of the educational process. As it has mentioned the bibliography provides a range of methods through which the requested objective can be fulfilled. These methods vary depending on the time they require to be implemented, how the group works (the whole group altogether, in couples, individually), the free space needed, the materials and the means that required, and the dangers that are present. It is up to the adult educator to choose the right technique depending on the subject he has to teach, the participants characteristics and available means.

References

American Psychological Association. (1972). *Ethical standards of psychologists*. Washington, DC: American Psychological Association.

Archondaki, Z. & Philippou, D. (2003). 205 experiential exercises for group animation, psychotherapy, social work, education. Sixth edition. Athens: Kastaniotis Publications.

EADVM, (2007). Operational Program "Education and Lifelong Learning" 2007-2013, available on the website: http: //www.edulll.gr/? Page_id = 22.

Galanis, G. (1993). Psychology of Adult Education: Theoretical and Practical Approaches, Athens: Papazisis Publications.

Government Gazette, (2005). Law 3369 / 6.07.2005. Sheet Number 171, Issue One, p. 2793.

Markelli, G. (2009). Experiential work exercises with the team, Makrinitsa Environmental Education Center.

Mouzakis, C. (2006). Adult education techniques and the role of the trainer. Athens: Institute for Continuing Adult Education.

Olympic Training and Consulting, (2016). Adult training methodology and techniques. Module two. Self-study course for Trainers of Intercultural Mediators, Athens: Time Project.

Papadimitriou, P. (2014). Technical training of driving guides and circulatory education. Athens: Small Business Institute.

Papanis, A. (2008). The first meeting in adult education. Available on the website: http://epapanis.blogspot.com/2008/05/blog-post.html.

Psachou, E. (2010). Adult educators active in the field of folk education in gipsy literacy departments: The teaching principles they apply and the importance of the Gypsy peculiarities in choosing the way of teaching by the trainers. (Case study). Patra.

Rogers, A. (1999). Adult education (Translation. Papadopoulou M. & Tombrou M.). Athens: Metaichmio.

Silberman, M. and Biech, E. (2015). Active training, a handbook of techniques, designs, case examples and tips. New Jersey: Wiley

Tsimpoukli, A. & Phillips, N. (2008). Adult Education Teachers, Institute for Adult Education, Athens.

Tsimpoukli, A. & Phillips, N. (2010). Adult educator training. Introduction to Adult Education, Athens.

Tsimpouli, A. (2012). Team Dynamics and Communication in Adult Education, Athens: GSEE Work Institute

Tsioli, M. (2015). Designing an first meeting in adult education programs, proceedings of the first Panhellenic Conference on the Promotion of Educational Innovation.

Copyrights