

Philosophy of Adult Education Inventory

1 Instructions

Each of the 15 items on the inventory begins with an incomplete sentence, followed by five different options that might complete the sentence. Underneath each option is a scale from 1 to 7, followed by a small letter in parentheses. For the present, ignore those letters; use only the numbers on the scale.

To complete the inventory, reach each sentence stem and each optional phrase that completes it. In the 1-7 scale, circle the number that most closely indicates how you feel about each option. The scale goes from 1 (strongly disagree) to 7 (strongly agree), with a neutral point (4) if you don't have any opinion or aren't sure about a particular option.

strongly disagree				neutral				strongly agree	
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	(q)		

Continue through all the items, reading the sentence stem and indicating how strongly you agree or disagree with each of the options. Don't worry about the letter in parentheses at the end—we'll refer to it later. Please respond to every option, even if you feel neutral about it. *There are no right or wrong answers.*

As you go through the inventory, respond according to what you *most frequently or most likely would do*. If it helps you to respond more easily, you may want to focus on a specific course that you teach or will teach. If you do focus on a particular course, choose one that you feel most comfortable teaching – one that you think best reflects your preferred style of teaching¹.

Enjoy!

¹This PAEI is adapted from L.M. Zinn, PAEI 1983/1994, Lifelong Learning Options, Boulder CO; descriptions adapted from J. Elias & S. Merriam (1980), *Philosophical Foundations of Adult Education*, Malabar FL: Krieger Pub. Co.

2 Questions

1. In planning an educational activity, I am most likely to:

Identify, in conjunction with learners, significant social and/or political issues and plan learning activities around them.

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 (h)

Clearly identify the results I want and develop a program [or class or workshop] that will achieve those results.

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 (c)

Begin with a lesson plan that organizes what I plan to teach, and how.

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 (a)

Assess learners' needs and develop valid learning activities based on those needs.

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 (d)

Consider the areas of greatest interest to the learners and plan to deal with them, regardless of what they may be.

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 (f)

2. People learn best:

When the new knowledge is presented from a problem-solving approach.

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 (x)

When the learning activity is clearly structured and provides for practice and repetition.

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 (w)

Through dialogue or discussion with other learners and a group coordinator.

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 (z)

When they are free to explore, without the constraints of a "system".

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 (y)

From an "expert" who knows what s/he is talking about.

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 (v)

3. The primary purpose of education is:

To facilitate personal development on the part of the learner.

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 (f)

To increase learners' awareness of the need for social change and to enable them to effect such change.

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 (h)

To develop conceptual or theoretical understanding.

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 (a)

To establish the learners' capacity to solve individual and societal problems.

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 (d)

To develop the learners' competency and mastery of specific knowledge and skills.

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 (c)

4. Most of what people know:

Is a result of consciously pursuing their goals, solving problems as they go.

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 (x)

They have learned through critical or reflective thinking focused on important social and political issues.

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 (z)

They have learned through a trial-and-feedback process.

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 (w)

They have gained through self-discovery rather than some "teaching process".

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 (y)

They have acquired through a systematic or comprehensive process.

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 (v)

5. Decisions about what to include in a lesson or learning activity:

Should be made mostly by the learner in consultation with a facilitator.

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 (f)

Should be based on what learners know and what the teacher believes they should know at the end of the activity.

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 (c)

Should be based on a consideration of key social, political, and/or cultural situations

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 (h)

Should be based on a consideration of the learners' needs, interests, and problems.

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 (d)

Should be based on careful analysis by the teacher of the material to be covered and the concepts to be taught.

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 (a)

6. Good educators start planning instruction:

By considering the end behaviors or specific outcomes they are looking for and the most efficient ways of producing them in learners.

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 (w)

By identifying everyday problems (or other problems) that can be solved as a result of the instruction.

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 (x)

By clarifying the content, concepts, and/or theoretical principles to be taught.

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 (v)

By clarifying key social and political issues that affect the lives of the learners.

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 (z)

By asking learners to identify what they want to learn and how they want to learn it.

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 (y)

7. As an educator, I am most successful in situations:

That are unstructured and flexible enough to follow learners' interests.

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 (f)

That are fairly structured, with clear learning objectives and built-in feedback to the learners.

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 (c)

Where I can focus on practical skills and knowledge that can be put to use in solving problems.

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 (d)

Where the scope of the new material is fairly clear and the subject matter is logically organized.

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 (a)

Where the learners have some awareness of social and political issues and are willing to explore the impact of such issues on their daily lives.

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 (h)

8. In planning an educational activity, I try to create:

The real world – problems and all – and to develop learners' capacities for dealing with it.

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 (x)

A setting in which learners are encouraged to examine their beliefs and values and to raise critical questions.

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 (z)

A controlled environment that attracts and holds the learners, moving them systematically toward the objectives.

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 (w)

A clear outline of the content and the concepts to be taught or learned.

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 (v)

A supportive climate that facilitates self-discovery and interaction.

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 (y)

9. The learners' feelings during the learning process:

Must be brought to the surface in order for learners to become truly involved in their learning.

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 (h)

(h) Provide energy that can be focused on problems or questions.

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 (d)

Will probably have a great deal to do with the way they approach their learning.

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 (f)

Are used by the skillful adult educator to accomplish the learning objectives.

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 (c)

Are likely to get in the way of teaching and learning by diverting the learners' attention.

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 (a)

10. The teaching methods I prefer to use:

Focus on problem solving and present real challenges to the learner.

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 (x)

Emphasize practice and feedback to the learner.

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 (w)

Are mostly non-directive, encouraging the learner to take responsibility for his/her own learning.

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 (y)

Involve learners in dialogue or discussion and critical examination of controversial issues.

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 (z)

Are determined primarily by the subject or content to be covered.

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 (v)

11. When learners are uninterested in a subject, it is probably because:

They do not realized how serious the consequences of not understanding or not learning the subject may be.

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 (h)

They do not see any benefit for their daily lives.

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 (d)

The teacher does not know enough about the subject or is unable to make it interesting to the learner.

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 (a)

They are not getting adequate practice or feedback during the learning process.

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 (c)

They are not ready to learn it or it is not a high priority for them personally.

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 (f)

12. Differences among learners:

Are relatively unimportant as long as the learners gain a common base of understanding through the learning experience.

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 (v)

Enable them to learn best on their own over time and in their own way.

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 (y)

Are primarily due to the differences in their life experiences, and will usually lead them to make different applications of new knowledge and skills to their own situations.

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 (x)

Arise from their particular cultural and social situations and should not be minimized even as they recognize common needs and problems.

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 (z)

Will not interfere with their learning if each learner is given adequate opportunity for practice and reinforcement.

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 (w)

13. Evaluation of learning outcomes:

Is not of great importance and may not be possible, because the impact of learning may not be evident until much later.

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 (h)

Should be built into the system, so that learners will continually receive feedback and can adjust their performance accordingly.

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 (c)

Is best done by the learners themselves, for their own purposes.

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 (f)

Lets me know how much learners have increased their conceptual understanding of the new material.

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 (a)

Is best accomplished when the learner encounters a problem, either in the learning setting or the real world, and successfully resolves it.

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 (d)

14. My primary role as a teacher is to:

Guide students through structured learning with well directed feedback.

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 (w)

Systematically lead students in acquiring new information and understanding underlying theories and concepts.

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 (v)

Help learners to identify and solve problems, or solve them better.

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 (x)

Help learners' awareness of environmental, social, and/or political issues and help them learn how to have an impact on these situations.

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 (z)

Facilitate, but not direct, learning activities.

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 (y)

15. In the end, if learners have not learned what was taught:

The teacher has not actually “taught”.

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 (a)

The need to repeat the experience, or a portion of it.

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 (c)

They may have learned something else which they consider just as interesting or useful.

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 (f)

They do not realize how learning will enable them to significantly influence society.

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 (h)

It is probably because they are unable to make practical application of the new knowledge to problems in their daily lives.

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 (d)

[Go to the next page to find out how to score your answers.]

3 Scoring

Now go back and find the small letters in parentheses on the far right, and add up your scores according to those letters below. E.g., if you circled ‘5’ for 1(h), then enter it under ‘h’ below, and add up the scores. The column subtotals should range between 7 and 56.

[item]	a	v	c	w	d	x	f	y	h	z
[add scores here]										
[subtotal]										

Now add the subtotals as indicated below. These totals should range between 15 and 105.

$$L = (a + v) = \underline{\hspace{2cm}}$$

$$B = (c + w) = \underline{\hspace{2cm}}$$

$$P = (d + x) = \underline{\hspace{2cm}}$$

$$H = (f + y) = \underline{\hspace{2cm}}$$

$$R = (h + z) = \underline{\hspace{2cm}}$$

Each of your scores reflects a particular philosophy of education—liberal², behaviorist, progressive, humanistic, or radical.

L = liberal education: education for intellectual development

B = behaviorist education: education for behavioral change

P = progressive education: education for practical problem-solving

H = humanistic education: education for self-actualization

R = radical education: education for major social change

²Note: ‘Liberal’ education does not refer to political views, but to the traditional liberal arts approach to education. ‘Humanistic’ should not be confused with other uses and meanings of this word outside the field of education.

On another handout or in an accompanying guidebook, you will find brief descriptions of these philosophies of education. Your highest score reflects the philosophy that is closest to your own beliefs, and that you most strongly agree with; your lowest score is the most distant from your beliefs. You may likely have one or two other secondary philosophies. If you find scores nearly equal among several philosophies, you may want to spend some time clarifying your beliefs and values and looking for possible contradictions among them.

Most educators have a clear primary philosophical orientation, or share two that are stronger than others. Typical combinations are liberal + behaviorist, progressive + humanistic, progressive + radical, and humanistic + radical. On the other hand, it is quite unlikely that you would have high scores for both in combinations such as liberal + radical, or behaviorist + humanistic. These philosophies have key underlying assumptions that are inherently contradictory. (For example, the primary purpose of behaviorist education is to ensure compliance with expectations or standards set by others, whereas humanistic education is intended to enhance individual selfdevelopment – which may or may not meet anyone else’s expectations or standards.)

There is no “right” or “wrong” philosophy of education.

The inventory is designed to reflect back to you some of your own beliefs, not to make judgments about those beliefs. It is up to you to decide how your beliefs may influence your decisions and actions as an educator, and how your personal educational philosophy may be well suited, or perhaps not the best match, for the educational setting in which you work.