

ADULT RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

CHARACTERISTICS OF ADULT RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

COGNITIVE REFLECTION.

Adult religious education is, first of all, time set aside for reflection. It is the opportunity to stand back from ordinary activity in order to examine one's experience and concerns in the light of the Gospel.

SYSTEMATIC AND INTENTIONAL

Participants in adult religious education consciously seek to be enlightened regarding a particular aspect of their faith and its implications for their lives. This implies that the participant already has a certain conscious level of faith he or she hopes to enhance. The existing level of one's faith directly affects both the motivation to seek out adult education opportunities and the kind of content or topics that one seeks to pursue.

GOD'S REVELATION/ACTIVITY IS THE CONTENT

The range of topics is virtually unlimited and can include anything from Mark's Gospel to interpersonal relations to a contemporary novel or movie. No matter what the topical starting point however, faith and the desire to grow in faith remains the goal of adult religious education.

WITHIN THE FAITH COMMUNITY

Adult religious education seeks to enhance and nurture the community's faith. In other words, it takes place within a community environment where the participants' faith is affirmed and challenged, celebrated and called to action. Meaningful opportunities must be programmed to meet the discernible needs and aspirations of this local community.

ACTIVE PARTICIPATION

Adult religious education presumes that the participants will be allowed to take an active part in setting goals, sharing their own experiences, determining the methodology and evaluating the outcome. Ministers of adult religious education are more properly considered facilitators of adult learning rather than lecturers addressing a passive, voiceless audience. In other words, a spirit of dialogue and critical reflection dominate adult religious education regardless of the particular learning method employed. However, specific methods can be as diverse as the possible range of topics and the variety of participant groups that it embraces.

Adult Education Ministry: A Parish Manual, Richard Reichart, pp. 4-5

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CHARACTERISTICS OF ADULT LEARNERS

Adults can learn!

Adults are their experiences.

Adults use their experiences in evaluating daily occurrences and in making decisions for the future.

Adults develop in a lifelong search for personal identity.

Needs, interests, and values create an affective and cognitive base for an adult's learning goals.

Adult learners expect comfort.

Relational preferences influence an adult's self-concept and affect his or her choices and actions during a learning situation.

Adult learning is affected by the contexts in which the participants live.

Adults have strengths and weaknesses that may or may not be modified as a result of learning experiences.

Adults have different learning and communicating styles.

Adults may not always attend the learning experiences to which they had committed themselves or in which they have expressed interest.

Adult learning is enhanced when the learning climate fosters self-esteem and interdependence.

Adults do look for practical consequences.

Adult learning is enhanced when learners evaluate their own learning outcomes, learning skills and needs for additional learning.