Adult Learning Styles and Distributed Learning: A List of Preferences

Denise M. Smith, Ed.D.,CCC-SLP
Fidel M. Salinas Jr., Ed.D.

This research study examines adult learning styles and preferences in enrollment in distributed learning courses. Initially, a questionnaire (Yes/No and narrative format) was developed which provided definitions about learning styles, such as visual, auditory, kinesthetic, or varied combinations of these styles. The learning styles and definitions were based on the research of Howard Gardner, Judith Warren Little, and University of New South Wales, Faculty of the Built Environment. Quantitative and Qualitative results were obtained and implications for further research were also cited. Fifty post-graduate students in business and/or education participated in this study. All respondents were voluntary and information was received anonymously. Participants also completed a demographic survey identifying age, gender, and ethnic background. The underlying questions of this investigation included:

1) Is there a certain type of adult learner who is more (or least likely) likely to enroll in distributed learning courses?

2) What information regarding online learning course formats (animation, video, audio (text/ voice/music))? For example: are adults who identified themselves as a combination of visual and kinesthetic more likely to register for online courses than adult learners who identified their learning style as solely auditory or visual?

As more undergraduate and graduate university programs offer courses online, it would appear to be both cost effective and pedagogically appropriate to examine the learning styles of their students and align course design accordingly. The intended audience for this presentation includes university faculty, students (undergraduate and graduate), and administration interested in developing enhancing distributed learning course work across academic disciplines.