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## PEDAGOGICAL RELATIONSHIPS IN DIGITISED ADULT EDUCATION

### ABSTRACT

*With the COVID-19 pandemic the education sector is facing major new challenges and opportunities, e.g., changes in the pedagogical relationships between teachers and learners. Various publications have already inquired into the importance of pedagogical relationships in primary and secondary education, but not in adult education. Therefore, a closer look should now be taken at pedagogical relationships in adult education and their impact on successful teaching – both in the analogue and the digital realm. The person-centred approach as well as the approach of professional proximity and distance are relevant concepts in this field. From the perspective of person-centred pedagogy, respectful interaction with one another and the facilitation of an equal dialogue between teachers and learners are of great importance. The relevance of relationships between teachers and learners in adult education should not be underestimated – also with regard to enabling successful relationship building in distance learning.*

**Keywords:** *distance learning, constructivist didactics, person-centred approach, closeness and distance, digitisation, pandemic*

### PEDAGOŠKI ODNOSI V DIGITALNEM IZOBRAŽEVANJU ODRASLIH – POVZETEK

*Izobraževanje se zaradi pandemije covida-19 sooča z novimi izzivi in hkrati odpira vrata novim priložnostim. Eden velikih izzivov tega časa je pedagoški odnos med učitelji in učečimi. Številne publikacije so se že posvetile pomenu pedagoških odnosov v osnovnih in srednjih šolah, ne pa tudi v izobraževanju odraslih. Članek ponuja bližnji pogled na pedagoške odnose v izobraževanju odraslih in na vpliv, ki ga imajo ti odnosi na (uspešno) poučevanje tako v analognem kot digitalnem okolju. Na posameznika osredotočen pristop, strokovna bližina in distanca so na tem področju izredno relevantni pojmi. Spoštljivo sodelovanje in spodbujanje enakopravnega dialoga med učitelji in učečimi sta izredno pomembna elementa poučevanja, ki se osredotoča na posameznika. Pomena odnosov med učitelji in učečimi v izobraževanju odraslih ne gre podcenjevati – tudi ko gre za grajenje dobrih odnosov med izobraževanjem na daljavo.*

**Ključne besede:** *izobraževanje na daljavo, konstruktivistična didaktika, na posameznika osredinjen pristop, bližina in distanca, digitalizacija, pandemija*

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## **INTRODUCTION**

The COVID-19 pandemic has caused widespread changes in the daily lives of all humanity. Almost out of nowhere, the task of transferring the processes that had previously been largely analogue to the digital realm has arisen. This presents a challenge to adult education, in particular as it changes the relationships between learners and adult educators – relationships which have as yet not been dealt with extensively. In this article, we briefly reflect on the situation of adult education during the pandemic. This will be followed by a summary of some central ideas on pedagogical relationships in the particular field of adult education. These ideas are derived from constructivist learning philosophy, from Rogers' person-centred approach, from adult education theory, as well as from distance education research. Finally, we try to connect and combine these different ideas and approaches by formulating some general principles of successful relationships between adult educators and learners.

## **CURRENT SITUATION AND RECENT DEVELOPMENTS IN ADULT EDUCATION IN PANDEMIC TIMES**

With the beginning of the first lockdown in spring 2020, many adult education institutions began to convert ongoing or planned events into online offers (Christ & Koscheck, 2021), often without the required infrastructure and with hardly any previous experience with such digital formats (cf. Christ et al., 2020). The focus here was not on the use of new or expanded didactic possibilities offered by digital media, but on the attempt to somehow continue current face-to-face courses as distance learning offers. Following the so-called RAT model (Hughes, 2005), which differentiates between three stages in the use of digital media, it could be said that what happened here was a simple replacement, in the sense of a mere transfer of offer format into the virtual space (possibly accepting a loss of quality) (cf. Scharnberg & Krahl, 2020), or a transformation in the sense of a fundamental change in teaching-learning processes, including the roles of teachers and learners, as they are achievable and appropriate in digital learning environments (cf. Reinmann & Mandl, 1998). However, a large proportion of adult education events – at least as is shown by surveys in Germany – were cancelled without replacement or postponed indefinitely (Christ & Koscheck, 2021). The reasons for this are likely to be, on the one hand, a lack of infrastructure and a lack of experience in designing digital educational offers on the part of the teachers (Rohs et al., 2019), and on the other hand, the unwillingness of various target groups to engage with digital distance learning offers. Especially for target groups with little experience in further education and strong dependency on the support of teachers, digital technologies as a medium of delivery represent a considerable additional hurdle (Schmidt-Hertha & Rott, 2021). Also, for learners with low digital literacy, the focus on online offers is tantamount to extensive exclusion from adult education (e.g., Garcia et al., 2021). Furthermore, in some countries, a collapse in educational activities in the area of continuing vocational education and training can be assumed due to the (temporary) closure of companies and the considerable waves of redundancies as a result of the pandemic (Boeren et al., 2020).

A decisive aspect in the changeover to digital learning opportunities, which many teachers and learners were not able to grasp so quickly, seems to have been the fact that it was not primarily about the didactically well thought-out use of digital media, but about the short-term introduction of distance learning formats that could be implemented relatively efficiently with the help of digital media (in this context, see Schmidt-Hertha, 2021). This was not a question of what opportunities and possibilities digital media offer that traditional face-to-face formats in adult education cannot. Rather, a choice had to be made between online formats, analogue distance learning (e.g., via teaching letters or similar methods), however designed, or the temporary complete discontinuation of educational activities (cf. also Kohl & Denzl, 2020). While analogue distance learning would probably have required a significantly longer preparation time and a discontinuation of teaching was not an option for most institutions, neither from an economic nor from a professional point of view, the only option was to resort to digital formats of distance learning (Santos, 2020). This form of learning is particularly demanding for adult learners, as is reflected in the higher dropout rates (Park & Choi, 2009).

As useful as they have undoubtedly been, the simulacra of virtual technologies that have helped bring us together while keeping us safely apart, are ersatz; a poor substitute for the embodied human interaction and touch that are a cornerstone of our humanity. (Brennan, 2020, para. 7)

The demands on learners associated with online distance learning relate, for example, to the self-organisation of the learning process (especially securing time resources), dealing with technical problems, interacting with teachers, or dealing with learning material (cf. Kara et al., 2019). Against this background, it is not surprising that different forms of distance learning have so far been discussed primarily in the context of university education and continuing academic education (cf. Zawacki-Richter & Naidu, 2016). However, there are also individual examples of the successful use of internet-based distance learning with rather educationally disadvantaged groups. For example, Kaiper-Marquez et al. (2020) report positive experiences from a family literacy program that had to be converted to purely online teaching during the pandemic. Nevertheless, it is precisely the area of adult basic education that seems to have been affected the most during the pandemic, for example, by numerous course failures and cancellations (Bickert et al., in press). Representative data from the UK, on the other hand, even points to an overall increase in adult learning activities during the pandemic, with informal learning in particular playing a key role (Aldridge et al., 2021). At the same time, this data also suggests an increase in social disparities in educational participation. A Delphi study carried out by K apflinger and Lichte (2020), who surveyed adult education experts worldwide on the impact of the pandemic, also underscores the greater social inequality that will continue to grow significantly against the backdrop of the pandemic's consequences. At the same time, the experts interviewed in the study – like many voices from academia and practice – see the pandemic as an accelerator of digital transformation in adult education. Even if

face-to-face events are possible again without restrictions, online formats will continue to play an essential role in adult education. Blended learning offers in particular, which combine face-to-face and online teaching in different rhythms, are likely to increase. At the same time, continuing education providers will presumably continue to realise part of their educational offers as online courses – also because many learners appreciate the spatial and temporal independence or even depend on it.

No matter whether online or face to face, pedagogical professionalism in adult education – as in other areas of education – cannot be limited to the transmission of knowledge and the determination of learning progress. Professional pedagogical action includes, not least, the personal encounter of teachers and learners, which is elementary for educational processes in the sense of a change in the relationship to oneself and to the social and material environment (Koller, 2012; see also Schmidt-Hertha & Lindemann, 2021). This raises the question of the importance of personal encounters for the relationship between teachers and learners and of how learning opportunities that take place in physical co-presence differ in this respect from purely online teaching formats.

### **CONSTRUCTIVIST APPROACH AND PEDAGOGICAL RELATIONSHIPS**

When looking at the effects of pedagogical relationships in education, it becomes apparent that a large part of the relevant research focuses mainly on the primary and secondary education sector. Kleine et al. (2013), for example, emphasize the importance of positive social relationships between students (just before completing elementary school) and their social environment (classmates, teachers, and family). It is possible to strongly influence academic performance through competence beliefs not only during the first years of school. Only if students are specifically supported by their learning environment in believing in their own abilities can they build up a positive attitude to learning. In this respect, it is possible to conclude that teachers have the opportunity to influence students' self-concept and to thus even partly compensate for a lack of family support, for example.

Relationships thus seem to have a great influence on learners, and the quality of pedagogical relationships is therefore considered a prerequisite for learning that is both sustainable and expedient. Some studies, for example, show that increased quality of relationships in the classroom has a positive impact on school effectiveness (Fischer & Richey, 2021).

In this context, it is important to enquire what defines the quality of pedagogical relationships in analogue and digital learning environments respectively. It is not assumed that analogue relationships are inherently better or worse than digital ones. In this context, too, it is above all crucial that learners are seen as subjects who need to be treated with dignity, sensitivity, and mindfulness. Viewing them just as a member of a classroom, and not as an individual person leads to a negative learning climate and damages the relationship between teachers and learners (Steinl & Vogelsaenger, 2020).

As early as 2005, Kersten Reich described the changing concept of learning in relation to constructivism. The constructivist philosophy of learning aims not merely at producing

or mapping knowledge, rather, its objective is to enable an increase in learning. Thus, the focus is no longer merely on subjective competencies, but above all on the development of relational, methodological, and social competencies. Accordingly, learners should be enabled to independently apply methods of learning that allow them to learn in a highly effective manner. The technique of knowledge transfer emphasized by the cognitivist approach forms, according to the constructivist view, part of that list of competences, but loses in significance.

**Figure 1**

*Change in the understanding of learning*

Old perspectives	New constructivist perspectives
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- teacher-centred</li> <li>- chalk-and-talk teaching</li> <li>- objectified through experts</li> <li>- given by experts</li> <li>- bureaucratized</li> <li>- postulate of completeness</li> <li>- rationalised</li> <li>- text-oriented</li> <li>- control-oriented</li> <li>- linear perspective</li> <li>- individualised</li> <li>- superficial reproduction</li> <li>- low-risk and adapted</li> </ul> <p>Underlying this approach is a predominantly causal notion of learning based on mapping, stimulus-response, instructive transmission.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- learner-centred</li> <li>- multimedia teaching</li> <li>- objectified through action</li> <li>- participatory elaboration</li> <li>- self-organised</li> <li>- postulate of viability</li> <li>- relational</li> <li>- multimedia</li> <li>- growth-oriented</li> <li>- systemic perspective</li> <li>- subjectivised within the team</li> <li>- constructive action</li> <li>- willing to take risks and rebellious</li> </ul> <p>Underlying this approach is a situated concept of learning based on action, growth, constructive learning in an appropriate learning environment.</p>

*Note.* Adapted from "Konstruktivistische Didaktik: Beispiele für eine veränderte Unterrichtspraxis," by K. Reich, 2005, *Schulmagazin* 5-10, 73(3), p. 6.

Looking at the above table depicting the different concepts of learning, it quickly becomes clear that the constructivist view focuses on the learners. Of particular interest to our study is the emphasis on relationship orientation.

In the context of the pandemic and of distance learning, too little attention has been given to pedagogical relationships in particular. From one day to the next, students were faced with the task of deciding for themselves what content to work on, when to do it and, above all, how to do it. If up to the beginning and during the early stages of the pandemic, a cognitivist didactic became dominant in online teaching, it quickly became apparent that, with a purely teacher-centred, illustrative and instructional transmission-based chalk-and-talk form of teaching (Reich, 2005), it is not possible to, even subsequently, establish a functioning relationship between teachers and learners (and their parents). Without this

relationship, however, purely content-based didactics and learning in a digital framework is hardly feasible (Bremm & Racherbäumer, 2020).

If we now turn our attention to the field of adult education, we can see similar developments with regard to constructivist learning. Siebert, for example, criticised as early as 1980 that relational aspects are often neglected in favour of content-related aspects in pedagogy for adults, too. It is emphasized here that, at the relational level, the focus is not on establishing friendly relationships with learners, but on incorporating these relationships into an understanding of andragogic professionalism. These ideas are even more relevant today (Siebert, 1980; Wolf, 2006).

It is therefore evident that in the field of adult education, too, relational ability ought to be promoted since it is a major factor in enabling educational processes. Wiltrud Gieseke (2002) sees the key to this in distanced proximity as a basic attitude to be practiced professionally. In this context, it is important to differentiate clearly between learning situations and personal relationships (which the former are not) and to avoid creating distorted experiences for the learners. Nor is it, according to Gieseke, the task of the pedagogue to touch the learners' privacy either. Attention is drawn to the fact that successful processes (communication, learning, problem solving) can have a strong influence on personal development. However, this ignores the fact that failed learning processes, in turn, may also be of personal significance, especially if they are related to negative experiences such as social decline or unemployment (Wolf, 2006).

Previous learning experiences, including experiences of learner-teacher-relationships, are therefore relevant for current learning attempts. This underlines the importance of pedagogical relationships for successful or unsuccessful learning processes. In literacy processes, for example, past learning experiences can have an impact on the learners' self-image and on their external image, both of which enter into and determine their relational structures. These experiences thus virtually precede the learning process (cf. Crossan et al., 2003). Although there is no indication that this phenomenon can only be related to literacy processes, it seems possible to conclude that – especially in the case of learning deficits – functioning pedagogical relationships are of great importance. This, in turn, leads us to assume that successful learning situations usually occur when conspicuously problematic relationships are absent and that this is possibly due to the existing relationship competence of all participants – or to sufficient positive experiences with the way former relationships proceeded. Accordingly, it is important to focus on relationship aspects not only when learning situations fail or become problematic (cf. also Katzenbach, 2004; Wolf, 2006). Given these insights, the extent to which a person-centred approach emphasizing values of appreciation, empathy and authenticity may have a positive impact on effective (digital) adult education ought to be investigated.

## **THE PERSON-CENTRED APPROACH**

The person-centred approach, conceived by the American psychologist Carl R. Rogers (1980) in the course of many years of educational and psychological practice, can be

summarised as follows: “We think we are listening, but it is very rarely done with real understanding and empathy. Yet this kind of listening is one of the most powerful forces of change I know” (p. 116).

Rogers gained notoriety in the professional community more for his approach to psychological counselling and psychotherapy than for his contributions to educational practice and theory. Nevertheless, he was deeply involved with issues of education and learning processes, as is shown by his autobiographical writings (Cornelius-White, 2012; Kunze, 2013; Rogers, 1969).

With the concept of person-centred adult education, Rogers shaped a radical paradigm shift in learning and development. Sustained learning as opposed to purely technical instruction is of great relevance in this new approach to learning. Person-centred educational experiences allow for more comprehensive learning combined with whole-person growth and development. Rogers (1961) also called this “significant learning”.

According to Rogers, the teacher is seen as a facilitator who not only imparts pure knowledge, but also promotes the learning process. Thus, learners are stimulated and encouraged to search for solutions independently, to develop their own learning strategies, and to make their own decisions regarding content or methodological approach. The focus is not on the abilities or learning deficits of learners, but on the positive highlighting of existing potentials and experiences and, above all, on the learners themselves (Kunze, 2013). Since the concept of lifelong learning relativises the supposed differences between learning in childhood and learning during adulthood, many personal or even professional experiences can also be integrated into the self-concept of one’s own learning in adulthood. According to Siebert (2011), although experiences relating to learning awareness are primarily gained in childhood and have a formative impact on lifelong learning, in combination with experiences gained later, adults still develop different preferences, interests, and learning styles (see also Arnold et al., 1999; Kunze, 2013).

A more detailed look at the person-centred theory makes it possible to subdivide it into a personality theory, a group theory, and a theory of interpersonal relationships. These are interdependent and are, in turn, also part of the person-centred learning theory (Rogers, 1959). The theory’s main focus is to create opportunities for learners to grow personally. This can only be achieved in a learning environment free of threat or fear in combination with a conducive relationship, both of which need to be provided by the teacher. Likewise, it is of great importance to develop trust with the learners and to let the learning processes unfold within social relationships. Learning processes are intrapsychic and self-initiated and, accordingly, cannot be controlled from the outside (Jarvis, 2006). Another of its foci is on learning in freedom. Only if learners have learned to learn freely will they be able to supplement their own self-concept with sustainable and congruent self-experiences (Rogers, 1959).

With the great importance of Rogers’ approach to successful learning in mind, the following section looks at similar ideas in adult education theory and in research on distance education.

## **PEDAGOGICAL RELATIONSHIPS IN ADULT EDUCATION**

As mentioned above, the relationship between learners and teachers in adult education has so far received little attention in adult education research or has been addressed but indirectly. In the classical theories of adult learning put forth by Knowles, Dewey or Tough, for example, there are references to the importance of the emotional level of learning in general, and to its significance for the interaction of teachers and learners with one another in particular (for an overview, see Knowles et al., 2005, p. 75). On the one hand, this involves the acceptance of an affective connection between teachers and learners by the participants themselves, combined with an egalitarian relationship between the two. On this basis, learners and teachers act equally as speakers and listeners and engage in a joint learning process in which the experience of the learners is recognised as being as valuable as the knowledge of the teachers. On the other hand, trust between learners and teachers plays a central role. Not only does the learner need a basic trust in the abilities and positive intentions of the teacher, but the latter also needs to trust in the learner's abilities of self-direction and self-regulation.

The teacher seeks to build relationships of mutual trust and helpfulness among the students by encouraging cooperative activities and refraining from inducing competitiveness and judgementalness. [...] The teacher exposes his own feelings and contributes his resources as a co-learner in the spirit of mutual inquiry. (Knowles et al., 2005, p. 93)

Building on the concept of transformative learning, which can be traced back to Mezirow (1978), Daloz (2012) describes the relationship between teachers and learners in adult education primarily as a mentoring relationship, one characterised by openness and mutual respect. The authenticity and presence of the mentor in the learning process plays a crucial role (Misawa & McClain, 2019, p. 55), although physical presence is not explicitly referred to here. Of equal importance is the reflexivity of the actors with regard to their relationship, especially with regard to power relations, which may be rooted not only in the institutionalised roles of teacher or learner, but also in gender relations, sexual orientation, ethical origin, or other dimensions of inequality (Misawa & McClain, 2019, p. 58).

## **EXPERIENCES IN THE FIELD OF DISTANCE EDUCATION**

Formats of distance learning in adult education have been discussed and studied for many decades. For the past two decades, the focus has been on different forms of online distance learning. The various theoretical models and empirical studies deal primarily with diverse forms of delivery, didactic concepts, and the interaction of learners with one another or with the technical environment. The relationship with teachers – who are often referred to as tutors – is rarely addressed or they are reduced to their function as learning guides available on demand. The importance of the relationship between teachers and learners is often rather implicit in the empirical material and is rarely reflected theoretically. An

exception to this is a contribution by Miyazoe and Anderson (2010), who, building on a theoretical model by Anderson (2003), assume three central relationship levels in teaching-learning contexts: the relationship between learners and content, between the learners themselves, and between learners and teachers. In the synopsis of various studies, the authors conclude that the different levels can be weighted differently, but at least one of the three must be at a high level to enable deep and meaningful learning. Thus, the relationship between teachers and learners seems to be only one of several aspects relevant to successful learning. The thesis that this relationship can be compensated by a positive dynamic between the learners or a high intrinsic interest in the subject matter, however, seems doubtful against the background of other studies.

It is not only in online distance learning environments that teachers are seen as playing a central role in developing positive interaction between learners and in mediating between learners and content (e.g., Guilar & Loring, 2008). In this context, some central quality features of tutorial support are repeatedly pointed out as an essential prerequisite for successful learning (see overview in Kara et al., 2019, p. 15). In particular, this concerns the quality but also the quantity of the interaction between tutors and learners. Tutors should communicate regularly with learners, respond promptly to queries, provide feedback, and use both asynchronous and synchronous communication channels to ensure learner satisfaction and motivation (see also Dzakiria, 2012). If this communication is not deemed sufficient or if it is experienced as not being supportive enough, learners feel left alone and isolated and are less able to identify with their role as learners. The interaction between learners and tutors should ensure “a climate of mutual respect, collaboration, mutual trust, supportiveness, openness, authenticity and pleasure” (Gravani, 2019, p. 202). In this way, the experiences of distance learning programs are directly linked to fundamental andragogic principles, such as those described by Weiss (2000): “As an instructor, it’s crucial that you set up the learning situation in a manner that arouses learners’ feelings of security, well-being, and self-confidence. It’s equally important to challenge them without threats, intimidation, or pressure” (p. 3).

Such a learning atmosphere allows for an open approach even to sensitive topics and to one’s own learning difficulties, while the feeling of closeness between learners and teachers may still vary (Gravani, 2019, p. 210). A case study by McDougall (2015) reveals how, in a distance learning environment, teachers succeed in creating an open work atmosphere characterised by mutual trust, in which they encourage the participants to share personal perspectives and experiences and at the same time do not place themselves in the foreground as experts but, rather, meet the learners at eye level. Nevertheless, especially for learners who have little experience with internet-based learning environments, the lack of a direct encounter with the teacher poses a particular challenge, which is why Dzakiria (2012), for example, recommends enabling face-to-face encounters between teachers and learners, at least at the beginning of a course.

It therefore seems sensible to take a closer look at the possibilities that arise in the field of adult education with regard to functioning pedagogical relationships.

## **LESSONS LEARNED WITH REGARD TO RELATIONSHIPS IN ADULT EDUCATION SETTINGS**

On the basis of the ideas outlined in the constructivist learning theory, Rogers' person-centred approach, as well as experiences and evidence from the field of distance education, we can assume some key factors for a positive relationship between learners and adult educators, regardless of whether they see themselves as teachers or as tutors.

### **Congruence**

Following Rogers' concept of congruence, Boshier (1973) emphasizes the learners' self-congruence as well as the congruence of learners and teachers in adult education. Congruence, in this context, can be conceived of as a relationship based on acceptance and on a certain level of sympathy for one another. For adult educators, this could imply an open-minded approach to the learners' views, a willingness to accept their attitudes and opinions and to approach them without ingratiation.

### **Empathy**

The willingness and ability to see the world through the learners' eyes can be considered one of the crucial prerequisites for being a successful adult educator. Empathy is relevant not only for knowledge transfer, but also for building a positive relationship between learners and educators. The feeling of being understood is an excellent starting point for learning and should therefore be promoted by adult educators.

### **Trust**

From a constructivist point of view, adult educators are above all facilitators who enable and support learning. On that basis, adult educators can also be seen as gatekeepers who unlock new knowledge for the learners. For them to be efficient in that role, however, they need their learners to trust in their facilitators and their guidance. Trust can be seen as a key component of a productive learner-teacher relationship, in general, and Rogers' ideas of congruence and empathy may well be the best means of achieving it.

### **Positive regard**

Not only unconditional positive regard, but also a general belief in the human organism can be seen as a further prerequisite for the facilitation of learning and for a successful relationship between adult educators and learners. Only if there is a strong belief in the capabilities and potentials of learners as well as a basic sympathy and respect for them will adult educators be able to motivate and support learners in an appropriate manner. However, this includes also the willingness to accept learners' personal problems or disagreements and the ability to cope with conflicts that may arise during the learning process, including role conflicts (Sipitanou & Foukidou, 2012).

## CONCLUSION

The ways in which relationships are built may well differ between the classroom and an online environment, but the decisive factors remain the same. These are related to congruence, empathy, trust, and positive regard. The use of digital media in pandemic times also provides opportunities for the creation of more democratic structures in learning contexts of all kinds (Steinl & Vogelsaenger, 2020). For adult education to be able to meet the challenges of the pandemic, the building of successful pedagogical relationships is required. However, only little is known about how such relationships may be built and deepened in an online learning environment. It seems that the relationship between learners and educators has been largely neglected in research, not only in the field of adult education. Thus, one positive outcome of the pandemic could well be that the awareness for the significance of these relationships has now increased significantly.

In order to implement the aspects discussed in the previous chapter in digitalised adult education in the future, the following things should be considered:

- The creation of an appreciative learning atmosphere is the basis of all successful learning and a central indicator for high-quality adult education.
- Creating a relationship based on the values of acceptance and a certain sympathy between teachers and learners could also be supported by adult education institutions.
- An empathetic view of learners in terms of knowledge transfer and building trusting relationships could be seen as a key competence of professional adult educators.
- Building learners' trust in themselves and in the teacher should be seen as a general learning goal and desirable outcome of educational programs.

Nevertheless, research on relationships in adult education is poor and many open questions remain, in particular related to the development of learner-tutor relations in an online environment.

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