

Success in Studies for Adult Students (Part 3)

By Daniel Theyagu

In the last two segments I shared with you on what you have got to do if you want to achieve success in your studies as an adult learner. Here, I will share with you on how you should study your subject so that you have a better understanding of what you are reading be it your textbook or lecture notes.

In order to be able to understand what you are studying remember the following acronym: P.Q.R.I.T. This stands for:

PREVIEW what you read

Ask **QUESTIONS**

READ effectively

INFER what you've read

TEST yourself constantly

1. PREVIEW what you read

This is rather a taken for granted practice. Many students speak about it, but do not quite practise it. Studying effectively is almost as similar as watching a movie.

Ask yourself what do you normally do before watching a movie in a cinema?

Chances are you want to know what the movie that you going to watch is all about. You might have seen the trailer and perhaps read the critique of the movie in the papers. Quite simply you have 'previewed' the movie before watching it.

This is exactly what you should do when you read your textbook or lecture notes. When you preview your text and lecture notes what you are doing is primarily to generate interest and this will motivate you to engage yourself fruitfully in your studies.

2. Ask QUESTIONS

Questions and more questions will lead you to the road to success in your studies. Even before you read or revise a topic ask questions about what you are about to do. Your questions can be structured using the: “who; what; when; where; why and how”. Cliché as this may be, asking questions generate interest and also allows you to identify what are the key points you need to know and perhaps need to clarify. Questions will also allow you to identify your weak areas and makes you put in extra effort in those areas. As mentioned in my previous segment, adults are basically self-directed learners, therefore you need to direct yourself to what you want to know and find out. What better way to do this than by asking questions?

3. READ effectively

After you've asked all possible questions about what you are about to read, you can commence reading your textbook, notes etc. Keep a note pad by your side and use your finger or a pencil to glide along the pages that you are reading. Take note of the key concepts and phrases. Write them down on your note pad. When you practise this conscientiously you will notice that your concentration span improves and you do not get distracted easily. I'm sure you will be aware that most textbooks are relatively boring and difficult to follow. Thus the only way you are going to make sense of it is to make inference of what you are reading. This is the next stage.

4. INFER what you've read

When you learn to infer, you will learn to see the connection between what you are reading and how this relate to the big picture. By inference what is meant is to try to repeat the main idea of each topic in your own words. When you put it in your own words it shows that you are able to make sense of what you are reading.

One way you can do this is to see how the chapter you are reading integrates with the rest of the materials that you are reading. Inference skills are especially important in studies as you need to analyse what you are learning in order to understand it.

TEST yourself constantly

This is the final stage. Test your understanding by summarizing the whole chapter and include as many facts and details from each sub-heading you come across in the chapter that you've read.

Visualize yourself as a lecturer or a teacher who is trying to teach this chapter to an imaginary audience (real one are even better). This is why I mentioned in my previous segment to engage your family. By getting your spouse or children involved you could make this into a pleasant effort by getting them to ask you questions about what you're reading or asking you to explain to them what you've read. If you are able to make them understand it just goes on to show that you understand.

When you make this concerted effort, you may be pleasantly surprised at the amount of information you know.

In the next segment, I will share with you how to prepare and write in an examination.

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