

## Methodology Examples

### Methodology #1

There is a wealth of information for this review since it is a current topic of interest in the career field for human resource, corporate training, and instructional design professionals. The University of Northern Iowa Rod Library, Des Moines Public Library, and the author's personal library were used to select resources. EBSCO, ERIC, UNISTAR, and online searches using Google Scholar were also used. The libraries were used for their large collections. The Internet was used as a source because of its limitless networking of resources. Sources used from the Internet were written by professionals in their fields and published on reliable sites, in refereed publications, or on professional organizational sites.

Descriptive search terms including adult learning styles, learning styles, Personal Learning Networks, generations, generations in the workplace, generational differences, generational learning styles, corporate training, technology in the classroom, emerging technologies, social media, social networking, andragogy, and pedagogy were used to retrieve research from library and online databases. Instructors at the University of Northern Iowa and professionals currently working in the corporate training field were also consulted.

The relevance and credibility of all the sources were considered in this literature review. The author evaluated the resources with the following criteria: (a) how current is the source? (b) does the source aligned with the author's research questions? and (c) what are the credentials of the source's author? The majority of cited references were within the last six years. A few researchers were included from previous decades to establish foundational concepts that continue to this day.

### Methodology #2

The methods for identifying and locating resources involved accessing the University of Northern Iowa Library's online cataloging system – *UNISTAR*. Information related to the reviewed topics at *UNISTAR* was discovered in selected books. In addition, *Panther Prowler* and *Google Scholar™* were heavily used to locate numerous online databases in order to find related scholarly articles. These online databases included ERIC (EBSCOhost Academic Search Elite), EBSCOhost Professional Development Collection, GALE Academic OneFile, IEEE Computer Society, Dissertation & Thesis (ProQuest), SpringerLink (Springer Netherlands), Education Full Text (Wilson Web), Wiley InterScience, and PsycINFO (EBSCO).

### Keyword Descriptors

A variety of keyword descriptors were used in searching within the above-mentioned online databases. The keyword descriptors included: assessment, online assessment, effective assessment, peer assessment, self-assessment, assessment techniques, assessment strategies, distance education, elearning, online learning,

distance learning, self-directed learning, motivation, adult learners, adult education, andragogy, and ARCS model.

### Evaluation of Resources

In searching for applicable articles, the search engines were limited to search peer-reviewed journals only. The *Advanced Scholar Search* feature in *Google Scholar™* was used to set specific criteria. The time period was limited from 2000 – 2010 to get the most current research articles. In addition, the basic Boolean search operator “AND” was used to narrow down search results as additional parameters. For example, “online assessment” AND “elearning” AND “adult learner” to retrieve articles that meet these three parameters.

Credibility, validity, and reliability were used to analyze and to evaluate the resources found. In searching all articles, peer-reviewed journals, date of journal submission, and journal acceptance rate were used to analyze and to evaluate the articles. The initial resources were selected by reviewing the article abstracts and then determining if the contents were relevant to the keywords. The evaluation of resources was based on: the quality of the content, the relevance to the topic, and the published year from the year of 2000 to the most current year. The citation index searching technique was also used to examine the citation frequency of author’s work in other publications.

### Methodology #3

Finding reliable and valid sources of information on staff development was a challenge for the researcher. The researcher used electronic databases using keyword-searching methods to locate traditional and online sources on the topic. The primary database used to locate sources was ERIC (Educational Resources Information Center). The ERIC database was useful in locating full-text articles from well-known research journals and publications. ERIC is a database that focuses on retrieving sources related to education. The researcher was most successful in finding pertinent information when using the following descriptors: *adult learners, distance education, technology use, and staff development*. Another database used to locate sources was the University of Northern Iowa’s Rod Library Catalog, known as UNISTAR. The researcher used UNISTAR primarily to locate traditional sources such as books and some research articles. The third source of locating traditional sources was the faculty within the Educational Technology Division at the University of Northern Iowa. The researcher was able to review books from respected researchers in the fields of staff development, distance education, and instructional technology. The final source of locating information was the use of World Wide Web search engines. The researcher was able to locate full-text research articles from online journals using search engines.

The challenge of citing resources from the World Wide Web is that the researcher had to check for the credibility of the information found. This was an important issue because the researcher recognizes that anyone can publish information online that is false or misleading. To check for credibility, the researcher found background information on the authors of the online sources and determined if the information was credible. To determine further credibility, the researcher entered the authors’ names

into the ERIC database and found that many of the authors have several publications in the fields of staff development, distance education, and/or instructional technology.

The primary rationale for selecting the sources described above was reliability. The researcher recognized that he had access to human and electronic resources that would make locating sources of information fairly easy. However, it was the researcher's responsibility to determine the credibility and the validity of the information to be referenced in this literature review. The second rationale for selecting the above sources is the researcher's own interest in the topic of staff development and use of technology. The researcher intends to use this literature review as a foundation for future research in staff development in the area of technology integration.

The researcher developed a list of criteria for evaluating the information cited throughout this review.

1. Is this the actual writer/author of the information? (Credibility)
2. Is the information verifiable and authentic? (Validity)
3. Has the information been used in other research?
4. Is the information based on previous research?
5. Does the information cite well-known researchers on the given topic?
6. Is the information presented in a clear and organized manner?