



## Professional reconversion to ensure a better professional future

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### Chapter 3 Initiative



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## Consortium



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## Introduction

Initiative is a highly valuable trait in today's ever-changing world, where individuals are expected to take proactive steps, demonstrate resourcefulness, and drive innovation. Employers seek employees who are self-starters, capable of taking independent action, and who display a willingness to go beyond their assigned tasks. Therefore, it is essential for adult educators to emphasize the development of initiative in learners to equip them with the necessary skills for success. This section aims to define initiative and explore how adult educators can foster and enhance learners' initiative-taking abilities.

## Learning objectives

Learners will be able to:

- describe in their own words the concept of initiative and list all its characteristics
- explain in their own word significance of initiative in personal and professional contexts
- name and characterize at least three benefits of initiative in modern life and the workplace
- explain the essence of all the aforementioned teaching approaches that promote the development of initiative
- identify good practices and applications of initiative in adult education

## 3.1. What is initiative?

### 3.1.1. Definition

Initiative can be defined as the ability and willingness to take independent action, demonstrate self-motivation, and drive positive change. It involves actively seeking opportunities, identifying problems, and taking proactive steps to address them. Individuals with initiative display a sense of ownership, responsibility, and a readiness to go beyond what is expected.

Various definitions and perspectives on initiative exist, but they converge on the idea that initiative entails self-directed action, proactive decision-making, and the ability to seize opportunities. Initiative goes beyond mere compliance and requires individuals to take risks, show adaptability, and embrace challenges.

Research by Frese and Fay (2001) highlights initiative as a key driver of personal and professional success. Their study suggests that individuals who demonstrate initiative are more likely to achieve their goals, exhibit higher job satisfaction, and contribute to organizational growth and innovation.

### 3.1.2. Characteristics

In the realm of personal development, initiative is characterized by an individual's proactive and self-driven nature. It encompasses a range of qualities and behaviors that contribute to taking independent action and driving positive change. Here are some key aspects of initiative:

- **Proactive mindset:** Individuals with initiative possess a proactive mindset, where they actively seek out opportunities, set goals, and take initiative without waiting for instructions or external motivation.
- **Goal-oriented approach:** Initiative involves setting clear goals and taking deliberate steps to achieve them. Individuals with initiative have a strong sense of direction and work persistently towards their objectives.
- **Resourcefulness and adaptability:** Initiative entails being resourceful and adaptable in various situations. Individuals with initiative display the ability to find creative solutions, adapt to changing circumstances, and seize opportunities in dynamic environments.
- **Risk-taking and resilience:** Initiative often involves taking calculated risks and embracing challenges. Individuals with initiative are not deterred by setbacks or failures; instead, they demonstrate resilience and learn from their experiences to improve and move forward.
- **Proactive problem-solving:** Initiative encompasses the ability to identify problems and actively seek solutions. Individuals with initiative take responsibility for addressing issues and contribute to finding innovative and practical resolutions.
- **Self-motivation:** Initiative is closely linked to self-motivation. Individuals with initiative possess an internal drive and self-discipline that propel them to take action, even in the absence of external rewards or supervision.

### 3.1.3. Values

Initiative holds intrinsic value in personal and professional contexts. By taking initiative, individuals can realize various benefits and personal growth. Here are some values associated with initiative:

- **Empowerment and self-efficacy:** Initiative empowers individuals to take ownership of their actions and outcomes. It builds self-confidence and self-esteem, as individuals witness their ability to initiate positive change and achieve desired results.
- **Adaptability and growth:** Initiative fosters adaptability and a growth mindset. It enables individuals to embrace change, learn new skills, and adapt to evolving circumstances. Through taking initiative, individuals can continuously improve and develop their abilities.

- **Innovation and creativity:** Initiative encourages individuals to think creatively and find innovative solutions to challenges. It sparks new ideas and approaches, leading to personal growth and contributing to organizational innovation.
- **Leadership potential:** Initiative is closely associated with leadership qualities. Individuals who demonstrate initiative are more likely to assume leadership roles, inspire others, and drive positive change within teams and organizations.
- **Professional success:** Initiative is highly regarded by employers and is often a key factor in career advancement. Individuals who take initiative are recognized for their ability to drive projects, solve problems, and contribute to organizational success.

By fostering initiative in learners, educators can empower them to become proactive and self-motivated individuals who can navigate challenges, embrace opportunities, and make meaningful contributions in their personal and professional lives.

### 3.1.4. The importance of initiative in modern life

Initiative is increasingly crucial in today's dynamic and competitive environment. Rapid technological advancements, evolving industries, and the need for continuous innovation make initiative-taking a valuable asset. Here are some reasons why the initiative is important:

- **Professional development and employability:** Taking the initiative to develop professional traits and skills, as well as going above and beyond to help others, demonstrates a proactive and resourceful approach that is highly valued by employers
- **Career advancement and competitiveness:** Demonstrating good initiative allows individuals to get ahead of the competition and stay updated with developments in their career sector, potentially leading to awards and promotions.
- **Proactive problem-solving:** Initiative empowers individuals to identify problems and actively seek solutions, contributing to personal growth and improvement. In professional settings, individuals who display initiative can address challenges promptly, leading to increased efficiency and productivity.
- **Adaptability and resilience:** Initiative cultivates adaptability, allowing individuals to embrace change, seize opportunities, and navigate uncertainty. It enables individuals to step out of their comfort zones, explore new possibilities, and bounce back from setbacks.

In summary, initiative as a transversal skill is important in modern life for professional development, career advancement, adaptability, and personal growth and satisfaction.

## 3.2. Teaching approaches to initiative

### 3.2.1. Teaching initiative

To foster and develop initiative in learners, adult educators can employ various teaching approaches. Here are some effective strategies:

- **Project-based learning:** Engage learners in projects that require them to take initiative, set goals, plan and execute tasks, and take responsibility for their learning. Projects provide opportunities for independent decision-making, problem-solving, and creative thinking.
- **Experiential learning:** Encourage learners to actively engage in real-world experiences that promote initiative. Field trips, internships, simulations, and practical exercises provide opportunities for learners to apply their knowledge, take ownership, and develop their initiative-taking abilities.
- **Autonomy and self-directed learning:** Create an environment that promotes learner autonomy and self-direction. Allow learners to choose topics of interest, design their learning paths, and set goals. Provide guidance and support as facilitators rather than relying solely on traditional instructor-led approaches.
- **Reflection and metacognition:** Incorporate reflection activities to enhance learners' metacognitive skills. Encourage learners to critically analyze their actions, assess outcomes, and identify areas for improvement. Reflection promotes self-awareness and helps learners recognize their strengths, weaknesses, and growth opportunities.
- **Recognition and celebration of achievements:** Acknowledge and celebrate individuals' achievements and milestones along their journey towards independence. This recognition reinforces their efforts and motivates them to continue taking initiative and striving for independence.

### 3.2.2. Challenges / Barriers

Developing and fostering initiative in learners can encounter several challenges and barriers. These factors can hinder the cultivation and application of initiative within an educational context. Some of the key challenges and barriers related to promoting initiative are as follows:

- **Limited autonomy and empowerment:** In traditional educational settings, learners may face limited opportunities to take initiative and make independent decisions. A rigid curriculum and instructional approach can restrict learners' autonomy and discourage them from taking proactive steps.
- **Fear of failure and risk aversion:** Learners may be hesitant to take initiative due to the fear of failure or the potential consequences of making mistakes. The emphasis on high-

stakes assessments and the fear of negative evaluation can deter learners from taking risks and exploring new possibilities.

- **Lack of motivation and purpose:** Learners may struggle to develop initiative if they lack intrinsic motivation and a clear sense of purpose. When learners do not see the relevance or meaningfulness of their actions, they may be less inclined to take initiative or invest effort in their learning.
- **Limited exposure to real-world contexts:** Learners may struggle to apply initiative in real-world contexts if their educational experiences primarily focus on theoretical knowledge and are disconnected from practical applications. The absence of authentic learning experiences can impede the development of initiative.
- **Sociocultural factors:** Cultural and societal norms, as well as peer influence, can impact learners' willingness to demonstrate initiative. Cultural values that prioritize obedience and conformity over individual initiative can pose challenges in fostering a culture of initiative.
- **Educator resistance to change:** Some educators may resist incorporating initiative-promoting strategies in their teaching practices. Traditional teaching methods that prioritize compliance and conformity can hinder the development of initiative in learners. Overcoming resistance to change among educators is crucial to promoting a culture of initiative.
- **Lack of role models and mentorship:** Learners benefit from positive role models and mentors who demonstrate and encourage initiative. The absence of such guidance and support can limit learners' understanding of what it means to take initiative and the potential benefits it offers.

### 3.2.3. The role of the educator

Educators play a pivotal role in fostering and nurturing learners' initiative. They can create an environment that encourages and supports the development of initiative in the following ways:

- **Establishing a supportive and empowering learning environment:** Educators should create a safe and inclusive environment where learners feel empowered to take initiative. This involves providing opportunities for learners to voice their ideas, encouraging independent thinking, and valuing diverse perspectives.
- **Promoting autonomy and ownership:** Educators should design learning experiences that allow learners to have a sense of ownership and control over their learning. Providing choices, encouraging self-directed learning, and fostering learner agency can facilitate the development of initiative.
- **Facilitating authentic and real-world connections:** Educators should design learning activities that connect to real-world contexts and challenges. By incorporating authentic

tasks, projects, and simulations, educators help learners understand the relevance and application of initiative in practical situations.

- **Encouraging reflection and self-assessment:** Educators should guide learners in reflecting on their actions and decisions, helping them recognize the impact of their initiative. Self-assessment can enable learners to develop metacognitive skills and become more self-aware of their strengths and areas for growth.
- **Serving as mentors and role models:** Educators can inspire and guide learners by modeling initiative themselves. By demonstrating proactive behaviors, taking risks, and sharing personal stories of initiative, educators can inspire learners to develop their own initiative.
- **Providing constructive feedback and guidance:** Educators should offer timely and constructive feedback that acknowledges and encourages learners' initiative. By providing guidance and support, educators help learners navigate challenges, learn from failures, and refine their initiative skills.
- **Incorporating collaborative opportunities:** Educators can foster initiative by promoting collaborative learning experiences. Group projects, teamwork, and peer collaboration allow learners to practice initiative in a social context, learn from others' perspectives, and develop teamwork and communication skills.

By embracing these roles and strategies, educators can create an environment that nurtures and develops learners' initiative, enabling them to become proactive, self-motivated, and empowered individuals who can drive positive change in their personal and professional lives.

### 3.2.4. Characteristics of a initiative-focused classroom

An initiative-focused classroom is a learning environment that nurtures and cultivates learners' ability to take initiative and drive positive change. Here are some key characteristics of an initiative-focused classroom:

- **Active engagement:** In an initiative-focused classroom, learners are actively engaged in their learning. They are encouraged to take ownership of their education, set goals, and take the lead in designing and implementing learning experiences.
- **Empowerment and autonomy:** The classroom promotes a sense of empowerment and autonomy among learners. They are given the freedom to explore their interests, make decisions, and take initiative in their learning journey. Initiative is a self-management skill, and an initiative-oriented classroom fosters a sense of responsibility and independence among students.
- **Goal-setting and planning:** Learners are encouraged to set goals and develop action plans to achieve those goals. They learn to identify areas for improvement, create strategies, and monitor their progress.

- **Problem-solving mindset:** The classroom fosters a problem-solving mindset, where learners are encouraged to identify challenges, seek solutions, and take initiative to overcome obstacles. They take action, when necessary, solve problems that others may not have noticed, and go out of their way to continue learning and growing. They are willing to take on challenges, ask questions, seek help when needed, and engage in extra research to deepen their understanding.
- **Collaboration and leadership:** Students who show initiative in the classroom tend to take more responsibility for their actions and display qualities that make them good leaders. They also motivate their peers to perform at a higher level, contributing to a collaborative and proactive learning environment
- **Encouragement of creativity and innovation:** The classroom encourages learners to think creatively and innovatively. They are given opportunities to explore new ideas, generate unique solutions, and take risks in their learning process.
- **Motivation and continuous learning:** An initiative-oriented classroom promotes a culture of motivation and continuous learning. Students are encouraged to take the initiative to develop their skills, go above and beyond in their studies, and demonstrate a drive to achieve.
- **Mentorship and guidance:** Educators serve as mentors and guides, providing support, encouragement, and guidance to learners as they develop their initiative skills. They offer feedback, share experiences, and inspire learners to take initiative.

### 3.2.5. Assessment

Assessment in an initiative-focused classroom is crucial for evaluating learners' development of initiative skills and their ability to take proactive action. Educators can assess initiative in the following ways:

- **Project-based assessments:** Assigning projects that require learners to take initiative, plan, and execute their ideas. These projects can be evaluated based on the learner's ability to set goals, take action, and demonstrate creativity and innovation.
- **Self-assessment and reflection:** Encouraging learners to reflect on their own initiative skills, assess their progress, and set personal goals for improvement. Self-assessment can help learners develop metacognitive skills and take ownership of their initiative development.
- **Peer assessment:** Providing opportunities for learners to assess and provide feedback to their peers' initiative-related projects or actions. Peer assessment promotes collaboration, communication, and a deeper understanding of the initiative process.

- **Observational assessments:** Educators can observe learners' initiative skills in action during group work, discussions, or independent activities. They can assess learners' ability to take the lead, contribute ideas, and drive positive change.
- **Real-world application:** Assessing learners' ability to apply their initiative skills in real-world contexts. This can be done through simulations, case studies, or community projects where learners demonstrate their initiative in practical situations.

It's important to note that assessing initiative is an ongoing process and should align with the overall goals and objectives of the initiative-focused classroom. Educators should provide timely and constructive feedback to learners, acknowledge their efforts, and create a supportive environment that encourages continuous growth and development of initiative skills.

### 3.3. Good practices/applications in adult education

In adult education, there are several good practices and applications that can promote and nurture initiative in learners:

- **Mentoring and coaching:** Provide learners with mentors or coaches who can guide and inspire them to take initiative. Mentors can offer support, share experiences, and encourage learners to explore new possibilities and take calculated risks.
- **Collaborative projects:** Foster collaboration among learners by assigning group projects that require joint decision-making and shared responsibility. Collaborative projects encourage learners to take initiative, contribute their unique perspectives, and work collectively towards a common goal.
- **Including plenty of practice exercises:** Incorporate practice exercises in the learning materials to ensure that adult learners can fully absorb and remember the subject matter. Repetition is key, so develop tasks that require learners to repeat certain steps and reinforce important key points throughout the course.
- **Role modeling:** Lead by example and model initiative in your own teaching practices. Demonstrate proactive behavior, take risks, and encourage learners to follow suit. By witnessing initiative in action, learners are more likely to develop and embrace this quality themselves.

By incorporating these teaching approaches, good practices, and applications, adult educators can create a learning environment that nurtures initiative, empowers learners to take ownership of their learning, and prepares them to excel personally and professionally.

## Suggested resources

- Frese, M., & Fay, D. (2001). Personal initiative: An active performance concept for work in the 21st century. Research in Organ
- [Entrepreneurial Skills - The Skills You Need to Start a Great Business](#)
- [Teaching initiative](#)



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