

Overview and criticisms of andragogy



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Andragogy, the art and science of teaching adults, is based on a set of core assumptions about why and how adults learn. The first assumption is that adults are self-directed (Knowles, 1984). As a result, adults learn best when their learning process can be self-directed, rather than centered in a traditional, dependent educational environment. Second, adults have both a greater number of experiences from which to learn and a wider variety of experiences upon which they can draw (Knowles, 1984). Third, adult role development plays an important part in spurring learning in adults (Knowles, 1984). For example, as a person ages and takes on new roles such as that of a care provider to a child or an elderly parent, that individual has the need to learn new skills. A fourth assumption is that, because adult learning is directly related to adult development, adult learning is focused on solving problems or performing new tasks (Knowles, 1984). Finally, Knowles (1984) assumes that adults are primarily driven by internal motivators and not external forces.

Criticisms of Andragogy

Both Lee (2003) and Sandlin (2005) describe multiple critiques of Knowles' (1984) five assumptions. Lee (2003) challenges andragogy on the basis that it incorrectly incorporates the importance of context. According to Lee (2003), andragogy is an individualistic concept, focusing only on the context a learner brings from his or her own experiences. Andragogy fails to consider that the individual does not exist in a vacuum and that individuals have many identities that may “ affect their views of learning and ways of engagement in the learning process” (Lee, 2003, p. 12).

Sandlin (2005) undertook an integrative literature review that found that critical theorists found andragogy to be lacking in five major and interrelated ways. First, andragogy treats education as a neutral, nonpolitical activity. Second, the entire concept is based on a “generic” learner who tends to be white, male, and middle class. Third, andragogy appears to value only one way of knowing and ignores voices that do not fit into the theory. Fourth, the concept is almost entirely individualistic, ignoring the importance of context. Finally, andragogy does not challenge the prevailing social structure, even if that social structure promotes inequality (Sandlin, 2005).

My Assumptions

In developing my own assumptions for andragogy, I have incorporated not only the critiques presented by Lee (2003) and Sandlin (2005) but also those based on my own experiences as an adult learner and as a teacher of adults. Most of them reflect the simple fact that humans are often complicated.

My first assumption is that adults may be self-directed in their learning journeys, but they may also elect to undertake a learning process because they are directed to do so by an external force. This assumption addresses Sandlin’s (2005) critique that andragogy is based on the idea that there is a generic learner. Men and women may have very different reasons for wanting to learn certain things, for example. As an educator, it is important to listen to the voices of your students.

Second, adults may have been around longer but that does not mean they are capable of learning from their experiences. Most people go through life having experience after experience, but not all of those experiences are

capable of providing a moment of learning. In addition, not everyone is interested in or capable of thinking about their experiences in such a way as to learn something from them. This assumption incorporates the criticism that andragogy, as it was originally presented, only valued one way of learning – that of learning from experience (Sandlin, 2005).

A third assumption is that adults may learn not only to develop the skills and knowledge needed for a new developmental role but also to address a need within their community. This assumption addresses the concerns of both Lee (2003) and Sandlin (2005) that andragogy is too focused on the individual and not focused enough on the social context of the individual or on the need for individuals to address inequity in community. At times, our communities may call us to undertake a new role for which we need new skills. In other cases, an adult might see a problem within the community and set out to learn what is needed in order to work towards a solution. Andragogy must acknowledge that learning is not just about the individual.

A fourth assumption is that adults might want to learn to solve problems but they might also learn just because learning is fun. Again, this is a reaction to the criticism that andragogy posits a generic learner (Sandlin, 2005). Adults learn for many reasons. An adult who is exploring a new hobby or learning a new sport may not actually be attempting to solve a problem. Rather, they may be learning because it is fun to do.

Finally, adults might have multiple motivations for learning particular things at specific times. We may indeed be driven to learn for a sense of inner achievement, but we may also be driven to learn so that we can battle our

child's school district when they deny our child something he or she needs. Learning can be a highly political activity and learning can lead to political activity (Sandlin, 2005). Andragogy should never assume that adult motivation to learn is wholly driven by internal needs and desires.

Using evidence you select from your readings explain how race, gender and sexual orientation can affect adult development or learning. Please provide CONCRETE examples of EACH positionality (e. g. one example for race, one example for gender, and one example for sexual orientation). (Hint: Stories from *Adult Learning and Development: Multicultural Stories* may be a good place to start when trying to answer this question.) (3 points)

Race, gender, and sexual orientation, in addition to other personal identifiers such as class, can positively and negatively affect both adult development and learning. In this essay, I briefly examine several concrete examples of the relationship between development or learning and a learner's race or ethnic identity, gender, and sexual orientation.

Race and Ethnic Identity

Race and ethnic identity can impact learning in a variety of ways. First, race and ethnic identity can influence what is important or proper for an individual to learn. *La Tortillera*, a short story by Patricia Preciado Martin (2000), provides a good example of how race and gender intersect in determining what it is proper for, in this case, a Latina to learn. In this culture, it is important for a woman and a mother to learn how to make tortillas for her family. Her mother shows Ms. Martin over and over again how to make tortillas, even though Ms. Martin finds the tortilla making lessons to

be frustrating not only because she can never get them just right but also because they are a reminder of her inadequacies as a Latina woman and a mother.

How individuals of specific races and ethnic identities are treated can also play a critical role in how individuals experience learning. Because of racism, minority students are less likely to complete postsecondary education (Swail, 2003). Unfortunately, in a racist and classist system, minorities often attend poorly funded schools that lack modern equipment and textbooks or that are unsafe. If they enroll in college or in an adult education program, they may still have to deal with the long-term effects of racism. Over 50% of Black graduate students, for example, reported being the targets of racist actions on campus and experienced “ isolation, loneliness, disconnection, and discrimination” as a result (Johnson-Bailey, Valentine, Cervero, & Bowles, 2009, p. 192).

The affect of racism on learning need not be entirely negative, however. Developing a strong sense of self in the face of racism can lead learners to reengage with their cultures and communities. “ Such resentment can be directed by more deeply engaging with and reclaiming one’s culture, history, and heritage, and thereby redefining what it means to be ‘ me,’ rather than defined (be either oneself or the dominant culture) according to what one is not ... ” (Smith & Taylor, 2010, p. 53).

Gender

Gender can also present challenges to the development and learning experiences of women and men. In the learning environment she was

studying, Cain (2002) described a situation in which a very traditional power dynamic based on gender developed. The women attempted to develop consensus among all participants, while a small group of males took over the meetings and ignored the voices of everyone else in the room. The lessons for all involved were tragic. “ The importance of this for learning is that so many of the initial participants, including all the women, learned that their contributions were not valued and they quit the group” (Cain, 2000, p. 70). The men’s developmental process had taught them that their voices were the most important, and, as a result, they ignored and alienated other voices that could have brought a great deal of knowledge to the work.

Another example that shows how gender can influence the learning experiences of men and women can be seen in Michael Dorris’ (2000) short story Groom Service. In the story, Bernard and Marie both exhibit behaviors they have learned as the appropriate behaviors for their gender. What Bernard learns, in particular, is described in the story. Bernard’s skills include hunting. “ Later he thought about hunting, how he could have succeeded the times he had failed, how the animals behaved, how they smelled and sounded” (Dorris, 2000, p. 219). Bernard also learns proper behavior around his future in-laws, with whom he will live in this matrilineal society.

Sexual Orientation

Like race and gender, sexual orientation can both positively and negatively affect development and learning. For example, if they are not “ out” to their family, friends, or teachers, lesbian, bisexual, gay, and transgender (LGBT) students may suffer from anxiety about their sexual orientation (Messinger, 2004). They may decide to stay in the closet because they fear that being

open about their orientation might lead to violence against them (Messinger, 2004). They may also fear that their parents will withdraw financial and emotional support from them (Freedman, 2009).

As with individuals who grow stronger by facing racism, students who develop strong self-identities in the face of homophobia can come through the experience stronger. They often show a more highly developed sense of empathy and better critical thinking skills than those who have not had to face the same challenges (Messinger, 2004).

You have taken Howard Gardner's Multiple Intelligence Test online. You are in charge of training resident hall assistants. Their highest multiple intelligence is one of your bottom three intelligences based on your test results.

List your group's learning style and provide a course title (. 25 point)

Provide one course objective (see the CAHA 501 course syllabus or seek information on the internet to properly word a course objective if you do not have experience writing objectives). (. 75 point)

Describe how you would teach that objective to your students based on their learning style. Use concrete examples (at least two) and make a clear and direct connection between the learning style and achieving the teaching of your objective. (2 points)

Learning Styles and My Training Course

My bottom three intelligences were social (3. 14), body movement (3. 00), and spatial (3. 00). For the purposes of this essay, my resident hall assistants

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will be strongest in bodily-kinesthetic intelligence. Learners that excel in bodily-kinesthetic intelligence often use parts of their body or their entire body as they work through the learning process (Smith 2002, 2008). As a result, they learn best through hands-on exercises, including building things and role playing (Armstrong, 2009).

The course I will be offering them as part of their training is “ Helping the International Student Transition to American Higher Education.” The course objective is to develop empathy among resident hall assistants for the challenges that international students face when starting college in the United States.

Training Exercises

Armstrong (2009) suggests that one method to engage students with strong kinesthetic learning intelligence is to role play or act out what you want them to learn. To help resident hall assistants gain a better understanding of what it is like to be an international student attending college in the United States for the first time, I will offer a role playing exercise. In the exercise, the learners will pull a scenario out of a hat. They will have to role play either an international student facing a barrier or challenge or a resident hall assistant tasked with helping the student work through the situation. An example of one scenario that the trainees might act out would be that of a South Korean female student who has been harassed by other students for walking arm in arm with her female friends. While this is a common behavior for young women in South Korea, in the United States, it can set students up for homophobic harassment. The role of the resident hall assistant in this scenario would be to help the South Korean student understand why they

are being harassed and to talk through strategies for dealing with the negative emotions harassment can engender and for promoting personal safety. Another role play might involve acting like an Ethiopian student who has enrolled in a northern college without knowing that winter clothing, like a coat, is needed. This exercise advances the objective by helping the students role play a situation in which they take on the persona of an international student facing a realistic problem.

As part of the training program, I would tell the resident assistants that lunch will be provided to them. The purpose of the lunch, however, is to offer them another kinesthetic learning opportunity. Another way in which to promote improved learning by kinesthetic learners is to engage them in hands-on activities or, in this case, a mouth and stomach-centered activity (Armstrong, 2009). Our lunch would be set up like the cafeteria at an American university. The food would not be labeled, and they would represent various foods that are eaten around the world that might be strange to American students. For example, there might be foods such as curried goat, tongue tacos, stewed okra, natto (fermented soybeans), blood pudding, kifte (highly spiced raw beef), kim chi (spicy fermented vegetables), and bread fruit and drinks like horchata and ginger beer. Seeing such a buffet might be disorientating to learners who are steeped in American culture and who are used to school menus of pizza and hamburgers. This exercise provides students with a concrete, hands-on learning experience, that of being forced to select and eat foods that are strange without any prior experience or guidance (McKenzie, 1999). It promotes the objective by allowing the

resident hall assistant to experience what an international student might experience the first day in the cafeteria.

You have taken the Emotional Intelligence Test online.

a) Argue for or against the use of emotional intelligence tests in hiring. You need to cite at least TWO (2) sources outside course materials to support your answer. (2 points)

I find the idea of emotional intelligence to be highly attractive. “ Emotional intelligence is a set of abilities that includes the abilities to perceive emotions in the self and in others, use emotions to facilitate performance, understand emotions and emotional knowledge, and regulate emotions in the self and in others” (Mayer & Salovey, 1997). Even though the concept of emotional intelligence currently is supported as a “ separate construct of intelligence” by little empirical evidence (Merriam, Caffarella, & Baumgartner, 2007, p. 383), I find that this model speaks to me because it argues for the importance of a very important part of life that is often denigrated or denied. How we interact and perceive the world is not just cold and rational, but rather our emotions play an important part in how we perceive the world and how we learn and make meaning.

Dirkx (2008) argues that “ emotional issues never seem very far from the surface in adult learning contexts” (p. 9). Emotions can affect how the student reacts to a classroom setting. They can also impact, positively or negatively, how well an individual learns, especially if a learner is scared or fearful (Rager, 2009). In addition, conflicts between learners can create negative emotions that negatively impact the ability to learn (Dirkx, 2008).

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Having emotional intelligence can better help learners understand not only their own learning process but also can help them understand what their fellow learners are going through.

The use of emotional intelligence tests in hiring, however, is a different matter. Does emotional intelligence play an important role in an individual's ability to be a good employee? Is it possible to accurately test an individual's emotional intelligence?

The use of emotional intelligence tests in hiring is growing, yet the validity of the tests is debatable (Grubb & McDaniel, 2007). There is no doubt that emotional intelligence can be helpful in the workplace. Cote and Miners (2006) found that workers who had low cognitive abilities could be highly successful workers if they had strong emotional intelligence to compensate for their deficiencies in other areas. However, the ability to accurately test for emotional intelligence and to find a test that could not be “faked out” continues to be difficult. Grubb and McDaniel (2007) found that, at least with one particular emotional intelligence test, the EQ-i: S, it was possible to teach test takers how to “fake” emotional intelligence. In their experiment, they found that fakers could be identified in only 31% of the cases, but “most of the respondents were able to increase their score by faking and not be identified” (Grubb & McDaniel, 2007, p. 56). Of what use is a test that can be so easily deceived?

On the other hand, other researchers have found emotional intelligence tests to be very useful in hiring practices. In one study, the researchers found that emotional intelligence tests were advantageous to minority test takers, as

they tended to score higher in emotional intelligence than Caucasians (Van Rooy, Alexander, & Chockalingam, 2005). If hiring were based on emotional intelligence tests with the hiring individual unaware of the race of the test taker, minority applicants might be more likely to be hired, whereas in traditional hiring situations they are more likely to not be hired due to racism.

When I took the emotional intelligence test online, I was highly dismayed by the results, which indicated that I had below average emotional intelligence. I found this distressing because I have spent most of my career working in positions that require a high degree of emotional intelligence (ability to read people, empathy) and I have been very successful in my work. Have I been faking emotional intelligence this entire time or did I just not do well in the testing environment? Or was the test itself faulty?

In the end, I believe that the concept of emotional intelligence is important to consider in the workplace. In many positions, having emotional intelligence is key to or supports success. However, emotional intelligence tests remain problematic and should be used only with great caution.

Ultimately, whether or not someone has the emotional intelligence needed for any given position will only be determined by observing that individual's performance on the job. As the testing instruments are developed and refined, perhaps this fact will change, but for now, to base a decision on whether or not to hire a given individual on the basis of an emotional intelligence test is not in the best interests of employer or employee.

5. Situated cognition is a topic of interest in adult education and it has been used in many

settings. Following are questions concerning situated cognition.

Compare (tell the similarities between) and contrast (tell the differences between) situated cognition and experiential learning. (1 point)

In the story “ Talking to the Dead” by Watanabe, explain what type(s) of learning occur for protagonist (e. g. experiential, situated cognition, reflective practice) and defend your answer by tying it to evidence in your readings. (1 point)

Situated cognition and experiential learning are closely related. However, the primary place of social interaction and social relationships as a requirement of learning in social cognition delineates the two theories from each other. It is the importance of the social interactions in Watanabe’s (2000) story, Talking to the Dead, that indicate that the type of learning the protagonist experienced falls under the category of situated cognition.

Situated Cognition and Experiential Learning

One of the most prominent theories of adult education, experiential learning addresses how adults make meaning or learn from their experiences (Zepke & Leach, 2002). There are five major schools of thought that fall under experiential learning theory. The first is the constructivist model, in which learners participate in a reflective process in order to develop new understandings (Merriam et al., 2007). The situative model posits that learning happens as the learner participates in activities, such as learning on

the job (Merriam et al., 2007). The psychoanalytic model believes that the emotions of the learner, particularly those that inhibit learning, must be dealt with in order for learning to occur, and the critical model believes that learning happens when the learner challenges the majority culture (Merriam et al., 2007). Finally, the complexity model posits that learning happens when individuals compare and contrast what multiple experiences teach them (Merriam et al., 2007).

Like experiential learning, situated cognition involves a learner gaining new understanding from lived experience. One example of situated cognition, the cognitive apprenticeship, makes this clear. In this process, learning can never be separated “ from the situation in which the learning is presented” (Merriam et al., 2007, p. 178). The learning happens in the experience. The experience of the place itself is important to the process of learning. “ The physical and social experiences and situations in which learners find themselves and the tools they use in that experience are integral to the entire learning process” (Merriam et al., 2007, p. 178). Experiential learning also focuses on “ doing the task in order to learn it” (Hansman, 2001, p. 46).

Situated cognition, however, “ is inherently social in nature. The nature of the interactions among learners, the tools they use within these interactions, the activity itself, and the social context in which the activity takes place shape learning” (Hansman, p. 45). Experiential learning theory might involve a social component but does not necessarily require it.

Learning to Talk to the Dead

In trying to determine what type of learning the protagonist of Watanabe's (2000) story *Talking to the Dead* experienced, I felt it important to think about what it was that she was really learning. On the surface, it appears that she was learning the process of preparing the bodies of the dead. However, at a deeper level, the protagonist is actually learning about proper social relationships – between master and apprentice, between mothers and children, between colleagues, and between the living and the dead (Watanabe, 2000). With this in mind, I believe that the protagonist participated in situated cognition. Neither her learning process nor what she learned can be separated from the social experience (Hansman, 2001). As in a cognitive apprenticeship, her learning only came about because she learned in a specific situation (Merriam et al., 2007). Had she learned to embalm bodies in another place, she never would have learned that the proper way to care for Auntie Talking to the Dead was to cremate her corpse in the traditional fashion (Watanabe, 2000). Every experience she had in learning about the proper relationships between the living and the dead – from the laying out of Mustard to the Blindman and the Blindman's Dog – every social context in which she found herself and every interaction between herself, Auntie, and others in the community contributed to her learning what she needed to learn in order to come to her moment (Watanabe, 2000, p. 279).

Application of Gerald Grow's SDL Scale to Instruction: Grow's SDL scale is informative for all educators. This question asks you to apply his scale. You are an instructor in whatever context you choose.

a) Create a course title and one (1) objective. (1 point)

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b) Describe in detail how you would teach this objective (use 2 concrete examples) to a Level 1 and a Level 4 learner. (2 points)

I have for two years taught a course titled “ Female Images of the Divine in the West.” My students affectionately call it the goddess class. The primary objective of the course is to develop the ability to think critically about how religious symbols and imagery impact people’s lives – both in the past and in the present. It is a 200-level undergraduate class, and I often find that I have a large group of first-year students in my class. I also tend to have a significant number of non-traditional-age students in my class, mostly because it is a night class. It makes for a very interesting group of students, representing every stage of Grow’s (1991) SDL Scale to Instruction.

Teaching Stage 1 Learners

Stage 1 learners are very dependent and view the instructor as the ultimate authority on the subject matter (Grow, 1991). They feel most comfortable in environments in which they receive immediate feedback, and they feel most comfortable in an environment in which the teacher-master dispenses wisdom to the learner (Grow, 1991). In working with this type of student, the educator needs to find a way to help the student gain confidence and begin to gain mastery over material that might be entirely new to them (Grow, 1991).

The first way I teach to my objective for my Stage 1 learners is to help them recognize that they know more about images of goddesses than they might think they do – even if they do not identify with any particular faith. We do this by talking about popular culture depictions of goddesses. I have

discovered that my students all seem to adore Xena: Warrior Princess. I have them go on YouTube and find clips from the show that depict the various goddesses – Hera, Callisto, and Aphrodite to name just a few. We then read primary texts from the ancient Greeks describing the goddesses. As a group, we identify similarities and differences between the television depictions and the depictions of the ancient Greeks and discuss why the two are often different. This discussion often leads to a further discussion about why the goddesses were important to ancient peoples and starts a semester-long discussion about the place of goddess imagery in modern times.

A second way I help my Stage 1 students is that I give quizzes in class, especially during the first few weeks, and we go over the answers right away. This helps them get immediate feedback on their understanding of the material. This activity helps advance the course objective because religious symbolism both holds steady and evolves over time. If they do not gain a solid mastery of the ancient understandings of goddesses, they have great difficulty when we begin discussion on whether or not modern figures, such as Princess Diana or Angelina Jolie, serve the same purposes in modern society as Artemis or Isis did in ancient cultures.

Teaching Stage 4 Learners

Stage 4 learners are considered to be fully self-directed (Grow, 1991). For a self-directed learner, the educator is someone who serves as a consultant, enhancing the learning work that is delineated and directed by the learner. Students functioning at the very highest levels are often self-directed learners; certainly, a student undertaking a major project such as a

dissertation ought to be able to function as a self-directed learner (Grow, 1991).

As an instructor of a stage 4 learner, I personally feel most comfortable with the delegator role (Grow, 1991). In this role, I can work directly with the student to discover their interests and needs, help them develop a learning plan, and then meet with them on a regular basis to discuss their progress and any roadblocks they have encountered. As part of their learning plan, we also develop together an assessment plan: what will be assessed, what products they are required to produce, and by which criteria we will assess their progress (Zepke & Leach, 2002). Most often, the stage 4 students I work with and I agree that they will pursue an independent project that makes a connection between the ancient and the modern. One project involved a student who examined the ancient Irish myths of the divine figure Deirdre. She then created an interpretive dance that incorporated environmental, costume, and movement symbols to convey the myth to a modern audience. Another student undertook a project that looked at the concept of ancient sovereignty goddesses and then used that material to analyze the Robert Zemeckis' film adaptation of Beowulf. When we first discussed the project, I suspected she might find echoes of sovereignty goddesses in the figure of Grendel's mother, but she also, convincingly, found echoes of the concept in the figure of Wealtheow. I was blown away! My student had made an intellectual discovery that had completely escape me.

7. Several authors have constructed models that show self-directed learning as a

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process.

Construct your own model of self-directed learning based on your experiences. (1 point)

Compare (tell the similarities between) and contrast (tell the differences between your model and two of the models found in Merriam, Caffarella and Baumgartner (2007) (pp. 110-119). (2 points)

Argue for or against the importance of context in the self-directed learning process using evidence from the literature. (1 points)

Defining self-directed learning can be tricky. It is not a self-contained theory of adult learning but instead a group of related concepts and practices.

Among the definitions I most prefer, Caffarella (1993) defines self-directed learning as:

a self-initiated process of learning that stresses the ability of individuals to plan and manage their own learning, an attribute or characteristic of learners with personal autonomy as its hallmark, and a way of organizing instruction in formal settings that allows for greater learner control. (p. 25).

Similar to Caffarella's (1993) definition, Candy's (1987) definition focuses on the importance of autonomy in self-directed learning, although the learner can work in concert with an educator (as cited in Grow, 1991).

My Model of Self-Directed Learning

My own model of self-directed learning is one based on process theology.

Process theology is grounded in change, growth, and constant movement. “

Human and other beings are not things (substances or essences) situated in empty space ... but are active processes ever in relation and transition” (Christ, 2003, p. 3). Moreover, as a postmodern theology, it is structured around the belief that all knowledge is contextual and that knowledge is shaped and controlled by