

The pedagogy verses andragogy



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Jarvis expanded theory of transformation of the person through learning prepositions an argument for the andragogical model and the way in which adults learn. Given the quality and extent of experiences an adult gains throughout life-span these experiences are shaped and molded by societal roles and tasks, and according to Knowles (1984) will be used as a source of learning. A desire for knowledge or to engage the learning process, often identified as eagerness to learn, is stimulated by experiencing motivating shifts in one developmental task to another or by an important life episode, creating an adjustment in behavior that leads to improvement in some characteristic of our personal being. Laher (2007) indicates that such movement on the individuals development, leads to a alteration from a subject-centered academic orientation to a problem-centered academic orientation to learning, due mainly in response to changing life occurrences. This paper will evaluate 1) the role that social change plays from an a andragogical approach with adult learners, 2) the responsibility of higher education institutions in facilitating adult education, and 3) briefly discuss a comparison between the role of pedagogy and andragogy approaches.

Social Change And Adult Learners

In terms of social change and the adult learner several factors are to be carefully considered. These would necessitate attending to social recognition of learners and addressing barriers to the learning process, reaching disadvantaged learners, fostering critical reflection associated with the process and ensuring experiential learning, and preparation for social action and community development. All of these efforts would serve to contribute

to the value of college education among adult learners. Mason (2003) notes that one assumption that should be considered is the readiness of learners to be self-directed, self-motivated, and personally resourceful.

Those learners experiencing disadvantage or who lack social recognition, or experience inequality as to access to educational opportunities may result in feelings of insecurity or uncertainty when approaching self-directed academics thus resulting in feelings of inadequacy or low self-esteem, borne out by the extent of their disadvantage and the main motivation for learning. Therefore, Merriam, et al. (2007) and her colleagues suggest that empowering learners to act involves a number of tasks. Facilitating an environment for adult learners so that they could create a relationships of equality is key in developing skills needed to contribute to meaningful participation in adult curriculum programming at the university level. Having a role in collegiate democracy such as problem-definition, identification of adult student needs, problem-solving, and decision-making structures and the development of critical reflection allows adult students to become more invested in the educational process and increases personal investment (pp. 23-27)

Engagement at this level and the opportunities it provides will increase a sense of academic cohesion, groups of adult learners working to carry out social change actions and individual learners moving into opportunities for engagement that address this populations academic needs will help facilitate learning environments that provide academic experiences upon which adult students can obtain valuable successes, build confidence and reach academic goals.

Experiential learning or education also helps adult learners identify their skills

and strengths in order to devise progression options, and to become “agents of their own

learning” (Connolly, 2002, p. 7). Such learning then is not only the responsibility of the individual learner, but must have a conduit by which learning is facilitated. The following section of this paper will address the responsibility of the higher education institutions role in adult education and the individual learner.

Responsibility of Higher Education Institutions

This section of the paper proposes the importance of institutions of higher education role in both providing and facilitating adult education with appropriate curriculum and strategies to enhance the adult learning experience. Higher education institutions goals and objectives could be adjusted to fit the learner and provide maximum opportunity to synthesize existing knowledge with new information by designing curricula that experientially relate to the learner’s developmental stage.

The number of adults entering learning situations later in life is growing due to rapid displacement, advancements in shifts in the job market, technological demands, and movement of employment overseas. Merriam, et al. (2007) and her colleagues indicate that “two best predictors of adult participation in a state’s higher education system were availability of undergraduate education (number of seats available, public and private) and

educational attainment of the state's adult population (percentage of adults with high school or higher)" (p. 69). Such responses to a voluntary or involuntary transition in their lives, such as seeking education to maintain current employment or to change careers, has necessitated a return to college for many older adults. It becomes the obligation of higher education institutions to adjust teaching strategies, curriculum, goals, and objectives to promote learning success in adult learners.

To promote external social change and to provide optimum learning environments for older adult learners requires adjusting strategies in curricula and delivery of the curriculum. Therefore, the next section of this paper will address the important nature of the adult learner and the origins of the andragogical principles and theory.

Pedagogy Verses Andragogy

This section of the paper will briefly review insights with regard to the relationship between

the pedagogy and andragogy principles and the adult learner. The leading form of teaching in America is pedagogy, or didactic, conventional, or teacher-directed method. A different method in terms of instructing adult learners is andragogy. The purpose of this section is to provide the reader with background information regarding both instructional forms.

Pedagogical Assumptions. The pedagogical model of instruction was originally developed from Greek, meaning the "art and science" of teaching children. In the pedagogical model, the teacher has full responsibility for

making decisions about what will be learned, how it will be learned, when it will be learned, and if the material has been learned. Pedagogy, places the student in a submissive role requiring obedience to the teacher's instructions. It is based on the assumption that learners need to know only what the teacher teaches them. The result is a teaching and learning methodology that promotes dependency on the instructor (Knowles, 1984).

The pedagogical model has been most used method applied equally to the teaching of children and adults and is seen as a contradiction in terms. As Knowles (1984) would suggest The reason this contradiction exists is as adults mature, they become increasingly independent and responsible for their own actions. They are often motivated to learn by a sincere desire to solve immediate problems in their lives. Additionally, they have an increasing need to be self-directing. In many ways the pedagogical model does not account for such developmental changes on the part of adults, and thus produces tension, resentment, and resistance in individuals (Knowles, 1984).

According to Ozuah (2005), pedagogical theory emphasized five major points: the lack of experience, dependency (in terms of self concept), external motivation, content oriented learning, and readiness to learn. Due to their relatively short lifetimes, children do not have the opportunity to gain much useful experience from many life events or developmental tasks. As a result, children rely on teacher and/or adult guidance to fill the void and provide the information with predetermined course content, to create a frame of reference upon which to build new learning (Knowles, 1984).

Furthermore, what little experience children do have is perceived within their limited cognitive abilities.

Other factors of pedagogy are also in opposition to the nature of andragogical principles. Children are dependent upon adults for direction and guidance, in terms of learning, the dependent child looks to teachers for guidance as to learning needs, children are basically externally motivated to reach the goals set, not by them, but by teachers and parents. Berk (2004) insinuates that youth are concrete cognitive operational thinkers and operate in the “ here and now” concept of achievement and notes until they are capable to thinking more in the abstract, they are not able to apply current learning to future experiences.

In pedagogical methodology, a child’s readiness to learn is driven by measurable achievement goals rather than developmental tasks. As children’s goals are externally pre-determined by teachers and parents, their readiness to learn aligns with adult expectations of them rather than their own. In other words, children’s readiness to learn is highly correlated with content achievement, as is their dependency on teachers to know what it is they need to learn. Imel (1989) suggest that Knowles strongly believed that through a comparison of pedagogical, teacher oriented methodology with andragogical, differences between adults and pre-adults would be clearly evident.

Andragogical Assumptions. Andragogy as a system of ideas, concepts, and approaches to adult learning was introduced to adult educators in the United States by Malcolm Knowles. Knowles a professor of adult education at Boston

University, introduced the term “ andragogy” which he defined as the “ art and science of helping adults learn” in 1968. By 1980 he suggested the following:

“. . . andragogy is simply another model of assumptions about adult learners to be used alongside the pedagogical model, thereby providing two alternative models for testing out the assumptions as to their ‘ fit’ with particular situations. Furthermore, the models are probably most useful when seen not as dichotomous but rather as two ends of a spectrum, with a realistic assumption (about learners) in a given situation falling in between the two ends” (Knowles, 1980, p. 43).

The andragogical model as conceived by Knowles is predicated on four basic assumptions about learners, all of which have some relationship to our notions about a learner’s ability, need, and desire to take responsibility for learning:

Their self-concept moves from dependency to independency or self-directedness.

They accumulate a reservoir of experiences that can be used as a basis on which to build learning.

Their readiness to learn becomes increasingly associated with the developmental tasks of social roles.

Their time and curricular perspectives change from postponed to immediacy of application and from subject-centeredness to performance-centeredness (1980, pp. 44-45).

The growth and development of andragogy as an alternative model of instruction has helped to improve the teaching of adults. Andragogy as a concept and set of assumptions is a system subdivided into pedagogy (dealing with youth education) and andragogy (concerned with adult education). There is some variety, too, in the application of related terms. Some countries use adult pedagogy, one (the Soviet Union) uses the term auto didactic among others to refer to adult education activities, and a few countries use andragology to refer to andragogical science (Knoll, 1981, p. 92). Outside of North America there actually are two dominant viewpoints: “. . . one by which the theoretical framework of adult education is found in pedagogy or its branch, adult pedagogy . . . and the other by which the theoretical framework of adult education is found in andragogy . . . as a relatively independent science that includes a whole system of andragogic disciplines” (Savicevic, 1981, p. 88).

Knowles (1975) in contrast to child learners suggest that adult learners evolve in the area of self-directed learning. One immediate reason was the emerging evidence that people who take initiative in educational activities seem to learn more and learn things better than what resulted from more passive individuals. He noted a second reason that self-directed learning appears “ more in tune with our natural process of psychological development” (1975, p. 14). Knowles observed that an essential aspect of the maturation process is the development of an ability to take increasing responsibility for life. A third reason was the observation that the many evolving educational innovations (nontraditional programs, Open University,

weekend colleges, etc.) throughout the world require that learners assume a heavy responsibility and initiative in their own learning.

Summary

This paper has provided a review regarding the research on approaches to adult learning in theory and practice. Additionally, consideration was given to role social change has played in adult learning programming and community outreach opportunities for this population. Noted were both success in reaching disadvantaged learners and those under-represented. The review of literature also confirms community education works particularly well for those adult learners who have experienced educational successes in high school and who have access to college courses and affordable course work.

However, it is clear that andragogy and Malcolm Knowles have brought considerable attention to the adult education field as a separate field during the past three decades. Applied correctly, the andragogical approach to teaching and learning in the hands of a skilled and dedicated facilitator can make a positive impact on the adult learner.

Knowles' introduction of andragogy was predicated on four basic assumptions drawn on the learning differences between adults and children. With maturity and age, an individual's self concept becomes less dependent and more self directed while accumulating a wealth of valuable experience that would serve the learner when readiness to learn is reflected.

Additionally, Knowles notes that adults seek out learning when appropriate to fulfill societal roles, and orientation to learning represented the skills or knowledge sought to either apply to daily problems in fulfilling the societal

roles (Lee, 1998). Finally, learning becomes less subject-oriented and more problem-centered (Lee, 1998). In 1984, Knowles added a fifth assumption that suggested that adults are internally motivated rather than externally motivated, and in 1990 a sixth: the need to know why something must be learned prior to learning it and its justification for being learned (Fall, 1998).