

General

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ADULT LEARNING THEORY Learning refers to the acquisition of skills by studying, experience or as in most cases by being taught. An adult on the other hand is an individual who is mature and is over a certain age mostly measured in relative terms and precisely someone who has full control of his own life. Adult learning theories tend to explain how best students pursuing courses at late ages can be assisted. It's well known that these students are faced by various challenges that make it hard for tutors to achieve their aim of educating them perfectly. Although literature from past years has resulted to several models, assumptions and principles as well as explanations that fully support adult learning and act as a base for improvement, it's certain that none of these theories is bound to have significant help on all adult students. Understanding this fact in addition to knowledge on the adult learning theories helps adult educators effect their practice. Several theories have been put forward and they include: andragogy, self-directed learning, active learning, transformational learning, problem solving and problem based learning, multiple intelligences, theory of learning conditions among many others.

The principle of andragogy was established by Malcolm Knows (1980) in an effort to differentiate the means by which adults learn from those of young ones. This was the basis of all other theories as it tends to emphasize that adults are self directed and are anxious of being involved in decision making. . Malcolm contrasted this principle with the art of teaching a child referred to as pedagogy. His contrast was based on several assumptions about adult learners that in addition to them knowing the reason to study something, the content has to have immediate value. Another assumption is that adult learners also approach learning as a way of solving a particular problem and <https://assignbuster.com/general/>

thus learning should be done experientially. Malcolm also pointed out that the motivation to study is more from internal factors than any external pressure. Therefore, andragogy calls for a clear explanation as to why the student should acquire knowledge on something and any adult tutor should adhere to it. However the principle of student incentive to self decision neglects the fact that the teacher should act as the primary source of information, knowledge and to some extent direction (Brookfield 2003). This draws back the andragogy to some point.

Studies have shown that a great percentage of adult learning is self-directed (Cross 1981) whereby they take full initiative with no or minimum help from tutors. This is mostly evidenced in the research projects and papers written by most postgraduate students. The benefit associated to this apart from it being a requirement is that it's easy to incorporate learning into daily routine. However there is a challenge to the low level literacy adults, as well as the individuals who lack resources or even internal resources. To cater for these a mixed set up that partially involves a tutor is adopted.

As pointed out earlier adult learners should have an immediate benefit to the learner, as well as having a close relationship with the environment. Adults prefer to retain knowledge as they apply it unlike children who would easily memorize facts to use during examination. A tutor should therefore involve the learner and avoid any teacher centered form for example lectures and notes dictation. Group work, case studies, experiential activities and strictly experiences from others, class discussions among many other class interactions improve the tutor's effectiveness.

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