Andragogy and Online Teaching

How Adults Learn
Joe Perret
What is Andragogy

- Andragogy is a set of assumptions about how adults learn.
- Its roots can be traced back to Alexander Kapp, a German grammar teacher who used it to describe Plato’s educational theory (Knowles, Holton, and Swanson 1998, 59).

Andragogy (Greek: "anere" for adult, and "agogus" meaning "leader of"
Pedagogy (Greek : "child")
What is Andragogy

- It appeared again in 1921 when another German, Social Scientist, Eugen Rosenstock claimed that “adult education required special teachers, special methods, and a special philosophy.” (Knowles, Holton, and Swanson 1998, 59)

Malcolm Knowles heard about the term and in 1968 used it in an article in Adult Leadership. From that point on, Knowles has become known as the principle expert on andragogy.
Assumptions of Andragogy


1. The Learner’s Need to Know
2. The Learner’s Self-concept
3. The Role of the Learner’s Experience
4. A Student’s Readiness to Learn
5. The Student’s Orientation to Learning
6. Students’ Motivation to Learn
The Learner’s Need to Know

- Adults must recognize the **necessity of learning something** before undertaking to learn it.

- **In online environment**
  - Ask the student to reflection on what they expect to learn
  - How they might use it in the future
  - How it will help them to meet their goals.
  - The design can solicit feedback about the relevance of the ongoing learning process
The Learner’s Self-concept

- Adults recognize the responsible for their own decisions - their own lives.

- In an Online environment
  - Non-linear web based learning allows an adult to follow the path that reflects their need to learn.
  - Important to use techniques in course design that allow them to take several paths to the desired goal.
  - Structure must also accommodate those not yet self-directed and to help them grow.
  - Encouraging self-directedness may require additional instructor contact in the beginning stages.

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The Role of the Learner’s Experience

- Adults enter an educational experience with more and different experience than youths.

- In online environment
  - Provide opportunities for learners to use their knowledge and experience.
    - Case studies, reflective activities, group projects
    - that call upon the expertise of group members
  - Put students in a different character in a case study or scenario may cause adults to reevaluate already learned information or patterns.
A Student’s Readiness to Learn

• Adults are more eager to learn things they **must know and apply** in order to cope effectively with their real-life situations.

• In online environment
  • Lessons in courses should be concrete and relate to students’ needs and future goals
The Student’s Orientation to Learning

- Adults are life centered (or task centered or problem centered) in their orientation to learning.

- In online environment
  - Use real-life examples or situations
  - Allowing student input in the design of a lesson or assignments

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## Contrast Andragogy with Pedagogy

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Andragogy</th>
<th>Pedagogy</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Demands of learning</strong></td>
<td>Learner can devote more time to the demands of learning because responsibilities are minimal.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Learner must balance life responsibilities with the demands of learning.</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Role of instructor</strong></td>
<td>Learners rely on the instructor to direct the learning. Fact based lecturing is often the mode of knowledge transmission.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Learners are autonomous and self directed. Teachers guide the learners to their own knowledge rather than supplying them with facts.</td>
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<td><strong>Life experiences</strong></td>
<td>Learners are building a knowledge base and must be shown how their life experiences connect with the present learning.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Learners have a tremendous amount of life experiences. They need to connect the learning to their knowledge base. They must recognize the value of the learning.</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Purpose for learning</strong></td>
<td>Learners often see no reason for taking a particular course. They just know they have to learn the information.</td>
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<td>Learners are goal oriented and know for what purpose they are learning new information</td>
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<td><strong>Permanence of learning</strong></td>
<td>Learning is compulsory and tends to disappear shortly after instruction.</td>
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<td>Learning is self-initiated and tends to last a long time.</td>
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Students’ Motivation to Learn

- While adults are responsive to some external motivators (i.e., better jobs, higher salaries, promotions),
- the most potent motivators are internal pressures (i.e., the desire for increased job satisfaction, self-esteem, quality of life).

- In an online environment
  - Activities that build self-esteem, or sense of accomplishment
  - Student’s input into lessons or prioritization of topics

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Online Strategy Summary

1. State clear expectations
2. Incorporate multiple forms of feedback into course
3. Provide regular communication to individual learners and the group
4. Provide learner flexibility and control
5. Incorporate motivational strategies to encourage students
6. Offer a variety of forms of learner support
7. Maintain the focus of content within units
8. Provide consistency among courses
9. Consider limitations of adults
10. Respect learner roles and life experiences
State clear expectations:

- Provide detailed syllabus with schedule, grading criteria, assignments, number of postings per week, deadlines, office hours.
- Avoid changing aspects of the course once it begins.
- State contingency plans for when the technology fails.
Incorporate multiple forms of feedback into course

- Use specific, consistent feedback from both learners and instructor.
- Grade assignments with specific, stated criteria.
- Provide both general and specific feedback to individuals, teams, and the whole class.
Provide regular communication to individual learners and the group:

- Respond to email within 24 hours.
- Personalize the class setting.
- Use friendly, informal writing style.
- Make weekly announcements or updates.
- Establish weekly **online** office hours.
- Assure learners that discussion board postings are being read.
- Provide information for telephone, fax, and U.S. post mail.
- Limit class size to allow for effective management.
- Consider using TA to monitor discussion board or team discussions.
- Be clear and succinct.
- Prepare students for working in small groups or team by providing objectives, assigning roles.
- Require regular participation for credit.
- Encourage students to respond as well as post
Provide learner flexibility and control:

- Use asynchronous email and discussion board for anytime/anyplace participation.
- Chunk learning into small manageable units or subunits that can be completed in relatively short amounts of time - they need logical stopping/starting points.
- Allow learner choice of assignments, projects, or research topics (consider learning contract).
- Incorporate text “signals” such as “this is a long unit,” “this is a very important concept”, “proceed to Lesson 6.”
- Allow students early access to the course and mail the syllabus several weeks before the course begins.
Incorporate motivational strategies to encourage students

- Tell why topic or link is important.
- Provide practical info with examples.
- Link new topics to what has already been discussed or read.
Offer a variety of forms of learner support

- Consider a cohort group that completes program as a group.
- Provide technical support.
- Provide learning skills support.
- Provide cohort support.
- Provide departmental support.
Maintain the focus of content within units

- Provide objectives and an outline at the beginning of each unit.
- Limit hyperlinks to only a few of the very best.
- Place additional links at the end of units for enrichment.
- Summarize key points of units and discussions for closure – debrief, then re-focus on next topic.
Provide consistency among courses:

- Maintain same format throughout program (i.e., all assignments found under the same course heading).
- Create pdf printable files for long articles.
- Use the same headings throughout units.
Consider limitations of adults:

- Maintain large, easy to read fonts.
- Use clear, bold colors.
- Use a variety of graphics, images, tables.
- Consider different learning styles.
- Be aware of ADA compliance guidelines.
Respect learner roles and life experiences:

- Assume role of facilitator more than “expert.”
- Recognize diverse backgrounds of adults.
- Apply concepts to tasks or problems.
- Use a friendly, first person style of writing.
- Ask for introductions that include professional background and some personal information (also provide this type of introduction).