Andragogy

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INTRODUCTION

Distance education has been on the rise for quite some time now, and it has widened the target audience of traditional younger college students to a more diverse group. Included in the more diverse group are international students. Many international students want to pursue an American education but plan on living outside of the United States. Attending an American college was out of the question for these international students until distance learning was created. Nearly 70% of senior university administrative officials from around the world expect an increase in international students to their schools' e-learning programs, according to a new survey, which means there is a need for understanding andragogy. The survey, conducted by Acadient, a leading developer and distributor of online education for higher education, shows that administrators expect the increase to come from students in Asia, specifically China, Malaysia, and India. The survey was sent globally to more than 300 senior university and business school administrators and members of the University Continuing Education Association (Newswire, 2004).

ANDRAGOGY VERSUS PEDAGOGY

With the increase of distance education, people want to know if distance education obtains the same quality of education as attending a local campus. Distance education is the same curriculum as a local campus except it is from a distance. The curriculum writers understand the difference between teaching children and adults in distance education and local campuses. The research question that we will answer is, "Do children and adults learn differently?" This question has been a debated topic among researchers for many years. This research paper focuses on how adults learn compared to children, the specific teaching strategies for the adult learner, and how motivation differs between children and adult learners.

The field of adult education has evolved at a dizzying rate since World War II—giving rise to a plethora of activities that fall under the rubric of adult education (Lawson, 1997). What exactly is adult education and what are the emerging trends in the field? To answer these questions and to help us develop a broad perspective of our field, it can be helpful to think of Thomas Kuhn's concept of paradigm. Kuhn, in his book *The History of Scientific Revolutions*, puts forth the notion that all major areas of thoughtful endeavor are governed by an underlying infrastructure that defines the important tasks, beliefs, and rules of the field. Kuhn's idea of paradigm can be useful to us as adult educators as we try to understand how various aspects of our field emerge and develop and change across time. As an example of paradigm, consider the work of Malcolm Knowles. In the late 1970s and early 1980s, Knowles described the idea of andragogy as a field of learning and educational practice distinctly different from pedagogy. Knowles, in his many writings, constructed the paradigm of andragogy and identified its defining characteristics and established its agenda. The characteristics and agenda of andragogy were and continue to be qualitatively different from the field of pedagogy. The paradigm of andragogy continues to be a powerful influence in the field, shaping how we think about the delivery of services to adults and serving as a base for much of the current research in the field of adult education (Lawson, 1997).

LITERATURE REVIEW

What is pedagogy? Pedagogy is the art and science of helping children learn. Thus, andragogy is the process of helping adults to learn and to take increased responsibility for their own learning by providing a climate in which the learners feel more

respected, trusted, unthreatened, and cared about; by exposing them to the need to know before instructing them; by giving them some responsibility in choosing methods and resources; and by involving them in sharing responsibility for evaluating their learning (Patterson & Pegg, 1999). Andragogy is based on four critical assumptions about mature individuals that differ from the traditional assumptions on which pedagogy is based (Knowles, 1980).

Four Critical Assumptions about Andragogy

1. The adult's self-concept moves from one of being a dependent personality toward being a self-directed person. According to Knowles (1980, p. 45), "Something dramatic happens to their self concepts when people define themselves as adults. They begin to see their normal role in life no longer as being full-time learners. They see themselves increasingly as producers or doers." Ingalls (1984, p. 6) says, "When adults discover that they are capable of self-direction in learning, as they are in other activities in their lives, they often experience a remarkable increase of motivation to learn and a strong desire to continue the learning process." The discovery of this capability forms the concept of maturity in adults; adults in the professional world do not want to be treated like children again. Thus, taking a pedagogical approach to the process of professional development will most likely seem patronizing to the adult learners (Terehoff, 2002).
2. Adults accumulate a growing reservoir of experience that becomes an increasingly rich resource for learning. Knowles (1980, p. 50) asserted, "If adults' experience is not being used, or its worth is minimized, it is not just experience that is being rejected—adults feel rejected as persons." Experience comes with age, so the older someone is, the more experiences that person has had. Adults seeking the benefits of further education are confronted with a difficulty their younger counterparts do not face—their life experience can actually work against them. Studies have shown that adults take longer to learn than children. That's

not because they have less intellect, but because life has taught them to think and see the world in a certain way. That being said, can adults be taught new learning tricks (Prashad, 2003)?

3. Readiness to learn is another characteristic featured in andragogy that distinguishes adults from children. Children's learning is generally contingent on teachers' structured activities. In formal settings, students generally learn the same material at the same time, regardless of their development. That is why the learning process for students is organized into a curriculum with predicted progression (Knowles, 1980). When teaching adults, the instructor needs to remember that learning occurs best when the learner is ready to assimilate whatever is being learned. The instructor cannot rush or pressure the adult learner to learn. In the context of professional development, this means that teachers feel the readiness to learn something or experience a teachable moment (Knowles) depending on where the learner's needs and interests are during a particular developmental stage. According to the andragogical model, understanding the difference between children and adults in their readiness to learn is important because the concept of a developmental task for adults is connected to their own choice of time and learning content (Terehoff, 2002).
4. Adults' orientation to learning differs from that of children in relation to goals. As Knowles (1980, p. 53) explained, adults enter into education with a different time perspective from children which in turn produces a difference in the way they view learning. To a child, education is essentially a process of the accumulation of a reservoir of subject matter—knowledge and skills that might be useful later in life. To adults, education is a process of improving their ability to cope with life problems they face now.

When this perspective is considered, teachers' professional development becomes not a subject-oriented activity, but a performance-centered or problem-centered learning process. Ingalls (1984) described this process as an "orientation to the

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