

## Chapter 28

# Applying Andragogical Concepts in Creating a Sustainable Lifelong Learning Society

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### ABSTRACT

*Today, the world is changing, re-establishing the role of education to have a developed society. This article aims to explore the practical application of Andragogy as a key element for creating a sustainable lifelong learning society, to propose strategies for developing a lifelong learning society using andragogical concepts, to enhance 'andragogy' as a scientific academic discipline and to expand on the horizon of andragogical assumptions and processes put forth by Malcolm Knowles. The literature on andragogy demonstrates the need to consider the future of andragogy, which may strengthen the theory and allow for the assumptions and processes to further guide this aspect of adult education. While the journey towards a lifelong learning society will continue to evolve, the lessons learned may help to identify key facilitating factors as well as pitfalls to be avoided in formulating more comprehensive lifelong learning society development strategies in the future.*

### INTRODUCTION

We are experiencing significant changes in the area of work and witnessing major shifts from the industrial age to the world of globalization, a knowledge-based economy, and technological evolution, where knowledge is considered as a country's most valued asset and primary source of power (Knight, 1995). In this period of change and transition, the competitive advantages of each country consequently

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depend on the availability and maintenance of a labor force with the necessary knowledge, practical skills and ability to innovate. Therefore, many countries have respected the new developmental concept to promote the continual learning of individuals and society. Faure (1972) stated the following in his preamble: "If learning involves all of one's life, in the sense of both timespan and diversity, and all of society, including its social and economic as well as its educational resources, then we must go even further than the necessary overhaul of 'educational systems' until we reach the stage of a learning society." The learning society approach aims to balance economic, social, natural and environmental aspects, social responsibility, and resources of society; and the learning society and andragogy may also help in transforming the people into knowledge citizens and knowledge workers (Charunkaittikul and Henschke, 2014; Wildemeersch et al., 2000).

A definition of the learning society is:

*...individuals residing within one locality, an agency or a community engaged in single or multiple matters simultaneously. It involves preservation, nourishment, rehabilitation, protection, promotion, assistance, development, and distribution through information technology, learning resources, local wisdoms and knowledge that allow members of the society to create, share, and use knowledge, common skills, and opinions with fellow members of the same and other communities on a regular lifelong basis. They generate new knowledge and appropriate knowledge management systems, as well as making the best life decisions for the prosperity and well-being of its people. (Charunkaittikul, 2011, p. 45)*

Leading employers and organizations in both public and private organizations have shown that investing in andragogical adult learning for their workers is indispensable for competitiveness and growth. (Gelpi, 1999; Vatcharasirisook, 2011). Consequently, there needs to be a radical change in the adult education, if adult learning for all working populations is to be more than a demagogic declaration. Many issues are involved in this, namely: devising flexible and continuous adult learning and training to meet the learning requirements of the entire labor market and society, including the informal sector and all active populations; building partnerships; and ensuring equitable access.

Andragogy is defined as "...the art and science of helping adults learn, in contrast to pedagogy as the art and science of teaching children..." Knowles (1980, p. 43). The term andragogy has a long and rich history of development and evolution. According to Merriam (2001), andragogy contributes to the understanding of how adults learn, in what context, and the process of learning. However, previous studies on andragogy (Hartree, 1984; Davenport and Davenport, 1985; Pratt, 1993; Merriam, 2001; Rachal, 2002; Heller, 2004) demonstrated various problems inherent in the concept.

Nevertheless, Cercone (2008) pointed out the four most popular adult learning theories: Experiential Learning, Transformative Learning, Self-Directed Learning, and Andragogy. She makes the case for each one's contribution toward understanding and supporting the adult learning internal process. Moreover, she declares that the theories of Self-Directed Learning, Transformative Learning, and Experiential Learning are all encompassed within the theory of Andragogy; and concludes that andragogy is the most comprehensive theory of adult learning and education, by comparison with the other three - of the thirteen characteristics of adult learners, self-directed learning and transformative learning each support three, experiential learning supports four, and andragogy supports ten. Moreover, the thirteen characteristics of adult learners (Cercone, 2008) are 1. Adults may have some limitations and these should be considered in the design of (the online) learning environment. 2. Learning styles need to be considered. 3. Adults need to be actively involved in the learning process. 4. Adults need scaffolding to be provided by the

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