

Chapter 51


Online Learning for the Adult Learners Using Andragogy

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ABSTRACT

The world of higher education is now global with online learning a driving force in much of the world. Globalization of higher education has created vast new opportunities for e-learning, particularly for adult students. However, adult learning online is different from online for traditionally aged students. Global universities are increasing their online programs to take advantage of economic considerations, particularly as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic and its implications for learning online. Using online learning for adult education is essential in the changing global world. Connotations of adult learning theory for professors using online learning are many and varied. Traditional pedagogical styles will not work effectively with adult learners who desire concrete, hands-on, practical information with learning activities characterized by active involvement, task-orientation, flexibility, and creativity. Online students often want opportunities to acquire skills directly applicable to job competencies for current employment or preparation for a future job.

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INTRODUCTION

In terms of online learning, (1) adult learners bring a greater background of life experiences to the learning situation; (2) the ability of adults to learn does not necessarily change; however, the rate of learning may diminish; and (3) the adult learner is in the learning situation out of personal or professional need, not compulsion (Khadka, 2020). Andragogy, in terms of adult learning, presents instructors working with adults in online learning with the need to adapt to fit the learning purpose and the learner (Linder, 2017).

Professors, in their capacity as instruction providers and designers alike, need to have a thorough understanding of adult learning theory especially with respect to online and distance learning (Arghode, Brieger, & McLean, 2017). Online learning in higher education is ubiquitous and has been driven by massification and an ever-growing demand of adult learners for flexibility in their education programs. To best meet the needs of adult learners in higher education instructors should apply learning andragogy principles and motivation of learning to design a simple, easy and effective online instruction for better learner engagement (Richardson, Sheeks, Waller, & Lemoine, 2020). The challenge for the facilitator is to provide an environment which involves interaction and collaboration to facilitate adult learning (Tainsh, 2016).

Teaching an online course requires instructors to acquire unique knowledge, skills, and abilities to successfully operate in the new paradigm and to support adult students' learning. Online learning increases access to education for working adults and provides opportunity for flexible and effective instruction (Alves, Miranda, & Morais, 2017). The biggest advantage of the COVID-19 crisis seems to be that it has fostered the development and utilization of online learning in delivering courses in global higher education.

GLOBAL HIGHER EDUCATION

In this knowledge-intensive society the need for advanced education has become more prevalent, both for individuals and for societies. The university and all of the higher education enterprise will change in profound ways to serve this changing world, just as higher education has changed in the past. This is a period of significant change in higher education as universities attempt to respond to the challenges, opportunities, and responsibilities present in this global society (Altbach, Reisberg, & Rumbley, 2019). These changes will be driven by economic and market forces which are almost impossible to predict. Therefore, the most critical challenge facing higher education leaders is how to develop the capacity for change; if change is inevitable, the capacity for change is perilous (Garretson, Lemoine, Waller, & Richardson, 2020).

Global higher education institutions continuously search for the most current and most effective technology to make the university more competitive and better prepared to survive (Everhart & Seymour, 2017). As knowledge-driven organizations, colleges and universities are greatly affected by the rapid advances in technology that are transforming society and social institutions (Chan, Hackett, Lemoine, & Richardson, 2016). Global higher education institutions use powerful digital networks to deliver educational services to anyone, at any place and any time, dramatically reshaping global society (Leahy, Holland, & Ward, 2019). In a very real sense, higher education is evolving from a system of colleges and universities serving traditional students from local communities into a rapidly expanding knowledge industry serving the world (Lemoine & Richardson, 2019).

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