

Chapter 1

LMS Course Design for Adult Learning: Heutagogy, Andragogy, Pedagogy

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ABSTRACT

Nearly all educational institutions use learning management systems (LMS). Post-pandemic figures suggest that the uptake of LMS is about 98%. This means that most educators, especially those in post-schooling education, will use, and be responsible for designing, an online course site. While there is a tendency to use course sites as a repository and convenient communication medium, there is an unmet need to design these sites in a way that facilitates learning. As online teaching and learning become more prolific, especially in higher education and adult learning contexts, it is increasingly necessary to design course sites that facilitate learning as opposed to course sites that are just repositories. Just like the approaches that a teacher uses in classroom teaching, the teacher's underpinning philosophy will impact the way they will design their course sites on an LMS or website. Despite technology and online being present for over two decades, course design and teaching in the online environment remains trapped in traditional behaviorist and content-driven approaches.

INTRODUCTION

Malcolm Knowles predicted that the teaching of adults in the 21st century would be delivered electronically (Knowles, 1975; Knowles, Holton, III, Swanson, & Robinson, 2020). His prediction was accurate and logical given that mature learners, constrained by multiple work/family responsibilities are unable to meet the demands of traditional classrooms locked into specific times and places. What Malcolm Knowles perhaps did not predict was the rapid transformation of education delivery to the online medium

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that was catalyzed by the pandemic. According to UNESCO, around 1.5 Billion students were online during the pandemic (<https://www.unesco.org/en/covid-19/education-response>). If the jump to online learning showed us one thing, then it was that education systems and educators were, in the majority, not well-prepared to use technologies to the best effectiveness. The pandemic experience has shown that there is still much to learn about effective teaching online and harnessing technologies effectively to maximize learning opportunities.

The de-institutionalization of education in the form of open and independent learning systems that Knowles also predicted is underway. This creates a need for learners to develop appropriate self-directed learning skills – a capability that is more urgent than ever in the current context. Students in open and independent learning systems without having learned the skills of self-directed inquiry will experience anxiety, frustration, and, often failure, and so will their teachers (as cited in Wang, 2005). Self-directed learning skills will help mature learners learn in virtual environments where they have no face-to-face meetings with course instructors.

The uptake and diffusion of online learning are greatly assisted by the development of learning management systems (LMS). LMS can be understood as “information systems that facilitate e-learning by supporting teaching and learning, but that also can perform administrative tasks and facilitate communication between instructors and students” (Klobas & McGill, 2010 cited in Holmes & Prieto-Rodriguez, 2018, p. 21). LMS such as Moodle, Blackboard, and Canvas are commonplace in post-secondary settings such as universities and in vocational education for both on-campus and distance students. During the pandemic, LMS played a crucial role in enabling the leap to the online learning medium (Gamede, Ajani, & Afolabi, 2022). Although LMS are ubiquitous, educators often fail to take full advantage of the capabilities of the technologies to facilitate the most effective learning (Noval, 2018). One reason why educators may not take advantage of the LMS tools is that they may not properly understand the affordances of the technology (Holmes & Prieto-Rodriguez, 2018). However, at the very foundation of teaching approaches is teaching philosophy. It is well-acknowledged that teaching philosophy deeply influences approaches, and the kinds of strategies teachers implement. Designing and delivering courses through LMS is no different. “Technology choices depend on and will amplify our teaching philosophy, so examining our assumptions about teaching is essential when designing appropriate learning interventions” (Hickey, 2014). In the present chapter, we consider two camps of philosophies: Pedagogical teaching (i.e., traditional approaches) and the andragogical teaching. We posit that andragogical teaching is necessary to escape the confines of the content-driven mindset that dominates LMS use towards developing innovative approaches, for the design and delivery of courses in LMS environments that effectively engage and result in deep learning, especially for adult learners.

The aim of the chapter is two-fold: to highlight how andragogical approaches are beneficial to learning in the context of LMS and online learning, and to encourage educators to examine their own philosophies against the andragogical and pedagogical frames, thus raising their self-awareness of their philosophies. Without understanding where they stand in relation to andragogical and pedagogical frames it will be difficult for educators to implement the ‘right’ instructional design and to implement effective and appropriate teaching methodologies in virtual environments.

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