

# Chapter 15

## Leading Through Digital Andragogy: On the Cutting Edge Educationally

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### ABSTRACT

*The tsunami of technological change in higher education is causing disruption throughout academia and is exerting influence on leading in formal education. In much the same way that industries experienced disruption from the digital revolution, andragogy is on the verge of what could be called a learning-tech culture revolution. This chapter focuses on two critical aspects that present potential impact in education, the leader, and the adult learner. The purpose of this literature review is to identify challenges leaders face in the digital landscape and strategies relevant to innovative techniques for digital adult learners.*

### INTRODUCTION

The objectives of this chapter are to interpret the progress, direction and current research on the impact technology has on andragogical leadership and to increase the conversations around adult students who are immersed in digital technology, who are accustomed to twitch-speed, multitasking, random access, graphics-first, active, connected, fun, fantasy, and a payoff world (Gisbert & Bullen, 2015). The aim of the chapter is an exploration of literature that examines key breakthroughs in the immersing of technology and how this digital disruption is influencing andragogical leadership. The goal is to lend a written voice to considering different perspectives in leading andragogical organizations.

Digital students are asking for new approaches to education with a better approach that affects how they think, interact, and make sense of their world (Greene & Larsen, 2018). The technologies and practices that have developed, and are still being developed, are heralded as opportunities to transform both online and traditional education systems. While proponents of these new ideas often postulate that they have the potential to address the educational problems facing both students and institutions, they also provide an opportunity to rethink the ways that education is organized.

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## ***Leading Through Digital Andragogy***

Adult learners bring vast experience to learning opportunities and should have the maturity to stay motivated, focused, and engaged. Yet, in an online environment, many of the andragogical ideals laid out by Malcolm Knowles can get lost. Lessons learned from the experiences of crafting curriculum and leading adult students are analyzed by Green and Larsen (2018) who offer an examination of strategies that can empower instructors, instructional designers, and administrators, allowing the presence of the instructor, fidelity of implementation, and emotional/cognitive support for the student.

Digital tools and instruments are “*rapidly becoming as infrastructural as electricity*” (Cascio & Montealegre, 2016, p. 350). Barley (2015) suggests that although digital technology is rapidly becoming as infrastructural as electricity, there is surprisingly little research on how it is altering work systems or the work that people do. The next wave of technological innovation will feature the emerging technology paradigm known as ubiquitous computing. This concept is not about one technology. Rather, it reflects information and communication environments in which computer sensors are all unified with various objects, people, information, and computers as well as the physical environment. The combination of these developments is a hyperconnected and data-saturated world, where an Internet of everyone is linked to an Internet of Everything (Wooldridge, 2015).

## **BACKGROUND**

Given the rapid advances and the increased reliance on technology, the question of how it is changing leadership is highly salient for scholars and practitioners. Even if and when technology has been applied to digital andragogical practices, technology will not fully be exploited unless methods of leading and teaching also change.

According to Gisbert and Bullen (2015, p.5) there are several reasons for changes in leading and teaching to occur:

- To achieve existing academic goals in a more productive way.
- To achieve new academic goals that are required in a digital society, such as knowledge management, independent learning, collaborative learning, and IT skills embedded within a subject domain.
- To use the technology to make learning more engaging and motivating for students, already immersed in digital technologies.
- To help students develop digital literacy - an essential skill in a digital world.

The impact of being immersed in a digital world is at the heart of the digital discourse for institutions. The challenge is knowing that any enterprise that runs forward on only new technology, ignoring the landscape of existing knowledge, will be sub-optimal and likely will fail. To build a strong future of digital learning in the academy, we must first take stock of what we know and what has been researched (Siemens, GaSevil, & Dawson, 2015). Clearly it is not enough for leaders to be digitally literate, they must also improve their digital competence and fluency to a high level.

Digital competence has been defined in the principal reports of The Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) as one of the key competencies of the 21<sup>st</sup> century (Gisbert & Bullen, 2015). Leaders need to speak in terms of environments, or spaces, rather than classrooms. One of the main didactic challenges educational professionals face is to integrate all the elements into an

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