

Chapter 12

Prevalent Andragogical Instructional Preferences and Technologies

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ABSTRACT

As developed countries face skilled worker shortages and their workforce becomes more diverse, education and training of adults has taken center stage. Changing workforce demographics, global economies, and advances in technology commonly influence what, when, and how to teach adults. This chapter provides an overview of contemporary andragogical instructional techniques and seeks to describe examples of their application through electronic delivery. Due to the emerging body of literature on some adult instructional techniques, efforts will be made to discriminate between techniques solidly grounded in theory, and those which show promise.

INTRODUCTION

The rationale to understand the linkage between adult learning theory, andragogy, and instructional technique is very basic. By understanding the fundamental ways adults learn, and creating or using methods in harmony with those learning styles to investigate content processes and problems in an area of study, one optimizes the teaching/learning process. To use instructional techniques that are not linked to adult learning theory makes the teaching/learning process inef-

fective and indiscriminate. At best, learning might occur through serendipity.

Learning at work has become an essential part of work (Billett, 2001; Illeris, 2004; Streumer, 2006). Generally speaking, adults learn in the world of the grown-up, primarily at work, self-study, and at play. The issues of when, where, and how adult learning takes place are addressed in the classic work, *Learning in Adulthood* (Merriam, Caffarella & Baumgartner, 2006). Here, the authors identify three dimensions of society that shape the nature of adult learning: 1) demographics, 2) the global economy, and 3) technology. Of course, these dimensions are in a constant state of change due to the dynamics of

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culture. In fact, these three dimensions are more relevant today due to geopolitical and economic inter-connectivity and the broad fluctuations of important attributes.

The chapter provides an overview of contemporary andragogical instructional techniques and describes examples of their application in teaching adults. In addition, the chapter describes the integration of technology with andragogical instructional techniques. The next sections in this chapter outline the changing demographics of today's workforce, influence of global economies, technological changes, and the impact of cultural or class stratification on andragogical instructional preferences. Subsequent sections describe characteristics of adult learning and some prevalent andragogical instructional strategies: transformative learning, collaborative learning, self-directed learning, narrative learning, and e-learning. Lastly, the chapter provides a summary, implications for practice, and useful references on contemporary andragogical instructional techniques.

BACKGROUND

Pedagogy is derived from two words, *paid* meaning "child" and *agogus* meaning "leader of," and literally means the art and science of teaching children (Knowles, 1973). According to Ozuah (2005), the model was founded on several assumptions about learners: 1) dependent personality of the learner (not knowing own learning needs), 2) learning needed to be subject-centered (curricula were organized around subjects), 3) emphasized extrinsic motivation as driving force for learning (the use of rewards and punishments to encourage learning), and 4) prior experience of the learner was irrelevant (blank slate concept or *tabula rasa*). The pedagogical model is concerned with the transmitting of information and skills (Holmes & Abington-Cooper, 2000), and therefore, the teacher determines what is to be taught and how.

In contrast to pedagogy, andragogy, the process of engaging adult learners in learning experiences (Ozuah, 2005), is viewed as providing procedures and resources for helping learners acquire information and skills. Knowles (1984) describes the field of andragogy as premised on five assumptions about characteristics of adult learners: 1) self-concept (moves from being a dependent to self-directed being), 2) experience (a mature person has experience), 3) readiness to learn (ready to learn developmental tasks of their social roles), 4) orientation to learning (immediacy of application knowledge and problem centeredness), and 5) motivation to learn (internal motivation to learn as opposed to external). These assumptions guide the selection and delivery of adult learning activities, and therefore, in andragogy, the teacher's role is that of a facilitator, change-agent, or consultant with the learners taking part in deciding what is to be taught and how (Holmes and Abington-Cooper, 2000).

While andragogy assumptions provide a means to classify characteristics of adults, the distinctions between andragogy and pedagogy models have been controversial (Elias, 1979; Knudson, 1980), and hence, andragogy has had its share of critics (Davenport, 1993). Even though differences between children and adults are acknowledged, the learning activities for children can be the same as those for adults. Nevertheless, many authors agree there are occasions when andragogy might be used with children and pedagogy with adults (Holmes & Abington-Cooper, 2000). To reduce the confusion and controversy between pedagogy and andragogy, other scholars have proposed the term *humanagogy* as a replacement for both because it is an inclusive term (Knudson, 1980). Whether its pedagogy, andragogy, or *humanagogy*, adults have unique characteristics that must be considered in designing and delivery of instruction. Based on the work by Malcolm Knowles, Billington (2007) describes seven characteristic of adult education: 1) safety for students; 2) intellectual freedom is fostered, and experimentation and

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