Chapter 2
Online Instructors:
Andragogical or Pedagogical Teaching?

Victor C. X. Wang
California State University at Long Beach, USA

Beth Kania-Gosche
Lindenwood University, USA

ABSTRACT

This study investigates the andragogical and pedagogical teaching philosophies of online instructors at the California State University, Long Beach in the Spring Semester of 2010. Drawing from reflective adult education theory, this article proposes a new model for this reflective adult education theory. It is either the helping relationship (andragogical philosophy) or the directing relationship (pedagogical philosophy) plus the learning environment (the Internet) that leads to adult learners' critical reflection in Mezirow's (1991) terms. A researcher-designed survey instrument called Online Philosophy of Adult Education Scale (OPAES) was used to measure instructional preferences of these instructors in the electronic classroom to determine their andragogical or pedagogical teaching philosophies. Data were collected from 37 online instructors regarding their instructional preferences. Nine qualitative questions were designed to parallel the Likert scale OPAES to determine why these online adult education instructors chose their pedagogical or andragogical teaching philosophies. The results of the study demonstrate that these online adult education instructors support both the teacher-centered approach and the student-centered approach to teaching online.

INTRODUCTION

Since current theories of transformative learning generally rest on humanistic philosophy and Knowles' version of andradogy is based on humanistic psychology, online learning for adults and

principles of andragogy have become inseparable, especially because of the asynchronous nature of many online courses. Although adults are responsive to external motivators, such as grades or verbal praise, adults are basically internally motivated. When it comes to online transformation, adults' real interest is in how to maximize their learning without the benefit of having a face-to-face dis-

cussion with their instructors. Adult learners may hold full time jobs and have family responsibilities, which may make physical travel to a campus for class difficult or even impossible, thus online courses are appealing.

To some extent, andragogy was designed to maximize adult learning especially adults' online transformation where the individual adult learner is a "free-agent" in his or her own learning. To some scholars, andragogy is more a technological application of psychological and sociological knowledge. However, to Knowles, it became a continuum from teacher-directed to student-directed learning. This student-centered learning is a democratic approach to teaching and learning. Influential scholars have delved into the principles of andragogy such as self-concept of adult learners (Tough, 1967, 1971; Knowles, 1975; Mezirow, 1985; Brookfield, 1986; Pratt, 1988, 1993; Brockett & Hiemstra, 1991; Candy, 1991; Merriam & Caffarella, 1999; Merriam, 2001). Because adult learners are capable of self-direction in learning, some scholars doubt whether a teacher-learner relationship is really needed given the asynchronous nature of cyberspace learning. Rhode (2009) investigated adult learners' preferences in a self-paced online environment, rather than the traditional course calendar many higher education institutions utilize.

However, to say this teacher-learner relationship is not needed is to overemphasize the power of self-direction. Even when adult learners are highly self-directed, an andragogical type of teacher-learner relationship may facilitate adult learning. When adult learners are highly self-directed, they may also require the traditional pedagogical teacher-learner relationship because of speed, convenience, previous experience in courses, or learning styles. Not only is this relationship necessary, but also the kinds of andragogical and pedagogical teaching philosophies online instructors may hold strongly affecting this relationship, hence adult online transformation. "Most students have a tendency for sensing, visual, and active

styles of learning. However, most college courses follow the lecture teaching style" (Wirz, 2004, p. 2). The instructors' teaching philosophies lead to the methods and art of teaching. Ultimately, students' critical reflection is affected by these methods and art of teaching. However, no empirical study has been conducted to determine online instructors' teaching philosophies. Most literature has focused on the learners' preferences (Rhodes, 2009) rather than the instructor's.

The present study is an investigation to determine and describe online instructors' andragogical and /or pedagogical teaching philosophies. The humanistic principles of andragogy support a helping relationship (andragogical philosophy) between teachers and learners whereas principles of pedagogy indicate a directing relationship (pedagogical philosophy) between teachers and learners. This exploratory study is only a first step to examining this concept.

"Although a learner-centered approach is strongly supported in the literature, a teacher-centered approach is widely practiced in community college and university settings" wrote Kraska and Harris (2007, p. 19) in their study of cognitive style and teaching style. They found no relationship between the two in a sample of 65 students enrolled in Air Force Reserve Officer Training. Their study emphasized the importance of innovating in teaching, rather than recruiting those with the same style. However, this study did not specifically examine online learning, although the sample did consist of adult educators.

For self-directed adult learners, online learning requires an andragogical relationship with their instructors. As a consultant or delegator, instructors link their students to learning resources. In contrast, the pedagogical information transmitter will only disappoint self-directed adult learners who are experienced with a subject matter and are capable of teaching themselves. However, the information transmitter is highly helpful when adult learners are inexperienced with a subject matter and do not have independent learning skills.

15 more pages are available in the full version of this document, which may be purchased using the "Add to Cart" button on the publisher's webpage: www.igi-global.com/chapter/online-instructors-andragogical-pedagogical-teaching/69437

Related Content

Adapting Informal and Formal Learning Skills for Success in the Virtual Learning Environment

Bob G. Barrett, Jr. (2014). *Synergic Integration of Formal and Informal E-Learning Environments for Adult Lifelong Learners (pp. 97-119).*

www.irma-international.org/chapter/adapting-informal-and-formal-learning-skills-for-success-in-the-virtual-learning-environment/83420

Characteristics of Teachers Nominated for an Accelerated Principal Preparation Program

Steve J. Riosand Daniel Reyes-Guerra (2012). *International Journal of Adult Vocational Education and Technology (pp. 35-46).*

www.irma-international.org/article/characteristics-of-teachers-nominated-for-an-accelerated-principal-preparation-program/66093

Learn to Train Like You Fight

Mika Karjalainen, Anna-Liisa Ojala, Marko Vatanenand Jarno Lötjönen (2023). *International Journal of Adult Education and Technology (pp. 1-20).*

www.irma-international.org/article/learn-to-train-like-you-fight/322085

Self-Study as an Emergent Methodology in Career and Technical Education, Adult Education and Technology: An Invitation to Inquiry

Todd S. Hawleyand Andrew L. Hostetler (2017). *International Journal of Adult Vocational Education and Technology (pp. 82-92).*

www.irma-international.org/article/self-study-as-an-emergent-methodology-in-career-and-technical-education-adult-education-and-technology/181505

Barriers to a STEM Career: Math Anxiety and the Adult Female

Luanne M. Amato (2021). *Research Anthology on Adult Education and the Development of Lifelong Learners (pp. 1469-1495).*

www.irma-international.org/chapter/barriers-to-a-stem-career/279797