

Andragogy

Malcolm Knowles

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What is Andragogy?

Andragogy literally means leader of man (andr- is Latin for “man” and agogos is Latin for “leader of”)

Dusan Savicevic, a Yugoslavian educator, made Knowles aware of the term “Andragogy” in 1967. (Knowles 1990) The term was actually coined by a German educator, Alexander Kapp, in 1833.

Knowles had already begun building a comprehensive theory of adult learning that is anchored in the characteristics of adult learners. Beginning with concepts researched by Cross (Adult Learning Theory), Gagne (Conditions of Learning), Houle, Rogers (Experiential Learning), Tough, and others, he developed the andragogical model based on several assumptions that differed from the accepted pedagogical models. These include:

1. *The need to know* – Adults need to know why they need to learn something before undertaking to learn it. ...
2. *The learner’s self-concept* – Adults have a self-concept of being responsible for their own decisions, for their own lives. Once they have arrived at that self-concept they develop a deep psychological need to be seen by others and treated by others as being capable of self-direction. ...
3. *The role of the learner’s experience* – Adults come into educational activity with both a greater volume and a different quality of experience from youths. ...
4. *Readiness to learn* – Adults become ready to learn those things they need to know and be able to do in order to cope effectively with their real-life situation. ...
5. *Orientation to learning* – In contrast to children’s and youths’ subject-centered orientation to learning (at least in school), adults are life-centered (or task-centered or problem-centered) in their orientation to learning. ...
6. *Motivation* – While adults are responsive to some external motivators (better jobs, promotions, higher salaries, and the like), the most potent motivators are internal pressures (the desire for increased job satisfaction, self-esteem, quality of life and the like). ... (Knowles 1990, p57-63)

Definitions Of An Adult Learner

Biological Definition: The age at which an individual can reproduce.

Legal Definition: The age that an individual can vote, drive, marry, etc.

Social Definition: When an individual begins to perform adult roles such as full-time worker, participating citizen, spouse, parent, etc.

Psychological Definition: When and individual develops a self-concept of being responsible for their own life.

Analysis of Andragogy

When applying andragogy to learning, the task or goal of the learner will determine if direct or indirect methods of instruction should be used. If a concept is one that is previously unknown to the learner, then more direct instruction will be necessary. An effective method is to address specific topics of immediate concern and then expand to how it can be applied in other situations. However, the learner needs to know why the concept to be learned is important in order for the learner to remain motivated.

Despite the learner ultimately having control of learning through self-directed means, the instructor and instructional designer needs to facilitate the opportunities for the learner to experience growth. Andragogy reorients adult educators from educating people to helping them learn. The methods used may range from isolated instruction within a curriculum or integrated instruction. It may also encompass intentional and unintentional learning situations. As an example, when designing materials to facilitate learning a computer program, providing a list of commands that must be memorized is inadequate. The instructions need to be organized by task and presented in a manner similar to how it will be used.

There is a significant amount of flexibility provided in regards to the development of interpersonal and intrapersonal dimensions. However, the learner must be within an environment that values self-directed learning. Knowles places an emphasis on the concept of the safe environment. In particular with workplace training and development, McGregor's Theory X & Theory Y Management Philosophy comes into play. If an organization is based in Theory X and they attempt to utilize training & development based on the principles found in Roger's Experiential Learning, then there will be resistance to the training that could prevent its success.

Knowles envisioned that learning was lifelong. A particular skill might be taught once; however, within a supportive environment, the learner might learn new approaches or methodologies from their fellow learners over time. Even though there is a lot of emphasis on the self-directed learner, this person cannot exist in a vacuum. They need to be surrounded by other self-directed learners and grouped in a manner that they can learn new perspectives from learners with different, but applicable experiences.

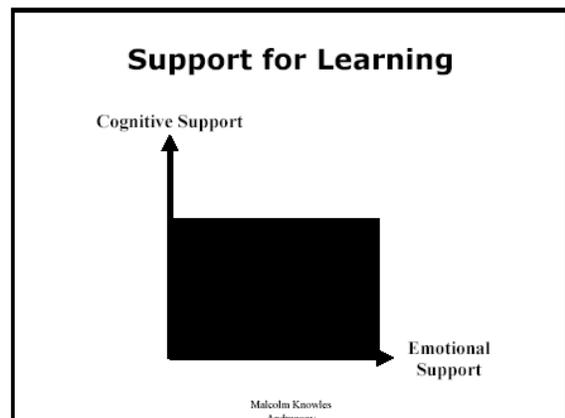
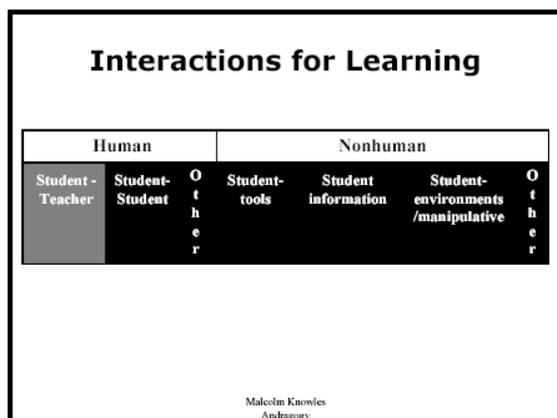
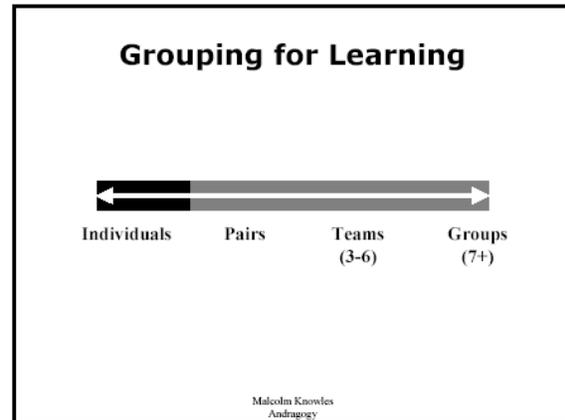
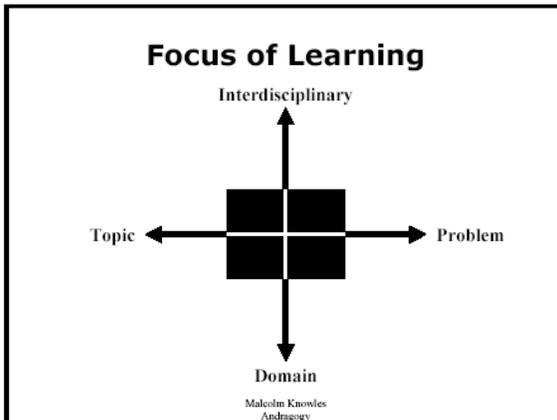
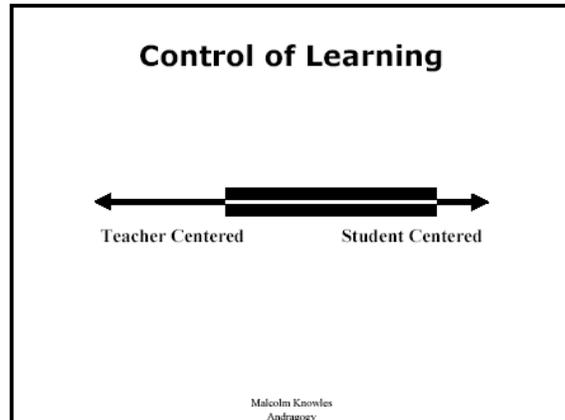
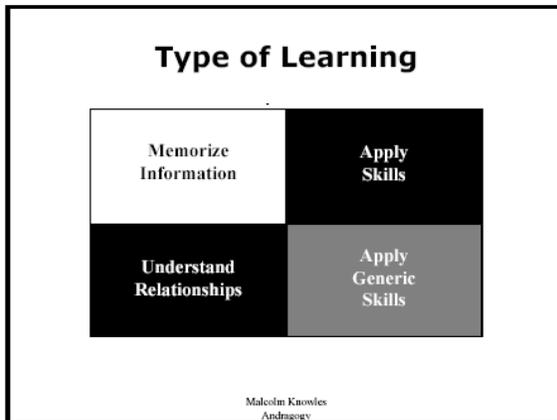
When To Use Andragogy

Andragogical methods are best when they can be applied are in community situation and industry/corporate situations that are supportive of a self-directed learner.

Community centers are a prime example of this (YMCA, etc.), adult learners who desire to learn new skills ranging from pottery to CPR, golf to ham radio, or home and car repairs can do so in a non-threatening environment. It is not expected that the learner will develop an expert level of knowledge of these skills, but a level that meets their immediate needs.

Human Resource departments should also consider andragogical principals when designing their employee development programs, providing the organization whose management style is one that is represented by McGregor's Theory Y. By placing a value on training and development, employees will be motivated to learn new skills to help them in their career development.

Andragogy may not be appropriate for higher education, as it is not intended for the development of a foundation of theories and practice that are critical in the higher education environment, but not necessarily used by the learner in the near-term. However, some of its implications should be considered for short-term practice. In particular using case studies and group discussions among the learners so that they can share their perspectives and life experiences with their fellow learners.



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