
ANDRAGOGY

Assumptions about Adult Learners

Malcolm Knowles' theory of Andragogy posits that Adults are: Self-directed, experienced, ready to learn and task centred (Knowles,1990).

PEDAGOGICAL	ANDRAGOGICAL
1. Learner is dependent on teacher , who decides what should be learned, how & when; and whether it's been learned.	1. Adult learners are self-directed , but may be conditioned by schooling to dependency on teachers for learning, so they may have to be re-oriented.
2. The experience of the teacher and textbook writer is what counts (the student's experience doesn't matter). So the backbone of pedagogy is transmission techniques.	2. Adults bring life experience . However, they can be locked into routinised ways of thinking, so may need help in becoming more open minded. An adult's identity is their experience, so to devalue this experience is to devalue the adult as a person.
3. Student readiness to learn is mostly a matter of age as they move through the curriculum.	3. Readiness to learn is dependent on need to know or do something to meet some critical developmental life task more effectively.
4. Orientation to learning is subject-centred : acquisition of content, organized in terms of curriculum.	4. Orientation to learning is problem-centred : so learning experiences have to be organised round critical life experiences.
5. Motivation to learn is through external pressures : parents, teachers, competition for grades & fear of failure.	5. The most powerful motivators are internal : a better quality, of life: recognition; self-esteem; self-confidence, self-actualisation. (Knowles, 1984)

Principles of Adult Learning

Based on his assumptions about adult learners, Knowles (1984) proposed four principles to consider when teaching adults.

1. Adults need to be involved in the planning and evaluation of their learning.
2. Experience (including mistakes) provides the basis for the learning activities.
3. Adults are most interested in learning subjects that have immediate relevance and impact to their job or personal life.
4. Adult learning is problem-centred rather than content-oriented.

References

- Knowles, M. S. (1984). *Andragogy in Action: Applying Modern Principles of Adult Learning*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.
- Knowles, M. S. (1990) *The adult learner: A neglected species*. Houston, TX: Gulf Publishing Company.