

## Andragogy Approach in Teaching Adults

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**Abstract:** In this article, we will discuss the important aspects of the andragogy approach and the merits that its proponents promote. A few cases of its applications will also be discussed and critical analysis will be offered on how accepting the principles and precepts of andragogy can affect the future of education and industries moving forward.

**Keywords:** pedagogy, andragogy, teaching, adults, approach.

Andragogy is an approach to learning that is focused on adult learners. The term was first coined by educator Alexander Kapp in 1833, and it has since been used to describe a variety of educational philosophies and methods (Loeng, 2017).

It has been defined as “the art and science of helping adults learn...” (Knowles, 1980). The term came from the Greek *andr-* + *-agogy* which literally means “leading men.”

Andragogy is typically contrasted with pedagogy, which is the more traditional approach to teaching children. Andragogy is built on the premise that adults are more self-directed and motivated than children, and that they need to be given the opportunity to learn in ways that are relevant to their lives. andragogy hinges on pursuing learning past formal education.

As a result, andragogical approaches tend to be highly participatory, with a strong focus on hands-on learning experiences. While andragogy is not necessarily limited to adults, it is most often used in contexts where adult learners are the primary focus.

In the 1970s, the theory of andragogy was further developed by Malcolm Knowles. He is also credited for being the main popularizer of andragogy. He positioned andragogy as an answer to the insufficiencies of pedagogy. He felt that pedagogy’s idea of the purpose of education does not carry over to adult education.

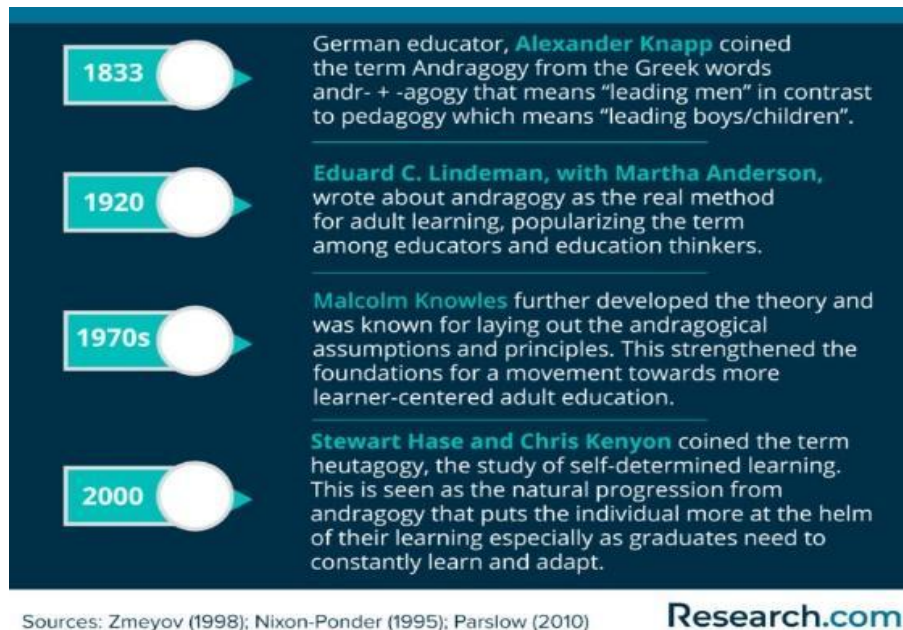
In pedagogy, education is viewed as a passive “transmittal of knowledge and skills that had stood the test of time (Knowles, 1980).” It is content-driven and fact-laden. But, adult learners need and want applicable knowledge. Thus, they are resistant to the tactics of traditional pedagogy like drills, quizzes, examinations, fact-laden lectures, and rote memorization.

Knowles (1980), as pointed out by Caruth (2014), viewed university administration as a laggard to management in business and industry. This is in the realm of finding the balance between human growth and organizational efficiency. Higher education, according to Knowles, lags because it overemphasizes organizational efficiency, interfering with the delivery of quality education. Those that sympathize with this view call for more focus on human growth.

Knowle’s andragogy evolved to a sort of movement within academia. And, as Savicevic (1991) noted, the research body revolving around it has also been growing. He added that Knowle’s andragogy has been adopted in at least 10 European countries, including Poland, England, Germany, Russia, and Hungary, among others. Moreover, it was adopted by various disciplines, including management (in Forrest & Peterson, 2006, cited in Kenyon & Hase, 2001), medicine (in Bedi, 2004, cited in Kenyon & Hase, 2001), education (in Bolton, 2006, cited in Kenyon & Hase, 2001), and criminal justice (in Birzer, 2004, cited in Kenyon & Hase, 2001).

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**Figure 1. The History of Andragogy**

Kenyon and Hase (2001), citing Merriam and colleagues (2007) and Forrest and Peterson (2006), outlined the six main assumptions in Knowle's adult learning theory. They are:

- **Self-concept.** Adult learners have a self-concept. This means that they are autonomous, independent, and self-directed.
- **Learning from Experience.** Experience as a rich resource of learning. Adults learn from their previous experiences. Thus, it is a good repository for learning.
- **Readiness to Learn.** Adults tend to gravitate towards learning matters that matter to them. Their readiness to learn things is highly correlated with their relative uses.
- **Immediate Applications.** The orientation of adult learning is for immediate applications rather than future uses. The learning orientation of adults tends to slant towards being task-oriented, life-focused, and problem-centric.
- **Internally Motivated.** Adults are more motivated by internal personal factors rather than external coaxes and pressures.
- **Need to Know.** Adult learners have the need to know the value of what they are learning and know the why's behind the need to learn them.

These assumptions guide practitioners of andragogy in delivering learner-centered education. And, these are consistent with the observation of Rogers (1951, cited in Kenyon & Hase, 2001) that learning is natural just like breathing in the way that it is an internal process totally controlled by the learner. In this view, it is by fiat that the learner is the real center of education. Hence, it is prescribed that educators accept and operate within this premise. Thus, educators should not really "teach." Instead, they should *facilitate* learning.

Moreover, practitioners of the andragogy approach advocate a negotiated design of relevant assessment between learner and facilitator. Also, the "guru factor" is removed (Kenyon & Hase, 2001). This is deemed critical when you really want to be person-centered.

And, in order to achieve these, Knowles, according to Galustyan and colleagues (2019), highlighted the following basic principles:

- Adult education must focus on solving specific problems
- Adult education must rely on the experience of teachers
- There should be significant knowledge and experience gained by teachers from training



- Teachers should be able to analyze and check teaching material
- Teachers should receive feedback about their progress

Andragogical principles require the collaboration of both teachers and learners to actively carry out learning processes. Also, it is not only the learner that needs a course correction. The educators are also required to improve their performance relative to the needs of the learner.

Moreover, in relation to the tendency of adults to be more ready to learn about things that matter to them and have immediate applications in their lives, Galustyan and colleagues (2019) asserted that education should provide a learner with the opportunities to solve societal problems. Thus, they should be equipped to be able to:

- **Learn to Know.** A person should have the tools to be able to understand the affairs of the world.
- **Learn to Do.** A person should be equipped with the skills and knowledge to be able to produce the changes they want in their environment.
- **To Learn Modern Life.** A person should be able to take part in various kinds of human activities cooperating with other people.

To conclude, as the andragogy approach prescribes that teachers must evaluate their own processes, approaches, and beliefs, it may also help improve their facilitating style. Moreover, by bridging the teacher-learner chasm through collaborative curriculum design, educators may have more opportunities to fine tune course content and delivery. This may also increase the interests of students to learn.

Knowles' adult learning theory can be thought of as an applied theory with the goal of producing functional persons that cannot only survive the dynamic changes of the modern world but also be at the forefront of change. It is envisioned that adults become lifelong learners and become self-directed innovators.

The andragogy framework in the tradition of Knowles and its development is, at first glance, very individualistic and puts a high value on the self-concept and autonomy of the learner. But, in the bigger scheme of things, it is geared towards arming people with the necessary knowledge and skills not just to learn more about the world and shape it in their favor but also for the betterment of their jobs and societal roles.

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