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Educational Theories in Practice

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Abstract

Research has shown that both andragogy and heutagogy are relevant to the practice of management education and associated with adult learning and success (Hase & Kenyon, 2003; Knowles, Holton, & Swanson, 2005; Wlodkowski, 2008). This chapter includes a brief summary of how these educational theories have evolved and an example of how to situate these theories within the practice of management education.

Introduction

One misconception held by some adult educators is that teaching approaches that are appropriate and relevant for children are also appropriate and relevant for adults (Wlodkowski, 2008). Pedagogy is the term for the theory and practice of teaching children (Knowles, Holton, & Swanson,

2005). The pedagogical approach, when applied to the education of adults in topics related to management, is limited in its utility. This approach fails to engage the adult learner's prior experiences and current management contexts by placing emphasis on the role of the teacher as director of learning (Knowles, Holton, & Swanson). Further, a pedagogical approach typically does not reflect research into the motivation and engagement of adult learners (Wlodkowski). Finally, because the pedagogical approach is founded on teaching in a simulated environment, it fails to leverage the authentic opportunities adult learners often have to apply what they are learning in relevant ways (Gruenewald, 2013).

This chapter will introduce two learning theories for consideration when designing management education: andragogy and heutagogy. For purposes of this chapter, the term andragogy will be used to refer to "any intentional and professionally guided activity that aims at change in adult persons" (Knowles, Holton, & Swanson, 2005, p. 60). The term heutagogy will be used to refer to "the study of self-determined learning" (Hase & Kenyon, 2000, p. 3).

Andragogy

As previously defined, andragogy is the application of learning theory to the education of adults (Knowles, Holton, & Swanson, 2005). Andragogical approaches acknowledge the needs of the adult learner as distinct and evolved from the needs of the child, noting the developmental stage of the adult and the impact of maturity on motivation to learn (Wlodkowski, 2008).

Knowles (1970) defined six core principles that are relevant to adult learning. These principles address the adult learner's need for relevance and reinforcement of self-concept, acknowledge the adult's prior experience and readiness to learn, and include methods designed to orient learning to the adult's unique requirements and motivations. This model and others provide direction to educators in the creation of adult learning approaches that acknowledge the adult's development and maturity.

The topic of adult motivation to learn was differentiated from pedagogical approaches by Knowles (1970) in alignment with andragogical models. Further, Wlodkowski (2008) suggested a four-part framework for motivating adult learners with components of inclusion, attitude, meaning,

and competence. Methods to address this framework included treating adult learners with respect, including them in decisions that affect their learning, ensuring clarity regarding the relevance of learning, and aligning learning experiences with the adult learner's own perspectives and values. Wlodkowski (2008) also found that the adult learner's perception of his/her own potential for competence was critical to motivation.

Heutagogy

Hase and Kenyon (2003, p. 3) suggested that heutagogy evolves from pedagogy and androgogy as a "natural progression" in the evolution of thinking regarding adult learning. Palloff and Pratt (2009) referred to heutagogy as an educational process of self-directed learning, asserting that in learning based on heutagogy, the focus of the learning is on the adult (vs. child), and that learning is constructed by the adult learner (vs. by the instructor). As adults apply what they are learning to their own personal context, they find their understanding enhanced by the situations within which they construct meaning.

The theory of heutagogy is closely aligned with constructivism, a concept first introduced by Lev Vygotsky in the early twentieth century (Wink & Putney, 2002). When teaching from a constructivist or heutagogical perspective, the task of the instructor becomes one of facilitation (Duffy & Jonassen, 2013). The instructor helps the learner to relate concepts to his or her prior experiences and current context in a way that the learner can construct his or her own meaning. Thus, a heutagogical approach requires more focus on the desired outcomes of the learning and on facilitating the learner's navigation toward those outcomes with experiences and applications that the learner co-designs. In contrast to a pedagogical approach based on specific activities and experiences designed by the instructor, a heutagogical approach is much more adaptive to the needs of the learner and requires that the learner be intimately involved in directing the approach to learning and application.

Hase and Kenyon (2003) asserted that learning only happens when the adult learner interacts with new knowledge and skills, integrating them into his or her experience. Hase and Kenyon further suggested that action research was especially well suited to support a heutagogical approach, stating "action research allows experimentation with real world experience

where learning is in the hands of the participants” (Hase & Kenyon, 2007, p. 113). Proponents of the action research approach suggest that learning on the part of individuals and organizations is enhanced through a process of action and reflection (Lewin, 1951, as cited in Hase & Kenyon, 2000). This concept closely aligns with Revans’s (2011) action research derivative, which he called action learning. In action learning, the focus is on bringing together a team of people to analyze problems, take action, and learn through reflection on results. Thus, action learning supports the learning of individuals as well as organizations (Marquardt, 2011).

Application of Learning Theories

A pedagogical approach has some merit in an adult learning setting. Knowles, Holton, and Swanson (2005) asserted that pedagogical approaches with high structure, clarity, and clear performance expectations could be effective when used appropriately in adult learning design. I applied my evolving understanding of learning theory to my work at City University of Seattle in the design of the capstone program for the Master of Science (MS) in Project Management. The program had previously employed a thesis as the capstone activity for students. In the redesigned action learning capstone, students instead assembled a team in their workplace to help them focus on a defined problem, and then they developed cycles of project work to implement in the workplace, reflected on the results of their efforts, and continued to replan and adjust their project approach.

Marquardt’s (2011) model of action learning, based on the earlier work of Lewin (1951), Revans (2011), Carr and Kemmis (2003), and Hase and Kenyon (2007), was well suited for use in a project management program and was deemed to be a relevant and applicable model to follow in the capstone for the MS degree. E-portfolios were added to the design of the capstone for two reasons: to provide a tool to support students in application and demonstration of learning, and to support the university’s requirements for providing evidence of outcomes to accreditation bodies. E-portfolios have been recognized as tools to support student learning as well as outcome assessment initiatives (Sweat-Guy & Buzzetto-More, 2007). Therefore, I selected the action learning and e-portfolio methods for their alignment with andragogical and heutagogical learning theories and their suitability to the curriculum and the needs of the students in this particular program.

The model deployed in the design of the capstone course was developed based on the work of Wiggins and McTighe (2005), which connects desired learning outcomes to methods for assessment and learning activities. Table 1 illustrates an example of how one of the components of this capstone (the e-portfolio) aligns andragogical and heutagogical learning methods.

Table 1. Alignment of E-Portfolio with Learning Methods

Required Assessment	Andragogical Methods	Heutagogical Methods
E-Portfolio	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Students base their action learning e-portfolio on an authentic project in a setting of their choice. • Students may create multiple portfolios for multiple purposes. • Assessment criteria are shared with students so that they understand how they will be measured. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Students can choose to meet minimum requirements or be creative in the design of their portfolio. • Students direct the update of the portfolio as they take courses, selecting artifacts to demonstrate their best work. • Students complete reflections on their learning and adjust their project as needed throughout the capstone.

The andragogical methods described in Table 1 support the adult learner’s need for relevance by situating the action learning within the context of the student’s choice of settings (usually the student’s current workplace). Students also have the opportunity to create multiple portfolios for various purposes, such as to support a job search or promote their work within their organization, further supporting the adult need for relevance and meaning. Further, the adult learner’s need for inclusion and competence are supported by providing clear assessment criteria to guide the student’s work. Heutagogical principles are also embedded in the action

learning capstone through self-direction and reflection opportunities. In short, students have the choice of simply completing the action learning capstone as a course assignment or leveraging it as a career-enhancing opportunity. They also have the choice of which artifacts (assignments) from their MS program reflect their best work. Reflection and change based on what is learned are also integral to the heutagogical design of the action learning capstone.

Conclusion

The example described above demonstrates the benefit of combining andragogical and heutagogical learning methods to management education. This benefit was further reinforced by the clear alignment of the relevant assessments (andragogy), experimentation and reflection (heutagogy), and the evidence of student learning. During the design of the action learning capstone, I incorporated the theories and associated methods that were best aligned to the needs of my students.

Understanding and applying learning theories and associated methods is the primary work of educators. Being open to new ideas while also remaining grounded in established theories and methods is good professional practice.

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