

Andragogical Assumptions and Integration of Philosophies in the Open and Distance Learning: A Theoretical Analysis

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Abstract

The emergence of major cross-cutting issues such as climate change and diseases like HIV/AIDS and COVID-19 in the 21st century has significantly contributed towards making the open and distance learning popular globally following role plays in educating individuals who are out of the formal education system. Recently, there has been an ongoing debate on how individuals learn better in any circumstance. This paper aimed to analyze the assumptions of andragogy, namely: the learner's need to know, self-directed learning, prior experiences of the learner, readiness to learn, orientation to learning/ problem solving, and motivation to learn. The analysis is based on a review of the challenges associated with these assumptions. Recommendations are also provided on how facilitators could help the open and distance learners to pursue their studies effectively.

Keywords: *andragogy, philosophies and open and distance learning*

Introduction

The term andragogy became famous in the 1970's and 1980's in the USA after the work of Malcolm Knowles and others (Pavlova and Sanger, 2016). However, the term was first introduced by Alexander Kapp (1833) in a German publication (Henschke, 2016). Malcolm S. Knowles (1913-1997) is considered to be a "Father of Andragogy" because he did great works in the field of adult education (Knowles, Holton and Swanson, 2005).

Andragogy was popularized by Malcom S. Knowles in order to distinguish adult education from pedagogy or child education (Pavlova and Sanger, 2016). Knowles (1980) stated that adults have a unique way of learning, which is through andragogy, which differs from pedagogy which is perceived to be a child learning approach.

In essence, "andragogy" refers to the methods and principles used in adult education. The word comes from the Greek "andr", meaning "man", and "agogus", meaning "leader of". Therefore, andragogy literally means "leading man". It is described as the art and science of helping adults to learn. The term "pedagogy" is derived from the Greek words "paidos", meaning "boy, child" and "agogus" meaning "leader of". Literally, it means "leading children". It is described as the art and science of teaching children in which the teacher controls all process of learning (Knowles, Holton and Swanson, 2005).

Darden (2014) argued that the andragogy model is based on the assumptions related to the concepts that open and distance learners whereby the learners must have the ability, need, the desire to control, and be responsible for their learning. Moreover, the author argued that facilitators must have a more practical, relevant, and self-directive and self-motivated instructional style that involve learners in the whole learning process.

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Burgh (2016) argued that there are limited studies on the integration of philosophies and classroom activities. There only few literatures that describe the integration of philosophies in the classroom practice, which have their origins in Lipman’s Philosophy for Children curriculum. Philosophies, schools of thought or philosophical ideas refer to perspectives of a group of people who share common characteristics of opinion or outlook toward a philosophy, discipline, belief, social movement, economics, cultural movement, or art movement (Dictionary Cambridge, 2021).

Distance education is a mode of learning conducted differently from the campus-based mode of learning (Dewal 1986 cited in Holmberg, 2005). Lockwood (2017) describes distance learning as a kind of learning in which learners are separated from their teachers in time and space but are still guided by them through pre-recorded, packaged learning materials. Open learning is a mode of learning that provides learners a wide range of choice and control learning content and strategies (Dewal 1986 cited in Holmberg, 2005). Lockwood (2017) defines open learning as a system which enables individuals to take part in programmes of studies of their choice, no matter where they live and their circumstances. In this context, open and distance learning referred as a kind of learning undertaken by students who study at a distance and undergo an occasional face to face sessions.

Generally, the open and distance learning has or should be associated with andragogy, because its targeted learners are those either working, looking for additional qualifications, or those dropped from formal education system for one reason or the other.

Table 4.1 below summarizes some of the educational philosophies. The summary focused on the proponents of philosophies, main ideas, the educational aims, curriculum focus, teacher and learner’s roles, and suggested teaching and learning methods.

Table 4.1 : Overview of Educational Philosophies

Philosophies	Proponents	Main Ideas	Edu- cation Aims	Curric- ulum Focus	Roles Of The Teacher	Roles Of The Stu- dent	Teaching & Learning Methods
Idealism	-PLATO (427-347 B.C) -E. Kant -Hegel -Froebel	Ideas are the only true reali- ty (ideas/ thoughts has great- er validity than the physical object)	Educate the ra- tional person.	Classical subjects	Teacher is an author- ity in his or her sub- ject field.	Receiver of knowl- edge and skills	-Instruc- tions -Activity -Experience -Question and answers

Realism	-Aristotle (384 B.C)	Existence of objects is independent of knowledge	Cultivate the intellect.	Constant curriculum	To enable the student to know the world and should not give personal opinions but clarify the facts	To choose subjects according to his/her ability from detailed curriculum	Demonstrations, tours and actual experiments (Practical)
Perennialism	-M. Hutchin (1899-1977) -M. Adler	To adjust man to the trust which is everlasting	To educate the rational person thus aims to develop student's intellectual and moral qualities of western civilization	To preserve culture from one generation to another and develop students' abilities of reasoning rationally.	A transfer of an everlasting knowledge from one generation to another.	Receiver of knowledge	Lecture Discussion Dialogue
Naturalism/positivism	-August Comte	Knowledge is acquired through sense organs and with the help of the brain	To achieve a synthesis and adjustment between individual and society and also between man and nature.	Should attach much the importance of evolutionary theory, empirical teaching and scientific analysis	A guider and a friend, and that in his behavior with the child.	The child occupies the central place in it. The child, in order to develop, should be left on its own. Society or the state should not interfere in his contact with nature.	-Direct experience of the nature -Tour -Laboratory practical

Existentialism	-Soren K. Kierkegaard (1813-1855) -Ivan Illich	Individuals are not ready made but rather designers of their own being.	To cultivate an authentic person	Student centered that emphasized the uniqueness and freedom of individual custom against the herd, the crowd or mass society	To provide individuals' freedom of choice to the highest good and opportunities to develop themselves	To be free to opt and practice any activities in learning process	Demonstration
Essentialism	-James O. Koerner -H.G. Rickover -Paul Copperman -TheodoreSizer	The core knowledge should stress on development of good moral behavior and essential skills of the society.	To teach intellectual and moral standards according to society.	Societal centered based on essential skills and essential subjects like literature, science, history and simple arithmetic.	To serve as an intellectual and moral role model for the students	To acquire knowledge and skills that are essential in their really world	Demonstration Imitation
Progressivism	-Rousseau -Pestalozzi -Frobel -W. James -C. Peirce	Reliable way for determining what is good or bad is experience	To promote the democratic social living and focus on the whole learner, rather than one of the content or teacher	To base on students interest and involve the application of human problem	To organize and guide the learning process through field trips and project	To use their own experiences in developing problem-solving skills	Field trips Project Discussion

Humanism	-C. Rogers	Human beings had their own intellectual capacities and in-born ethical sense	To develop a self-directed learner	To develop individuals' self-concept in relation to humanity	To support an individual to reach self-determination goals	To use prior-experience in learning and build an individual complex power of reasoning and abstract thinking.	Problem solving Discussion
Pragmatism	-John Dewey (1859 – 1952)	Knowledge based on experienced and observed real things	To teach student to adjust to change	To base on learners experiences and practical skills	To act as a facilitator, advisor, guider or coach in the whole process of learning	To use experience in solving different problems in real life.	Project Problem solving Laboratory experiments
Reconstructionism	-Theodore Braneld (1904 – 1987) -Paulo Freire (1921 – 1997)	Knowledge should base on creation of better society and world-wide democracy	Education should improve and reconstruct society education for change and reform	To address social reform, student experience and taking action on real problems such as violence, hunger, international terrorism inflation and inequality	To save as an agent of social change and reform, project director as well as research leader	To adapt or adopt changes according to the current situation or environment.	Dialogue Project Problem-solving

Source: Adapted from Ornsten and Hunkins (2018)

The Andragogical Assumptions

The Learner's Need to Know

According to Knowles, Holton and Swanson (2005) this is the primary assumption that learners' need to know; *why*, *what* and *how* before they engage in any learning programme. The authors argued that engaging learners in a collaborative programme planning could help the attainment of the learning goals. In short, before initiating any programme, learners need to know "how learning will be conducted"

“what learning will occur” and “why learning is important”. Ferreira and MacLean (2017) noted that the assumption that adults are forced by a need to know before they engage in the learning process is the foremost indicator that differentiate adults from child learners.

Application of this assumption to ODL learners: Blondy (2007) argued that creating an environment that will promote the accomplishment of these goals for learners who are not in conventional mode is not a simple task. The author noted that to accommodate the needs and interest of the ODL learners there must be clear communication from the course facilitator at the start of the course informing the learners to think about and identify their specific learning goals as well as what learning activities they would personally like to use within the course to meet their goals. Knowles, Holton and Swanson (2005) advocated that facilitators are supposed to use; personnel appraisal systems, job rotation, exposure to role models, and diagnostic performance assessments in assessing the learners’ needs and interests.

In order to meet the needs and expectations of ODL learners’ Brieger (2020) proposed that, before starting the course there must be communications between the facilitator and learners that clearly illustrates program purpose, sets the learners’ expectations, and elaborates the course learning outcomes. The programme objectives must describe the benefits of the course to ODL learners’ real life situation. Additionally, Gitterman (2004) emphasized the use of collaborative learning, whereby the facilitator has to create conducive learning to mutual problem solving. The learning situation should begin with an attention to the physical and online learning environment that helps the learners to solve or resolve their prevailing problems. The author also reminds facilitators to create a supportive and trusting psychological and social climate that enables the learners to conduct needs assessment towards programme goals before starting of the programme. Meanwhile, Gitterman argued that when learners are feeling to be respected and trusted by their facilitators in needs analysis, they respect and trust each other more readily, leading to achievement of programme goals. On the contrary, when the learners’ note that they are not respected and trusted, they are more likely to sabotage the programme goals.

Challenges of this assumption: The ODL learners do not fully participate in educational agenda discussions for several reasons. First, learners are less likely to participate fully when they do not understand the purpose of the discussion. Second, when they do not understand what to contribute to the discussion. Third, when they do not expect responses to their postings due to language barriers or technological problems. Fourth, when they do not understand the discussion structure of the forum or do not understand the grading criteria (Hew, Cheung, and Ng, 2010).

Recommendations for facilitators: For effective identification of the learner’s needs and interest, facilitators are advised to incorporate this assumption with knowledge and views from existentialist philosophers like Soron K. Kegaard (1813-1885) emphasized facilitators to provide the learners’ freedom of choice and plan programme goals based on their real life environment. Through this, learners should be educated on how open and distance learning mode will help them to attain their goals, because the ODL learners appreciate a learning mode that is specifically directed toward helping them to achieve their goals. Existentialist philosophers believe that individuals are not ready made but rather designers of their own being, therefore a good facilitator is one who gives room to his/her learners to determine their educational goals (Nyirenda and Ishumi, 2008).

Moreover, Spalding (2014) discussed the importance of facilitators to advertise their classes on the first day of meeting or communicating with distance learners. According to the author, the first day of meeting or communicating with learners is very important because most learners decide whether to keep on or drop from a class. Being facilitators, getting well prepared for the first day will go a long way toward class sustainability and the achievement of the programme goals.

Self-directed Learning/Autonomous

The term self-directed learning is not a new one in the education system. Knowles (1975) stated that it is a “basic human competence, the ability to learn on one’s own”. Knowles argued that in its broadest meaning, “self-directed learning” describes a process in which individuals take the initiative, with or without the help of others, in diagnosing their learning needs, formulating the learning goals, identifying human and material resources for learning, choosing and implementing appropriate learning strategies, and evaluating learning outcomes. Cheng (2005) contends that students’ capacity for effective self-directed learning becomes the core concern of numerous ongoing education reforms in different parts of the world in order to meet the challenges of rapid transformation and globalization in the new millennium. The term self-directed learning is viewed in two perspectives. First, self-directed learning is seen as self-teaching, whereby learners are capable of taking control of the mechanics and techniques of teaching themselves in a particular subject. Second, self-directed learning is conceived of as personal autonomy. Autonomy means taking control of the goals and purposes of learning and assuming ownership of learning (Knowles, Holton and Swanson, 2005).

Application of this assumption to ODL learners: These two perspectives of self-directed learning depend on each other, although they may differ. Learners may have an ability to enroll in high independent learning (distance learning or open and distance learning) but choose to learn in the conventional mode because of convenience, speed, or learning style and vice-versa. In fact, some people believe that traditional instruction is the best approach when they know little about a subject. Choosing traditional instruction over self-teaching does not mean a learner has given up ownership or control just because he or she chooses to access learning in this manner. Conversely, just because a learner engages in self-teaching does not mean that the he or she is autonomous. Thus, the presence or absence of activities associated with self-teaching is not an accurate indicator of personal autonomy. For most learning professionals, the most important perspective of self-directed learning is building personal autonomy (Knowles, Holton and Swanson, 2005).

Moreover, Nyirenda and Ishumi (2008) discussed that learners are capable of being self-directed and therefore are able to identify and articulate their own learning needs and problems to their facilitators. This underlines the need for facilitators to involve learners in problem and needs assessment, as well as in programme planning, implementation and evaluation.

Challenges of this assumption: Self-directed learning is a complex process and the endeavor can result in non accomplishments, frustrations or even failures. The assumption that all learners have the full capacity for self-teaching and personal autonomy in every learning situation is generally not accepted. Any particular learner in a particular learning situation is likely to exhibit different capabilities and

preferences (Knowles, Holton and Swanson, 2005).

Cheng (2005) contends that very little has been understood with regard to how students' self-directed learning can happen, how it can be motivated and sustained in the long run, and how information technology can play an important role in facilitating and sustaining self-directed learning. Therefore, there is a challenge of maintaining a culture of self-directed learning and facilitating each student's persistent learning in both the local and global contexts.

Recommendations for facilitators: Facilitators are advised to leave ODL learners free with less or no guidance towards the self concept by allowing them to conduct self-assessment and evaluation. All processes of learning are recommended to serve as facilitators and not directors. The main task is to get participants' perspectives about what topics to cover and let them work on projects that reflect their interests. The ODL learners should be allowed to assume their responsibility for presentations and group leadership (Mushi, 2010).

Apart from that, facilitators should guide the learners to their own knowledge rather than supplying them with facts and create opportunities for self-direction and self-actualization as suggested by the humanists philosophers like Erasmus (1466-1536), Rousseau (1712-1778), Pestalozzi (1746-1827), Abraham Maslow (1908- 1970), Carl Rogers (1902- 1987), and Alfred Adler (1870- 1937). Humanistic philosophers believe that human beings have their own intellectual capacities and inborn ethical sense therefore the main task of the facilitator is to support learners to reach their self-determination goals. Such support will help the learners to become a fully autonomous person and self-directed learner (Sharma, 2002).

Prior Experience of the Learner

In this assumption, the learners are required to have accumulated a foundation of life experiences and knowledge that may include work-related activities, family responsibilities, and previous education. Therefore, they need to connect learning to this knowledge/experience base (Knowles, Holton and Swanson, 2005).

Application of this assumption to ODL learners: For effective learning process the curriculum must be structured in a way that fosters sharing of experiences among learners such as through online group projects and interactive discussions. The ODL learners must be willing to participate in online discussions and team projects during which they share their personal experiences and knowledge, and facilitators must create online environment in which learners feel free to express opinions, share ideas, and discuss information and experiences valuable to them (Blondy, 2007).

The role of the ODL learners' experience has become an increasingly important area of focus, particularly in the professional development arena. Knowles, Holton and Swanson (2005) identified four means by which learners' experiences impact learning. These are: (i) creating a wider range of individual differences (ii) providing a rich resource for learning (iii) creation of biases that can inhibit or shape the new learning (iv) providing the grounding for learners' self-identity. Traditionally, individual learning professionals have focused on the first, second and fourth items through emphasizing experiential

learning techniques. However, much of the recent emphasis has been on item number three, focusing on how learner's experience shapes or inhibit the new learning.

Challenges of this assumption: Nyirenda and Ishumi (2008) revealed that, learners feel to be rejected whenever they find people devaluing their experience, not paying attention to it, or not incorporating it into their education plans.

Recommendations for facilitators: Facilitators are supposed to utilize the ODL learners' experience and knowledge as a basis from which they plan to facilitate. Subject matters/contents could be applicable to the learners if they are familiar with their life situation/experience. As a facilitator use the learners' experiences and knowledge in your lesson to explain the relevance of the topic under discussion. The best way to use the learners' experiences is by creating activities that relate with the learners' experience, such as group discussions, problem-solving activities and simulations as suggested by pragmatism philosophers like John Dewey (1859 – 1952) who believed that the primary goal of education should be to facilitate learners to adjust to changes. Pragmatists advise facilitators to choose participatory rather than transmittal modes in their training and supervision work. In other words, facilitators are supposed to use facilitation techniques that enable the learners to effectively utilize their experiences (Nyirenda and Ishumi, 2008).

Readiness to Learn

Individuals generally become ready to learn when their life situation creates a need to know. It then follows that the more learning professionals can anticipate and understand the learners' life situations and readiness for learning, the more effective they become. The learners' life situations not only affect their readiness to learn but also their readiness for andragogical-type of learning experiences (Knowles, Holton and Swanson, 2005). The readiness to learn implies that the learner has sufficient interest in the learning stimuli to be engaged, attentiveness, enthusiasm or motivation to learn, and can concentrate on and complete the learning task (Smith, Rose, Ross-Gordon, and Smith, 2015).

Application of this assumption to ODL learners: Knowles, Holton and Swanson (2005) argued that it is not necessary to sit by passively and wait for readiness to develop naturally. In the classrooms environment most learning experiences are highly situational, and a learner may show very different behaviors in different learning situations. Therefore, the facilitator's task is just to create conducive physical and online environment that creates the inner motivation and readiness to learn. The ODL learners' motives for engaging in educational programmes are vital for determining how and what they learn. Learners' choices affect not only the type of service required but also the modes and styles in the learning process (Nyirenda and Ishumi, 2008).

Challenges of this assumption: The challenge has been to develop the models to explain typical variability in the learner's readiness to learn (Knowles, Holton and Swanson, 2005). Moreover, the critical challenge of this assumption is the importance of timing the learning experiences matching with those developmental tasks. For example, a small entrepreneur may not be ready to learn about bank shareholder education because he/she possesses low capital, but he/she is more likely to be ready after maximizing the capital. Similarly, semi literate learners may not be ready for comprehension topics until

they have mastered basic literacy skills (writing, reading and simple arithmetic) and have decided that they are ready for more studies.

Recommendations for facilitators: There are ways to induce readiness through exposure to models of superior performance, career counseling, simulation exercises, and other techniques (Knowles, Holton and Swanson, 2005). As a facilitator, make all course and text material practical and relevant to the learner as suggested by pragmatists philosophers like John Dewey (1859 – 1952) who believed in the uses of experience in solving different problems in the real life (Sharma, 2002).

Always learners need to relate the course information directly to their careers; therefore, all course material must be directly related to the learners' career. For learners, information must carry some very practical and applicable purpose. Facilitators must tell the learners exactly how the material and information will be useful to them on the job. Examples, exercises need to be career relevant, familiar, and timely. Smith, Rose, Ross-Gordon, and Smith, (2015) recommended that facilitators have to focus on the educational practices that enhance the readiness to learn to the learners with the low motives to learn. These practices could help improving some of the negative effects of low readiness to learn.

Orientation to Learning (Problem-centered)

Contrary 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. Adults generally prefer a problem-solving orientation to learning, rather than subject-centered learning (Knowles, Holton and Swanson, 2005).

Application of this assumption to ODL learners: Mushi (2010) argued that for proper utilization of the learners' problem centered approach, there is need to make learning tasks relevant to the needs and the interests of learners because they join a learning activity in a problem centered frame of mind. Most studies in education indicate that learners learn best when new information is presented in the real-life context (Mushi, 2010; Nyirenda and Ishumi 2008; and Elias, and Marriam, 2005). The ODL learners are conditioned to a problem-centered orientation to learn as opposed to subject-centered learning. This is to say that ODL learners are more interested in learning how to resolve or solve the problems that they are experiencing now, not in the future (Nyirenda and Ishumi, 2008).

Challenges of this assumption: Ali (2019) noted that the challenges through this assumption occurred when facilitators are unable to facilitate group discussions, construct valid problems, and guide learners through the problem solving process. Moreover, challenges occur when the learners fail or are unable to work well in groups, actively generate resolutions or ideas related to the problem.

Recommendations for facilitators: Facilitators are emphasized to identify the learning objectives for ODL learners before the course begins. The emphasis should focus on the use of experiential approach in learning as suggested by pragmatists philosophers like John Dewey (1859 – 1952) who believed that true knowledge was based on experienced and observed real things. For effective implication of this assumption, facilitators are advised to give room to the ODL learners to choose projects that reflect their own interest. Pragmatists ask facilitators to adjust their teaching speed to meet the needs of both

faster and slower learners. Because the learners differs in intellectual capabilities and learning speed, so facilitators must be conscious of the rate at which materials are presented in the learning process (Mushi, 2010).

Motivation to Learn

The ODL learners tend to be more motivated toward learning that helps them solve problems in their lives. They are motivated to learn by external factors such as higher salaries, promotions, better jobs in the future or internal pressures, such as the desire for increased job satisfaction, self-esteem and quality of life issues (Knowles, Holton and Swanson, 2005).

Application of this assumption to ODL learners: Levina and Mariko (2015) noted that promoting and maintaining volitional motivation of learners in an autonomy-supportive environment stimulates their growth and increases the efficiency of education. To maintain volitional motivation of learners, programme goals must be prepared to accommodate a real life, experiences and interests of the ODL learners. Mushi (2010) states that, the learner's participation and continuing in learning depends upon the achievement of satisfaction. The author asserts that no one can directly observe one's motivation but we can observe the human behavior and the environment in which the individual is purposefully active. To meet individuals' needs and interests the programme goals must motivate learners by stating its benefits to learners and to the community.

Challenges of this assumption: Many learners go back to school due to extrinsic motivation and the pursuit of external reward. There's nothing wrong with that. Extrinsic motivations like wanting to earn more money have pushed countless students out of their comfort zone. Other learners return to school due to intrinsic motivation: because they love the subject or they simply love to learn. Extrinsic and intrinsic motivations are both legitimate (Spalding, 2014). Additionally, Mushi (2010) states that motivation in learning is influenced by both internal and external factors which involve a combination of force/drives, needs and tensions which start and maintain activity or behavior towards achievement of certain goals. Therefore, assuming that all learners have intrinsic motivation to learn is a negative perception.

Recommendations for facilitators: As a facilitator spend less effort trying to motivate the ODL learners and concentrate more time on facilitating since ODL learners are already motivated to pursue. Through such techniques as positive reinforcement, motivate ODL learners to learn and retain new information as a means to recognize the relevance of the information to their careers and achieve their goals. Facilitators are advised to emphasize the learning strategies that deal with community or global controversial/puzzled/burning issues as proposed by Reconstructionism philosophers like Theodore Braneld (1904 – 1987) and Paulo Freire (1921 – 1997). As a facilitator try to bring the world into the open and distance classroom by making the course content meaningful to your learner through learning techniques like: role-plays, games, inquiry, demonstrations, dialogue, project and problem-solving that reflects the learners' everyday experiences.


Conclusion

Generally, the paradigm shift from teacher centered on the learner centered contributes to liberation of the mind among teachers/facilitators who believed in pedagogical mode of learning. Some scholars agree that andragogy when applied to open and distance learning programmes can help to promote self direction and independence to the ODL learners. The open and distance learning mode faces a number of challenges like: it does not provide immediate feedback, leads to social isolation, less seriousness to some students and lack of interaction and motivation among students. These challenges could hinder the ODL learners from pursuing their studies effectively. Therefore, applying andragogical assumptions and integration of philosophies in open and distance learning could be a remedy to these challenges.

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