PHI 800-12

Transformative Learning and

Adult Education

Regina Matthews

Omega Graduate School

May 17, 2024

Professor

Dr. Sara Reichard

List and discuss the fundamental principles of adult education theory. Identify

elements of the OGS degree program that correspond to each principle.

The six principles articulated in Knowles' theory of adult learning—addressing the learner’s need to know, self-concept, prior experience, readiness to learn, orientation to learning, and motivation—connect seamlessly with the spirit and culture of the Omega Graduate Program. This program is dedicated to nurturing lifelong learners who proactively engage in their educational journey, ultimately evolving into adept leaders. The alignment between Knowles' principles and the program's mission underscores the commitment to fostering enduring learning practices and facilitating impactful personal and professional development. The Omega Graduate program is built on the cornerstone of nurturing lifelong learners and empowering us to lead transformative change by integrating our faith-based beliefs into the world. However, achieving this mission is impossible without a deep understanding of the concept of being an adult learner and the intricacies of how we learn.

The foundational principle of Knowles' 'need to know' resonates with the understanding that as adult learners, our motivation to learn extends beyond simply being provided information about a particular topic or requirement, as often emphasized in pedagogical theory. Instead, we seek knowledge because we desire it, driven by our own rationale to thrive and grow. The first principle that Knowles focuses on is the adult learners need to know. “Adults want to know why they need to learn something and how what they learn will apply to their immediate situation” (Bierema & Merriam, 2014, p. 55). The principle is clear: adults desire to learn things that are relevant to their lives and lifestyles, and information they will need as they move into new phases of life. Recognizing this principle helps me understand myself better as an adult learner. Over the years, I have observed that as I mature, I tend to pursue learning new skills or information only if they hold relevance to my life. However, there are instances when adult learning is not driven by immediate necessity but is required for potential future applications. Pursuing a doctoral degree at Omega Graduate School will amplify our need for knowledge, enhance our motivation to learn, and inspire growth in ourselves and others. The Word of God instructs us that anyone seeking wisdom should ask, and it will be given freely. Moreover, it reminds us to seek understanding above all.

I believe that a key focus of OGS is to inspire our intrinsic motivation to learn. We should cultivate a desire within ourselves to learn and, essentially, be self-motivated. “Self-determination as a concept was proposed by Deci and Ryan (2002) as being concerned with encouraging learners to continue their self-development both autonomously and socially. In self-determined learning, all responsibilities of the learning process are considered to be in the hands of the learner, including what should be learned and how it should be done” (e-Journal of Business Education & Scholarship of Teaching, 17(2), 1-7).

The second principle of "self-concept" in Knowles' adult learning theory emphasizes that as adults, we take charge of our own learning. This notion reflects our personal growth and increases self-direction over time. This course and program are motivating me to excel as a self-directed learner and embrace new knowledge enthusiastically. Having dedicated twenty-four years to elementary education, where I encouraged teachers to foster students' desire for learning and lifelong curiosity, I now embark on renewing this principle within myself.

The third principle, prior experience, enables adult learners to leverage their background knowledge and experiences, facilitating a deeper understanding of new information. “According to the andragogical model, the most effective method of learning for adults is making connections between newly acquired information and previous experiences and knowledge” (Nallaluthan et al., 2023). The students in our higher-level graduate program bring a wealth of diversity and varied experiences to our school, providing opportunities for mutual learning among both our professors and peers. “The second assumption of andragogy is that an adult’s accumulated life experiences are a “rich resource” for learning” (Bierema & Merriam, 2014, p. 49).

The fourth principle, ‘readiness to learn,’ is linked to the developmental tasks and social roles of adult life. This principle recognizes that adults typically become receptive to learning subjects they perceive as pertinent to their needs. According to Hammond (2015), "It should be noted that individuals start with an education experience that is embedded in pedagogy something which occurs in the early learning consistent with a childhood state and the level and complexity of learning develops from that point building upon that very initial learning process" (p. 56). This concept resonates with our current program understanding, as we endeavor to acquire knowledge to enrich our professional capacities and integrate it with our careers. Furthermore, we aim to explore how we can intertwine our faith to bolster our professional endeavors. This can also connect to our deeper need to learn, as we have a deeper need to understand who God has created us to be. "According to Chinnasamy (2013), 'The andragogical principles developed by Knowles is an impact of Maslow’s motivational or hierarchical theory of human needs. The hierarchy theory of Maslow has five levels in which human needs are classified as physiological needs which progresses gradually to safety needs, love needs or belongingness, esteem needs, and self-actualization needs' (p. 2835). This highlights the connection between Knowles' andragogical principles and Maslow's hierarchy of needs, suggesting that adult learning is influenced by motivational factors."

The fifth principle is orientation to learn, identifies that the adult learner will need to learn to perform a task or solve a problem. The principle articulated in Knowles' theory of adult learning holds universal significance, emphasizing the necessity for acquiring necessary skills and knowledge to navigate tasks effectively. As adults, we naturally evolve into adept problem solvers, a trait we endeavor to cultivate in our children from an early age to equip them for future success. In my role as an administrator, problem-solving is a continuous endeavor, reflecting both personal development and contributions to our community. The design of our current OGS program aligns with this perspective, challenging participants to identify and address real-world issues, thereby fostering proactive engagement with the challenges of our time."

“A sixth assumption of adult learning addresses the motivation to learn. While adults are responsive to extrinsic motivation, they are most driven by internal pressure, motivation, and the desire for self-esteem and goal attainment - people will not learn until they are ready and motivated to learn.” (Ozuah, 2016). At OGS, each of us is propelled by a dual inspiration: a sense of divine calling and personal determination to expand our knowledge for the betterment of our surroundings. This inner motivation serves as the foundational drive behind our evolution during this season in our lives. I firmly contend that self-motivation stands as the forerunner for assuming roles as both leaders and learners concurrently.

As an administrator, one of my school's core values is to foster lifelong learners. However, this program has prompted me to reconsider this statement in a new context. How do we truly promote lifelong learning without having a clear understanding of how we will evolve? While I've previously integrated various learning styles and multiple intelligences into our educational approach, I realize I haven't sufficiently explored the underlying reasons for why we learn. We must reevaluate how we transition from one phase of knowledge acquisition to another. For instance, when working with children who lack enthusiasm for reading, we often explore their interests to understand their motivations. Moreover, we frequently commend those driven by a thirst for knowledge across diverse subjects. Personally, I've always identified as an informational reader. The idea of reading for purely literary enjoyment never quite resonated with me; I perceived little to gain from it. I questioned whether it would expand my understanding of the world, contribute to my spiritual growth, or offer insights into my future endeavors. If these outcomes weren't probable, I would prefer to allocate my time elsewhere. Discovering that I'm not alone in this inclination is intriguing; perhaps I'm more of an intellectual outlier. Given the choice, I'll opt for facts over fiction any day to enrich my knowledge. The principles of adult learning allow me to understand wholeheartedly why God has placed me here as I consume all that OGS has to offer and will guide me through for my next assignment and journey.

In conclusion, the profound comprehension of our identities as adult learners, coupled with the principles of Knowles' andragogy, empowers us to delve into the depths of our purpose and existence. The Omega Graduate Program intricately weaves together these principles, guiding us towards a heightened awareness of our potential and purpose. Through this program, we strive to gain clarity on how to not only excel as adult learners but also to positively influence and impact those around us. "The very nature of the learning process inherently involves the extension and enrichment of individual knowledge and experience. Consequently, the pedagogical approach must be recognized as the cornerstone for all subsequent learning and personal development" (Alabisi & Vucetic-Trifirò, 2023, p. 6). The paradigm of adult learning, coupled with the principles upon which Omega Graduate School is built, will provide us all with a strong foundation.

**Works Cited**

Alabisi, A., & Vucetic-Trifirò, C. E. (2023). Pedagogy, andragogy and heutagogy: How are they related? The e-Journal of Business Education & Scholarship of Teaching, 17(2), 1-7. <https://www.proquest.com/scholarly-journals/pedagogy-andragogy-heutagogy-how-are-they-related/docview/2878448011/se-2>

Chinnasamy, J. (2013). MENTORING AND ADULT LEARNING: ANDRAGOGY IN ACTION.*International Journal of Management Research and Reviews, 3*(5), 2835-2844. Retrieved from <https://www.proquest.com/scholarly-journals/mentoring-adult-learning-andragogy-action/docview/1417475654/se-2>

Deci, E. L. & Ryan, R. M. (2002). The handbook of self-determination research. Rochester, NY: The University of Rochester Press.

Hammond, Z. (2015). Culturally responsive teaching and the brain (p. 56). Corwin.

Nallaluthan, K., Nasir, M., Thurasingam, V., Vignes, K., & Kanapathy Kaaminy. (2023). Malcolm Knowles and innovation centre universiti Pendidikan Sultan Idris (RMIC – UPSI): work-based learning model. Evaluation Studies in Social Sciences, 4(2), 30-50. <https://ejournal.upsi.edu.my/index.php/ESSS/index>

Merriam, S. B., & Bierema, L. L. (2014). Adult Learning: Linking Theory to Practice. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.

Ozuah, P. O. (2016). First, there was pedagogy and then came andragogy. Einstein journal of Biology and Medicine, 21(2), 83-87.