Transformative Learning and Adult Education

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Assignment #3 – Essay

1. Write a 5-page paper based on one (1) of the three (3) items below:

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

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

● Explain Jack Meirow's transformative learning theory. How does the OGS

approach to transformative learning promote critical reflection for transcending

barriers to personal growth and social impact?

● Assess Jane Vella's 12 Twelve Principles for Effective Adult Learning and the

application of quantum thinking. Discuss how OGS promotes quantum thinking

(holistic, integrated, spiritual, and energetic).

2. Paper Outline

a. Begin with an introductory paragraph that has a succinct thesis statement.

b. Address the topic of the paper with critical thought.

c. End with a conclusion that reaffirms your thesis.

d. Use a minimum of seven scholarly research sources (two books and the

remaining scholarly peer-reviewed journal articles).

**Fundamental Principles of Adult Education Theory**

One cannot look at the principles of adult education without understanding a little of its origin. Malcom Knowles was an educator who is credited with developing the principles of andragogy (adult learning). Knowles defined andragogy as the art and science of helping adults learn (Mews, 2020). It should be noted that Knowles was not the creator of the concept of andragogy but was responsible for making the term popular along with the expansion of its meaning. In this paper, we will explore how the elements of the OGS degree programs correspond to Knowles’ principles.

Knowles wanted to address the specific needs of the adult learner (Holton & Robinson, 2020). He was the trailblazer who provided many learning institutions with a road map on how to educate their adult students, including the Omega Graduate School, (OGS). In fact, the principles of adult education theory are and were instrumental to the teaching methods of OGS. Later in this paper we will show the OGS/Knowles connection, but first more andragogical information is necessary.

 Knowles made a major distinction between how young children are taught in school settings and how adults best learn while matriculating in colleges, universities and other forms of higher education and training outlets. He set the two models of learning apart by developing six andragogy principles also known as assumptions:

1. Need to know
2. Self-Perception
3. Experience
4. Readiness to learn
5. Orientation toward learning
6. Motivation to learn (Tezcan, 2022)

Before we explore how elements of the OGS degree program correspond to the principles that Knowles set forth for andragogy, we first have toknow something about the school’s overall educational style.OGS is committed to the Oxford tutorial method and models its degree programs based on this well-established learning approach. Oxford tutorial is recognized for small group discussion courses with a handful of students which allow for better learning outcomes involving analysis and critical thinking (Balwant& Doon, 2021). There were no findings to support the methodology of Oxford tutorial as being purely andragogical or pedagogical. At this point, we have talked a lot about andragogy. However, it is also valuable to know what pedagogy is. Pedagogy addresses what younger learners need in order to learn. It should be noted that they learn differently from adult learners. For instance, children may need guidance, they may need a teacher to shepherd them through something being taught. One concept worthy of mentioning is by a Russian psychologist, Lev Semyonovich Vygotsky who believed there is a gap between what children can learn independently and what they can achieve with assistance (Leuwol, et al., 2023). Most adults do not need to be taught, instead they can learn independently and prefer to learn that way with little or no assistance.

Admittedly, this paper concentrates on adult students, but we would be remiss if we did not also mention what role the adult educator plays. Adult educators can become change agents and world builders who foster ecologies of transformation (Nicolaides, et al., 2024). Adult educators are advisors to the paths of transformation for each of their students, but the final say of how a student gets to that transformative experience belongs to the student alone.

At this point, we can examine elements of OGS that correspond with the assumptions formed by Knowles. The OGS website provides four key elements. They are:

 (1) Adult Learning must be relevant.

 (2) Adult Learning should be experiential.

 (3) Adult Learning should be driven toward problem-solving.

 (4) Adult Learners thrive when learning has immediate value.

We will now see how the elements and principals identified in this paper are similar.

**Adult Learning Must be Relevant**

There is a new term that recently entered into today’s modern lexicon the word “adulting.” It means concentrating on doing those things that are hard to do but if done genuinely will matter to the quality of one’s life. Adulting is mentioned because OGS knows that anything learned by its adult students must be relevant – the students must be able to apply their learning experiences to their lives in a meaningful way. We will now look at how the “relevant” OGS element corresponds to the principles of Knowles: “need to know.” The “need to know” Knowles principle echoes OGS’s “relevant” element by recognizing that whatever adult students learn should lead to goals they want to achieve. For example, an adult student who is a computer engineer may want to learn about AI technologies. The “need to know” principle and OGS “relevant” element are practical applications for this adult learner who is in the information technology industry. This person is learning about AI because the goal is to remain competent within his or her field. Thus, the adult learner seeks out some form of education that is “relevant” and “need to know” focused so that he or she can improve their job prospects.

**Adult Learning Should b****e Experiential**

“Adult learning should be experiential” is the next OGS key element that we will observe. It should be noted that the OGS key element “adult learning should be experiential” mimics the Knowles principle, “experience.” Both premises correspond with each other because they involve the idea that adult learners are shaped by their own experiences. One caveat of this particular OGS key element and Knowles principle is adult students’ previous learned experiences can be a catalysts to a resistant to change. Past experiences can lead to misconceptions and biases causing adult learners to reject new innovative ideas beneficial to their educational growth. It should also be mentioned that societal influences can play a role in the rejection of learning experiences. Each adult student’s customs, socio-political norms and world perspectives can determine how they learn. In addition, “Every culture’s adult learning theories are a derivative of the hegemonic power structure of the society in which they are developed” (Dantus, 2021, p. 83).

**Adult Learning Should be Driven Toward Problem-Solving**

With the OGS element “adults learning should be driven toward problem-solving” we can look at two of Knowles principles that agree with this particular OGS element. The two Knowles principles are: “ readiness to learn” and “orientation towards learning.” When adult students are faced with a problem requiring them to learn something new to solve that problem they are ready to do so. In fact, there are studies that link achievement, learning outcomes and readiness with each other (Agustiani, et.al, 2022). Think of the problem-solving readiness of first responders.

With the Knowles principle “orientation towards learning,” adults learners seek education based on productive problem-solving not subjects. For example, for those adult learners in the helping professions many take continuing education courses to aid others; the nurses may want to learn how to provide better healthcare for their patients and the social workers may want to educate themselves about how to ensure their clients receive food and affordable housing.

**Adult Learners Thrive When Learning has Immediate Value**

Explained will be how the OGS element “adult learners thrive when learning has immediate value” corresponds to two of Knowles principles: “self-perception” (also called self-concept) and “motivation to learn.” “Self-perception” involves practicing autonomy, adult learners can make their own decisions. These learners can gleam value by being and staying in control. “Adult learners have their own experiences, their own world view and their personal autonomy, which serves as a guide to what they actually want to learn” (Ngozwana, 2020, p.44). The last Knowles principle we will review relates to motivation. Adult learners are moved by intrinsic motivators. For example, a student taking Spanish courses in order to speak to a family member that is not bilingual. This is a far stronger motivator for an adult learner and has more immediate value than a student taking Spanish to meet the foreign language requirements set by a school for all its students.

**Conclusion**

It is safe to conclude that the elements of the OGS degree programs do align with the Knowles principles on andragogy. One could say Knowles principles are the bedrock of the OGS key elements. However, at the same time, OGS with its history and affiliation with the Oxford tutorial method and its faith-based ideology transcends beyond just the andragogical concepts of Knowles instead it is a multi-layered educational institution where its adult learners come first.

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