Transformative Learning and Adult Education: Andragogy

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* 1. Create a 350-word original discussion paper (with cited sources) during the week of the residency. Be prepared to discuss and engage with other students during the live sessions. Post this document in DIAL.

Andragogy, a term popularized by Malcolm Knowles in the 1970s, shifts the focus from the traditional teacher-centered education model to a learner-centered approach, particularly tailored for adult education. Knowles (1984) defined andragogy as the art and science of helping adults learn, contrasting it with pedagogy, the discipline of educating children. This distinction highlights adult learners' unique needs and characteristics, including self-direction, life experiences, learning readiness, orientation, and motivation (Knowles et al., 2005).

Adults bring a wealth of experience to the learning environment, significantly influencing their engagement and the learning process. Knowles et al. (2005) underscore integrating learners' experiences into educational programs, fostering a more relatable and effective learning experience. This approach respects the background and knowledge that adult learners bring and leverages these as foundational elements for new learning.

Furthermore, adults' readiness to learn is often oriented toward the developmental tasks of their social roles (Merriam et al., 2007). Adult education, therefore, needs to be designed with a focus on immediate applicability to work or personal life. This pragmatic approach ensures that learning is relevant and directly beneficial, increasing motivation and engagement.

Adult learners' motivation tends to be more intrinsic than extrinsic. Adults pursue education for personal fulfillment, career advancement, or to achieve a specific goal rather than external rewards (Wlodkowski, 2011). Recognizing this, educators can tailor instructional strategies that align with adult learners' internal motivations, providing a more satisfying and motivating learning experience.

Andragogy's learner-centered approach advocates for a facilitative role for educators, guiding learners through self-discovery and self-application of knowledge rather than dictating what must be learned. This aligns with contemporary educational trends emphasizing autonomy and self-directed learning, preparing adults for continuous, lifelong learning in an ever-changing world (Merriam & Bierema, 2013).

In conclusion, andragogy offers a robust framework for understanding and improving adult education. By recognizing the distinct characteristics of adult learners, educators can create more effective, engaging, and relevant learning experiences. As the landscape of education continues to evolve, the principles of andragogy remain critical in addressing the unique needs of adult learners, facilitating lifelong learning, and personal and professional development.

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