Transformative Learning and Adult Education

Kevin W. White

Omega Graduate School

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Professor

Dr. Sara Reichard

**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 Mezirow’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 with 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).

**Andragogy –**

The topic for the instructor-assigned essay chosen is adult learning theory or andragogy. Malcolm Knowles (1984) defines andragogy as teaching focused on the learner's needs and goals. Andragogy, a method that fosters inclusiveness, focuses on the academic development of the whole person instead of just one aspect of a person. The components of andragogy also consider adult learner characteristics: motivation, readiness, experience, self-direction, and orientation. While andragogy teaches adult learners how to learn, it also promotes a sense of inclusion and collaboration, as now there is learning how to learn together, creating a sense of community. Andragogy is adult-focused learning. As a methodology, it is relevant, experiential, driven towards problem-solving, and offers immediate value, making the learning process practical and applicable. Andragogy as a teaching method is comparable to two renowned hall-of-fame coaches of the National Basketball Association or NBA. Two of its Hall of Fame coaches who come to mind when describing andragogy are Pat Riley and Phil Jackson.

Riley and Jackson, two legendary coaches, led multiple teams to the NBA championships. What set them apart was their distinctive coaching styles, which bear a striking resemblance to andragogy. They both excelled in managing synergized rosters of the NBA's most elite players, demonstrating their ability to develop players in collaborative environments. Their shared leadership trait was their approach to their athletes, treating them as complete individuals rather than just role players. This perspective challenged the traditional view of sports organizations and the leadership of their athletes. Riley and Jackson's coaching methods, like andragogy, celebrated the individuality of each player, fostering a culture of acceptance and embracing their players' diverse cultures and skill sets.

Like Coaches Riley and Jackson, academic professors are similar, if not more so, to andragogical teaching methods when comparing what it takes to synergize professional athletes and accomplished graduate students who bring their diverse academic proficiency to post-graduate studies. The fundamental principles or assumptions of andragogy are essential to the adult learner or a group of adult learners. Malcolm Knowles, the father of andragogy, emphasizes education in their life and through experience throughout adulthood (Finlay, 2010). Knowles' theory comprises six assumptions: the need to know, self-concept, experience, readiness, orientation to learn, and motivation.

According to Knowles, adult learners are naturally self-directed, with a keen sense of control over their educational journey. They have the power to decide what and how they will learn. This self-concept attribute is key to Knowles' theory and adult learner characteristics. Most adult learners, particularly older adults, have more years behind them than they do ahead. So, economizing and planning one's time becomes a priority. In this case, *the need-to-know* assumption's underlying emphasis suggests meaningful, wise investment and use of the commodity of time. It also underscores the immense value of learning at any stage in life, inspiring us to ask questions such as: How will learning this at this stage benefit me? What are the consequences if I choose not to learn it? Why am I learning this? As it relates to *self-concept*, self-directed learning, on the other hand, assumes that learners' experiences are rich resources; it acknowledges that individuals "become ready to learn what is required to perform their evolving life tasks" (Damrow et al., 2024, p. 1894).

According to Knowles, adult learners are inherently self-directed, with a keen sense of control over their educational journey. They have the power to decide what and how they will learn. The most valuable resource in adult education is the learner's *experience*.

If education is life, then life is also education. Much of our learning comes from our experiences, not just reading or listening to others. Psychology teaches us that we learn by doing, and all genuine education involves action and reflection. Experience is an adult learner's living textbook (Knowles 2020 et al., p. 20). Therefore, the most effective learning environment for adult learners is one that builds on their existing knowledge. Sharing teaching and learning experiences is beneficial because it encourages instructors to incorporate more opportunities for self-directed learning in their own qualitative methods courses (Damrow et al., 2024, p. 1895).

Omega Graduate School, also known as OGS, plays a crucial role in the adult development of its learners through its andragogical method of teaching and learning. In its philosophy of education, OGS's primary focus is adult development and the role the institution plays in the learning and growth of its constituency, the adult learner. OGS affirms the characteristics of andragogy by making learning relevant and experiential and encouraging learners' self-direction. This is seen in the fourth of Knowles' assumption of *readiness to learn*, where the learner is concerned with the relevance of the learned information and questions such as: How will it help me? Does it have immediate usefulness or value? How much support and resources am I going to require?

It is important to note that adults reorganize their lives around changing priorities in each decade. Moreover, all life’s challenges necessitate learning and education, which are crucial in effective management. The role of lifelong learning in this context cannot be overstated. It is imperative to devise new and creative methods to tap into their wisdom and offer opportunities for lifelong learning and meaningful engagement across the lifespan. This continuous learning and engagement play a significant role in effective management (Henschke J., 2024 et al., p. 2). In the case of older adult learners, because of their self-directedness and diverse experiences, a contextualized or experiential learning environment is perfect because it provides them with a context to utilize aspects of their life skills in their approach to problem resolution in their *orientation to learn*. Self-directed learning encourages adult learners by giving them a feeling of being more in control of and responsible for the outcome of having the academic autonomy to decide for themselves the determination of their academic success. This type of empowerment serves as a driver, a muse, but in andragogical circles, it is known as the *motivation to learn*. There are tangible and intangible rewards for meshing oneself into post-secondary education. Passing grades, public recognition, and accolades are examples of tangible rewards. The intangibles that motivate adult learners, such as enjoyment and leisure, finding fewer activities, and establishing affiliations with the older age group, are equally important in their learning journey (Henschke J., 2024 et al., p. 4).

Not the same drivers motivate all learners. Self-directed learning environments partially depend on the opportunity and the ability to make learning decisions (Loeng, 2020, p.2). OGS exemplifies this by affirming and promoting atmospheres of academic safety. In its Philosophy and Policy for Faculty-Student Relationships, the expectations are respecting human dignity, fostering synergistic relationships, and promoting personalized learning, ensuring each learner's unique needs are met. Through the qualitative approach, researchers conducted a thematic analysis of the transcribed interviews to gain insight into what influenced adult learners' self-direction and peer engagement. The research found that collaborative contexts, which encourage group learning, lead to better student engagement. Also highlighted is the significant role of mentorship in successful learning, providing reassurance about its effectiveness. The study's main contribution is that adult learners' self-direction is critical to moving from the current development zone to the potential development zone (Boateng 2022 et al., p. 1).

**Conclusion –**

The mentorship provided by the faculty at Omega Graduate School (OGS) is utterly unique, setting it apart from other institutions I have experienced in my academic journey. This mentorship has deeply influenced my personal and professional growth. OGS shares similarities with the institutions where I earned my undergraduate and graduate degrees in their relational, mentoring, and facilitator approach to engaging learners in their academic growth and development. However, OGS stands out in its ability to create an environment encouraging adult learners to explore thriving pathways. They consider the characteristics of aging learners and the life circumstances that often occur, defining thriving as student success that encompasses not only academic performance and engagement but also psychological well-being and interpersonal relationships (Brown, 2024, p. 8).

The faculty's involvement at every stage of the adult learners' life at OGS is the center of their mission to their students. Facilitators play a crucial role in guiding and supporting the learners' academic goals, instilling a sense of reassurance and confidence in their personal and professional lives. The heart of servant leadership permeates throughout every term. In today's dynamic education landscape, fueled by the power of information and digital technology, the key to steering educational institutions to excellence lies in embracing responsible leadership. This involves leaders actively engaging in diverse aspects such as fostering student success, supporting educator growth, efficiently managing resources, empowering communities, adhering to policies, driving innovation, and skillfully managing crises (Mohamad et al., 2024 et al., p. 1068). It is concluded that the success of OGS is due to its commitment to assumptions of the andragogical teaching and learning methods.

**Works Cited**

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