

**E-LEARNING FOR ADULTS IN INSTITUTIONS OF HIGHER  
EDUCATION**

Should teachers follow the same educational methods and apply the same learning strategies to all of their courses, regardless of the age of the audience? Do adults and children learn the same way? The work is aimed to clarify the differences between the two concepts, Andragogy and Pedagogy, and develop appropriate strategies for adult learners at higher educational establishments.

The terms “andragogy” and “pedagogy” are of Greek origin, both including the Greek verb “ago”, which means “guide”, and the Greek words “andras” (man) and “paidi” (child) respectively. Thus, Pedagogy means paidi (child) plus ago (guide), while Andragogy its andras (man) plus ago (guide). It can be concluded from the above that pedagogy is a child-focused teaching approach, whereas andragogy an adult-focused teaching approach; or, formally, pedagogy is the art and science of helping kids learn, whereas andragogy is the art and science of helping adults learn.

Before 1950, all research was focused on children and there wasn't much evidence about how adults learn. The term "andragogy", although known since 1833 when the German Alexander Kapp used it to refer to a theory of Plato, practically in modern education appears only after the early 1960s, that was used to express the distinct characteristics of adult learners that affect not only their learning motivation, but also their learning ability, compared to those of children. Knowing these differences is critical, as engaging and motivating adult learners is certainly a challenging art.

According to M. Knowles, andragogy is the art and science of adult learning, thus andragogy refers to any form of adult learning [1]. In 1980, Knowles made 4 assumptions about the characteristics of adult learners (andragogy) that are different from the assumptions about child learners (pedagogy). In 1984, Knowles added the 5th assumption.

### ***Self-Concept***

As a person matures his/her self-concept moves from one of being a dependent personality toward one of being a self-directed human being.

### ***Adult Learner Experience***

As a person matures he/she accumulates a growing reservoir of experience that becomes an increasing resource for learning.

### ***Readiness to Learn***

As a person matures his/her readiness to learn becomes oriented increasingly to the developmental tasks of his/her social roles.

### ***Orientation to Learning***

As a person matures his/her time perspective changes from one of postponed application of knowledge to immediacy of application. As a result his/her orientation toward learning shifts from one of subject-centeredness to one of problem centeredness.

### ***Motivation to Learn***

As a person matures the motivation to learn is internal.

In 1984, Knowles suggested 4 principles that are applied to adult learning:

1. Adults need to be involved in the planning and evaluation of their instruction.
2. Experience (including mistakes) provides the basis for the learning activities.
3. Adults are most interested in learning subjects that have immediate relevance and impact to their job or personal life.
4. Adult learning is problem-centered rather than content-oriented.

Knowles provides an example of applying andragogy principles to the design of personal computer training:

1. There is a need to explain the reasons specific things are being taught (e.g., certain commands, functions, operations, etc.)

2. Instruction should be task-oriented instead of promoting memorization – learning activities should be in the context of common tasks to be performed by the others.

3. Instruction should take into account the wide range of different backgrounds of learners; learning materials and activities should allow for different levels/types of previous experience with computers.

4. Since adults are self-directed, instruction should allow learners to discover things and knowledge for themselves without depending on people. However, learners should be offered guidance and help when mistakes are made [2].

These adult learning principles and assumptions can be applied to any computer based course in order to offer adult learners a wide range of benefits, including improved comprehension of key concepts and a boost in knowledge retention.

#### REFERENCES

1. Knowles, M. (1984). *The Adult Learner: A Neglected Species* (3rd Ed.). Houston, TX: Gulf Publishing.
2. Knowles, M. (1984). *Andragogy in Action*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.
3. Kearsley, G. (2010). *Andragogy* (M.Knowles). The theory Into practice database. – Electronic data. – Mode of access: <http://tip.psychology.org> – Title from the screen.