Adults vs. Children: Learning

- Do adults learn differently than children do?
- What distinguishes adult learning and adult education from other areas of education?
- What particular characteristics about the learning transaction with adults can be identified to maximize their learning?

Attempts at codifying differences between adults and children as:
- a set of principles
- a model
- or even a theory of adult learning

have been pursued by adult educators.

However, there is no single theory that explains all of human learning, or no single theory of adult learning.
ANDRAGOGY

Malcolm Knowles, in 1968, proposed “a new label and a new technology” of adult learning to distinguish it from preadult schooling.

The European concept of andragogy, meaning “the art and science of helping adults learn,” was contrasted with pedagogy, the art and science of helping children learn.

Andragogy Assumptions

- As a person matures, his or her self-concept moves from that of a dependent personality toward one of a self-directing human being.
- An adult accumulates a growing reservoir of experience, which is a rich resource for learning.
- The readiness of an adult to learn is closely related to the developmental tasks of his or her social role.
- There is a change in time perspective as people mature—from future application of knowledge to immediacy of application. Thus, an adult is more problem centered than subject centered in learning.

Later Knowles referred to a fifth and a sixth assumption

- The most potent motivations are internal rather than external
- Adults need to know why they need to learn something
Knowles used these assumptions to design programs for adults.

- From each of these assumptions, there are implications for the design, implementation, and evaluation of learning activities with adults.
- For example, as adults mature they become more independent and self-directing.
- Knowles suggested that the classroom climate should be one of "adultness," both physically and psychologically.
- The climate should cause "adults to feel accepted, respected, and supported"; further, there should exist "a spirit of mutuality between teachers and students as joint inquirers".

Knowles system of concepts has given adult educators "a badge of identity" that distinguishes the field from other areas of education, especially childhood schooling.

- Andragogy became a rallying point for those trying to define the field of adult education as separate from other areas of education.
- It also stimulated controversy, philosophical debate, and critical analysis matched by recent discussions on transformational learning.

Is it even a theory?

- At first the main point of contention was whether andragogy could be considered a "theory" of adult learning.
- Some said that it was not clear whether Knowles had presented a theory of learning or a theory of teaching, whether adult learning was different from child learning, and whether there was a theory at all.
Relatively little empirical work has been done to test the validity of Knowles’ model or its usefulness.

- A few studies have focused on the relationship between andragogical assumptions and instruction.
- One study asked teachers who taught both adults and preadults if their teaching behavior differed according to the age of the students.
- Teachers reported viewing adult students differently and using more andragogical techniques.
- However, when observed, it was found there were no differences in how a teacher instructed adults or preadults, although teachers claimed that they did treat the two age groups differently.

With regard to involving learners in planning their own learning:

- A study compared achievement and satisfaction measures between groups who had planned their course and those who had it planned for them.
- No differences were found in either achievement or satisfaction.

- Despite some writers’ grim predictions of andragogy’s demise, practitioners who work with adult learners continue to find Knowles’s andragogy, with its characteristics of adult learners, to be a helpful rubric for better understanding adults as learners.
What can we say about Knowles’ model?

- It is the best-known theory of adult learning.
- It is less a theory and more a set of assumptions about adult learners that learners and educators alike can use to strengthen the learning transaction.
- The assumptions regarding an adult’s self concept, experience, readiness to learn, problem-centered focus, and internal motivation all have some intuitive validity.
- Andragogy, while having many questions, is popular with practitioners in many fields.

Mcclusky’s Theory of Margin

- His theory is grounded in the notion that adulthood is a time of growth, change, and integration in which one constantly seeks balance between the amount of energy needed and the amount available.
- "Margin in life" is the ratio of load to power.
- More power means a greater margin to participate in learning.

Load and Power

- Load – tasks involved in normal life requirements (such as family, work, and community responsibilities). Internal load consists of life expectancies developed by people (such as aspirations, desires, and future expectations).
- Power – a combination of such external resources... as family support, social abilities, and economic abilities. It includes various internally acquired or accumulated skills and experiences contributing to effective performance, such as resilience, coping skills, and personality."
Load = Resistance to Learning  
(in Theory) 
- To engage in learning, then, an adult must have some margin of power “available for application to the processes which the learning situation requires”.  
- Adult students in particular have to be adept at juggling multiple responsibilities and demands on their time.

Illeris’s 3 Dimensions of Learning Model
- All learning includes two essentially different types of process:
  - An external interaction process between the learner and his or her social, cultural and material environment
  - An internal psychological process of acquisition and elaboration in which new impulses are connected with the results of prior learning

3 Dimensions Involved in Learning:
- Although one dimension might be emphasized over the other two, all three are always present in a learning activity.
The Strength of Illeris's Model

- Lies in its comprehensiveness but also its simplicity.
- We can all relate to how a learning activity reflects cognitive, emotional, and social dimensions.
- Much of adult learning research and theory building emphasizes the cognitive, so Illeris's inclusion of emotional and social dimensions is a real strength.
- Model can be used to understand resistance to or rejection of learning as well as something as powerful as transformational learning: * 

Jarvis's Learning Process

- According Jarvis's learning process model consider an experience as a learning process adults need a reflective action. Many adult might gain nothing from experiences, good or bad, because they turnover to be a routine for that person.
- Jarvis set out nine routes of responses to the potential learning situation.

He categorized these routes into three levels:

- **Level One: Non-learning:**
  1- *presumption* people react through mechanical response (like saying hello) or a presumption that what has previously worked will work again.
  2- *non-consideration* when a person does not respond to a potential learning situation.
  3- *rejection* when a person consciously chose to reject the opportunity to learn.
Level Two: Non-reflective learning:

4- **Pre-conscious** when having experiences in daily living that are not really thought about.

5- **Practice** when a person practice new skill until it is learned like training for a particular physical skills or the acquisition of a language.

6- **Memorization** when acquiring presented information and learn it so it can be reproduced at a later time.

Level Three: Reflective learning:

7- **Contemplation** when a person thinks about what is being learned.

8- **Reflective practice** when there is reflection on and in action such as problem solving.

9- **Experiential learning** when there is actual experimenting on one’s environment, which might be the way to learn pragmatic knowledge.

Some Important Points Made by Jarvis

- All learning begins with the five human sensations of sound, sight, smell, taste, and touch.
- All experience occurs within the learner's world (not "the world"), which is ever changing.
- The learner is a whole person made up of the mind and the body and comes to a learning situation with a history, a biography that interacts in individual ways with the experience that generates the nature of the learning.
Using the Jarvis theory gives us insight into how to best accomplish learning:

1. Adult lifelong experiences can be used as a foundation to build on learning.
2. An adult’s self-concept of independency empowers learners.
3. The development of adults’ social roles enhances their motivation to learn.

- Using these concepts will help teachers to prepare educational materials that fit right into adult reflective learning.

Self-Directed Learning
Chapter 5

What is SDL?

- **Gibbons** stated that “SDL is any increase in knowledge, skill, accomplishment, or personal development that an individual selects and brings about by his or her own efforts using any method in any circumstances at any time.”

- **Knowles** describe SDL as “a process in which the individual takes the initiative, with or without the help of others, to diagnose their learning needs, formulate learning goals, identify resources for learning, select and implement learning strategies, and evaluate learning outcomes.”
Self-Directed Learning

- Learners could be empowered, take more responsibility for decision associated with the learning endeavor
- Is best viewed as a continuum or characteristic exists to some degree in every learner and learning situation
- Learning can take place in isolation from others.
- Learners are able to transfer learning in term of knowledge and study skill, from one situation to another
- Learners can involve various activities and resources
- Effective roles for teachers in SDL are possible
- Some educational institutions support SDL

Abdullah (2001), describes the slight variations in how different educators define SDL:

- SDL views learners as responsible owners and managers of their own learning process. SDL integrates self-management with self-monitoring.
- SDL recognizes the significant role of motivation and volition in initiating and maintaining learners’ effort.
- In SDL, control shifts from teachers to learners.
- Teachers scaffold learning by making learning visible.
- SDL develops domain-specific knowledge as well as the ability to transfer conceptual knowledge to new situations

Grow, describes four distinct stages of learners:

Stage 1: Dependent learner: Learners of low self-direction need an authority figure (a teacher) to tell them what to do

Stage 2: Interested learner: Learners of moderate self-direction are motivated and confident but largely ignorant of the subject matter to be learned

Stage 3: Involved learner: Learners of intermediate self-direction have the skill and basic knowledge and view themselves as being both ready and able to explore a specific subject area with a good guide

Stage 4: Self-directed learner: Learners of high self-direction are willing and able to plan, execute, and evaluate their own learning with or without the help of an expert
A summary of many writers’ ideas on how adult educators can best facilitate self-directed learning.

- Help the learner recognize the initiating point for a learning lesson and perceive relevant modes of examination and reporting.
- Inspire adult learners to view knowledge and truth as contextual, to see value frameworks as cultural constructs, and to appreciate that they can act on their world individually or collectively to transform it.
- Create a partnership with the learner to set goals, strategies, and evaluation criteria by using negotiation a learning contract.
- Be facilitators of the learning experience rather than teachers.
- Help learners reach the needs assessment techniques necessary to discover what objectives they should set.
- Encourage learner to set objectives that can be met in several ways and offer a variety of options for evidence of successful performance.

That is it!