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ABSTRACT

Malcolm Knowles, in his theory of adult learning (1972, revised 1980), presents adults as motivated, self-directed learners. Basically, once a person starts seeing himself or herself as an adult, he or she has an expectation of being independent in decision-making, valuing personal experience, and desiring respect. Courses, curriculum, and classrooms can be designed to affirm students in their adulthood, empowering them to draw on their experiences, interests, and self-motivation to learn. There are three types of learning that we must take into consideration: Affective Learning involves formation of attitudes, feelings, and preferences; Behavioral Learning includes the development of competence in the actual performance of procedures, operations, methods, and techniques; Cognitive Learning includes the acquisition of information and concepts related to course content (includes ability to analyze content and apply it to new situations). Shifting one's view of the students we have in the classroom changes the way we put together syllabi, are interactive in the classroom, and include group/team work as part of the course. These changes shift the responsibility onto the student with the professor becoming the facilitator of the learning process. Overall, relationships, creativity, and motivation are enhanced. This paper contains multiple examples of incorporating the principles of adult learning in the college classroom. (Author)

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Adult Learning Styles and the College Classroom

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Malcolm Knowles, in his theory of adult learning (1972, revised 1980), presents adults as motivated, self-directed learners. Basically, once a person starts seeing himself or herself as an adult, he or she has an expectation of being independent in decision-making, valuing personal experience, and desiring respect. Courses, curriculum, and classrooms can be designed to affirm students in their adulthood, empowering them to draw on their experiences, interests, and self-motivation to learn. There are three types of learning that we must take into consideration: Affective Learning involves the formation of attitudes, feelings, and preferences; Behavioral Learning includes the development of competence in the actual performance of procedures, operations, methods, and techniques; Cognitive Learning includes the acquisition of information and concepts related to course content (includes ability to analyze content and apply it to new situations).

Shifting one's view of the students we have in the classroom changes the way we put together syllabi, are interactive in the classroom, and include group/team work as part of the course. These changes shift the responsibility onto the student with the professor becoming the facilitator of the learning process. Overall, relationships, creativity, and motivation are enhanced. This paper contains multiple examples of incorporating the principles of adult learning in the college classroom.

Adult Learning Styles and the College Classroom

Malcolm Knowles, in his theory of adult learning (1972, revised 1980), presents adults as motivated, self-directed learners. Basically, once a person starts seeing himself or herself as an adult, he or she has an expectation of being independent in decision-making, valuing personal experience, and desiring respect.

Basically, we need to facilitate the maturation process. This process moves from

dependence	**to**	**autonomy**
passivity	**to**	**activity**
subjectivity	**to**	**objectivity**
ignorance	**to**	**enlightenment**
few responsibilities	**to**	**many responsibilities**
focus on particulars	**to**	**focus on principles**
imitation	**to**	**originality**
impulsiveness	**to**	**rationality**
narrow interests	**to**	**broad interests.**

We need to design our programs so that we are moving learners toward the more mature end of the spectrum. In Knowles' terms, we must move from pedagogy to andragogy. Therefore, our assumptions must change.

Regarding:	**Pedagogy**	**Andragogy**
Concept of learner	dependent learner full responsibility on teacher:	self-directed learner teachers encourage and

	what, how, when and if it has been learned	nurture
Role of learner's experience	what they bring is of little worth; to gain experience of teacher, text, audio-visuals, etc.; Primary techniques include lecture, assigned reading, AV presentations	learner's experience is valuable learn from experience share experiences primary techniques: laboratory experiments, discussion, problem-solving cases, simulation exercises, field experiences
Orientation to learning	process of acquiring subject matter content to be used at a much later time	process of developing increased competence to achieve their full potential in life; ability to apply knowledge and skills more effectively tomorrow
Readiness to learn	society determines standard curriculum	experience a need to learn organized around life application categories

This leads us to look at conditions of learning and the corresponding principles of teaching.

Conditions of Learning	Principles of Teaching
learners feel a need to learn	1. Teacher exposes learner to new possibilities for self-fulfillment 2. Help with clarification of aspirations 3. Diagnose gap between aspirations and present level 4. Identify life problems experienced due to gaps
learning environment: comfortable, mutual trust, respect, mutual helpfulness, freedom of expression, acceptance of differences	5. Comfortable physical conditions are provided 6. Accepts learners as persons of worth and respects their feelings and ideas 7. Build relationships of mutual trust and helpfulness with cooperative activities 8. Teacher as resource and colearner
learners perceive goals of learning experience to be their goals	9. Involves learners in mutual process of formulating learning objectives taking into account learning objectives of institution, society, teacher, learner

learners accept a share of the responsibility for planning and operating a learning experience	10. Shares options available in design of experiences and the selection of materials and methods - decide jointly
learners participate actively in learning process	11. Helps with organization, share responsibility
learning process is related to and makes use of experience of learners	12. Helps learners exploit their own experiences 13. Gears presentations of own experiences to levels of learners 14. Helps with application of learning
learners have a sense of progress toward goals	15. Involves learners in developing criteria of measuring objectives 16. Helps develop and apply procedures for self-evaluation

Courses, curriculum, and classrooms can be designed to affirm students in their adulthood, empowering them to draw on their experiences, interests, and self-motivation to learn. There are three types of learning that we must take into consideration:

Affective Learning involves the formation of attitudes, feelings, and preferences.

Behavioral Learning includes the development of competence in the actual performance of procedures, operations, methods, and techniques.

Cognitive Learning includes the acquisition of information and concepts related to course content (includes ability to analyze content and apply it to new situations).

Suggested Methods

1. **In terms of grades**: Syllabi can be designed to put the focus on the student as participating in activities that bring about the desired evaluation rather than the professor as the dispenser of grades. The professor becomes the facilitator of the process. Students mount points that translate into grades.

Example 1. The contract

- Let the regular syllabus provide up to the maximum of a B with an additional paper or project that could open the possibility of an A.
- Let students choose from a series of tests, projects, and/or papers, writing a contract at the beginning of the course that talks of what content and to what quality of work.

Example 2. Point values for different parts of the course. Maximizing points depends on quality of work.

Grading will be based on points earned throughout the course:

1. Participation in all group discussion sessions (7)	77 pts.
2. Quizzes (6 – 20 pts. each)	120pts.
3. Class participation (pop quiz, special assignments, internet)	93 pts.
4. Participation in experiments - or equivalent	50 pts.
5. Midterm (2 class periods; 1st half of book)	100 pts.
6. Paper using APA style	60 pts.
7. Final (exam period A; 2nd half of the book)	100 pts.

A: 564 - 600; A-: 546 - 563; B+: 528 - 545; B: 512 - 527; B-: 486 - 511; C+:462 - 485; C: 444-461;

C-: 426 - 441; D+: 408 - 425; D: 384 - 408; D-: 366 - 383; F: below 366 pts.

Special Assignment 1: participation in a lab study Points: 10

After participating, you are to turn in a half page reaction statement. Tell me what you learned from participating in this particular study. Why is it considered a "true experiment" capable of saying something about possible causation?

Special Assignment 2: participation in an autobiographical study Points: 15

Tell me what you think are the strengths and weaknesses, benefits and limitations of this type of study. Just write up a half page on your thoughts. You might include when you could see this type of study being used.

Example 3. Syllabus as contract

Have students sign a statement that they understand the syllabus and that their grade depends on their participation in the class and the quality of work that they turn in.

Please sign the following statement:

I have read through the entire syllabus. What I receive in this course depends on what I put into it and how I fulfill the requirements. I do understand the requirements of this course and agree to abide by them. I have asked any questions I have at this time. My grade will be based on the points I earn throughout the course.

_____ Date _____

Signature

2. **Classroom techniques are interactive**, sometimes providing the experience when the experience is lacking. Methods that enhance the analysis of real life experiences and focus on real life applications are natural motivators.

Example 1. Applying learned material to real life.

- You have just been given a tremendous amount of money to open a day care center. What type of physical place do you need? What training should the caretakers have? What guidelines will you set up? What is the general philosophy of your center? What is important for the well being of the children?
  Now, create a list to evaluate day care for your own child.

- Your best friend is pregnant. Since you are taking psychology, she asks you for advice about taking care of a baby. What advice do you give her? What is most important the first three months? The first year? The second year? What can she expect in terms of development? What should she be doing to help her baby develop to his potential?

- **Critical Thinking Exercise 1:**

A. Think about the cultural influences on the perception and management of pain. In what ways is the experience of pain different for males and females? What do you remember parents and

other caretakers telling you when you were in pain? How has that influenced the way you deal with pain?

B. Eighty million Americans suffer from chronic pain such as severe headaches, back pain, and arthritis. It has been shown that dysfunctional patients continuously feel higher levels of pain, and, therefore, have increased psychological distress and a perception that they have no or little control over what is happening. Interpersonally distressed patients have little social support and feel that others don't take their pain seriously. These patients also have a high felt pain level. But adaptive copers report feeling far less pain and social distress even though physically their pain is equivalent.

Explain why adaptive copers might report less pain.

Using what you've learned about selective attention, sensory adaptation, and the difference between sensation and perception, design a pain management program that takes people off drugs.

- **Group Discussion: Stress and Health**

1. List some of the hassles and then some of the "lifts" you have in a typical day.

Hassles	Lifts

How do these balance out during a day? What might happen if you didn't have things that provided a lift during the day?

List seven stressors in your life along with a possible coping mechanism that might reduce that stressor.

Stressors	**Coping Mechanism**

2. **How do you personally see yourself? What do you value? What is important in your life right now? (Do a composite for the whole group.) How do these values and priorities determine how you spend your time. Give specific examples from the group. Now use this information with the next question.**
3. **Each person is to make a list of the things that they do in a typical week Look at the values listed, and underline the things that you do that are important to achieving your goal of who you want to be and that reflect all that you value. Star those things that are important to maintain balance in your life. Circle those activities that are important for your overall well being. Are there activities that are wasting your time and adding to stress in your life? What can you do about them? Why is this an important exercise?**
4. **Create a time management schedule for each person in the group. How could the programs you devised help relieve some of the stress in your lives?**

3. **Contracts** as to amount of work and resulting evaluations reduce complaints about workload and final grade results. Setting up the syllabus as a contract can actually enhance professor-student relationships.

Example 1. The syllabus contract (as above):

Please sign the following statement:

I have read through the entire syllabus. What I receive in this course depends on what I put into it and how I fulfill the requirements. I do understand the requirements of this course and agree to abide by them. I have asked any questions I have at this time. My grade will be based on the points I earn throughout the course.

_____ Date _____

Signature

Example 2. Choice of work load/ grade

I understand that the paper in this course is optional. If I choose not to do the paper, the highest grade that I can attain is a B. If I choose to do the paper, I raise the highest possible grade to an A. the final grade does depend on the quality of my work. I, therefore, contract for a possible _____ by completing the course requirements by (doing or not doing) the paper.

Signature _____ Date _____

4. ***When nontraditional students are mixed with traditional students*, intergenerational group discussions** enhance the classroom environment and allow for the sharing of relevant experiences.

Example 1. Emotions Seminar

Intergenerational grouping produced examples from life utilizing different points of view and perspectives. A discussion of emotions in relationships could be view from the parent-teen perspective, teacher–student perspective, married-single perspective, long-term-short-term relationships, etc. the real life stories enhanced the theory and research we were discussing.

Example 2. Statistics Class

Intergenerational grouping helped nontraditional students with concepts that they hadn't been exposed to in years and helped traditional students with motivational issues. Both benefited, stereotypes about not being good in math were broken, learning was facilitated by the interaction. These were in class problem solving and applications groupings.

Example 3. Developmental Psychology

Intergenerational groupings allows for more real life examples. Some students are even willing to bring in young children to demonstrate play, drawing, and language. The concepts suddenly come alive and all remember more of the lessons as a result.

Preschool children who are allowed to play and draw for the class are a great addition, especially when mom can talk about the integration of such behaviors into family life or how they are reflective of not only development but of family life.

Example 4. Mixing in Commuter Students

Integration of commuters with on campus students allows for a wider range of ways to carry out a project. In social psychology, advertisements using principles of psychology

could be filmed in unique ways as a result of such groupings. Access to younger siblings, transportation, and other materials produced very creative demonstrations.

5. **When teaching classes skewed in favor of nontraditional students, projects and papers that build on their experiences and interests** actually add to the amount of material included. Presentations go far beyond texts and expertise of professor.

Example 1. Psychological Testing

Students were required to do a paper based on relevant research. Since the course was in the evening and students all were in jobs, their topics were to either relate to their job or the newly chosen field for which they were being educated. Research was to include interviews with two people in the area of choice. Questions were to include what tests were used, why, and a personal evaluation as to their usefulness by the interviewee.

Results included educational testing, at risk intelligence testing, testing for management teams, placement testing done by human resource personnel, achievement testing, testing for learning disabilities, and clinical issues. Papers included a general description of the area, particular tests considered, and research background on one of the tests. Presentations in class started with an overview of the area of psychological testing and then were more specific.

A small class then was able to cover the applications of psychological testing beyond what our text was able to handle. Each student actually ran out of time because of the volume of information that they had on their chosen area. Students were able to use some of their own expertise in the area and even enhance their jobs with the research.

The enthusiasm of students was incredible! As a result, they produced wonderful handouts for some very practical and knowledgeable presentations. It was an assignment that they wanted to do.

Example 2. Social Psychology

Students were allowed to group according to interest. Each group then chose one area that demonstrated an application of psychology: quality of life issues, planning for the future, social psychology in the courtroom, etc. Paper topics were then chosen by interest within those areas. Each group then had two class periods to present what they had learned.

The classes on social psychology in the courtroom included a crime with a court session. Outsiders were brought in and the class did not know what was happening during the crime. Issues of jury selection, leading questions, character of accused, etc. were demonstrated. A guilty person was set free as a result. Discussion then centered around how it could have gone the other way if the accused had been presented differently.

Issues concerning the future and participation of citizens was even more realistic as students related it to current news events concerning terrorism, war with Iraq, foreign policy vs. domestic policy, etc. Students in that group were able to included information from their majors of history, political science, education, etc.

All of the groups were very creative in the way they demonstrated how social psychology impacts other areas. Enthusiasm was high since what they were doing was relevant and they had chosen the topics.

Example 3. Introduction to Psychology

Students today are computer literate. They enjoy surfing the net. I just put this interest to an advantage in my introductory courses. Students choose a topic of interest and search for two web sites offering information on that topic. They then evaluate the material offered. Athletes usually choose sports psychology and are thrilled when they come across material that helps them. I have had students who baby sit or work in day care programs find valuable information. Depression and bipolar disorders are other popular topics.

Once they stop thinking of it as an assignment and just surf the web, they enjoy finding the information. It leaves them with sites that they can visit other times.

Special Assignment 3: Internet Paper

The assignment: You are required to search on the internet for information on one of these topics. You are to search two web sites. Provide me with a print out of what you find from each web site - the actual information you have reviewed. Fill in the provided sheet (make copies, one for each article read) about the information you have reviewed. Then write a paper on the questions provided at the end of this list of topics.

Great web site: http://www.gasou.edu/psychweb/psychweb.htm

Topics to be considered:

abnormal psychology, behavioral psychology, clinical or counseling psychology, cognitive psychology, consciousness, cross-cultural psychology, comparative psychology (with animal research), evolutionary psychology, developmental psychology, educational psychology, emotion, forensic psychology, health psychology, history of psychology, industrial/organizational psychology, memory and/or language, motivation, neuropsychology,

persuasion, personality, psychology of religion, sensation and perception, psychology of aging, social psychology, sports psychology, statistics and testing in psychology, attachment styles and the triangular theory of love

Writing the paper: To be typed and double-spaced.

1. Do **not summarize the material**. I can read the information.
2. Talk about **your reaction** to the material.
3. In formulating your reaction, think about the following:

- Did you learn something new about psychology? Why or why not?
- How does the coverage in your textbook compare with what you read from the net? Does it concur? Does it supplement? Does it contradict? Does it go into more detail than your text?
- How did what you learned affect you? Did it shed light on something you've thought about? Did it change any opinions or beliefs? Did it contradict what you've thought about that topic? Or Did it agree with what you thought about that topic?
- Did what you read help you to understand your own behavior or the behavior of those around you? If yes, how? If no, why not?
- Did it provide a means of changing your behavior or your attitudes?
- What is the most important point you have taken away from this assignment?

The paper should be 2-3 pages long. It should be typed, double-spaced.

Grading: 33 points

Quality of thought: 15 pts. How well have you responded to the questions posed? Have you shown critical thinking? Have you considered the implications of what you have read?

This is not about whether I agree with you, it is about the way you process information and see its implications.

Organization of thought: 12 pts. Can I follow your points? Do you build, one idea upon another? Is the paper well structured? Is there an introduction and a conclusion to your arguments?

Writing Basics: 6 pts. Can you spell? Did you proofread? Are there complete sentences? Are paragraphs properly structured? Does your paper look professional?

This paper can be turned in at any time during the course, but must be in by Thanksgiving. The purpose is to give you a chance to see what is on the web and to evaluate it.

5. **Letting students take time to evaluate where they are in terms of their goals and objectives puts responsibility on the students to seek the guidance they need**. Professors are not "blamed" for student shortcomings. There are fewer requests for make-up work due to unexcused absences.

When using a point system with quizzes and tests, it is easy to take the time to let students be aware of the total points that they have earned against the total possible points. One can then ask, "Are you where you want to be?" I then tell students to adjust their study habits, seek help on campus, etc. It is their money, their degree, and their responsibility to make the most of it.

Let students set goals and objectives at the beginning of the course. On the back of their syllabus, I have this list what they want out of the course. At different intervals, we take those out so that students can evaluate what is happening. Adjustments can be made, questions asked,

goals of the course itself assessed, and needed help obtained. My syllabus lists important phone numbers on campus such as the learning center.

Clearly state your absence policy in your syllabus. Highlight it and remind students of it during the semester. If you treat your syllabus as a contract, then it is even easier. I have had students tell me when they don't deserve make-up work because they didn't follow policy.

Course requirements:

Class attendance: only excused absences (illness, death in the family, major accident, etc.) Policy: Although personal illness or problems may interfere with your performance in this course, you must consult the instructor before missing any major assignment. Otherwise, you may not make up the assignment. Leave a message on my home voice mail or in the psychology department or my e-mail.

Conclusion

In conclusion, shifting one's view of the students we have in the classroom changes the way we put together syllabi, are interactive in the classroom, and include group/team work as part of the course. These changes shift the responsibility onto the student with the professor becoming the facilitator of the learning process. Overall, relationships, creativity, and motivation are enhanced.

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