

Andragogical Methods Applied to Adult Learning Environments: Adult Education for Adult Learners in and out of the Traditional Classroom

by

Lori Risley and Sue McKee

Abstract

There is a recognized movement to provide educators, both in a classroom and outside the classroom, with the ability to teach diverse students. This means understanding what motivates adults to learn and utilizing the most effective teaching strategies. To date, the literature has documented there is little formal education courses for professions that use their own members as teachers – such as nursing and law enforcement academies. Many professions use their “experts” for in-service training and professional development. Understanding how and why adults learn is primary in order to be an effective “teacher.” Currently, adult education strategies for nurse educators and law enforcement instructors have been developed by the Andragogy Academy for Teaching and Learning[©] (AAFTL[©]). These strategies are appropriate for use with adults involved in continuing education, in-service classes, and formal classroom teaching. The AAFTL program includes student-centered and interactive teaching strategies that are based on adult education theories and philosophies. The AAFTL[©] program includes six sessions that can be used individually, in groups, or concurrently. The sessions focus on adult growth and development, understanding the adult learner, adult education theories and philosophies, principles of teaching/learning, timely approaches to adult learning, and assuming the faculty role. The program can be presented to educators in a college setting, for professional training, or it can be presented as a 2-3 day workshop for any adult educators.

Introduction

Available literature supports the claim that there is a critical need for effective educational models within professional development components of most professions and organizations (Rowden, 2007; Shipton, Dawson, West, & Patterson, 2002). Individuals and organizations are in need of workplace learning to help respond to the multiple aspects of the workplace. Rowden (2007) describes *workplace learning* as the process of acquiring job-related knowledge and skills. Knowledge and skills can be obtained through both formal training programs and informal social interactions and activities. When changing job responsibilities and work processes can be considered contributing obstacles to unmet organizational expectations, then quality, effective, workplace learning contributes to meeting organizational expectations. Therefore, addressing the learning needs of employees has become a vital issue for organizations.

Furthermore, when meeting those learning needs is connected with employee commitment and job satisfaction, (Ehrhardt, Miller, Freeman, & Hom, 2011) the necessity of an effective educational model becomes an imperative. Employee commitment and job satisfaction are key components to successful organizations (Vatcharasirisook, 2011). This paper provides a glimpse of a few professional settings in need of transition to a more effective educational model in order to meet the learning needs of the adult learners and the organizations they represent. However, these are not the only professions or organizations in need of an effective educational model.

Importance of the Concern to Both Research and Practice in Adult and Higher Education

_____The first profession examined was nursing education. To date, the literature has documented there is little orientation or academic preparation provided to nurses who choose the role of a nurse educator. In fact, novice and experienced educators may only receive the course

objectives and a class roster, while floundering through a tremendous amount of nursing content. As a result, nurse educators are frequently not prepared to use timely teaching strategies and may resort to teaching nursing students the way they were taught using methods such as lecture, memorization, quizzes, and examinations. According to the American Association of Colleges of Nursing (2009) and the National Advisory Council on Nurse Education and Practice (NACNEP, 2002), nurse educators should be teaching with more interactive, student-centered, adult methods. Even though the literature provides strategies to implement adult education methods, many nurse educators still do not have any knowledge of these methods or the skills to effectively implement these techniques. Thus, there has been little change in the teaching strategies used by nurse educators.

Based on the findings, it was determined that a practical solution for preparing nurse educators to teach was needed. Adult learners expect to be treated as adults and generally want to take an active part in their learning. In fact, one study, in particular, found that nursing students prefer to learn from academically prepared nurse educators (Williams, 2000).

The next profession was law enforcement. The training academy of any law enforcement agency serves as the educational scaffolding for personal, professional, and academic development of law enforcement officers. Recruits are provided with formative knowledge and experience by the training academy. The academy represents a critical first step in the development of professional, knowledgeable, and skilled officers (White, 2008). Training provides an introduction to protocol and philosophy and can be a platform for introducing change to law enforcement personnel (Birzer & Tannehill, 2001). Hunter-Johnson and Closson (2012) further assert that "training academies should play a more active role as change agents in facilitating organizational transformation" (p. 193). Training academies require an effective

educational model to enhance learning outcomes. Curriculum design and instructional techniques must reflect the learner, the adult learner, in order to meet the learner's needs and the organizations expectations. Similar to other adult learners, law enforcement officers generally prefer andragogical methods of instructions (Hunter-Johnson & Closson, 2012). Law enforcement, like the nursing profession needs an effective educational model. Examination of these two professional organizations leads to the assertion that a transition is necessary.

Various Approaches That Have Attempted to Deal With the Concerns

The review of the literature regarding nurse educators and academic preparation could be classified in three categories. The first category pertained to *interventions* that could be used to assist the nurse educator adapt to the teaching role. The second category, *transitioning*, included suggestions as to how nurse educators could move from the clinical side of nursing to the role of an academic. The third category involved ways to prepare the nurse for the teaching role. This included providing teaching courses (Johnson-Crowley, 2004).

Literature on law enforcement acknowledges the “variation in police departments, training facilities and subjects being taught, there is one commonality; police training is usually taught in a uniform militant manner” (Birzer & Tannehill, 2001, p. 195). Instructional methods employed are usually lecture style, limited input from trainees, prompting, cueing, behavioral modeling, simulation and skill drills. These techniques are reflective of the use of behaviorist pedagogy. Even though the literature provides strategies to implement adult education methods, many nurse and law enforcement educators still do not have any knowledge of these methods or the skills to effectively implement these techniques. Thus, there has been little change in the teaching strategies used by these educators.

Discussion of the Way in Which the Concern Relates to the Conference Theme of Linking Theory to Practice

The use of andragogical methods in the teaching of adults has been documented by several adult education theorists and philosophers. Many professions are recognized as caring and nurturing professions, for example the health care industry, while others promote a caring and nurturing work and learning environments. The same attributes can be applied to andragogy (andragogy is the art and science of helping adults learn). Humanism in any and all learning environments can be a significant benefit to the learner. The development of the Andragogy Academy for Teaching and Learning[©] (AAFTL[©]) is based on the theoretical framework of andragogy. The AAFTL[©] employs adult teaching theories and strategies to assist educators in educating adults and other non-traditional learners. Thus, bridging the gap between theory and practice while providing educators tools needed to be effective in all educational environments.

Currently, adult education strategies for educators have been developed by the Andragogy Academy for Teaching and Learning[©] (AAFTL[©]). The AAFTL[©] strategies are appropriate for use with varying levels of learners. Novice to experienced learners and educators will find strategies useful to their practice. The AAFTL[©] program includes learner-centered and interactive teaching strategies that are based on adult education theories and philosophies. The AAFTL[©] program is designed to: a) equip novice (and experienced) educators with effective adult education teaching strategies; b) provide educators with the skills to provide essential and recommended methods of teaching strategies; and c) to give the educator insight into the definition and description of the adult learner.

The AAFTL[©] program includes six sessions that can be used individually, in groups, or concurrently. The sessions focus on adult growth and development, understanding the adult

learner, adult education theories and philosophies, principles of teaching/learning, timely approaches to adult learning, and assuming the faculty, instructor, or in-service educator role.

The AAFTL[©] program can be presented to in-service educators in organizational education environments or to faculty/instructors in a traditional education setting. The AAFTL[©] program is designed with the option of presenting as a 2-day workshop for educators. The information and methodologies included in the AAFTL[©] are appropriate for all professions responsible for the learning of adults.

Session 1:

Role and Responsibilities

Teaching

The interactive nature of teaching and learning

Scholarship

Boyer's scholarship of discovery, integration, application, and teaching

Research and trends influencing education

Service

Committees and membership

To community

To college or organization

(Any information pertinent to the specific organization or college)

Session 1 Objectives:

Upon completion of this session, the learner will be able to:

- 1) Recognize the interactive nature of teaching and learning.
- 2) Discuss the various applications of scholarship.

- 3) Explain the concept of service to the organization/institution and the community.
- 4) Apply the process of innovation and change to a selected educational milieu.
- 5) Understand diversity in learners with regard to age, gender, culture, ethnicity, and generation.

Session Two:

Understanding the Adult Learner

Adult development (psychological as well as cognitive)

The social context of adult learners

(Generational differences)

Principles of adult learning (Tough, Houle, Knowles, etc.)

Research and trends influencing adult education

Session 2 Objectives:

Upon completion of this session, the learner will have developed:

- 1) Knowledge * of the characteristics of adult learners, including an overview of physical needs, developmental states, and current research related to adult learning.
- 2) Understanding* of the implications of these characteristics and theories on research, programming, curriculum development, ethics, and praxis.
- 3) Skill* in recognizing the needs of adult learners and the appropriateness and effectiveness of ways the adult is engaged in the learning process.
- 4) A positive attitude* toward adult learners in general and in their ability to learn.
- 5) Values* consistent with respect for diverse adult learners and for the experiences they bring to the learning situation.

- 6) Interest* in learning more about adults in the field in which they work, their needs, interests, abilities, and how to improve their learning experience.

□ These terms create the mnemonic KUSAVI, which is from Knowles (1986) theory regarding the adult learner and his belief about the necessary components of a competency.

Session Three (a):

Principles of Teaching and Learning

Tailoring the teaching

Instructional methods/strategies

Reflection in diverse groups

Classroom management strategies

Session Three (b):

Principles of T/L continued

Development of syllabi, class schedules, calendars, course objectives, assignments

Assessment and evaluation techniques

Theory and clinical (skills)

Education and technology

Specific to distance learning

Session 3 Objectives:

Upon completion of this session, the learner will be able to:

- 1) Integrate educational theories of learning, teaching, motivation, and critical and creative thinking into practice.

- 2) Discuss the nature and extent of learning variations among diverse individuals and groups, incorporating effective teaching strategies and styles to accommodate all learners.
- 3) Incorporate evidence-based research into education practices.
- 4) Identify methods and instruments for assessment of education outcomes.

Session Four:

Adult Education Theories, Philosophies, and Models

Education theories

Andragogy

Self-directed learning

The Learning Contract

Perspective transformation

Critical reflectivity

Educational philosophies

Development of personal philosophy of teaching/learning

Session 4 Objectives:

Upon completion of this session, the learner will be able to:

- 1) Compare and contrast adult education philosophies, theories, and models.
- 2) Develop strategies to incorporate these philosophies, theories, and models in their teaching methods.
- 3) Describe their dominant teaching philosophy.

Session Five:

Newer Approaches to Adult Learning

Active learning (participative methods)

Service learning

Enhancing learning communities in cyberspace (online teaching/learning)

Session 5 Objectives:

Upon completion of this session, the learner will be able to:

- 1) Discuss advantages and disadvantages when implementing various active learning methods.
- 2) Apply the cardinal components to integrate service learning into the curriculum and community setting.
- 3) Describe the responsibilities of the instructor and the student in an a synchronous class.
- 4) Identify best practices for designing, implementing, and evaluating online courses/programs of education.

Session Six:

Summary discussions in practical application of AAFTL[©].

Session 6 Objectives:

Upon completion of this session, the learner will be able to:

- 1) Discuss student-centered, interactive adult teaching/learning strategies.
- 2) Analyze and evaluate effectiveness of teaching applications.
- 3) Determine and discuss personal philosophy of teaching.

Conclusion

The aim of the AAFTL[©] is to prepare educators in various learning environments to teach learners/students in an adult manner while recognizing the characteristics of adult learners.

Learning is fundamental and necessary in every profession, institution, and organization. The learners in these environments are adults requiring the use of appropriate strategies to facilitate learning.

The andragogical approach draws heavily from humanistic education. Andragogy like humanistic education focuses on the development of persons who are open to change and continued learning. The academy will introduce humanist, andragogical strategies to educators. It is believed that using these methods will encourage educators to engage learners in interactive, participatory learning.

AAFTL[©] is adaptable for use with all professions responsible for the teaching of adults. Session can be presented as a whole, in groups, or individually, based on situational needs.

©2012. All rights reserved by Lori Risley Ed.D.

References

American Association of Colleges of Nursing. (2009). Essentials of baccalaureate education for professional nursing practice. Faculty Tool Kit. *American Association of Colleges of Nursing*.

Birzer, M. L., & Tannehill.(2001). A more effective training approach for contemporary policing. *Police Quarterly*, 4(2), 233-52.

Ehrardt, K., Miller, J., Freeman, S., & Hom, P. (2011). An examination of the relationship between training comprehensiveness and organizational commitment: Further exploration of training perceptions and employee attitudes. *Human Resource Development Quarterly* 22(4), 459–489.

- Hunter-Johnson, Y., & Closson, R. (2012). Learners' educational orientation as a design tool for human resource development professionals in law enforcement: a Caribbean context. *Human Resource Development International, 15*(2), 193-208.
- Johnson-Crowley, N. (2004). An alternative framework for teacher preparation in nursing. *Journal of Continuing Education in Nursing, 35*(1).
- Knowles, M. (1986). Using learning contracts. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.
- National Advisory Council on Nurse Education and Practice. (2002, November). United States of America Department of Health and Human Services. Retrieved from <http://bhpr.hrsa.gov/nursing/nacnep>
- Rowden, R.W. (2007). *Workplace learning: Principles and practice*. Malabar, FL: Krieger Publishing.
- Shipton, H., Dawson, J., West, M., & Patterson, M. (2002). Learning in manufacturing organizations: What factors predict effectiveness? *Human Resource Development International, 5*(1), 55-72.
- Vatcharasirisook, V. (2011, March). *Organizational learning and employee retention: A focused study examining the role of relationships between supervisors and subordinates* (Unpublished doctoral dissertation). University Missouri-St. Louis, St. Louis, MO.
- White, M. (2008). Identifying good cops early: Predicting recruit performance in the academy. *Police Quarterly, 11*(27), 27-49.
- Williams, L. (2000). Academic maturity: Qualifications to teach the nurse professionals of the future. *Collegian, (74)*.

Lori Risley, Ed.D., MSN, RN. Assistant Professor. Adult Education and Safety Sciences
Department at University of Central Oklahoma, 100 N. University Drive, Edmond, OK 73034

lrisley1@uco.edu

Sue E. McKee, Ph.D., RN, MSN, M.Ed., CNE. Associate Professor, Goldfarb School of Nursing
at Barnes-Jewish College. 4483 Duncan Ave., St. Louis, Missouri, 63110. sem1590@bjc.org

Presented at the Research-to Practice Conference in Adult and Higher Education, Lindenwood
University, St. Charles, MO, September 20-21, 2013.