

Applying Andragogy Theory in Photoshop Training Programs

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Abstract

Andragogy is a strategy for teaching adults that can be applied to Photoshop training. Photoshop workshops are frequented by adult learners, and thus andragogical models for instruction would be extremely helpful for prospective trainers looking to improve their classroom designs. Adult learners are much different than child learners, given the fact that adult learners tend to be much more intrinsically motivated to be in classrooms than children are. Adult learners are typically taking on instruction because it is conducive towards progress in some goal, whereas child learners are in classrooms because of mandates. This study will cover the six assumptions of andragogy and how they can be applied towards a successful Photoshop workshop. The goal of this study is to encourage future Photoshop trainers to begin incorporating andragogical principles in their classroom instruction.

Keywords: Photoshop training programs, Adult learning, Andragogy.

Introduction

Over the past seven years I have noticed a growing number of Photoshop designers in Saudi Arabia among males and females aged 17 and over. Most of them have learned Photoshop with the help of their friends or through Internet tutorials. Eight years ago, the options available to students to learn Photoshop were few and expensive. Now, classes are highly available and prices are far cheaper than before I was one of the designers who committed to expanding the culture of graphics in my city of Riyadh in Saudi Arabia; and I have been training people on how to use media graphics programs since 2005.

Most students in my Photoshop workshops were between the ages of 18 and 35. My questions are: 1) what will be the best approach to teaching a group with a diverse age range and 2) what educational technologies can be used to assist Photoshop trainers with educating their students?

On the topic of teaching diverse age ranges, we must look at the three stages of adulthood: emerging adult 18 to 25 years old, young adult 26-39 years old and mature adult 40-59 years old (Conaway, 2009). The majority who attended my Photoshop workshops were of the first two age ranges, meaning that there might have been two different approaches I could have taken with these groups.

Adult education is comprised of “activities intentionally designed for the purpose of bringing about learning among those whose age, social roles or self-perception, define them as adults” (Merriam and Bierema, Pp.11). There were a lot of adult learning theories established in the learning field and there is no single theory of learning that is suitable for all adults. A variety of theories, models, sets of assumptions and practices comprises the foundation of adult learning knowledge. Adult education becomes more robust as a field of study the more its practitioners record and share their data with researchers who can create new assumptions from this data. (TEAL center staff. p.1)

Andragogy is the art and science of adult learning (Kearsley, 2010). According to Knowles, andragogy “is not an ideology that must be applied totally and without modification. In fact, an essential feature of andragogy is flexibility” (Knowles, Holton III and Swanson, p. 135). Applying andragogy theory in Photoshop training programs may help adult designers to foster learning, create novel and effective ways of teaching students in their classes, and could even contribute to new versions of the Photoshop software.

Before and After Andragogy

Before andragogy, all the theories and models of formal learning were created for children—pedagogy (Craig, p. 253). The word “pedagogy” originates from Greek and it is derived from “ped”, meaning “child” and agogus, meaning “leader of.” Thus, “pedagogy literally means the art and science of teaching children” (Knowles, p60). According to Knowles (1984) pedagogy is a set of beliefs, and its foundation is comprised of “assumptions about teaching and learning that evolved between the seventh and twelfth centuries in the monastic and cathedral schools of Europe out of their experience in teaching basic skills to young boys” (Knowles, p52). Until the nineteenth century, pedagogy was the only existing model in U.S. schools even in higher education. Therefore, when the U.S established adult education programs after World War I, pedagogical models were all that they had

to design curriculum with (Knowles, p52). The pedagogical model places full responsibility on the teacher to decide what students must learn, how it will be learned, and when it will be learned. Thus, students are dependent on their teacher.

For more than thirty years, Malcolm Knowles tried to formulate a theory of adult learning using his experience and research of the unique characteristics of adult learners. Throughout his experience of informal adult learning he noticed that adult learners learn best and feel comfortable when they are in an informal environment because it is flexible and a non-threatening setting (Knowles). Knowles published his first article in 1968 about his understanding of andragogy titled, "Andragogy, Not Pedagogy" (Reischmann, 2004). He also expanded his arguments in the book "Andragogy Versus Pedagogy," published in 1970 (Knowles, p51-52). Andragogy today consists of several assumptions. One assumption is that adult learners have a self-concept that moves them to be independent and self-directed. Furthermore, Knowles assumes that adult learners have experience which is counted as a learning resource; therefore, their experience is the center of the class, rather than the teachers' experiences. Adult learners are ready to learn to improve their individual skills and social growth, thus adult educators need to show them why they need to learn a subject and how it will help them to attain their goals.

Andragogy theory has gone through challenges and critiques since its establishment. "More recent critiques of andragogy came from researchers who operate out of different theoretical orientations, including critical, feminist, and Afrocentric"(Sandlin, p27). They "have pointed out its slavish focus on the individual learner, the sociohistorical context in which learning takes place is virtually ignored" (Merriam, Caffarella, Baumgartner, p89-90). According to Henschke (2014); Jarvis (1984) wrote that andragogy had been admitted in the adult education without much research to justify its position. Pratt (1993) said that andragogy is not usable for all adult education. Crace (2001) "considered that Knowles' andragogy had been effectively dismantled by 1990" (Henschke, p.2). Merriam (2001) acknowledged that andragogy is one of the important adult theories, but the field needs to move beyond it.

Through all of these challenges and critiques of andragogy, adult educators who practice it still find andragogy's assumptions to be a helpful rubric (Merriam). Also, andragogy has been accepted in many fields and educational settings across the world. Henschke (2014) believes that andragogy has much to contribute to the future of adult education and learning. He pointed out that there are many documents on andragogy that have been published, and he has gathered almost 330 documents on andragogy on his website (Henschke). There are many studies implementing andragogy theory across the world, leading to translations of Andragogy literature into many languages. This applied andragogy is usable across many nations, cultures, and genders.

The Assumptions of Andragogy

There are six assumptions of andragogy that are different from the pedagogical model:

1. The need to know

Adults need to know the aim of the learning subject and how it helps them attain their goals so that they can be motivated, engaged, and active in the class. To apply this assumption to Photoshop training programs, the trainers need to have experience with design to the extent that they know what the trainees need to improve, what trainees already know, and what the new creative ideas in the Photoshop field are that can be shared to improve their designing skills. So, there is a need to explain the reason specific things are being taught. For instance, with each activity in the curriculum, there needs to be an explanation that demonstrates how it will improve. Also, there can be visual aids on the walls that illustrate the goals of the workshop and the expected output from students. Trainers can share successful stories about designers who have taken the workshop before, so that they can feel the benefits. From my perspective, all of that is external motivation for them in a way that shows the trainee that the trainer understands their goals. The ultimate goal is to increase their internal motivation and fulfill the psychological needs of trainees.

2. The learners' self-concept

Adults' self-concept drives them to be self-directed and independent. However, there are few adults who want to be dependent on instructors and, thus, their self-directing learning is low. According to Knowles (1984) "Once they have arrived at that self-concept they develop a deep psychological need to be seen by others and treated by others as being capable of self-direction"(Knowles, p56). To apply this assumption in the Photoshop curriculum training program, trainers may need to make their curriculum flexible, so adult designers can come to understand the learning to obtain the skills they need to improve. Also, the instruction should allow learners to discover techniques and knowledge for themselves without depending on others. To apply this assumption in the Photoshop classroom or "climate setting," the classroom must be comfortable and the Photoshop equipment

must be prepared. Part of making the classroom comfortable means spreading a climate of respect, trust, and collaboration.

Self-directed learning is one of the primary traits of successful Photoshop designers. From my experience, we use the Internet as a primary resource to learn new ideas in graphics, and we spend most of our time learning from the Internet more than we design. In fact, when we design a single panel design, it is an outcome of days of learning colors and filters to enhance and make it unique. Hence, the Internet is the primary learning environment for Photoshop designers. According to the EMC2 website (2011), Internet information doubles every 90 days. As a result, it would be impossible for designers to keep up with the new ideas of designing and new Photoshop versions if they do not have the self-directed learning abilities, or if Photoshop trainers do not account for self-directed learning in their training strategies.

3. The role of the learners' experience

Adults are rich in experiences that were gained throughout their life situations which make them different than children and youths. This accumulation of experiences cannot be ignored in the classroom by adult teachers; otherwise adult learners will feel that they are being marginalized. Adult trainees tend to need to know structures rather than needing to know exactly how to perform certain tasks. For example, for a class about designing a book jacket, instruction would center around the placement of various, fixed fields on that jacket—such as the title, author's name, and publisher's name. The trainer would then step aside and allow the adult learners to create. In the classroom, trainers may encourage group discussions, exercises, and strategies. Also, trainers may invite other designers to share with class new ideas and experiences.

In order to promote the problem-solving in the workshop I taught, I showed trainees some of my rough draft designs and asked them to find the flaws and what they would change to enhance it. I find this technique useful to enhance their critical thinking and, at the same time, put me on the same level as them so as to demonstrate a trajectory for growth from beginner to expert.

4. Readiness to learn

According to Knowles (1984) "adults become ready to learn those things they need to know and be able to do in order to cope effectively with their real-life situations." (p58). From my experience, beginners become ready to learn when they want to, not because their parents or society say so. There are a variety of external motivations that drive adults to learn Photoshop. The people I trained in Photoshop were sometimes professional or amateur photographers who needed to edit and enhance their pictures. Others attended my Photoshop workshops because of their job as producers or moviemakers; others to enhance their skills and keep up with new ideas in creative design for fun, and others for purposes of self-employment. Thus, extrinsic factors drive learning, but a greater challenge is to "create the readiness for learning through instructional techniques" (Merriam and Bierema, p52).

One of the techniques I use is telling trainees my story of graphics, how I began designing in Photoshop, and what my skills have enabled me to do. Sharing stories about my own experiences really helps trainees see that you understand their goals. Also, having trainees share their designs with one another and do group critiques can encourage development in skills thanks to the advice they receive and even the benefits they might gain from watching others be critiqued.

5. Orientation to learning

The main idea of 'orientation to learning' is that adults learn to adapt to their situation immediately, not later, hence, they are problem-centered rather than subject-centered. To apply this assumption in a Photoshop training program, it is important that the curriculum contains activities that promote designers to think and figure out solutions to their problems. For instance, an activity about simulating one of a Twix candy wrapper's design can open some issues such as how can they get the golden color and how they develop fonts for their packaging.

Other high-level, famous designs, such as those seen on magazine covers can also be helpful to students. They get to know the ins and outs of the editing industry and the tools that were used for touching up and enhancing the actresses' skin and bodies. This sort of activity is important for Photoshop trainers to keep it in mind because Photoshop designing has unlimited possibilities, and we demonstrate to them through our instruction.

6. Motivation

Adults are in the classroom mostly because of internal, rather than external motivation. They are not required to be there—they are there because they want to be. This motivation is their fuel, and our job as Photoshop trainers is to create an atmosphere of respect, collaboration, support, and to keep them motivated.

According to Wlodkowski (2008), there are five pillars of motivating instructor that are: "Experience: the power

of knowledge and preparation; empathy: the power of understanding and compassion; enthusiasm: the power of commitment and expressiveness; clarity: the power of organization and language; and cultural responsiveness: the power of respect and social responsibility.”(P, 49-84) In order to complete a Photoshop training program successfully, we need to align this set of motivations.

The Differences Between Pedagogy and Andragogy

This comparison will be based on assumptions of pedagogy and andragogy and how pedagogical assumptions may impact Photoshop trainees. Based on the “need to know” assumption, learners in the pedagogical model need to know what they must learn to pass a course, regardless of how they can apply it in their lives. On the other hand, learners in the andragogical model need to know how the content of each lesson will impact their future goals, and how they can apply it. If Photoshop trainers assume that their trainees are in their class for the sake of passing it, trainees are more likely to quit the workshop because they did not register in the course because they need to pass, but because their main goal is to discover Photoshop techniques and develop a working capacity to use the program.

A second assumption is “learner’s self-concept.” In the andragogical model, adult learners are independent and self-directed and are responsible for their decisions; as a result, trainers need to fulfill the trainees’ psychological needs to teach them. In contrast, in the pedagogical model, “teacher’s concept of the learners of a dependent personality; therefore, the learner’s self-concept eventually becomes that of dependent personality” (Knowles, p53). If we apply the pedagogical assumption to Photoshop training programs, we will not help trainees to discover techniques and knowledge for themselves and the trainees may find that overbearing or patronizing.

The third assumption is the role of experience. The Andragogical model counts the learners’ experience as a resource of learning, and it should be the center of the classroom, rather than just the teacher’s experience. In the pedagogical mode, the learners’ experience is worth little as a resource for learning and the experience of the instructor is most influential. If Photoshop trainers apply the pedagogical assumption with adult trainees, the trainees may again find their instructor patronizing and will not be able to engage in self-directed learning.

The fourth assumption is readiness to learn. Learners in pedagogy are ready to learn when they are told what they have to learn in order to move to the next level; while the andragogical model indicates that adult learners are ready to learn when the subject aligns effectively with their real-life needs. If Photoshop trainers do not create a climate of readiness by using problem-solving or problem-centered learning they will not encourage their trainees to think outside the box and engage in self-directed learning.

The fifth assumption is orientation to learning. Learning in the pedagogical model is acquiring subject-matter content. Thus, learning experiences are sequenced according to the logic of the subject matter. On the other hand, learners in andragogy are life-centered, task-centered, or problem-centered. Photoshop trainees learn better with problem-centered exercises and experimenting. As I mentioned before, Photoshop is a broad topic and trainees cannot learn all of the tools and filters in a single workshop. So, trainers need to motivate them to discover these tools and elements by themselves by giving them a structure which they can then work within. Photoshop trainers need to focus on activities that help trainees perform tasks or deal with problems that they may face in their future designing situations.

The sixth assumption is motivation. Learners in the pedagogical model have external motivation. This external pressure comes from competition for grades, consequences of failure, or parental pressures. In contrast, learners in andragogy have an internal motivation or internal pressures; that aim is to increase societal growth, individual growth, or institutional growth. From my experience, all of the designers I have taught had internal motivation and were ready to learn and do extra activities after the workshop.

Conclusion

Applying andragogy theory in Photoshop training programs is useful for both trainees and trainers. Through andragogy, Photoshop trainers will be able to recognize the psychological needs and be able to help adult designers fulfill psychological needs that keep them motivated to engage in life-long learning. The other feature of the andragogical model is its flexibility. It Trainers are able to center their class instruction around the experiences of their trainees and involve them in meaningful ways. From my perspective, because of the fast changing Photoshop versions and design ideas, andragogy is a suitable technique for teaching adults.

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