Foundations of Adult Learning for Community College Faculty

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Thoughts About Teaching Adult Learners

“Learning is more effective when it is an active rather than a passive process.” – Euripides

“Learning is always rebellion... Every bit of new truth discovered is revolutionary to what was believed before.” – Margaret Lee Runbeck

“Learn from yesterday, live for today, hope for tomorrow. The important thing is to not stop questioning. Curiosity has its own reason for existing.” – Albert Einstein

“Why should society feel responsible only for the education of children, and not for the education of all adults of every age?” – Erich Fromm
In the Stone Age (1983-85)...

When I was enrolled in Contra Costa, Laney and Merritt Colleges in 1983 (third from left), there were no fees/tuition. Smoking was allowed and prevalent. Most of us were 18-21 and moved rather slowly from one college to another—always seeking out a different environment. Distance learning meant taking a bus to school. Whole-group instruction was the theme of the day.
The Changing Landscape at CCC

- **Demographic Shifts:** Majority/Minority
- **Urbanicity** (primarily large cities and urban fringe)
- **Bifurcated Mission** (remedial in some cases, advanced/four-year in others)
- **Linguistic Diversity** (English Learners – first, second, and third generations)
- **Female Majority** (53.6 percent)

CCS Student Demographics by Ethnicity, 2012-2013

- Latino: 39%
- White: 31%
- African American: 7%
- Native American: 3%
- Asian American: 4%
- Filipino: 3%
- Pacific Islander: 1%
- Multiple Ethnicities: 1%
- Unknown: 4%
The Changing Landscape at CCC

- Increased **distance learning**
- Increased **partnerships between CCs and Four-Year Institutions**
- Greater recruiting of **Baby Boomers**
- Changes in enrollment (non-traditional students—HS/Reverse Transfer/Veterans)
- Increased **partnerships with business**
- Response to **Globalization**
- **Policy trends** (free community college initiative)

- Inconsistent enrollment vectors and intensity (enrollment patterns—full/part-time; enrollment during a given semester), challenging assumptions about regularity and persistence
- **Tracking transfers** and providing survival skills—especially for non-traditional enrollees.
- **Technology and formal/informal learning resources** – striking a balance
Foundations for Adult Learning

- Physiology of the Brain and Holistic Problem Solving (Brain-Compatible Learning)
- Individual Learning Styles and Profiles Enriched by Existing Expertise and Experience
- Understanding the Audience
- Moving from Didactic to Collaborative Differentiation and Personalization using Technology
- Peer-to-Peer Learning
- From More Structure to Less Structure
- Ongoing Monitoring and Assessment
- From Pedagogy to Andragogy to Heutagogy
It all starts here. Everyone has a unique learning profile and set of life experiences to scaffold upon.

This is especially true for diverse adult learners who populate your courses.

One size doesn’t fit all – it never did!

Equity and equality are at the roots of the endeavor.
The Cocktail Party Effect

How much do you retain?

Only about one percent
When in the flow state, the brain is actively seeking out information from multiple sources to engage in problem solving activities.

That, my friends, is where Motivation, persistence and creativity make their homes.

That is FLOW.

Where are your students?
Pedagogy Versus Andragogy

**PEDAGOGY**

- Learner is largely dependent upon instructor for all learning
- Instructor is responsible for teaching, learning and evaluation
- Instructor experience is paramount — learners come with little or no experience upon which to build

**ANDRAGOGY**

- Learners are self-directed and responsible for their own learning/evaluation
- Learners bring greater volume and quality of experience — diversity of experience important
- Adult learners are rich resources for each other (peer learning) and experience is source of self-identity

*Based on Whitby, 2013.*
## Pedagogy Versus Andragogy

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Pedagogy</th>
<th>Andragogy</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Students are told what they need to know to advance to next level</td>
<td>Search for knowledge is motivated by life change and identified gaps between where one is and wants to be</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Acquiring prescribed subject matter and units are sequenced according to logic of subject matter</td>
<td>Problem solving orientation, real-life relevance, situationally organized (JIT Learning)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Motivated by external pressures (grades and the consequences of failure)</td>
<td>Internal motivators (esteem, want of education, better quality of life, recognition)</td>
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*Based on Whitby, 2013.*
The Art and Science of Adult Learning

- Malcolm Knowles (1980, 1985), primarily, but believed to be initiated in Germany as early as 1833

Five Assumptions:
- Self-concept: dependent to self directed as one matures
- Experience is a resource for learning
- Readiness to learn is focused on developmental tasks
- Postponed application versus immediate application of knowledge
- Learning is internally motivated

Vygotsky’s *Zone of Proximal Development*

Where are adult learners versus children and young adults?
The Art and Science of Adult Learning

- Move from more structured to less structured over time
- Fundamental principles:
  - Adults need to be involved in the planning and evaluation of their instruction
  - Experience (including mistakes) provides the basis for the learning activities
  - Adults are most interested in learning subjects that have immediate relevance and impact to their job or personal lives
  - Adult learning is problem-centered rather than content-oriented

From Knowles 1980, 1984
Pedagogy and Andragogy are steps along the pathway

Heutagogy is self-determined versus self-directed, is more metacognitively focused: process and content (very well suited to those pupils emerging with experience under Common Core State Standards)

Self-efficacy; understanding the learning process; communicating and working well with others; creativity in problem solving; adopting flexible and informed approaches to new areas of study

Knowledge sharing versus hoarding

Blending informal and formal learning resources, such that the learner is at the center of the learning process

Very well suited to blended learning and distance learning environments—somewhat structured, but with latitude for independent learning

Certain levels of self-regulation and maturity are applicable here (may not be immediately used with inexperienced students)

Least structured, closest to auto-didactic learning

Source: https://heutagogycop.wordpress.com/history-of-heutagogy/
Heutagogical Thinking

In each of your online courses, you will find a diverse range of skills, abilities and attitudes based on prior expertise and experience.

To enhance learning and metacognitive skills requires the application of pedagogical (modified), andragogical and heutagogical strategies to differentiate content and instruction.

Smartly differentiated instruction can facilitate transitions and create an environment characterized by creativity, engagement and commitment (FLOW).

Move from more to less structure and from concrete/manipulation to application to abstraction.

*Figure 2. Progression from pedagogy to andragogy then to heutagogy (based on Canning, 2010, p. 63).*
Critical Facets of Teaching Diverse Adult Learners

Effectively teaching diverse groups of adult learners requires that the instructor move from more-structured activities (didactic and whole-group learning) to less-structured activities over time.

Varying delivery of instruction using multiple modalities and grouping strategies and moving from concrete to abstract helps to engage all learners.

Recall that individual learning styles are the product of culture, personality, preferences, experiences, etc.

Explicit expectations, explanations, and outcomes are universally appreciated.

- Create creative colleagues, not pupils
- Value peer-to-peer learning
- Your life experiences may not match
- Preferences and prejudices (cultural competence) are part of prior experience (for instructor and student alike)
- Immediately applicable information
- Move around, vary learning activities
- Build up, not tear down (immediate feedback and constructive criticism)
- Want/expect to be part of the learning and assessment process
- Different in many, many ways, including learning styles and profiles
- Structured learning opportunities (metacognitive/process)
- Laughter is the best medicine—use humor!
# Moving From Didactic to Socratic Learning in Teaching Adults

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>DIDACTIC</th>
<th>SOCRATIC</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Takes on an <strong>ancillary</strong> role (but still needed to disseminate general information)</td>
<td><strong>Primary</strong> focus (in considering information)</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Teacher</strong> is primary agent</td>
<td><strong>Student</strong> is primary agent</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Impart</strong> experience <em>to...</em></td>
<td><strong>Uncover</strong> a concealed answer, serve as co-learner</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Deductive</strong> (lecture, story telling, etc.)</td>
<td><strong>Inductive</strong> (discussion, dialogue and problem-solving)</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Authority and Experience</strong></td>
<td><strong>Reason and Evidence</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Learning is the <strong>reception of ideas</strong></td>
<td>Learning is the <strong>conflict</strong> of ideas that results in new knowledge (Hegelian)</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Student</strong> is <strong>passive, open, receptive</strong></td>
<td><strong>Student</strong> is <strong>active, questioning, critical and discriminating</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>Evaluation involves recall of data (<strong>objective assessment</strong>)</td>
<td>Evaluation is the <strong>interpretation and application</strong> of data</td>
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<tr>
<td>Wisdom is the internalization of truths and beliefs</td>
<td>Wisdom is ‘<strong>informed ignorance</strong>’</td>
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First and foremost, know the audience, bearing in mind that learning is equal parts cognitive and affective

New Faces. HS students, traditional students, English Learners, remedial students, advanced students, Baby Boomers and career changers: broad range of age, understanding, aptitude and ability

Challenge your own understandings of the postsecondary experience (not everyone knows what you know)

Facilitator versus teacher: what they want to learn (can’t always happen, however), actively drawing upon experience(s)

Explain the relevance of the course to their lives, as well component pieces (materials, activities, etc.)

Clarity, clarity, clarity. Clearly define objectives and explain relevance to the course.
Teaching and Learning Strategies

- **Balance** informal and formal resources (allow collaboration through ‘vetting’ sources and conclusions)
- **Active and participative learning** reigns supreme.
- Research suggests that we retain more by teaching others (90 percent); practicing by doing (75 percent); and engaging in discussion around topics (50 percent)
- Only about **five percent** of lecture is retained (consistent with the ‘cocktail party effect’)

Active Learning Strategies for Adults

- Background Knowledge Probe
- Think/Pair/Share
- Write/Pair/Share
- Student Summaries
- Q and A Pairs
- Two-Three Minute Free Write (in response to a prompt or question)
- Scenarios/case studies
- Focused Listings
- Generating Questions

- Peer Survey
- Corners
- Case Studies and Scenarios
- Two/Ten Strategy
- Two Column Pairs
- Reciprocal Questioning
- Roundtable Discussion
- 3-2-1 Strategy
- Note Check
- Jigsaws
- Among Many Others!

Source: Center for Teaching and Learning, University of Minnesota
To Consider...

- Still a place for whole-group and didactic instruction (the entire class need not be spent in active learning activities)

- Provide opportunities for students to take center stage (may not always be comfortable—you may encounter resistance—students want to learn from an expert, advanced students don’t want to be ‘dragged down’ by others)

- Always be clear about the strategies that you are using (or intend to use) and change as needed (many colors in the pallet)

- Move from content transporter to metacognitive mentor in valuing expertise and experience

- Switch things up every ten minutes or so (consider adult brain’s attention span), progressing from ‘low-impact’ strategies to more complex, advanced strategies

- Grouping does not necessarily translate into learning. Activities must be carefully planned, executed and monitored

- Content coverage and active learning (esp. intro courses)—all about time management and learning objectives (and YOUR style)
Comments and Questions
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