“Emotional Intelligence and Andragogy”: The Adult Learner

Mark Esposito

Emotional intelligence, a type of social and personal intelligence, is important in managing interpersonal relationships and interactions, especially in the business and educational sphere. Educators, that involve frequent contact and interaction can benefit from the application of multiple intelligences. This presentation examines how and to what extent emotional intelligence can benefit the educational relationships, and identifies a clear spectrum of action plans. The analogy with the use of andragogy will then, reinforce the study to the adult educational module and its applications in some leading edge case studies. Results showed that all educators, to a certain degree, utilized emotional intelligence to offer more personalized and effective solutions for the learners.

Introduction

Andragogy, initially defined as “the art and science of helping adults learn,” has taken on a broader meaning since Knowles’ first edition. The term currently
defines an alternative to pedagogy\(^1\) and refers to learner-focused education for people of all ages.

The andragogic model asserts that five issues be considered and addressed in formal learning. They include letting learners know why something is important to learn\(^2\), showing learners how to direct themselves through information\(^3\), and relating the topic to the learners' experiences. In addition\(^4\), people will not learn until they are ready and motivated to learn. Often this\(^5\) requires helping them overcome inhibitions, behaviours, and beliefs about learning.

Unfortunately, andragogy usually is cited in education texts as the way adults learn. Knowles himself concedes that four of andragogy's five key assumptions apply equally to adults and children. The sole difference is that children have fewer experiences and pre-established beliefs than adults and thus have less to relate.

In the information age, the implications of a move from teacher-centered to learner-centered education are staggering. Postponing or suppressing this move will slow our ability to learn new technology and gain competitive advantage.

How can we expect to analyze and synthesize so much information if we turn to others to determine what should be learned, how it will be learned, and when it will be learned? Though our grandchildren or great-grandchildren may be free of pedagogic bias, most adults today are not offered that luxury. To succeed, we must unlearn our teacher-reliance. We must take it upon ourselves to meet our learning needs and demand training providers do the same. To know our demands, we must know how we process information.

Malcolm Knowles' theory of andragogy (adult learning) is an attempt to differentiate the way adults learn. Each learner is respected for their current skills

\(^{1}\) Pedagogy from the Greek word paid, meaning "child," and agogus meaning "leader of."


\(^{3}\) John Dewey tested and proved his theories in the Laboratory School, established at the University of Chicago in 1896.


\(^{5}\) In The Adult Learner, Knowles stated that Andragogy is not a new word. It was used in Germany as early as 1833 and has been used extensively during the last decade in Yugoslavia, France and Holland. It is also worth noting that in 1927, Martha Anderson and Eduard Lindeman used the term in a volume titled Education Through Experience.
and experience. New skills and understanding are based on existing ones. Students are encouraged to “learn how to learn” - as this will prove infinitely useful. A number of assumptions are made based on this theory:

- adults are goal oriented.
- adults are autonomous and self-directed.
- adults are relevancy oriented (problem centered)— they need to know why.
- they are learning something.
- adults are practical and problem-solvers.
- adults have accumulated life experiences.

Kearsley summarizes what this means to educators in practical terms:

“andragogy means that instruction for adults needs to focus more on the process and less on the content being taught. Strategies such as case studies, role playing, simulations, and self-evaluations are most useful. Educators adopt a role of facilitator or resource rather than lecturer or grader.” (1996)

**Methodology**

**What Motivates Adult Learners?**

Adults typically, have motivations for learning such as those pointed out by Cantor (1992, 37-38):

- to meet external expectations— the boss says you have to upgrade skill ‘X’ to keep your job.
- learn to better serve others — managers often learn basic First Aid to protect their employees.
- professional advancement.
- escape or stimulation.
- pure interest.
- to make or maintain social relationships.
Educators should be aware of the possible motivations behind their students' enrolment. Then they can better shape the instructional materials.

Training and Active Learning

Involving Learners with the Training Process, effective teachers demonstrate more implementation of learner-centered domains of practice than less effective teachers (Fasko D. & Grubb D. J. & McCombs J. & McCombs B. L.).

The Seven Principles for Good Practice in Undergraduate Education

A group of scholars of higher education were asked to derive from their knowledge of the past 50 years of research a set of principles that could be applied to improve learning. The Seven Principles for Good Practice in Undergraduate Education was then formulated from their conclusions, as reported herewith: (Chickering & Gamson 1997).

1. Encourage contacts between students and faculty.
2. Develop reciprocity and cooperation among students.
3. Use active learning techniques.
4. Give prompt feedback.
5. Emphasize time on task.
6. Communicate high expectations.
7. Respect diverse talents and ways of learning.

Learner-Centered Principles for Training

A set of Learner-Centered Principles for Training (Ellis, Wagner, & Longmire, 1999) were created to help with the learning process. They are based on the work of Barbara M Combs (M Combs, 1992):

- Learning does not occur in a vacuum. Learners discover and construct meaning from information and experience based on their unique perceptions, thoughts and feelings.
- More information doesn't necessarily mean more learning. Learners seek to create meaningful uses of knowledge regardless of the quantity and quality information presented.
• Learners link new knowledge to existing information in ways that make sense to the learner. The remembering of new knowledge is facilitated when it can be tied to a learner's current knowledge.

• Personality influences learning. Learners have varying degrees of self-confidence and differ in the clarity of their personal goals and expectations for success and failure.

The Andragogic Learning Model

The Andragogic Learning Model recognizes several facets to learning (Knowles, M.S.):

• They are problem centered rather than content centered.

• They permit and encourage the active participation of the learner.

• They encourage the learner to introduce past experiences into the process in order to re-examine that experience in the light of new data.

• The climate of learning must be collaborative (instructor-to-learner and learner-to-learner) as opposed to authority-oriented.

• The learning environment (planning, conducting, evaluating) is a mutual activity between learner and instructor.

• Evaluation leads to appraisal of needs and interests and therefore to redesign and new learning activities.

• Activities are experimental, not “transmittal and absorption.”

• Thus, the primary function of the trainer is to become a guide to the process of learning, not a manager of content. The “learning guide” uses two-way communication to establish the objectives and methods of the learning process.

A Climate for Learning

Learning is enhanced when it is more like a team effort than a solo race. Good learning, like good work, is collaborative and social, not competitive and isolated. Working with others often increases involvement in learning. Sharing one's ideas and responding to others' improves thinking and deepens understanding. (Chickering & Gamson 1997)
There are three general types of learning group: informal learning groups, formal learning groups, and study teams (Johnson, Johnson, and Smith, 1991). Informal learning groups are “off the cuff” clustering of learners within a single class session, e.g. asking the learners to turn to a neighbor and spend two minutes discussing a question you have posed. These informal groups are formed to check on the learners’ understanding of the material, to give them an opportunity to apply what they are learning, or to provide a change of pace.

Formal learning groups are established to complete a specific task, such as perform a lab experiment, write a report, carry out a project, or prepare a position paper. These groups may complete their work in a single class session or over several weeks. The learners work together until the task is finished.

Study teams are long-term groups with stable membership whose primary responsibility is to provide members with support, encouragement, and assistance in completing course requirements and assignments. Study teams also inform their members about lectures and assignments when someone has missed a session. The larger the class and the more complex the subject matter, the more valuable study teams can be.

Also, the process that these learning groups uses falls into two different camps:

Cooperative learning involves the more conventional notion of cooperation, in that learners work in small groups on an assigned project or problem under the guidance of the trainer who monitors the groups, making sure the learners are staying on task and are coming up with the correct answers (if there is a right or a best answer).

Collaborative learning is a more radical departure. It involves learners working together in small groups to develop their own answer through interaction and reaching consensus, not necessarily a known answer. Monitoring the groups or correcting “wrong” impressions is not the role of the trainer since there is no authority on what the answer should be.

Achieving a climate for learning can be accomplished by:

€ Breaking the class into small groups.
€ Keep people moving around from group to group/person to person.
€ Have activities and projects outside the classroom for group participation.
€ Developing teams.
€ Peer tutoring.
€ Encouraging the learners to study together.
€ Encouraging the learners to answer each other's questions instead of answering them yourself.
€ Have learners teach all or part of a lesson.
€ Be a model by asking questions and displaying good listening behaviors.

A Structure for Mutual Planning

Frequent student-faculty contact in and out of class is a most important factor in student motivation and involvement. Faculty concern helps students get through rough times and keep on working. Knowing a few faculty members well enhances students' intellectual commitment and encourages them to think about their own values and plans. (Chickering & Gamson 1997) Further to this, the out of the class time, that is qualitatively spent between students and faculty summarizes the reinforcement of the beneficial relationship between educator and students.

How do we know that? Mostly through large-scale co-relational studies that conclude that students who have frequent contact with faculty members in and out of class are better satisfied with their educational experience, less likely to drop out, and perceive themselves to have learned more than students with less faculty contact (Pascarella & Terenzini, 1991). Thus, the matrix between the source of the information and the learning process, sees its direct allocation, through the catalyst role played by the educator, outside the classroom environment.

Some methods of mutual planning are:
€ Using a one-on-one approach to assessing the learner's requirements.
€ Personalize feedback on learner assignment—ask questions.
€ Open door policy.
€ E-mail.
• Stick around for after class conversations.
• Mentoring.
• Learn student’s names.
• Telephone access.
• Frequent question & answer periods.

Learners’ Needs, Interests, and Values

Many roads lead to learning. Different students bring different talents and styles to college. Brilliant students in a seminar might be all thumbs in a lab or studio; students rich in hands-on experience may not do so well with theory. Students need opportunities to show their talents and learn in ways that work for them. Then they can be pushed to learn in new ways that do not come so easily. Also, the emotional anchoring to the learning process is a vital instrument of prime advantage in the educational pattern. (Chickering & Gamson 1997) Research shows therefore, that the emotional intelligence aspect of learning, can be an indispensable tool of mastery of the notions.

The learner’s needs can be met by:

€ Utilizing multimedia presentations that engage the learners (see, hear, and do or visual, auditory, kinesthetic/tactile).
€ Provide outside of the classroom activities (fieldtrips).
€ Give the learners a problem to solve that has multiple solutions.
€ Change the media or delivery method frequently.
€ Identify a variety of learning opportunities for each module.

• Explain theory from “practical approach” first, then add the structural approach.
• Use real life case studies in class, to promote the job sharing and the team work abilities, framed in a learning in action modality.
Formulation of Objectives

Expect more and you will get it. High expectations are important for everyone—for the poorly prepared, for those unwilling to exert themselves, and for the bright and well motivated. Expecting students to perform well becomes a self-fulfilling prophecy. (Chickering & Gamson 1997)

Due to some training requirements, certain learning objectives are often required. However, by focusing in on the learner’s needs, instead of the training program’s needs, you can get the learners involved with the achievement of the objectives:

Although a lot of learning is developmental and cannot be easily defined, work with each learner to set as complete a learning goal or objective as possible—what is the task to be learned, how will it be learned, how will you know it has been learned.

Assign realistic time values for each objective or learning point. If the total time is greater than the time you have, adjust accordingly (suggest self-study for the less critical learning points).

Designs for Learning

Learning is not a spectator sport. Students do not learn much just sitting in classes listening to teachers, memorizing pre-packaged assignments, and spitting out answers. They must talk about what they are learning, write reflectively about it, relate it to past experiences, and apply it to their daily lives. They must make what they learn part of themselves. (Chickering & Gamson 1997)

The US Department of Education and the National Institute of Education highlighted student involvement as one of three critical conditions for excellence in education, noting that:

“It is only the amount of time one can allocate for learning, but the quality of effort within that time makes the difference...quality of effort refers to the extent to which learning is active rather than passive and colleges clearly can control the conditions of active learning by expecting students to be participants in, rather than spectators of the learning process.” (US Department of Education 1984:18-19)
“Students learn best when they are actively involved in the process. Researchers report that, regardless of the subject matter, students working in small groups tend to learn more of what is taught and retain it longer than when the same content is presented in other instructional formats. Students who work in collaborative groups also appear more satisfied with their classes.” (Cross, K.P cited these sources: Beckman, 1990; Chickering and Gamson, 1991; Collier, 1980; Cooper and Associates, 1990; Goodsell, Maher, Tinto, and Associates, 1992; Johnson, Johnson, and Smith, 1991; Kohn, 1986; McKeechie, Pintrich, Lin, and Smith, 1986; Slavin, 1980, 1983; Whitman, 1988).

To help achieve the design:

- Set up problem solving activities in small groups and have each group discuss with class.
- Get feedback on what activities help the students to learn.
- Encourage reflection (e.g. learning journals).
- Encourage learners to challenge (challenging is not flaming each other) ideas, the ideas of other students, or those presented in readings or other course materials.
- Give learners concrete, real-life situations to analyze.
- Encourage students to suggest new readings, projects, or course activities.

The learning environment needs to be dynamic, not passive.

Carrying out the Design

Time plus energy equals learning. Learning to use one’s time well is critical for students and professionals alike. Allocating realistic amounts of time means effective learning for students and effective teaching for faculty. (Chickering & Gamson 1997)

- Carrying out a plan or design, if often the hardest part, but the most enjoyable:
- Ensure that time spent on a task is real learning, not busy work.
- Understand that there will be problems and changes along the way—plan for them.
Identify key concepts and how those will be taught. Active learning, not passive, should always be stressed. Expect learners to participate (preframing).

Try to make the assignments interesting. The more interesting, the more involved the learners become.

Blend two types of knowledge: theoretical and everyday-lived.

Ask learners to comment on what they are doing. This helps to reinforce the learning experience.

Conclusion

Mutual Evaluation, Leading to Reappraisal and Revision of the Learning Objectives

Knowing what you know and don’t know focuses your learning. In getting started, students need help in assessing their existing knowledge and competence. Then, in classes, students need frequent opportunities to perform and receive feedback on their performance. At various points during college, and at its end, students need chances to reflect on what they have learned, what they still need to know, and how they might assess themselves. (Chickering & Gamson 1997)

Each learner differs in his or her need for achievement and how success and failure is perceived. These differences tend to affect individual motivation and persistence at a task. Individual motivation and persistence is affected by how one makes attributions for success and failure (Weiner, 1986). For example, one can attribute success to something about oneself or something about the environment. Learners who credit themselves for success, tend to have higher motivation and persist longer at tasks as they believe they have control over success or failure and thus greater persistence should lead to success.

The goal of any training intervention should be to facilitate these types of attributions as they increase the desire to learn and make use of the training:

- Grade on a criteria based system by using a range of test questions (using a curve is ok).
- Provide constructive criticism when necessary, but provide praise/input as often as possible.
• Provide plenty of questions and answer sessions.
• Use exams that give fast feedback.
• Relate lessons to real life experiences.
• Videos can be used to help the learner critique his or her own performance.
• The trainer or other students can react to a writer’s draft using the “hidden text” option available in word processors: Turned on, the “hidden” comments spring up; turned off, the comments recede and the writer’s prized work is again free of “red ink.”
• Celebrate in-class success!

(Dr. Mark Esposito, DCT International Hotel & Business Management School, Switzerland. The author can be reached at m.esposito@dct.ch).

References


Cross, K. P. What Do We Know About Student’s Learning and How Do We Know It? AAHE’s 1998 National Conference on Higher Education. http://www.ahe.org/nche/cross_lecture.htm


Provost’s Student Centered Learning. Task Force on Student-Centered Learning California State University, Chico. http://hyperion.csuchico.edu/vpaa/report.html


