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COURSE NAME: PAN062 PRINCIPLES OF ANDRAGOGY

Assignment Title: An Overview of the Principles of Andragogy

ATLANTIC INTERNATIONAL UNIVERSITY

9 2022

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## Introduction to the principles of andragogy

In his research article on the beginnings and history of andragogy, John A. Henschke states: "The term 'andragogy', as far as we know, was first authored by Alexander Kapp (1833), a German high school gymnasium teacher." The term andragogy is rooted in the educational theory of Plato, the Greek philosopher. Plato held the belief that justice for individuals can be realized when each person develops their abilities completely. For Greek society and Plato, justice equates to excellence and, excellence is virtue.

Plato concluded that virtue is obtainable through three distinct stages in the development of knowledge, namely: knowledge of one's job, self-knowledge and knowledge of the Idea of the Good.

According to Plato, social justice is achieved when all classes in society have a harmonious relationship. To this end, societal harmony is achieved when all people are afforded equal educational opportunity from an early age to be positioned for fair competition with each other.

When equal educational opportunities are absent in a nation, an unjust society evolves with unqualified people heading up the political system, resulting in timocracy, oligarchy, defective and/or ineffective democracy or tyranny. In Plato's view, authentic education is interested and attentive to the common good, based on the principle of individual and social justice.

Andragogy defined – a simple definition

American adult educator, Malcolm Shepherd Knowles, published his first article in 1968, which he titled 'Andragogy, Not Pedagogy.' He is credited with adopting the andragogy theory after Alexander Kapp had originally coined the term.

The word 'andragogy' has its etymology in Greek: *andr* – which means "man" and *agogos* which means "leader of". Translated into English, *agogos* is a suffix: -agogy and means 'leading'.

Literally, in its most simple context, andragogy means "leader of man" or "leading man".

Keeping with a simplistic approach to defining andragogy, Knowles in his book, *The Modern Practice of Adult Education*, defined andragogy as: "the art and science of helping adults learn."

There are five elements pertaining to this definition of andragogy, namely; the concept of self, experience of the adult learner, the preparedness to learn, inclination towards learning and the motivation to learn.

The concept of self or self-concept

With the concept of self, the maturing adult shifts from dependency on others to being an independent, self-governed person. They are resourceful in sourcing and obtaining learning

materials and they have a clear understanding of steps to follow and how to proceed with their studies.

Experience of the adult learner or adult learner experience

As an individual reaches adulthood and ages, experience is accrued by the adult learner and becomes an expanding reservoir for learning.

The preparedness to learn or readiness to learn

With maturation, a person's preparedness to learn is increasingly directed towards educational activities of their social roles. Learners are ready to learn and they do not encounter any postponements or suspensions.

The inclination towards learning or orientation to learning

The maturing adult's perspective of time changes from delaying the utilization of knowledge to the urgency of the utilization and the person's inclination or orientation towards learning shifts. The individual's focus moves from being subject-centered to being problem-centered.

## Motivation to learn

Knowles determined that with maturity, a person intrinsically becomes motivated to learn. They take ownership of their learning processes and research and study independently.

The definition of andragogy can be expanded on, and further explain it to be, an adult educational process specifically directed at the adult learner and is focused on the interests and undeveloped potential of the student.

## The historical and theoretical background

The history of civilization is traced back to the Old World civilizations of Egypt, Mesopotamia, dated about 3000 BC, and North China following in about 1500 BC. The Egyptian and Mesopotamian civilizations flourished and thrived during this first phase of civilization (3000-1500 BC). The construct of their civilizations were different, but they both achieved monumental literary capabilities, developing their own writing and study. The website Britannica further explains: "The need for the perpetuation of these highly developed civilizations made writing and formal education indispensable." However, education was directed at the youth of their society, training them up for cultural roles such as priests or scribes.

It was not until 1833, when Alexander Kapp first focused on, and defined adult education, namely: andragogy. While studying the writings and works of Plato about education, Kapp noticed that Plato's reported observations involved both young people and adults. Kapp believes people have an enduring need to learn. He justified adult education as an essential necessity, expanding and elaborating on important general qualities to develop in different occupations, emphasizing inner qualities over outer qualities. Unbiased, objective competence is paramount in Kapp's andragogy and, the formation of character is the supreme value that humans obtain.

Another significant contributor to the field of andragogy was Eugen Rosenstock-Huessy, a German born in Berlin. He was a historian and social philosopher, whose work traversed many disciplines including linguistics, sociology, theology, history and many more. After World War 1, he engaged in labor issues, and focused his efforts on bettering education in order to improve the societal living standard. He was an andragogical pioneer and leading authority in theoretical and academic considerations on adult learning in the 1920s. He implemented various practical actions for his thoughts and ideas, inspiring adult educators.

The website Eugen Rosenstock-Huessy Fund states the following about Rosenstock's theory and practice: "Adult education, in particular, is oriented toward solving community problems as a step toward a better future." The curriculum required to achieve this must prepare the learner to recognize and see, understand and deal with problems as they present. The adult learner requires special education, as referenced by Rosenstock in 1921, which is completely different to that of



children. The adult undergoes a transformation, creating a new and better future having progressed with and through ever changing times.

In adult learning situations, the age difference between the teacher and the student is noticeably less, and therefore the teacher will assume a role of leading at first. In a short period of time, the student will become more autonomous, taking ownership of their learning and relying less on the teacher.

American educator, Eduard C. Lindeman is well-known for his leading-edge contributions in the understanding of adult education. The website Wikipedia states that Lindeman had: "a concern for social justice, a belief in the possibilities of education and human action, and a deep commitment to democracy." He held the following position on adult learners:

- Motivation to learn for adults stems from needs and interests that will be satisfied by further learning.
- Learning orientation for the adult is life-centered
- Adult's learning originates from abundant experience
- Adults want to be self-directing
- With age, individual differences increases among people

Lindeman's outlook for education reached beyond the classroom setting and formal adherence to established curricula. His vision was focused on the everyday educational possibilities of life – education starts with, and is connected to the learner's life; situations and not learning subjects; non-academic and non-vocational standards and ideals; and the experience people have is the most valuable resource. Life is education and individuals spend their whole life learning and education has no ending. The curriculum applied in adult education is designed to accommodate the interests and needs of the students.

His book "The Meaning of Adult Education", published in 1926 is widely acclaimed in America as the andragogical bible and is continually referenced in many other studies.

Malcolm Shepherd Knowles had a significant influence in the theory of humanist learning and plans on how to steer learning experiences. The website [infed.org](http://infed.org) states that Knowles: "was the first to chart the rise of the adult education movement in the United States; the first to develop a statement of informal adult education practice; and the first to attempt a comprehensive theory of adult education (via the notion of andragogy)."

Concrete utilization of andragogy

It is prudent to understand the use and application of andragogy in our modern world, and to determine if it is useful in the screen-time dominated global culture we are experiencing today.

Andragogy principles have been applied in multiple settings and situations namely: high school (11<sup>th</sup> grade: junior and 12<sup>th</sup> grade: senior), secondary educational institutions such as colleges and universities, and in it is an underlying activity of our everyday life.

Andragogy in high schools has replaced the long-established method of testing knowledge by giving students multiple choice tests and exams. Students found that the multiple choices for any given question were so similar, they became confused and could not rely on remembering all that they had studied in preparation for their test or exam. In some instances, a single word changed the meaning of the sentence, presenting a dilemma for the student when under pressure in the test or exam. For these reasons, "multiple choice" became known as "multiple guess" with students guessing the answer and hoping that their choice was correct. When guessing, students prove that they have not retained knowledge, and studied courseware is rendered useless and ineffective. However, with the introduction of andragogy principles, multiple choice questions have been greatly reduced and even eliminated. Andragogy presents the student with opportunities to apply critical thinking skills, and in this way, students demonstrate their understanding of subjects and topics.

In colleges and universities where andragogy is applied, the lecturer is not there to teach and disseminate information, but rather to facilitate the learning process, unlike in primary and secondary school where the teacher instructs and teaches the students. With andragogy, we see a

switching of roles; from teacher to facilitator. The website Seattle Colleges states: "in the adult classroom, the richest source of information is not the teacher, but in the student themselves."

The andragogically-oriented facilitator will also capitalize on the broad spectrum of experiences that the adult learners bring to the learning environment, coaching them and providing any additional guidance.

With the assistance of an advisor or counsellor, many colleges and universities require learners to plan and develop their own curriculum. The EUA report on curriculum design states that curriculum is: "the elements that make up a course or programme, including the content to be covered, intended learning outcomes, and teaching and assessment methods." Learners take ownership of their curriculum and studies and manage them.

Andragogy is also practiced in our everyday lives. Secondary education, whether it be a certificate, diploma or degree program, provides people with an education and qualification but when entering the job market, people still need on-the-job training. This training is essential in equipping employees with knowledge, skills and competencies to do their job by learning as they do their job. The trained employee is more productive, efficient and motivated.

As adults we often encounter situations where we need to utilize our prior knowledge and experience, for example changing a light bulb, hanging pictures on the wall or fixing a broken electrical appliance. In these everyday instances, we recall to mind our experience and

knowledge, and we know what to do without assistance; we activate andragogy. Our learning in school did not prepare us for everyday problems that we need to solve ourselves.

Andragogy will continue to help adult learners as more and more people enroll in learning institutions, and in addition, andragogy is the classroom of life, it is the trend of the future.

### Quotes from other people

According to the website AnswersToAll, the Roman general and statesman, Gaius Julius Ceasar, stated: "Experience is the teacher of all things." We learn many useful lessons from the experiences we have in life and we use our experiences to manage things in a more excellent way in the future. Experiences come in a variety of forms, such as a struggle, a failure, a success, a realization, and a discovery. Each experience is unique, together with its meaning and impact on the individual. Often times we learn hard lessons from experience which make the lesson learned unforgettable. We also tap into other peoples' experience and learn from them. In addition, most employers prefer to hire someone who has experience in the role or job they need to fill. In general, experience is viewed as the best teacher in life and every person is all the richer for the experiences they have had.

In adult education, the end result is not the most important factor; what is of utmost importance is the learning experience. Projects, assignments, exercises and activities that require the learner

to explore and research the subject matter, ensure that learners gain experience. Adult learners can solve problems by taking their own approach and using their knowledge in a way that is practical. The learning experience will be meaningful and effective as they learn from errors and mistakes and master their skills sets through their first-hand experience.

The website AZ Quotes, quotes Malcolm Knowles: "An essential aspect of maturing is developing the ability to take increasing responsibility for our own lives – to become increasingly self-directed." This statement of Knowles refers to the self-concept.

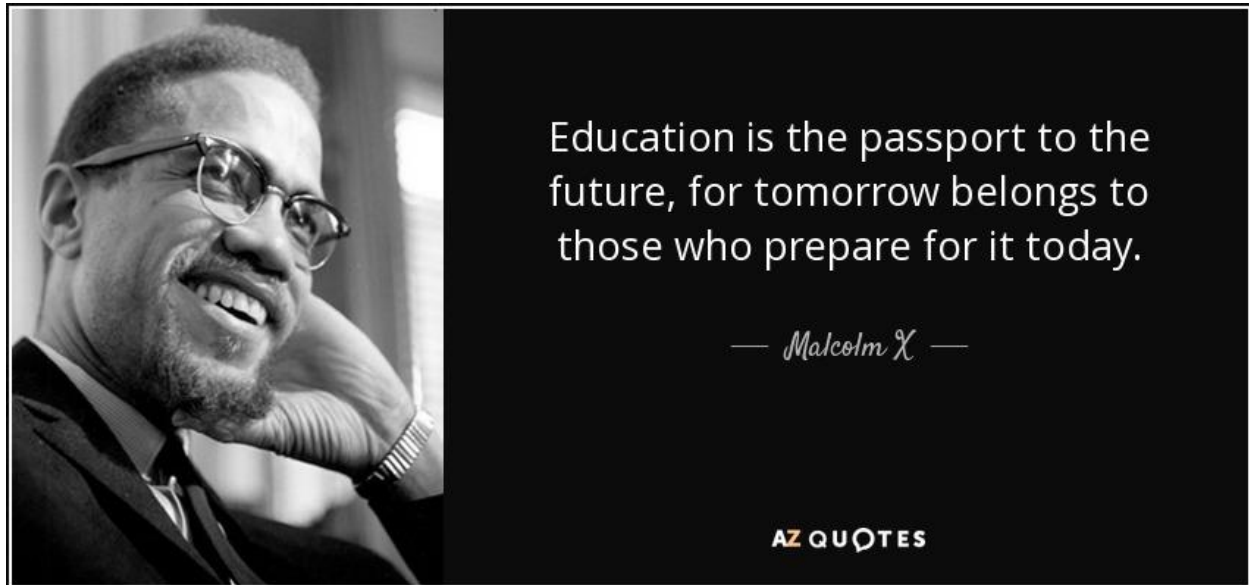
Knowles firmly believed that adults learned differently to children. Adults should have knowledge of self, such as understanding what their needs, interests, capacities and goals are, and what motivates them. All of these factors are very relevant in the adult learning arena because adults increasingly need to be responsible for their learning. Objective and mature self-examination will give them insight into who they are. Self-acceptance and self-respect is necessary but one should always strive to become a better person.

In her book, *The Measure of our Success: A letter to My Children and Yours*, Marian Wright Edelman states: "Education is for improving the lives of others and for leaving your community and world better than you found it."

Having an education equips one with power – power to make a change where we see discrimination, inequalities, exclusion of minorities, poverty, persecution of religious persons, and many other social injustices.

Access to education is a basic human right. UNESCO is leading the Global Education 2030 Agenda through Goal 4 of the Agenda, Sustainable Development. The website UNESCO states: "... worldwide 258 million children and youth are still out of school for social, economic and cultural reasons." With these statistics, the end goal of the Agenda almost seems impossible to attain and therefore individuals must do their part to help where they can, whether it be local in their community or on a worldwide scale. Education lifts children and adults out of impoverished lives, affording them better job opportunities and it is a stepping stone to access other essential human rights.

The below quote from Malcolm X, sums up the importance of being educated:



Picture from AZ Quotes website

## The advantages of andragogy

### Independent learning

For andragogy to be effective, adult learning must allow for autonomous, independent learning that is enabling and self-directed. Adult learners want freedom of choice with regards to what they should learn, when they should work on their studies and where they would like to complete their studies. They capitalize on their own potential, capabilities and motivation, and they have a variety of options to choose from in order to set their own goals and learning objectives.

Learning materials equip learners with knowledge and information while providing learning opportunities that can be comfortably paced. The adult learner can solve problems independently and is engaged and challenged.



## Enriched learning

With andragogy, the learning experience is enriched. The adult learner has moved away from the classroom setting where the teacher is responsible for teaching the prescribed curriculum, determining its efficacy and for evaluating the progress the student is making, determining if the student has mastered enough knowledge in specific topics in order to proceed to the next level. Many teaching methods used in the classroom are repeated over and over again and become dull, boring, unengaging, uninteresting and monotonous. In this environment, students lack internal motivation and are instead motivated by external factors such as parents, teachers, competing for high grades and the dread of the consequences of failure.

Andragogy does away with all the negatives of the classroom and the adult learner's learning experience is enhanced. Adult learners determine the direction of study they want to take, they self-evaluate and take responsibility for their studies. Life experiences is used as a foundation and adults learn from the facilitator and from other people. There is no requirement to advance to higher levels, instead knowledge gaps are filled where identified. Motivation is intrinsic prompted by wanting to have good self-esteem, enhanced quality of life, be able to solve problems and a desire to be recognized.

## Targeted learning

Adults have ownership of their learning and what they want to study, is based on their needs and their interests. Learners identify knowledge gaps and design their curriculum and study topics around finding solutions for life and work circumstances, making their learning purposeful.

## Useful learning

Because adult learners have designed their own curriculum, and identified knowledge gaps, their learning will be useful in achieving their goals. For example, a person might be lacking knowledge in business English, when this gap is identified, the person will want to study a course designed around gaining business English acumen. The learning process will be beneficial for the person. Time will not be wasted on learning unrelated topics and curricula – the knowledge gap is established and the learner closes the gap with the correct learning.

Learning can be linked to group learning with other students.

## Lifelong knowledge acquisition

The knowledge gained in the andragogy approach is for life. It is not forgotten and can be tapped into and recalled at any time or in any situation or circumstance where it is needed.

The disadvantages of andragogy

The initial stage of study

It can happen that adult learners struggle initially with starting their learning process. They will need to read introductory materials to understand what is required of them and often times, they are required to complete some administrative tasks prescribed by the college or university where they are enrolled. This requirement can extend to situations of on-the-job training where registration to be part of the sessions is mandatory. Learners may encounter feelings of confusion and being overwhelmed as they try to establish a starting point, how to go about applying their knowledge and how to establish research methods to gather information for study. In addition, where adult learners have jobs and/or a family of their own, they need to work around their responsibilities to dedicate time each day for study.

The absence of conventional methods

In the pedagogy classroom, learners are conditioned in that method of receiving instruction and knowledge and are dependent on the teacher to sequence and advance the learning process. With andragogy, adult learners have to overcome the conditioning they have received. They are now free to conduct and orchestrate their studies as they want. There may be an initial period of adjustment to this freedom.

## Conflict

Adult learners have an innate penchant to challenge traditions and in group settings where multiple cultures are represented, there may be conflicting approaches to solving problems and conducting research.

## Individualism

The website Cambridge Dictionary defines individualism as: "the idea that freedom of thought and action for each person is the most important quality of a society, rather than shared effort and responsibility." Some adults have strong personalities and are argumentative by nature. They are vocal about everything they do not agree with, and will defend their view point without hesitation and quarrel with their peers. When in thought, they disagree with everything that has no meaning to them. Their over-riding sense of individualism is their foremost trait.

## The advantages of pedagogy

## The ever-presence of the teacher

In the pedagogy classroom, the teacher is responsible for all aspects of what must be taught and the student is dependent on the teacher for all their learning. Students have no experience to tap into and therefore, the teacher is an influential figure in pedagogy. The teacher is the subject matter expert and can readily answer any questions the students have.

#### Access to resources

Resources are freely available and easily accessible as the teacher will be following a curriculum which sets out learning objectives for each unit of study. In addition to the student's textbook and workbook, the teacher will make any additional resources available to the students, for example, worksheets, cheat-sheets, supplementary notes, recommended reading, etc.

#### Non-taxing extension activities

Homework, assignments, lesson preparation, and practice, to name a few extension activities, are not cognitively draining or demanding and are fairly simple tasks for the student to complete independently. With regards to homework, the website [HelpfulProfessor.com](http://HelpfulProfessor.com) states: "The important task for teachers is to select homework that will best provide holistic support to a student."

## Good grades

In general, pedagogy students get good grades. In some instances, the grade structuring elements can be as simple as allocating a percentage of the overall marks to the student's workbook or awarding students with high grades for desirable behavior in the classroom and learning institution.

## The disadvantages of pedagogy

### Lack of critical thinking

Students are not given opportunities to utilize critical thinking, instead they are spoon-fed, reproducing activities the teacher has prepared for them to do. The teacher only covers learning outcomes that is required in formal tasks with an emphasis on knowing the correct answers in preparation for formal assessments.

### Developmental gaps

Students are not given opportunities to explore and develop their creative and critical thinking skills. Their attention span is limited and when listening to teaching instruction for long periods, learners may become bored, lose their focus and miss out on, or overlook information that is

important. Not being active in class results in the lack of opportunity to express what they have learned which is then easily forgotten because they could not put their new knowledge to use.

#### False grades

Because students are not exposed to tasks, activities and assignments that require them to be creative or use their cognitive skills, students are graded on false or artificial abilities which do not measure true ability of the student. For example, students learn for an examination on a specific topic. The questions are either multiple choice or based on what the student can remember about the topic. The student has no life experience to enhance the topics they study.

#### Deficiency in cognition

According to the website Online Etymology Dictionary: "educare refers more frequently to the mind," and, "There is no authority for the common statement that the primary sense of education is to 'draw out or unfold the powers of the mind.'" However, with pedagogy, there are limited or no opportunities to develop cognitive functions of the brain and mind. This is a major disadvantage because learning is an individualistic experience.

#### An educated choice – my personal perspective

From my research and the above comparisons of the advantages and disadvantages of pedagogy and andragogy, I must say that without a doubt, when choosing a learning style, andragogy works best for me. The andragogy model has helped me discover and understand my learning style. I need the structure of courseware, the guidance of my advisor, the requirements for each assignment and the freedom express the knowledge I have gained with each assignment.

Andragogy has showcased my strengths. What I have realized is that I am good at doing in-depth research and organizing vast amounts of information into concise paragraphs that I rewrite in my own words for my assignments. I enjoy being creative and have learned to use many words and expressions to discuss various topics.

On the downside, I find some of the research materials I came across, to be very difficult to understand. The articles are written by academics, professionals in their field and even professors and they do not use everyday English. Many words are changed and the suffix 'ism' is added making it hard to comprehend the meaning of the word, especially because they are not common words, for example, constructivism, behaviorism, and cognitivism. In some instances I have had to look the words up in a dictionary because I want to ensure that I grasp the concept of the sentences they were used in. Although I understand the meaning of the words and the ideas being discussed, I still find it difficult. I intend to do more reading on such topics to overcome this barrier.



When I contemplate these struggles, I realize that because I am living in a foreign country, and there is very little use of English in the city where I stay, I do not have opportunity for in depth conversations in English; use of English is limited to primary school textbook English in daily interactions. There is only one other foreigner where I stay who can speak English and it is not his first language. I am therefore grateful to be studying for this Bachelor's Degree through AIU as it is redeveloping and reawakening my cognitive skills.

#### Andragogy at work – a practicum



Photo from website: [infed.org](http://infed.org): Facilitating learning and change in groups and group sessions

My observations about the above photo

The photo shows a large group of adult learners who have been arranged in smaller groups of four. It may be coincidence, or it may be deliberate and purposeful that each member of the smaller groups is wearing a different color shirt, with the same colors represented in each small group. If it is for a specific reason, perhaps each person has been allocated a definitive task within the group or perhaps to argue for or against a viewpoint, or to bring some explicit knowledge or expertise to the session. One person in each group is mapping ideas and taking notes on a large sheet of paper.

This learning session is being facilitated by a facilitator, who cannot be seen in the photo. The website [infed.org](http://infed.org) defines group facilitation as: "a process in which a person whose selection is acceptable to all members of the group, who is substantively neutral, and who has no substantive decision-making authority diagnoses and intervenes to help a group improve how it identifies and solves problems and makes decisions, to increase the group's effectiveness." The facilitator will structure the learning session by selecting a topic that the learners are interested in and allocating time for the group work, and other procedures to be followed during the session. Helping learners explore, learn and change is at the core of facilitation, empowering the participants.

The venue/environment is appropriate for the group work as learners need adequate space to organize themselves in small groups and sit on the floor. There is enough room for multiple groups to work together comfortably and make use of stationery. The environment is conducive to learning and is not chaotic.

Learning is taking place through discussion, contemplating and sharing ideas and listening to other members of the group. Each adult learner brings a wealth of experience to their group adding value to the group work. Working in a group, encourages exploration as they engage in the subject or topic they are enabled to proceed and achieve more and more.

Andragogy: an evaluation – the ideology of andragogy

Learning in the andragogy model is flexible. Education or a knowledge outcome is achieved in the absence of exact learning systems. In andragogy, the acquisition of education is realized by a process of multiple inputs. Learners are confident and have the freedom to consider many perspectives and points of view and their life experience impacts their learning.

The website The University of Tennessee, Knoxville, John A. Henschke states: "Andragogy has a long and rich history that has shaped understanding of adult learning and continues to be a strong force in guiding the way adults learn." Andragogy has established its roots as the adult

learning model of the future and already has more than 5 decades of application in many countries, such as the United States of America, the United Kingdom, Canada and New Zealand.

The website BrainWare states: "While everyone has the ability to learn, we don't all have the same capacity to learn." We can all learn because the neurons in our brain connect in response to stimuli from our environment. Our brains are constantly learning however, our capacity to learn varies. Some people are gifted mathematically or musically or linguistically, for example. The human brain is phenomenal and can be trained to increase in learning capacity through strategies that support learning, cognitive skills training and developing a growth mindset.

## Conclusion

Because humans are naturally curious and inquisitive beings, they will always want to have more knowledge and thus will learn more. Every society is built on the visions people had for improvement, to create a utopia which surpasses other civilizations. People see a gap or a void in life and they direct their time, energy and resources to advance mankind.

In our modern day of 2022, we see great visionaries at work in the technological and industrial fields with literal quantum leaps in progress. Perhaps the most extraordinary visionary we have to date is Elon Musk. He has a successful self-driving electric car in his Tesla models and he has launched and successfully landed rockets, allowing for them to be reused. Musk started the

Boring Company to bore underground transport networks in the United States. His greatest vision is to see people colonizing Mars and becoming inter-planetary beings. It is clear that Musk is a super product of andragogy; he is not even limited by his own imagination and he is actively pursuing these future plans.

Growing up I heard sayings such as: "The sky is the limit." and, "Space is the final frontier." but we have long exited the boundaries of the sky and we have made progress in space exploration, more than we knew possible. My new saying is that we are not restricted in our imaginings and in what we can do, create and achieve – there is no limit. Andragogy provides the freedom for adults to shape our world and to advance our societies.

How I will apply this knowledge in my life

Studying this course has defined what I had an idea about but did not have a term for. I knew that adults learn differently to children and that as adults, we want freedom to explore our possibilities and creativity; and we want to lean on our experiences in life to enrich our learning. Now I know that these factors are part of andragogy.

I am encouraged to explore and research more about this topic and perhaps write an article about societies or instances where andragogy is not used and adults still learn in a classroom, listening to a lecturer for hours on end, taking their own notes and hoping to get through the prescribed

curriculum without falling asleep or losing concentration. I have experienced this many times in the past; at least up until about five years ago, but I know that this practice still continues today.

I feel inspired to help my colleagues, who as adults, still learn from textbooks, memorizing text. I have seen first-hand that they can memorize text but it is soon forgotten and true comprehension and appreciation of the lesson was lost and no experience is gained. I want to work closely with them becoming a force for change.

I have learned a great deal from this course on the Principles of Andragogy. Education is our right and pathway to a better future.

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