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by

Susan Isenberg, John Henschke, and Kathy Petroff

Abstract

Developing and implementing a Doctor of Andragogy Program andragogically provides an opportunity to "think outside the box." It requires congruency between talking and action, and active involvement of the learners. With many successes in the first two years, a concern emerged over the lack of interest and attendance in the initiative. Using andragogy to investigate the concern, opportunities emerged for improvement.

Introduction

Creating new programs in higher education is always interesting business. The heavy lifting of program creation unfolds in ways that are messy and not always linear. Stakeholders engaged in such daunting tasks want their needs represented. Program creation often calls for "thinking outside of the box;" new programs and the creative processes necessary for program and institutional growth may present a "Catch 22" for the stakeholders involved in the effort. Instead of "nibbling" around the edges of program design, university faculty members who are experts in the field of andragogy, model their practice by valuing and inviting the voice of the learners. This practice goes well above and beyond the traditional, albeit important notion of assessing learning or program evaluation. This new practice requires active participation on the part of all stakeholders, including the learners themselves. *Just maybe*, there is a place for student voices in such endeavors within the enterprise of higher education.

New university programs frequently fill a need for a population that requires a degree in a field of study in order to be employable in that field. However, the traditional need for initial

employment in the field is not perceived by students or faculty of andragogy. Instead, they appear to seek improvement in their current employment practice. This difference is fundamental and unique to andragogy degrees. As such, this degree attracts students whose focus is greater than employment. In an effort to model the practice – theory connection, students currently taking andragogy courses within the Ed.D. – Andragogy Emphasis Specialty Program, are participating in the journey of enhancing the evolution of an independent andragogy doctor of education degree. Since this process began, an online master's degree and a graduate certificate, guided by the two professors of andragogy, are being developed. The learners in this program see that "word and deed" are joined; students have a stake in and become invested in shaping their andragogy academic study.

Involving participants/students (as far as we know) in the development of doctoral, master's degrees and certificate programs in andragogy is not generally part of the practice and procedures within the enterprise of higher education. Vigorously engaging participants in each step of the process of developing academic programs may be tested as an example for possibly helping to improve the field of adult and continuing education; or contextualized more broadly, may be seen as a way for student voice to become part of a model of continuous program development and improvement. In this program, participants are invited (and guided by professors) to be involved in the process each step of the way. This, in essence, blends the actual research, theory and practice as an inseparable unit.

Foundational theory, research, practice and the two andragogy professors' years of experience are blended to inform the scope of this process (Rachal, 2002; Savicevic, 2008; Glancy & Isenberg, 2011; Isenberg & Titus, 1999; Isenberg & Henschke, 2012; Knowles, 1990). Table 1 depicts connections with the eight processes of andragogy. Each item

demonstrates the engagement of students, but is not complete as to the things included.

Table 1

Aligning the Eight Process Elements of Andragogy with the Process Elements of Building an Andragogv Ed.D. Program to Demonstrate Theory Application

Preparing the learners for what is to come	Professors communicated vision and weekly mutual planning meeting approach to all andragogy students through email and during andragogy courses.
Setting a climate conducive to adult learning	Voluntary participation, sitting at round table in cheery office, drinking coffee, open invitation, open discussion, and respect for all voices. Creating a sense of place.
Involving learners and facilitators in mutual planning to foster pro-active learning	Timeline sequence of events working backward from a "go live" deadlines, i.e., planning/co-creating international university partnerships, and planning/creating cultural experiences.
Engaging participants in a process of diagnosing their own learning needs	Developed Master's and Doctoral Assessment Instrument completed by all students in the program. Sent out survey (via survey monkey) to all andragogy students to see what courses they would like offered and in what sequence.
Facilitating the learners in translating their learning needs into learning objectives	Contract doctoral degrees as short-term goal, master's online degree, certificate, and free-standing Ed.D. degree as future goals.
Designing a mutually beneficial pattern of learning experiences	Weekly meetings, development of program and course proposals, market analysis, marketing plan, webpage planning, conference presentation planning, research planning, planning and executing lectures/discussions with "international" partners.
Collaborating with and allowing adult learners to manage and carry out their learning plans	Advocacy and seeking ways around barriers, providing face-to-face experience for interns, graduate assistants, and international students.
Learners and facilitators assessing participant satisfaction and the extent to which participants have achieved their learning objectives	Weekly meeting, participant assessment biannually, program standards assessment at start and finish of program.

Source. Adapted from (Knowles, 1990; Isenberg and Henschke, 2012)

Current Status

Friday meetings for andragogy doctoral degree programs building continued

throughout fall 2012, spring 2013, and summer 2013. The 33-hour online master's degree

andragogy program and an 18-hour graduate andragogy certificate program received the first level of approval from education leadership by the end of the spring 2013 semester. Full approval for both will be sought this fall 2013 semester. There was brisk attendance at the Friday meetings during that time of course and program planning and development.

Interest emerged outside the Friday meeting group to create the new Ed.D. degree program with the title Andragogy and Higher Education (equal billing). A collaborative effort is underway between andragogy and higher education professors to think through the course offerings for such a degree. This collaboration has been outside the Friday meetings.

In the spring of 2013 after the preliminary approval of the online and certificate programs, a program evaluation was completed among the Friday meeting volunteer participants in preparation for this conference paper. It was modeled after the Brookfield's (1995) Critical Incident Questionnaire (CIQ). A noteworthy result was that the majority of answers to the first question were the same. When asked, at what times during these Friday meetings do you feel most engaged with what is happening, the overwhelming answer was when the topic of discussion is interesting and important. It was during that time that we noticed a decrease in attendance each week and that attendees were almost exclusively those andragogy students who were already on campus and were *walking over, not traveling in* to attend the Friday meetings.

In June/July of 2013, one of the andragogy professors was absent from Lindenwood for a month due to academic travel to Thailand. His absence was felt by the group and surely contributed to the lagging interest among the Friday meeting participants over the summer.

New Concern

As the Friday meetings begin a third year of work toward building andragogy degree

programs with student and other stakeholders, a concern over participant interest and

attendance emerged and may be related to the program evaluation results. As we track

alignment of the eight process elements of andragogy with the process elements of building

an Andragogy Ed.D. degree program, it seems important to also tract how we are attending

to the six assumptions of the adult learner (Friday meeting attendees and stakeholders of the

andragogy programs). As a result, Table 2 depicts the connections with the six assumptions

of the adult learner as an exercise to investigate andragogy theory application in response to

the concern.

Table 2

Aligning the Six Assumptions of the Adult Learner with the Friday Meeting Participants to Investigate Theory Application

Increasingly self-directed	Friday meeting participants voluntarily take on work that they perceive is needed (e.g., creating an andragogy blog).
A rich resource for learning from each other	Internationals taught local participants about andragogy in their countries. Friday professors and students reported on the group's ongoing work during andragogy courses to inform and invite. However, only students already on campus seemed to attend on Fridays. Too many voices are missing in this otherwise democratic process.
Learn as a result of developmental tasks or social roles	All Friday meeting participants are doctoral students and recent discussions on the new Ed.D. degree have been among professors of higher education and andragogy, not among andragogy students and andragogy professors.
Want immediate application of the learning to solve a problem	Friday meeting professors and students understand the importance of bringing new students into the andragogy programs. Many are talking to their colleagues at school and work about the Friday meetings to generate interest in the andragogy programs. The Ed.D. Andragogy Emphasis degree program has nine new students starting Fall 2013—the highest number starting at one time in the history of the program.

Internally motivated	Friday meeting participation was down this summer. No further work has been done on forwarding the master's online degree and certificate program. The work on the doctoral program has been done outside the Friday meetings this past summer. Lack of relevance may have decreased internal motivation.
Need a reason to learn that makes sense to them	Friday meeting participants may not clearly see the relevancy and saliency of the weekly meetings. Results of the program evaluation indicated disinterest causes disengagement. Additionally, the day and length of the meetings may be barriers to attending.

Source. Adapted from Knowles (1984).

As a result of this exercise in thinking about the Friday meeting participants as adult learners, there is an opportunity to make a few changes to the Friday meeting initiative in an effort to engage all andragogy students in building andragogy programs by attending to all six of the adult learner assumptions.

Opportunities to Address the Concern

Andragogy doctoral degree enrollees are up, but participation in the Friday meetings is down. One obvious reason is the lightheartedness and change of pace that summer brings. Vacations and catch-up work were distractions. However, there are other less obvious reasons that were revealed in the exercise aligning the learner assumptions with the Friday meeting process that could be addressed. The three assumptions that could be addressed are (a) adults are a rich resource for learning from each other, (b) adult learners are internally motivated, and (c) adults need a reason to learn that makes sense to them (evidenced on the program evaluation results).

Adult Learners are a Rich Resource for Learning from Each Other

To address *adults are a rich resource for learning from each other*, andragogy students who are not on campus could participate virtually through a blog, which was

introduced to the Friday group by an international student who completed his coursework and has returned to his country. The blog would keep the conversation going among interested andragogy students worldwide and allow many instead of some to participate. With most of the blog set-up work completed, the blogging must simply begin.

With nine new andragogy emphasis doctoral students, a reception is planned for early fall as an opportunity for new student onboarding. This will be an opportunity to share andragogy program resources including the Friday meetings, blog, etc. An andragogy bulletin board is planned for the office door of the two professors that will be a place to give and receive andragogy program information, view pictures of events, list resources, etc.

Adult Learners are Internally Motivated

It is often the case that meetings with a purpose begin with great gusto as a result of the members' internal motivation and enthusiasm—fighting the good fight! But, unless each member continues to feel internally motivated, membership will wane. Perhaps the work on the doctoral program should be brought back to the Friday meeting for participant input and feedback. This is the andragogy program that is most relevant to the current Friday meeting participants. Some may see themselves teaching a course in this program, perhaps as an adjunct before their graduation from the current doctoral program.

Adults Need a Reason to Learn that Makes Sense to Them

Some attend Friday meetings for face time with the professors or relationship building with other colleagues who regularly attend. So, the meetings may serve dual purpose. The meetings become more relevant and important for reasons other than building an andragogy program together. For some, the day and length of the meetings may make them irrelevant. Andragogy courses are always on Monday and Tuesday nights at 4:30, so gathering for 30

minutes before the classes begin instead of Fridays and in a place convenient and close to the classrooms may increase attendance, perhaps even in a restaurant close to campus or the student union.

Conclusion

Andragogically building a Doctor of Andragogy program is tricky business. It is the role of the professors of andragogy to facilitate an andragogical process. With many successes to tout, a new concern over a decrease in interest and meeting attendance must be addressed. By aligning the six assumptions of the adult learner with the Friday meeting participants to investigate theory application, opportunities for improvement emerged.

Lack of importance and relevancy seems to be the leading adult learner assumption that must be addressed by the professors and participants in the Friday meetings. As we begin the fall 2013 semester, it is time to engage more andragogy students in this discussion through a needs assessment and mutual planning among all participants. Congruency between talking and action includes applying andragogy to the process of program improvement.

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