### Guidance note no. 2 – Andragogy

# Laws of learning

The six laws of learning are suitable for most learning situations. When planning a training session, using some of these laws creates a better learning atmosphere for the students.

**Law of Readiness**

A person learns best when the necessary background is provided, paired with a good attitude, and the readiness to learn. One cannot not learn much if there is no identifiable reason for learning. Getting a student ready to learn is usually the trainer’s job. A clear goal and objective(s) and a good reason for learning sometimes help to motivate students to learn even when they start off not caring. A student who is usually ready to learn meets the trainer halfway. Sometimes the trainer can do little to create a readiness to learn. Outside responsibilities, overcrowded schedules, health, finances, or family affairs can take away a student’s desire to learn.

**Law of Exercise**

Those things most often repeated are the best learned. This is the basis for practice and drill. The mind rarely retains, evaluates, and applies new concepts or practices after only one exposure. A student learns by applying what he has been taught. Every time s/he practices, his/her learning continues. There are many types of repetitions. These include student recall, review and then summary and manual drill and physical applications. All of these serve to create learning habits.

**Law of Effect**

This law is based on the feelings of the learner. Learning is stronger when joined with a pleasing or satisfying feeling. It is weakened when linked with an unpleasant feeling. An experience that produces feelings of defeat, anger, frustration, futility, or confusion in a student is unpleasant. This will decrease the learning capabilities. Every learning experience does not have to be entirely successful, nor does the student have to master each task completely. However, every learning experience should contain elements that leave the student with some good feelings. A student’s chance of success is definitely increased if the learning experience is a pleasant one.

**Law of Primacy**

Primacy is being first, which often creates a strong impression. This means that the trainer must be right the first time. Everyone knows from experience how hard it is to break a bad habit. “Un-teaching” wrong first impressions is harder than teaching them right the first time. The first experience of a student should be positive. This helps to provide a stable foundation for all that follows.

**Law of Intensity**

A sharp, clear, or exciting learning experience teaches more than a routine or boring one. This law implies that a student will learn more from the real thing than a substitute. For example, a student can get more understanding and appreciation of a movie by watching it than by reading the script. The classroom places real limits on the amount of realism that can be brought in by the trainer. So, s/he should use his/her imagination to keep things as close to real life as possible. Mockups, videotapes, interactive courseware, slides, charts, and any number of other training aids add sharpness and action to classroom instruction. Demonstrations, skits, and role playing do much to increase the learning experience of students.

**Law of Recency**

Other things being equal, the things learned last will be best remembered. The opposite is also true. The longer the student is away from a new fact or understanding, the harder it is to remember. For example, it is fairly easy to recall a telephone number dialed a few minutes ago, but it is usually impossible to recall a new number dialed last week. The trainer must recognize the law of recency when planning a good summary. He should repeat, restate, or reemphasize the training objectives. He should also repeat important information the students need to remember.

# 7 Top Facts About The Adult Learning Theory

*Mature learners have unique learning needs and traits that should influence your eLearning course design. In this article, I share the 7 top facts about adult learning theory that every eLearning professional must know.*

### Adult Learning Theory: Everything eLearning Professionals Should Know

In 1968, Malcolm Shephard Knowles put forward a theory that distinguished adult learning (andragogy) from childhood learning (pedagogy). He expounded his ideas using five main assumptions. Out of these five points, he extrapolated four principles to make adult learning education more effective. Ηis theory still holds water. It’s closely referenced in the development of eLearning material. Here are 7 notable facts and tips about adult learning theory that you may want to consider before creating your next eLearning course.

#### Adult Learners Have A Well-Established Sense Of Self

In childhood, we model ourselves off our parents and siblings. As teenagers, we pull away from family to mimic our friends and peer groups. It isn’t until adulthood that we pick-and- choose from these two stages. We form a complete entity we call our ‘self’ and can be very attached to it. Even if we’re not emphatic about identity politics, we do have a clear sense of self. We know we’re distinct and separate from those around us. This affects our decisions and actions. In a training context, this means we want a say in our eLearning courses. We require a healthy sense of autonomy in learning. Otherwise, we soon lose interest.

#### Past Experiences Play A Pivotal Role In Adult Learning

Kids go to school with a good deal of knowledge, but it’s not necessarily academic. By pre-school, they vaguely know how to share and speak. But there’s lots of space for fresh data. Adults, on the other hand, have a world of experience behind them both academic and social. To teach them effectively, you have to feed into what they already know. Piggy-back off that and launch new concepts. This is crucial, because if your new data clashes with their existing knowledge base, they’re not likely to accept it. You have to skillfully integrate into their lived experience, becoming an active part of their thought process.

#### Adult Learning Is Purpose Driven

Kids go to school because they’re supposed to. Adults learn because they see the relevance. If they don’t train, it could cost them a non-compliance fine or a promotion. They consciously decide to pick up a new skill or polish a valued hobby. It’s a choice, not a duty. So their learning needs to be goal oriented. They have to see measurable learning objectives and have a clear system of gauging their progress. Otherwise, they’ll just walk out of class. An eLearning course for adult learners must be tied to real-world applications. For example, incorporate simulations or real-world examples that allow them to see how the skill relates to their job duties or will help them overcome a challenge that is hindering their work performance.

#### Adult Learning Relies On A Readiness To Learn

Closely tied into their practicality is their willingness to attend the eLearning course. They paid for this eLearning course themselves or were sponsored by their employer. But they’re still aware they’re in the session by choice, so they’re open to learning. They see the value in it and can comprehend the big picture. This makes them more receptive to study the online training material. It also makes them more discerning. They can recognize quality and are more vocal in demanding it. They relate to online instructors and eLearning course designers as peers, since they’re fellow adults. They rarely hold them in awe or derision like kids do with their teachers. Keep online training material relevant and task based to tap into their openness and interest.

#### Adult Learners Are Driven By Internal Motivation

Kids can be trained with ‘carrots and sticks’. They want their teacher to like them, and they’re eager for those gold stars. They’re scared of disapproval. These polar emotions can keep them working hard, at least for a while. Adults develop their own methods of motivation. Focus their online training on problem-solving. Rote learning doesn’t do them much good. There’s no stage in their workday when they’ll need to recite their lessons.

Instead, offer simulations and contextual role play, showing how to translate their online training into real life. This will keep them coming back to class.

#### Mistakes Are Often The Most Valuable Teacher

The adult learning theory hinges on experiential learning. Which means that adults are encouraged to explore the subject matter firsthand and learn from their mistakes. For example, participate in branching scenarios that show them how their actions or behaviors lead to real consequences. As a result, they are less likely to make those mistakes in the workplace and continually develop their experiential knowledge.

#### Adult Learners Must Play An Active Role In The eLearning Course Design Process

A core principle of the adult learning theory is that online learners must be actively involved in the process so that they’re empowered and motivated. They should play a part in developing eLearning content, evaluating performance, and creating training criteria.

Conduct surveys to get their feedback, then invite them to sit through a test course to identify gaps. They should also be able to personalize their learning paths and choose eLearning activities that are relevant to them and their job duties. Namely, resources that allow them to immediately apply what they’ve learned and address individual pain points.

Some of Knowles’ concepts of andragogy are generally accepted. Others are disputed because they overlap with pedagogy. Further research has shown that childhood to adult learning is a spectrum. Some kids are precocious and some adults are immature where online training is concerned. That said, Knowles’ adult learning theory states adults have a developed sense of self, prior experience, practical reasons for learning. They’re ready to learn and internally motivated. As a result, their online training programs should be self- directed, relevant, contextual, and task-based. They should be less theoretical and more hands-on.

Source: adapted from https://elearningindustry.com/the-adult-learning-theory-andragogy-of-malcolm-knowles

Additional information on under the entry “andragogy” of Wikipedia at <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Andragogy>, <https://elearninginfographics.com/adult-learning-theory-andragogy-infographic/> (nice infographic, partly seen in the slides), and <https://elearningindustry.com/9-tips-apply-adult-learning-theory-to-elearning>