

Applying Andragogy to Assessment Design: How to Engage Your Learners and Make your Teaching Easier.

Duncan D Nulty
Learning and Teaching Centre
Australian Catholic University

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- How might we do more to engage industry as partners in the assessment of students learning?
- Helping us with the marking perhaps!

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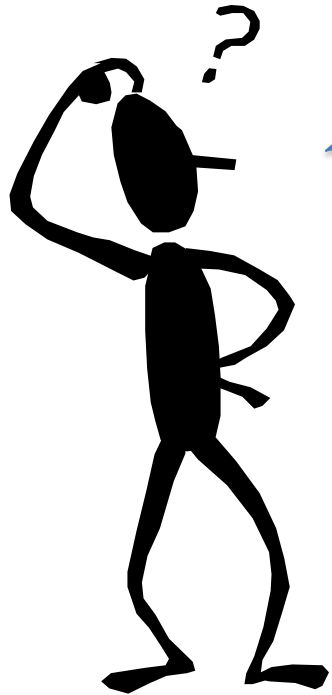
My basic argument:

- We can *and should* use some of the principles of andragogy to guide us in the design of our assessment of students' learning.
- If we do, our assessment will be more aligned with industry (in the broadest sense).
- This alignment will create an alliance between our students' sense of purpose, our educational aims, and the needs of the industries they will enter – society even!
- There could be many significant benefits.

Applying andragogy to assessment design:

1. Principles of Andragogy
2. Apply the principles to assessment design
3. An illustrated example from a course I teach
4. Outcomes

5. Can this work for you?



Andrew who?!

- Andragogy is the method and practice of teaching adult learners.
- Pedagogy is much the same, except that it's applied to younger learners – i.e. children.
- In practice, we use the term pedagogy more broadly i.e. we apply it to both groups and make no mention of the age group we're teaching.

- Childrens' and adults' learning are different.
- For children, we need to consider the physiological maturation of the brains of the learners. (See Piaget)
- For adult learners, we have to consider maturation of their *conceptions* of what knowledge is, and therefore what learning is. (See Perry)
- Maturation, development, and growth are involved for both, but the nature of each is different.

6 Principles of Andragogy (Knowles, 1984)

1. Adults need to know the reason for learning something;
2. Experience (including error) provides the basis for learning activities;
3. Adults need to be responsible for their decisions on education, and have involvement in the planning and evaluation of their instruction;
4. Adults are most interested in learning subjects having immediate relevance to their work and/or personal lives;
5. Adult learning is problem-centered rather than content-oriented; and,
6. Adults are purposeful [especially] when they can see the real world application.

1. Adults will not invest their time, effort or money in learning activities that they cannot see the point of, the value of, or the relevance of.
2. Adults are really quite unlikely to be motivated to study in the way we would like them to, or the ways we ask them to, simply out of trust.
3. When adults can see the value and relevance, they will be motivated and engaged and will self-direct their effort accordingly.

- The third point here is particularly important:
- Students who can see the relevance and value of the learning activities we propose for them, will be *intrinsically* motivated to engage with them.
- They will contribute *actively* to making decisions about their own study behaviours that are consistent with maximizing the likelihood that they will do well on those tasks – precisely because they see this as a strategic benefit to them.
- They will (of course) claim this as them teaching themselves, - but we will all know that it was us that led them to do so.

Linking Assessment design to Andragogy: Knowles' principle 1

- *Explain* to students the *reasons* why they should learn something by providing a clear *rationale* for the units they study (and the courses these comprise).
- Make sure that assessments are directly (and obviously) related to these reasons.
- Ideally, each assessment task will have a *purpose* that is aligned to the reasons for studying the unit (or course).

Linking Assessment design to Andragogy: Knowles' principle 2

- Design courses, units, & smaller scale learning activities (like lectures), and especially assessment, on the premise that they each comprise part of a deliberate sequence of experiences *that the learners are participant in*.
- In other words, learning (and our role facilitating it) is more about what students have to do than the content.
- Thus, we should provide a developmental sequenced *experience* – driven by the assessment.

Linking Assessment design to Andragogy: Knowles' principle 3

- Impress on students that *they are responsible for their learning* and that *they* need therefore to be actively involved in planning how they will engage, and when.
- Fundamentally, learning can only occur when the learner invests time and effort in the task of learning – they have to be actively involved, and (in general) no teacher can or should stipulate every learning activity that the learners will undertake.
- Students, of course, have to engage in the assessment – so use that to direct/guide them.

Linking Assessment design to Andragogy: Knowles' principle 4

- Develop and deliver units and courses that have a transparent relevance and value to the students both in the 'here and now' and in 'the imagined aspirational futures of the students – as they see it'.
- Thus, a 'real-world' rationale for a unit or course is essential, but not sufficient. What is also needed is for this rationale to "speak to" the students in a way that links the learning activities of the unit or course (particularly the assessments) to needs that the students themselves have – and will have in the future.
- We need students to be saying: "This unit is clearly really important for me if I am to be successful – I obviously need what this unit is designed to help me learn."
- Again, the assessment required is where the rubber hits the road.

Linking Assessment design to Andragogy: Knowles' principle 5

- Present learning experiences in ways that clearly link to real problems not just content.
- This promotes the development of comprehension (deep learning), instead of simply acquisition of “facts”.
- So, assessments should pose problems.
 - Ask yourself what behavioural processes do the assessments in your units of study promote?
 - What cognitive processes accompany these?
 - Do your students have to think?

Linking Assessment design to Andragogy: Knowles' principle 6

- Ensure that the problem-oriented learning described above is also *authentic* to real-world purposes.
- Then adults can see the purpose of the learning (in a 'real' way, not an abstract way), and can also be purposeful about their learning.
- Thus, set assessments that resemble tasks students will have to do once they graduate, or at least tasks that clearly scaffold their learning to the next task.

- What follows describes a specific example, taken from ACU's Graduate Certificate in Higher Education.
- The second unit in this course focuses on *curriculum design, assessment design and evaluation*.
- These are all activities every teaching academic is involved in – at least to some degree.
- Making it obvious that the unit relates to developing the student's capability to understand and do these things (that they must do in their work), makes the unit relevant and valuable.
- This is underscored by the assessments.

1. Critique (or create) the rationale statement in three unit outlines.
2. Critique the rest of one unit outline, in light of the rationale.
3. Re-author that unit outline to fix any problems uncovered in assignment 1 and 2.
4. Propose an evaluation and improvement plan based on the theorising you used in assignments 1-3.
5. Evaluate your own work.

Andragogical features of this pattern of assignments

These tasks :

1. Have high and obvious relevance and value - the reason for doing them is clear, their immediate value (to study) is clear, their long-term value (to the students as academics) is clear.
2. Create a constructive developmental sequence for the learning experience
3. Are problem focused not content focused
4. Allow students to choose their own unit outlines, take responsibility for sourcing some of the literature they cite, and allow flexibility over the structure of the assignment.
5. Encourage students to engage purposefully with the tasks.
6. Help to develop metacognition.

Outcomes – did it work?

Some illustrative student quotes:

- “The way assessments were structured was impressive as they were scaffolded, and one could improve the work based on the experience with the previous assessment.”
- “You do what you preach by demonstrating best practice how to enhance learning, and how to use various methods of assessment.”
- “This semester has been a blast. I don't think I've ever been so motivated to learn in my life than this semester! Thank you for your huge contribution to that!”
- “I absolutely love this course, your approach ... I want to emulate this. You are absolutely teaching by doing ... and modeling and I am learning so much...”

Outcomes – did it work?

Some illustrative student quotes:

- “I found UNHE500 to be stimulating, compelling and absorbing (not all material!), and very rewarding.”
- “I am extremely enjoying this unit, it is encouraging me to reflect regularly about my teaching (I love to reflect but this reflection sometimes leads to WHY questions but the educational theory is now providing me with the answers to some of these why's!).”
- “I have really enjoyed learning with a different focus and using all the resources you have provided to us.”
- “I really did find the course helpful and interesting.”
- “The course so far has greatly enhanced my teaching. I look forward to resuming in 2018.”

- No plagiarism!
- Excellent quality of observable learning outcomes in the assignments themselves.

All making sense?



Drouot

Hmm, interesting!
Sounds good.
Can I get this to work for me?

Give it a go!

Comments/Suggestions/ Questions?

 e.mail:

duncan.nulty@acu.edu.au

☺ In person: North Sydney, TWH, Level 17