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Understanding Different Models of Adult Learning: The Australia Residency Education Extension Immersion Case Study

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ABSTRACT: *This research examined the andragogical concepts of Andragogy of Knowles, Kolb's Experiential Learning Theory, and Honey and Mumford Learning Style as a framework for developing a new approach to extension education. Such a review is a cornerstone for established assumptions that was tested in the learning process. The involvement of a community (the Murray community) and the utilization of techniques learned during the residential experiential learning serve as a foundation for testing assumptions through the Murray Experience. The outcome served as the foundation for developing and testing the Glenn Step-Board Learning Model.*

Key words: Andragogy of Knowles, Glenn Step-Board Learning Model, Honey and Mumford Learning Style, Kolb's Experiential Learning Theory, and Murray Experience.

I.   Introduction

In the early ages of Education, students are matched with the same age and level of expertise and knowledge in an environment to process learning. In many studies, research took adult learning for granted until experts used corporate thinking to train individuals. Adult learners have a higher sense of direction and motivation and are more focused on achieving goals; thus, they choose the relevant and open information to modern ways of learning.

Knowles popularized andragogy as the science of teaching adults in 1968; it posits that adult learners are better suited to own direct learning, use the knowledge base and life experience to aid understanding, and have a voice in planning evaluating learning experiences [1]. To provide relevance to learning experiences, Forrest and Peterson included imperatives to use techniques such as role-play, group discussion, experiential learning, and problem-based learning [2]. Brownell and Jameson contend that using problem-centered instruction allows students to bridge the cognitive, affective, and behavioral learning processes [3] to advance learning competencies and achieve educational outcomes.

The rationale for writing on this thematic area came from the experience of residency education in Australia. The learning journey as a course requirement includes dissecting learning models in extension work, thereby contributing to the body of knowledge.

Threading on the potentials of developing a new model and understanding adult learning processes by reviewing different models developed by various authors whose primary interest is to seek further understanding and express processes as they build their model. The primary objective is to check adult learning theories with the intention of creating a new approach to experiential learning that is appealing to adults as a target clientele. And compare the new approach model to the existing extension learning models used in the community through the Murray Experience.

II.   Conceptual Framework

Experiential learning is central to Extension. Experiential learning for students includes various opportunities such as internships, project-based Education, and service-learning activities [4]. The Extension is a natural fit for student experiential learning opportunities because of its close connections to the community and priority populations [5]. Offering experiential learning opportunities to students through Extension has many advantages, including the chance to understand academic coursework better and apply knowledge to real-world situations [6]. Faculty benefit from Extension by increasing their capacity to meet community needs and providing students with new ways to deepen their learning [7]. At the same time, the community benefits from assistance in resolving community-based issues and programs [8]. Overall, experiential learning allows students to transition from college to a professional environment, connects Education and employment, increases project implementation capacity, and prepares the future workforce.

The Andragogy of Knowles. The foundational meaning of the concept of andragogy is associated with adults. Malcolm Knowles was the person who contributed the most in popularizing andragogy through his book, The Modern Practice of Adult Education: Andragogy versus Pedagogy [9]. Knowles defined andragogy as "the art and science of helping adults learn." This andragogy is very practical and explained through a set of assumptions. That as individuals mature: (a) their self-concept shifts from one of a dependent personality to one of a self-directed human being; (b) they accrue a growing reservoir of experience, which is an increasingly valuable resource for learning; (c) their eagerness to learn becomes increasingly focused on the developmental tasks of their social roles, and (d) their time perspective shifts from one of deferred sharing of concepts to one of the immediacy of implementation, and their perspective toward learning shifts from subject-centeredness to performance-centeredness [10]. Later, Knowles added the fifth assumption: (e) the motivation to learn becomes internal as a character matures [11]. Which later on defines the five principles of Knowles andragogy which are 1) self-concept, 2) adult learner experience, 3) readiness to learn, 4) orientation to learning, and 5) motivation to learn [12].

Kolb's Experiential Learning Theory (KELT). Experiential learning is a multi-dimensional model of adult development and a dynamic, holistic theory of the process of learning from lived experiences. The emotional perspective on learning is anchored on a learning cycle driven by resolving the dual dialectics of action/reflection and experience/abstraction. [13]. Kolb's experiential learning theory operates on two levels: a four-stage learning cycle and four distinct learning styles, focusing on the learner's internal cognitive processes. These are as follows: (1) Concrete Experience - a unique experience or situation that confronts or is a reinterpretation of an emerging experience; (2) Reflective Observation of the New Experience - any discrepancies between experience and understanding as perceived is significant; (3) Abstract conceptualization - reflection results in the generation of a new idea or the modification of an existing abstract concept base on what the person has learned from their lived experience; and (4) Active Experimentation involves the learner attempting to apply their idea(s) into action in the community to see what happens. McLeod stated that effective learning occurs when a person goes through four stages: (1) having a substantial experience, (2) observing and reflecting on that experience, (3) forming abstract concepts (analysis) and generalizations (conclusions), and (4) testing hypothesis in future situations, resulting in new experiences[14].

Honey and Mumford Learning Style. This style is one of the many learning styles based on Kolb's work but using a different approach [15]. According to Honey and Mumford, learning styles describe the attitudes and behaviors that determine the likelihood of an individual's learning style [16]. The theory introduced four dimensional learning styles, namely, (a) activist learning style is typical among those who prefer new experiences and have an open mind, and some of the activities include brainstorming, action learning, problem solving, group discussion, role-playing, and competitions; (b) theorists are people who think logically and assimilate all of the facts systematically into the problem (coherent theorists), and activities include model exploration, theory application, background information, statistics, stories, theoretical connections, complex tasks, and drawing information into systematic and logical theory; (c) reflectors prefer to remain at a distance and consider the situation from various perspectives, which included self-analysis questionnaires, data collection and analysis, personality questionnaires, time out, observing activities, being cautious and thoughtful, self-directed learning, feedback from others, interviews, and paired discussions; and (d) pragmatists are people who are willing to try new things and want concepts that are applied to at work, they seek out new ideas and try them out in the real world as soon as possible, and do action learning, problem-solving, and practical applications [17].

III.   Methodology

This paper explored the andrological concepts of Knowles, Kolb, and Honey and Mumford, which the researchers adopted as a theoretical concept on crafting a new learning model approach in Extension. And pilot-test the new Glenn Step-Board Learning model to the chosen community through the Murray Experience. The case study follows four phases: reflection, looking into the present situation, basic assumption, and critical appraisal.

Experimentation through the Murray Exercise

Murray Council is a South Australia local government area; as an exchange student of the Australian Government and as part of the learning process, students are too engaged in a community and use the learning process, theories, and style of the above-stated authors. Researchers chronicled observations to determine the actual learning interaction during the visit,

Reflection Phase

Looking for and dissecting different extension models was part of the learning journey in the Australian education residency. During the reflection phase, the researchers evaluated the best applicable extension model used to develop the new approach model. During the assessment, we discovered that most models used a generic approach while aiming for a specific outcome. The parameters followed in developing the new model are meant to address a particular condition, which area of concentration, logical hypothesis, agenda of initiative, techniques, and defined result.

Present Situation: A Case Illustration of Propose Learning Framework

To be able to illustrate the model, researchers identified a target group to pilot test the model. Participants were extension officers, extension agents, and spouses who are all new in the adult learning principles and adult learning cycle. A focus question was then developed and presented to track down the line of thinking to embrace their different understanding and consolidate their experience. Researchers used the Objective, Reflective, Interpretational and Decisional (ORID) process during the focus group discussion.

Table 1. Key questions and answers

Questions	Answers
1. As extension agents, what extension models have you been involved in or are aware of?	• ORID Process • Transfer of Technology • Farmer First Approach • Participatory Action Research • Action Research
2. What learning model was adopted?	None of them are aware of such a learning model.
3. What is your standard process of learning?	• Group wants to learn by discussing information within the group leading to new knowledge. • Better understanding promotes better efficiency. • Group discussion is a promising avenue for better exchange of ideas. • Building confidence towards making progress in their learning goals.
4. What is required when you have the information and the interest and challenge to practice change?	• The need to have a framework • Process • Foundation • Technology • Policy
What are you going to do if you have information that creates social change supported with technology?	• Moving forward • Create change • Work on It • Action required • Linkages required • Build a foundation • Ponder

	• Work on a prototype • Practice • Develop an action plan • Develop a habit

The New Approach Model: Glenn Step-board Learning Model

Figure 1. Glenn Step-board Learning Model
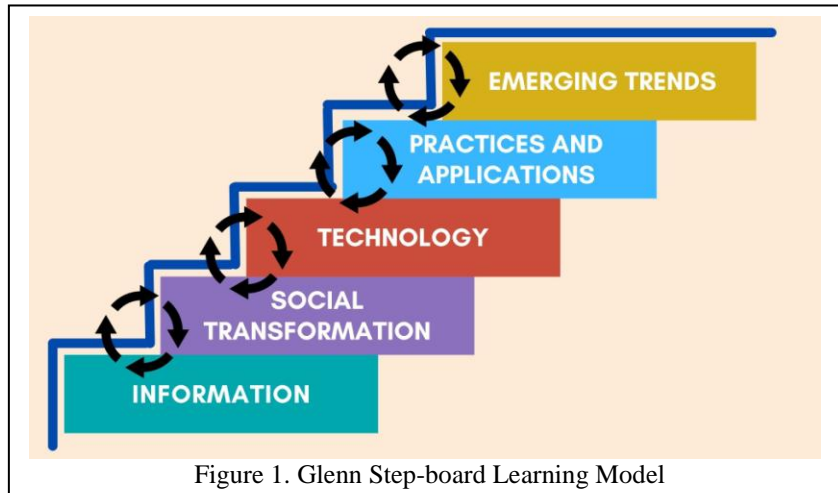
We were able to create a paradigm change in focus of how to develop a new learning flow for Extension. As a result, the new approach was named the Glenn Step-board Learning Model. The new learning model includes the following step-boards: information, social transformation, technology, practices and applications, and emerging trends.

Information is situations, experiences, and new learnings that create an opportunity for motivation. As a result, such information becomes a critical component in obtaining the targeted emerging outcome.

Social transformation is how an individual alters or changes an established set of actions and pursues them after being exposed to new steps.

Technology is either soft or hard—an excellent example of soft technology processes. The process as defined under soft technology is a logical flow of steps to achieve a set of goals or objectives. Technology then follows a logic flow of action that define or that is governing a series of activities. Other examples are participation and policy.

Practices and Applications is a condition in which a new set of actions is pursued individually and applied routinely based on a different approach.

Emerging Trends are conditions or state that one observed and established or felt after going through a new process.

IV.   Conclusion

Learning:

Horses for Courses. During the learning process, applications for a specific condition or some situations are driving forces in determining which extension model is more relevant or practical.

It is always a welcome opportunity to test case new dimension of learning, creating an atmosphere of constructively motivating to develop a more practical approach towards Extension using learning approaches in the Adult Learning Cycle and Principles towards understanding adult learning. In some cases, the use of multiple models and principles is crucial to optimize the effectiveness of an extension intervention. An example of this is the use of ORID and technology transfer.

Sometimes we are flooded with opportunities, but we must seek the idea that what is essential may not be essential after all, which indicates that the framework used is challenged because end-users believe it is redundant and not crucial.

Plan Prepare Practice Ponder Plan is an application of 5Ps in creating or planning an exercise is an essential strategy that is frequently used and proven to be an effective tool for approaching uncharted dimensions of learning.

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