

Some Tidbits of Thinking

These thinking extracts have been penned over time. They were not produced rapidly – they evolved, sometimes slowly and at other times quite quickly. They are viewpoints which are contestable, as are all such things...

Ten Key Features of Lifelong Learning

A pre-eminent education system that optimises lifelong learning will, through quality continuing education, recurrent training and community education activities and processes, provide relevant ongoing vocational training programmes and continuously accessible open and flexible learning opportunities. Key features of such a system will ideally include the following:

1. Professional guidance for communities of learners to identify their own education needs;
2. Recognition of prior learning - that is - valuing and giving credit to the reservoir of previous relevant learning experiences inherent in all adult learners;
3. Provision of new programmes and courses to cater for hitherto unrecognised learning needs;
4. Provision of open and flexible learning opportunities and course structures which allow learners access to non-traditional approaches and subject combinations;
5. Right of access to all learning opportunities and all learning providers with positive discrimination provision to ensure equality of learning opportunities for disadvantaged groups - women, ethnic minority groups, the unemployed, the disabled and the isolated;
6. Sharing of responsibility for curriculum design, assessment and maintenance of standards with communities of interest including learners, industries and programme facilitators;
7. Redistribution of power and control - the devolution of decision making power from a central providing agency to local communities of learners in partnership with providers of learning opportunities;
8. Recognition by those involved in the provision of lifelong learning that they have to change in order to meet new responsibilities - especially those associated with accommodating to changing societal, technological and economic circumstances;
9. Provision of realistic levels of funding in order that effective long term planning and harnessing of new technology can lead to the most effective use of available resources to provide optimal learning experiences;
10. Deliberate inclusion of formative and summative evaluation and feedback activities for both single events and long term programmes so that better ways can be charted for future learning proceedings, even if this means the cessation of traditional activities and the demise of traditional structures.

Jens J Hansen, 1987.

The Future Itself is a Very Compelling Reason for Encouraging Excellence in the Ongoing Development of All Staff Members

An organisation best serves its own interests by employing a person's future. While a potential employee's reservoir of past experiences must be acknowledged because these partially influence how they will respond to unfolding events, there can be little doubt that it is their capacity to adapt to both the present and to the future which is the most powerful determinant of tomorrow's flourishing performances. Such performances, therefore, are primarily generated by an ability to learn on the job, and by a capacity for successful and continuous evolution. And these are dynamic dimensions of the employee's future rather than only a product of their past.

Jens J. Hansen, 1995.

On Equity and The Cultural Mosaic of Aotearoa-New Zealand

In order to ensure educational equity, especially with respect the net, educators need to learn how to assume a range of voices - Maori, Pasifika, Asian, etc. They need to do this so that they can present materials effectively and crisply and in forms that are culturally appropriate. By paying attention to the voices of different cultures, subcultures and interest groups, the learning needs of a multitude of audiences can be intentionally and methodically considered when materials are being assembled for distance and flexible delivery. But in order to achieve such educational equity, unequal resource allocation may well be demanded and more time than is typically available will almost certainly be required.

Jens J. Hansen, 2001.

UNDERLYING ASSUMPTIONS OF ANDRAGOGY

These pointers about the theory of andragogy, the notion originally advanced by Malcolm Knowles that concerns the study of the processes whereby adults learn, were derived from an unknown list-serve contributor some few years back. Subsequently, however, they have been revised, not so much for meaning, but rather, for making them even easier to read than they already were. They are included here because they cohere with my views on this approach to education. In distance education and flexible learning, the approach proposed by Borge Holmberg of a mediated didactic conversation is also useful and is, in many respects, akin to the theory of andragogy if only because such a process is highly interactive and learner centred .

Andragogy offers an alternative to traditional pedagogical approaches. It makes use of knowledge about what motivates adults and how they learn. It encourages adults to become actively involved in the learning process and in achieving their desired goals.

1. Learning is lifelong. If you're not growing and learning, you're dying.
2. The orientation is life-centred. The focus is on how to understand a situation, perform a task, solve a problem, or living a satisfying life.
3. Teachers serve as facilitators and resources not merely as imparters of knowledge.

4. Learners are motivated by internal needs such as wanting greater self-confidence, a better quality of life, recognition, self-esteem, and a sense of control.
5. Learners are self-directing. They are in the best position to identify their own needs and form their own learning objectives.
6. Learning readiness is based on a need to know. Facilitators help learners assess where they want to be, where they are at present, and how to close the gap.
7. Learners are teachers. They have a wealth of experience waiting to be tapped. They benefit tremendously by exchanging ideas and information based on their own experiences.
8. Facilitators are lifelong learners. They continually expand their learning through the exchange of ideas and information.
9. Facilitators are process designers. They build a climate conducive to dialogue and provide an environment of mutual respect, support, openness, and enthusiasm.
10. Facilitators and learners collaborate in the learning process. Planning, evaluation, and responsibility for learning are shared.

(Modified circa 1995 from an unknown source with original reference cited as: *Andragogy in Action: Applying Modern Principles of Adult Learning*, Malcolm S. Knowles & Associates, 1985.)