

LEARNING FRAMEWORK

Program Conceptual Framework

Andragogy

Coined in 1833 by German educator Alexander Kapp, the term “Andragogy” as used in the adult education market currently was a term popularized by Malcolm Knowles in referring to the difference in the way adults learn and are taught. While there is disagreement on whether or not Andragogy (as defined by Knowles) is a theory or a set of guiding principles, the fact remains that the construct speaks directly to the needs of adult learners. Knowles later in life changed his position on whether andragogy applied only to adults. He wrote that “pedagogy-andragogy represents a continuum ranging from teacher-directed to student-directed learning” (Merriam & Caffarella, 1999, p. 275), and he came to the understanding that “both approaches are appropriate with children and adults” (p. 275) in different situations at different times.

There are six guiding principles of Knowles’ (2005) Andragogy:

1. Adults need to know why they need to learn something before learning it.
2. The self-concept of adults is heavily dependent upon a move toward self-direction.
3. Prior experiences of the learner provide a rich resource for learning.
4. Adults typically become ready to learn when they experience a need to cope with a life situation or perform a task.
5. Adult orientation to learning is life-centered; education is a process of developing increased competency levels to achieve their full potential.
6. The motivation for adult learners is internal rather than external (p. 159).

With this construct in mind we tailor course design and instruction to the needs of learners as we seek to meet them where they are on their respective educational journeys.

Constructivism

Another important theory affecting the curriculum is constructivism. Constructivism is a theory describing how learning happens. This theory holds that learners construct knowledge from their experiences. Constructivism describes assimilation as the process whereby learners incorporate new knowledge into an already existing framework using existing “hooks” in their minds to attach and make sense of new experiences. Chrenka (2001) noted that the role that teachers play is to “combine their understanding of how students learn with their own expert knowledge of a particular discipline in order to construct a framework for instruction” (p. 694). In constructivist theory, experience is

the index and basis for meaning. In other words, the theory of constructivism suggests that learners construct knowledge out of their experiences. As a result, constructivists recognize the importance of placing the cognitive experiences in authentic activities. Instruction should also attempt to focus the student on the ability to be able to construct and reconstruct plans for learning material in the real world (Applefield, Huber, & Moallem, 2000).

Vermette, Foote, Bird, Mesibov, Harris-Ewing, and Battaglia (2001) use the following acrostic to create a functional understanding of constructivisms:

<u>C</u>onnections:	Learning is through connections of new information and previous knowledge.
<u>O</u>ptions:	Choice is a key ingredient for students in the constructivist classroom.
<u>N</u>egotiation:	Students should be allowed the freedom to garner a personal understanding of the new information.
<u>S</u>caffolding:	Teachers assist students to reach new levels of understanding without giving them the direct information.
<u>T</u>ime:	Time is not a constant for the subject matter in a constructivist model. Rather, the student's understanding of the subject is the guide for the amount of time needed.
<u>R</u>ubrics:	Rubrics are used to help evaluate.
<u>U</u>nderstanding:	Students must understand (and apply) the information to have learned it.
<u>C</u>ollaboration:	The building of knowledge in a social context is central to learning.
<u>T</u>echnologies:	Technology allows for greater resources for personalized research and discovery.
<u>I</u>nquiry:	Learning is through inquiry about the subjects.
<u>V</u>ariety:	Variety of backgrounds, levels of comprehension, learning styles, etc. should all be considered in the constructivist classrooms.
<u>I</u>ntentional Teaching:	Though the teacher is a guide in this learning process, he or she is no less a teacher.
<u>S</u>tudent-Centered:	The focus of constructivism is on the student, not the teacher.
<u>M</u>otivation:	Relevance is central to the student's motivation level.
<u>S</u>tandards:	Standards are ever-present in the constructivist model in spite of the priority on student-centered learning, etc. These standards may include the ability of the student to think critically on the subject and perform other cognitive procedures while manipulating his or her knowledge of the subject (Vermette et al., 2001)

With these ideals as the focus, constructivist curriculum designers can make a program of study that allows the student to learn through and focus upon concepts of value to the student.

The Principle Approach

The Principle Approach to the curriculum was introduced by Slater (1975) in her text *Teaching and Learning America's Christian History: The Principle Approach*. In essence, the primary construct of the Principle Approach is to start with a principle in the Bible and develop learning from the Bible. This goes beyond simply adding prayer and some biblical references to course materials. This Principle Approach was designed in an effort to have learners think biblically about the issues of life, critically reflecting on those issues with logic and reasoning clarified with a Biblical worldview. While this approach was designed for K-12 learners, the applications for higher education are solid. Learners will continue to need the foundation stone of the Bible in the field of study in which they will pursue a career and calling.