

# Pairing Leadership and Andragogical Framework for Maximized Knowledge and Skill Acquisition

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## ABSTRACT

Is andragogy the elixir for organizational instability? Organizational survival in the post-pandemic world means navigating through the great resignation and ensuing labor market shortage to find the most efficient manners in which to conduct business. Perhaps in a nod to the evolution of the virus, only those organizations that have evolved will survive the onslaught of stressors. Many organizational leaders are looking to their existing workforces for solutions. Organizations with a strategic approach towards training and development appreciate the return on investment such programs may provide if the training is effective in expanding the employee skillsets. The leadership of this mindset is guardedly optimistic. To ensure training and development program success, leadership must understand adult learners acquire information differently than children. This article examines differences in knowledge acquisition between children and adults. It delves into the constructs associated with andragogy including theories associated with self-directed learning and enhanced self-concepts.

## KEYWORDS

Andragogy, Knowledge, Learning Contracts, Organizational Leadership, Organizational Learning, Skill Acquisition

## INTRODUCTION

The workplace dynamic driven by organizational adaptations to the modern plague known as COVID-19 is much different than pre-pandemic workplaces. Meeting complex challenges such as labor shortages, shifting job locations, and ongoing supply chain disruptions are no longer nuanced one-off experiences but standard operating procedures for most organizations.

The rising popularity of workforce development illuminates the shift in organizational attitudes towards the construct of organizational learning. While training and development allocations have long been one of the first items stricken from budgets during austere times, panicking leadership now seeks numerous modes to grow the knowledge, skills, and abilities of the existing workforce.

Organizational leaders recognize the urgency in retaining and developing their current workforce as qualified replacements are few and far between. This requires the organization to pivot from a

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replacement mentality to focus on upskilling the existing workforce while also enlarging many of the jobs.

Two educational philosophies that often are regarded as competing, pedagogy and andragogy, are examined in this article to determine if the two are mutually exclusive. This examination will be accompanied by a historical overview of learning theories. Next, each will be reviewed to determine if one or the other is more suitable for workplace learning since an organization's learning agility may foreshadow the organization's strategic success. The conclusion will provide direction to organizational leaders engaged in culture building, attracting and retaining talent, and employee training and development for the purposeful enhancement of knowledge, skills, and abilities necessary for organizational success (Torres-Coronas & Arias-Oliva, 2008).

Education's standard instructional environment associated with formal education is quite different from the professional education environment associated with the workplace or organization. Yet, both share common learning principles. The aim of this article is to stimulate thought and robust discussion about organizational learning and leadership development and how learning theories can serve as frameworks for learning strategy. Real learning is enigmatic. Learning must be relevant to the learner's life with a short span between learning and meaningful action (Prensky, 2010).

As the conversation here begins, the reader should calibrate around the two central themes: pedagogy and andragogy. Pedagogy is the term commonly used when referring to the science of learning. This umbrella term is defined simply as "art, science, or profession of teaching (Merriam-Webster, 2022). Etymology posits the word to be Greek in origin: *paidi* refers to *child* while *ago* refers to the verb *guide*. The literal expression for pedagogy, therefore, is *guiding children*. The term andragogy is an expression used less frequently. This term is defined as "the art or science of teaching adults (Merriam-Webster, 2022). Andragogy's etymology indicates *andras* refers to *man* such that the summed literal expression *guiding man* (Knowles, 1980).

Throughout this article, the terms will be used frequently with pedagogy referring to child-centric education while andragogy refers to adult-centric education.

## THE EVOLUTION OF THE SCIENCE OF LEARNING

Records indicate early formalized education dating back to the seventh century to be monastic or cathedral in nature with boys as students (Knowles et al., 2015). Education was not yet a formally identified field but was developing as such when fields such as psychology, sociology, and physiology were emerging as formal disciplines.

One of the earliest formal accounts of the study of learning comes from Johann Freidrich Herbart (1776 – 1841), a German philosopher and educator. While Herbart's field of interest was philosophical in nature, his role in the history of education was formalized once he publicly criticized the politicization of education arguing that "true education is one that does not concern itself with the state and political interests but is education for its own sake" (Clarke, 2002, p. 90). Herbart's frustration with the flatness of education was included in his annual report on the Pedagogical Seminar which trained teachers. The ideas and frameworks of Herbart, collectively referred to internationally as Herbartianism, were so popular that in the United States enclaves of supporters formed the National Herbart Society for the Scientific Study of Teaching in 1895 (Valdemarin, 2022).

W.T. Harris who edited Herbart's seminal publication *A Textbook in Psychology* (Herbert, 1916) calls attention to Herbart's emphasis on perception and apperception. "In perception, we have an object presented to our senses, but in apperception, we identify the object or those features of it which were familiar to us before; we recognize it; we explain it; we interpret the new by our previous knowledge, and thus are enabled to proceed from the known to the unknown and make new acquisitions." Harris (Herbert, 1916) continued to describe how that newly acquired information was classified in a variety of ways by the observer.

Many scholars have documented differences between adult learning and child learning. While researching the origins of education, German educator Alexander Kapp (1799 – 1869) determined Plato as the first to identify an independent manner of learning associated with adults. The term andragogy, the neologism of pedagogy, was coined by Kapp in 1833 to differentiate between the two manners of learning (Ahmad et al., 2021).

Edward Thorndike (1874 – 1949) launched the scientific study of learning with the 1913 publication of *Educational Psychology*. Notably, Thorndike studied the laws of effect with animals, usually cats, which pressed levers and buttons to exit a box to reach a treat. Over successive tests, the cats responded more quickly and predictably. This empirical test provided Thorndike with the components he needed to publish the Law of Effect which declared that any behavior followed by a pleasant consequence was more likely to be repeated. Conversely, the Law of Effect states that any behavior followed by an unpleasant consequence would not be repeated (McLeod, 2018).

On the other side of the world, Russian physiologist Ivan Pavlov (1849 – 1936) worked to understand the relationship between cardiac physiology and the regulation of blood pressure. While studying the digestive systems of dogs, Pavlov noted the animals salivated at the site of food. Pavlov then noted salivation began when the dogs heard the rustle of food preparation before the food appeared (Rehman et al., 2017). To test his hypothesis that the animals were conditioned and responded based on the food preparation noise rather than visual stimuli, Pavlov introduced a bell to the dogs' environment. In the beginning, the dogs made no association with the dinging of the bell to the reward of the impending food delivery. Over time, however, the dogs began to salivate upon the sound of the bell leading Pavlov to conclude the dogs had been conditioned to associate the bell with the delivery of the reward, the food. Pavlov also noted that the response was subject to extinction if the condition of the ringing bell was not rewarded with the delivery of food. Spontaneous recovery occurred rapidly when the reward was reintroduced even if a substantial amount of time had passed between the time when the neutral stimulus and unconditioned stimulus were paired, were unpaired, and then paired once again (Rehman et al., 2017). The work of Pavlov provided the framework for the study of automatic or unconscious learning.

BF Skinner (1904 – 1990) produced the concept of operant conditioning after his study of cats affirmed that behaviors rewarded would likely be repeated while behaviors that were punished would diminish. Skinner (1971) applied operant conditioning with the belief that teachers controlled all elements of the learning experience producing an environment heavy in memorization and repetition to reinforce the content and meet learning objectives. Skinner (1971) found the use of a teaching machine that scored a student's answer provided immediate feedback, reinforced what was learned, and over time created permanent retention of the learned material.

American educator Eduard Lindeman (1885 – 1954), regarded by many as a pioneer in adult education, documented several key assumptions about adult learners:

- Adults are motivated to learn as they experience the needs and interests that learning will satisfy.
- Adults' orientation to learning is life-centered.
- Experience is the richest source of learning for adults.
- Adults have a deep need to be self-directed.
- Individual differences will increase with age (Wang & Torrisi-Steele, 2022).

Contemporary education scholar Malcolm Knowles (1913 – 1997) advocated for the study of andragogy as he believed adult learners were essentially overlooked and therefore taught in the same fashion, in a similar environment, and with the same tools, as the children. Andragogy, Knowles affirmed is the art and science of helping adults learn (Knowles et al., 2015). In this regard, art refers to a style while science refers to a method. To further his point and give the framework to future scholars, he crafted Knowles' Andragogical model:

- **The need to know:** Adults need to know why they are learning something before committing to learning it.
- **Learner's self-concept:** Adults have a self-concept of being responsible for their own decisions and for their own lives. Once they have arrived at that self-concept, a deep psychological need to be seen by others and treated as being capable of self-direction.
- **Learner's Experiences:** Adults have a greater volume and different quality of experiences than youths. By virtue of simply having lived longer, they have accumulated more experiences than they had as youths.
- **Readiness to learn:** Adults become ready to learn things they need to know to cope effectively with life situations and solve problems.
- **Orientation to learning:** In contrast to youths' subject-centered learning orientation, adults have a life-centered orientation to learning.
- **Motivation:** While adults are responsive to some external motivators, the most potent motivators are intrinsic (Wang & Torrisi-Steele, 2022, pp. 4-5).

A side-by-side comparison of pedagogy and andragogy provides a brief overview of differences using the framework developed by Knowles.

For this discussion, one additional scholar should be noted. Brazilian educator Paulo Friere (1921 – 1997) documented libertarianism as an alternative to pedagogy as it provided emancipation through education His premise riled educators across Brazil resulting in his exile from Brazil in 1964, due in large part to his challenge of pedagogy. Friere sought to shift the emphasis towards critical thinking to close gaps rather than learning for the sake of learning (Darder, 2017).

As students transition to adulthood, their manner of acquiring new knowledge and skills shifts. Pedagogical approaches lessen in effectiveness while the students themselves are drawn to learning engagement that offers more self-direction, and more choice. Ruhl (2015) proposed modification to the standard pedagogical approach away from the “sage on the stage” who “downloaded” vast quantities of information to children and shifting towards the “guide on the side” (Ruhl, 2015). Ruhl based his belief on his experience with high school students and most specifically the way they behaved in the lunchroom. Students enjoyed having food choices. Ruhl converted his classroom to include choices that would foster the development of students by appealing to a broader range of learning style preferences. He added the relationships are equally valuable. In his evolved classroom, Ruhl (2015) focused on growing four particular skills: collaboration, communication, critical thinking, and creativity.

**Table 1. Comparison of pedagogy and andragogy**

	Pedagogy	Andragogy
Self-Concept	Learning sources are external – how and what to learn are determined by the instructor	Leaners understand their needs and incorporate this knowledge when learning activities are designed
Learner's Experience	Minimal experience from the learner is brought to the assignment or activity	Significant integration of experience and knowledge on behalf of the learner
Readiness to Learn	External: The instructor develops the need to know	Internal: The learner develops the need to know
Learning Orientation	Subject- or Teacher-centered problem	Performance or solution-centered

Forest III and Peterson (2006)

## DISCOURSE SURROUNDING ANDRAGOGY

The debate related to andragogy focuses on learner self-concept and motivation principles. Critics argue that adults' self-concept may not be positive. As self-concept relies on the construct of self-direction, feelings of incompetence or uncertainty may be associated with a negative sense of self (self-concept). Likewise, adults with low self-concept may be less motivated and lack self-direction. Deci and Ryan (2000) countered this by linking self-concept and motivation via the Self-Determination Theory.

Detractors continued. Brookfield (2003) challenged that learners with low-level literacy may lack confidence, independence, resources, and intrinsic motivation. These learners may flounder if left to self-directed learning. Brookfield (2003) later labeled andragogy theory as "culture blind," suggesting the construct of self-directed learning was insensitive to cultures that prized the teacher as the sage, the source of knowledge and direction. Brookfield's criticism suggested that andragogy thwarted the establishment of a non-threatening relationship between the teacher and the learner. This concern may be assuaged by Forrest III and Peterson (2006) whose comment "experience becomes a textbook" (p. 6) illustrates the demand of facilitators to move student experiences to active relevance by encouraging them to share which validates the experience.

It is safe to say that theories and frameworks regarding education are incalculable. Dissenters are to be expected as the friction of discourse yields new or improved theories and frameworks.

## SELF-DIRECTED LEARNING, MOTIVATION, AND SELF-DETERMINATION

"Self-planned learning" (Merriam & Caffarella, 1999, p. 289) models developed by Houle (1961) and Tough (1979) were at the forefront of the movement linking motivation to independent learning. Tough (1979) reflected that learning occurs in many domains beyond the halls of higher learning institutions. Self-planning, according to Tough (1979), follows a lifecycle of thirteen stages:

- Deciding what knowledge and skills need to be learned.
- Deciding specific activities, methods, or resources, needed for learning.
- Deciding where learning should take place.
- Setting specific deadlines.
- Deciding when to begin a learning episode.
- Deciding the pace at which to proceed during a learning episode.
- Estimating current knowledge and skill or progress in gaining the desired knowledge and skill.
- Detect factor(s) that hinder learning or discovering inefficient aspects of the current process.
- Obtain the desired resources or reach the desired place.
- Preparing or adapting a room (or certain resources, furniture, or equipment) for learning or arranging certain other physical conditions in preparation for learning.
- Saving or obtaining the money necessary for the use of resources.
- Finding time for learning.
- Taking steps to increase the motivation for certain learning episodes (Tough, 1979, pp. 94-95, as cited in Merriam & Caffarella, 1999, p. 294).

Merriam and Caffarella (1999) offered the neologism of *self-directed* learning and defined it as a learning process in which the adult must "plan, carry out and evaluate their own learning experiences" (p. 293). In other words, curiosity fuels learning.

Self-directed learning is inseparably attached to motivation. Learners are "active, growth-oriented organisms who are naturally inclined toward integration of their psychic elements into a unified sense of self and integration of themselves into larger social structures" (Deci & Ryan, 2000, p. 229). In other words, it is natural that people explore that which they find interesting. This aligns with the pure

definition of intrinsic motivation which is “active engagement with tasks that people find interesting and that, in turn, promote growth” (Deci & Ryan, 2000, p. 229).

Three psychological needs must be met before an individual’s focus allows for the willful pursuit of desires. These elemental needs are autonomy, competence, and relatedness (Deci & Ryan, 2000; Ryan & Deci, 2000). According to Deci and Ryan (2000), autonomy relates to the choices and experiences of integration and freedom; competence is the learner’s perceived ability as it relates to the execution and completion of the task. Relatedness is connected to peers, students, supervisors, or other influencers. Each of these impacts motivation though each to a different degree. However, when all three needs have been met, the collective impact is significant on intrinsic motivation, self-regulation, and well-being (Ryan & Deci, 2000).

From the organizational leadership perspective, studying the conditions that foster positive human potential is critical “because it can contribute not only to formal knowledge of the causes of human behavior but also to the design of social environments that optimize people’s development, performance and well-being” (Deci & Ryan, 2000, p. 68).

Added Wang and Torrisi-Steele (2022), learners are more likely to assimilate and integrate when their social context needs are met. This expands on the suggestion of Deci and Ryan (2000) that controlling the environment interferes with internalization thereby increasing stress and diminishing initiative and responsibility. Self-directed learning at its core requires intrinsic initiative and desire from the learners. Self-directed learning, often referred to as SDL, is a process in which individuals take the initiative, without the help of others: to plan, execute, and assess the learning experience (Knowles et al., 2015). Self-direction is a vital element of persistence in adult education.

## **ANDRAGOGY, LEADERS, AND LEARNING ORGANIZATIONS**

Humanism, the belief that humans have unlimited potential for learning and that learning evolves from dependent to self-directed, encompasses many approaches including principles of andragogy. Andragogy proponents including Rogers (2002) and Knowles et al., (2015) repeatedly provide that educators do not teach another individual directly, but rather help – or partner – with the learner (Wang & Torrisi-Steele, 2022).

From an adult educator or organizational leader’s perspective, their role as a partner is one of facilitating learning at the direction of the learner – not teaching. Teaching in an educational sense belongs in the pedagogical environment wherein the learner is not directing the acquisition of new knowledge or skills. It is, however, to be expected that some educators in the learner’s work environment may slip in and out of teaching mode when the learner is truly engaged in acquiring new knowledge in fundamental knowledge or skills in a first-time exposure situation. While the learner is also self-directing this knowledge acquisition, the differences between learning which is taught or learning which is facilitated blur. This underscores the notion that pedagogy and andragogy aren’t always mutually exclusive.

Yet, that is the exception rather than the rule. When adult learners feel connected with the content facilitator, the learners are more likely to be intrinsically motivated. This connection cannot exist separately from the needs for competence and autonomy, but it is the third component of the promotion of an intrinsically motivating learning experience (Wang & Torrisi-Steele, 2022; Ryan & Deci, 2000).

What is a facilitator? Knowles et al. (2015) shared that a helper is a facilitator. This facilitator performs a set of functions that require a skill. The facilitator does not disseminate information or transmit knowledge, but rather the facilitator designs and manages a process that avails new knowledge to the learner. The facilitator assesses existing knowledge or skills, identifies the gaps, and involves the learner in acquiring new knowledge or skills to close the gap. The facilitator grows the relationship encouraging learner initiative and providing access to resources that support knowledge and skill acquisition (Knowles, 2015).

While Knowles was continuing his work, clinical psychologist Carl Rogers et al. (2002) joined the public conversation when he expanded on the relationship between the instructor and the learner. Based upon the counselor-client model, Rogers identified the traits of a good facilitator:

- **Readiness and genuineness:** The facilitator is genuine and honest in representing his or herself.
- **Prizing, acceptance, and trust:** The facilitator-learner relationship is based on trust, where the facilitator cares for and recognizes the learner is an individual.
- **Empathic understanding:** The facilitator can relate to the student's situation and feelings, and understands the emotions and challenges involved in the educational journey (Wang & Torrisi-Steele, 2022, p. 7).

Thus, the collaboration of the facilitator with the learner involves cognitive, motivational, and emotional aspects. It is in this acknowledgment that the relationship between andragogy, leadership, and the learning organization is revealed.

Senge (1990) shared “a learning organization is a place where people are continually discovering how they create their reality. And how they can change it” (p. 13). Remedios and Boreham (2004) asserted that involving workers in decision-making and shared organization responsibility is “very much the ethos” (p. 220) of a learning organization. Wang and Torrisi-Steele (2022) recently added that the engagement of workers in their organizations aligns with the humanist principles of andragogy which recognize the limitless learning potential of individuals which is supported by and then grows capacity for self-direction.

Viewing leadership through the monocle of andragogy, leaders of organizations that engage workers as just described are educators who seek not to instruct but rather to help, to guide, and to facilitate. As andragogical leaders, they do not disseminate knowledge per se. They facilitate learning by providing conditions that are conducive to self-determination, self-direction, and learning. The organizational educators avail themselves and resources to the learners. They establish trust in the process of knowledge and skill acquisition and are genuine in their efforts to support adult learners throughout the learning process. The organizational educators champion the initiative, welcome the partnership of employees as decision-makers, and empathetically collaborate to meet the needs of the employees.

To deduce that these characteristics of organizational educators are andragogical in nature are anything other than transformational, contemporary leaders would be grossly in error. These are the leaders whose organizations have survived the economic and social contractures of the pandemic. Andragogical principles provide the framework for the employee-leader partnership.

## READINESS

Self-concept, motivation, readiness to learn, and learning orientation are key dimensions that are interconnected elements of andragogy and vital to the success of learning organizations. “Self-concept refers to the totality of a complex, organized, and dynamic system of learned beliefs, attitudes, and opinions that each person holds to be true about his or her own existence” (Beheshtifar & Rahimi-Nezhad, 2012, p. 159). Adult sense-of-self sense of self is associated with the chronological arrival at adulthood giving rise to the sense of independent learning. Self-concept is not static in that it shifts based on the environment, task, and individual's perception of competence.

## SELF-DETERMINATION THEORY

Competence, as outlined in the Self-Determination Theory, is the ability or mastery of a skill or task; relatedness is social connectedness and support felt and autonomy is the perceived freedom

to choose an activity (Deci & Ryan, 2000; Gagne, 2003). Gagne (2003) continued “Contexts that support satisfaction of these needs will promote a person’s enjoyment of activities and the autonomous self-regulation of behaviors” (p. 202). An adult is compelled to act based on the enjoyment derived meaning the adult is intrinsically motivated.

Empirical evidence of the relationship between self-concept and motivation and the impact is abundant (Beheshtifar & Rahimi-Nezhad, 2012;). Employees with a positive self-concept engaged positively within the organization, reported higher job satisfaction, higher levels of confidence in the role, felt valued as a contributor, and tended to be more creatively engaged and innovative (Beheshtifar & Rahimi-Nezhad, 2012). Additionally, these employees were more likely to contribute to the organization and engage in learning that supported the organization’s strategic goals. Findings included a significant impact on achievement and success (Dixon et al., 2006; Rosen et al., 2010).

Approaching self-concept in the workplace can be challenging given the demand on organizational educators to accommodate varying degrees of self-concept which is influenced by the learner’s strengths and weaknesses, relationships with others, and the collective working conditions. Inspiration leaders are well-positioned to nurture the learner’s positive self-concept (Gray et al., 2020).

Organizations whose culture permits the adult learner to be authentic create an environment where employees thrive. The distributed leadership model provides engagement where critical thinking and problem solving based upon the employee’s accumulated experiences produces a superior resolution to organizational challenges be they large or small. This fuels self-motivation as the employee expands the sense of pride and worth bringing a higher value to job ownership and standing within the organization. To that end, organizational leaders in the role of educators work earnestly to foster a culture where employees sense autonomy and competence.

Eduard Lindeman (1885 – 1954) determined the individual needs of an adult will grow more diverse over time (Lindeman, 1926). The experiences that led to the increasing degree of diversity influenced the adult’s interests, competency, and autonomy needs, and ultimately influenced the adult’s satisfaction. The adult’s readiness to learn manifests in self-directed learning, a vital andragogical principle. Readiness to learn is rooted in the adult’s need to know. On a larger scale, readiness for self-directed learning is positively related to organizational commitment (Cho & Kwon, 2005).

Organizational educators must empower employees in the same manner that andragogical educators facilitate, guide, create senses of self-worth and trust, and provide autonomy to learn. An adult, especially as it relates to a career, will self-direct learning and development opportunities in the context of solving real-life situations. A child experiences none of this context. The facilitator can help guide the learner into engagement activities that do not necessarily solve a problem in the here and now but prepare the employee for an expanded role or promotion to a new position. A tool popular with organizational educators for facilitating adult learning in a self-directed environment is learning contracts.

## **LEARNING CONTRACTS**

Ensuring the learners know at the start what is to be learned, how it will be learned, and when the learning will occur is paramount to successful self-directed knowledge or skill acquisition. This fulfills the first principle of andragogy: the learner’s need to know. The greater the planning engagement between the facilitator and the adult learner, the more likely the learner’s prior experience will be factored into the learning experience as a resource; thus, the second principle of andragogy is met.

The remaining principles of andragogy can be accomplished through learning contracts negotiated with the facilitators. Learning contracts typically include all the aforementioned data and are crafted via collaboration between the facilitator and the learner (Gailbrath & Gilley, 1984). Gailbrath and Gilley (1984) found that the learner’s sense of commitment and ownership is substantially improved when the learner is engaged in the content and design of activities and goals in the contract, consequently, goal achievement is more likely.



The contract should include the manners in which the learner will engage in the process of knowledge or skill acquisition, required resources and strategies, a timeline to serve as a roadmap ultimately leading to the achievement of the learning objective, and finally a summative assessment with criteria for validating the completion. The final step is seldom a formal test instead opting for demonstrated knowledge or skill proficiency in a real-time scenario Knowles (1975). At the organizational level, ensuring a transfer of what was learned to actionable behaviors ensures learner synthesis. These achievements should be celebrated to boost self-esteem and confidence while raising the employees' value to the organization as a whole.

A popular reference for best practice is this citation by Knowles (1975) from Lloyds Bank of California:

*You are entering an adult learning environment. This is a very participative process. We realize that you are interested in a career rather than just a job. We will help you become aware of the skills and knowledge you will need on your growth path with us. We will expect you to participate in certain training at each step ... We will expect you to use your training as an opportunity and gain from it the information you need for your own competence and future career growth. Your test will be on the job. If you are able to carry out your functions competently as a result of training, then your manager will recognize this and consider it in growth appraisals. If you fail to take advantage of the resources offered, then you will not become competent, not progress, and probably not be with us in the future. (Knowles, 1975, p. 75)*

It bears repeating to say that solution-based or problem-centered learning is contextual and often is the most valuable to the adult learner. Facilitators must be intentional about supporting self-directed learning in a manner that supports and grows autonomy especially as it relates to mastery of new knowledge and skill.

Criticisms of the learning contract include the supposition that the learning contract might limit or hinder performance rather than help it. Another concern is the varying degrees of self-concept which may also hinder progress. For instance, a learner in the early stages may be overwhelmed with the gap to close, growing anxious, becoming at risk of self-doubt, and abandoning the learning contract altogether. Deci and Ryan (2000) concluded autonomy and competency must exist for intrinsic motivation to grow and be maintained for the learner to become self-directed. The facilitator's assurance to the learner that progress – even if stalled – is realistic and valued is vital. This fulfills the third component of Self-Determination theory: relatedness (Deci & Ryan, 2000).

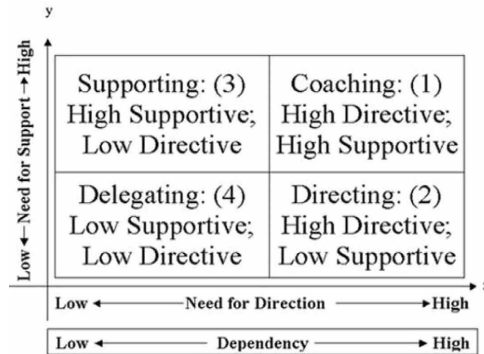
The justification for incorporating learning contracts by a learning organization is to align with the construct that adults are lifelong learners which is essential to the survival of the organization. Learning contracts are a tool that enables organizational educators to quantify the knowledge and skill of the organization's adults as well as the organization as a whole. By enabling managers to know the capabilities of the adults, the organization's leaders can flex to meet the changing demands of the external environment (Brecko, 2003).

## **A SEAT FOR PEDAGOGY AT THE ORGANIZATIONAL TABLE**

While this discussion has focused on the andragogical theory and the case of incorporating andragogical tenets into the learning organization's strategy, many in leadership development have already embraced elements that support planned learning for adults.

The Situation Leadership II model (Blanchard et al., 1993) revised an earlier model which outlined four styles of influence a leader might practice when engaging with followers. Using the framework, Wang (2012) demonstrated how it can also be applied to instructors when engaging with learners. As can be seen in Figure 1, *Need for Support* varies from low to high along the vertical axis *y* while *Need for Direction* varies from low to high along the horizontal axis *x*.

Figure 1. Situational leadership II (Knowles, Holton, & Swanson, 1998, p. 183)



Educators in adult education environments as well as organizational educators can achieve flexibility, a critical component, by adjusting their approach based on the unique direction and support needs of the learner. Not so obvious in the model is the alignment with the pedagogical model which is reflected in the low supportive and low directive box. The educator engaged with learners in this range shifts back to the teacher mode in which information may be disseminated and the knowledge or skill acquisition may be more rote, a classic pedagogical approach for a teacher is more fitting for learners in the *Delegating* range as opposed to learners in any of the three other ranges.

As a “guide on the side” (Ruhl, 2015), the organizational educator is well advised to make frequent use of the textbook of experience (Forrest III & Peterson, 2006). Ongoing development of the organization’s employees must “include contextual considerations including the sensitivity of the scholar to crisis and hardship that color humans’ personal experience and may impact their personal structure” (Gordon & Auten, 2018, p. 157).

## CONCLUSION

In a strictly pure sense, the acquisition of knowledge, skills, and abilities for an adult learner is reflective of the proverbial onion. Layer upon layer over a core occurs with each layer enhancing the existence of the preceding layer. Organizational leaders acknowledge this construct of scaffolding and target training and development in personalized fashions so employees can remain relevant in the increasingly complex work environment.

Employers who entrust the employees to self-direct their learning are associated with learning-agile organizations. These organizations’ leaders maintain a culture that tolerates errors as an essential element of the innovation and risk-taking process. They incorporate participative leadership in which authority and responsibility are delegated by senior members to junior members which provides a high-level on-the-job training environment. These organizations’ leaders champion training and development initiatives that are linked to the organization’s strategic goals. They are committed to communication channels that are open and less formal to support collaboration and do so while utilizing internal as well as external resources. And finally, these forward-thinking leaders source and create opportunities for individual learning.

The elements just described comprise the framework of the Self-Determination Theory. Deci and Ryan (2000) outlined the Self-Determination Theory that an individual’s natural growth tendencies and inherent psychological needs fuel motivation and integrate personality dimensions into the whole individual. From the perspective of an organizational employee, the individual observes and assesses the organization’s approach to be either supportive of autonomy or control. As many scholars have reported shared “autonomy supportive environments are those where leaders provide a rationale for

decision and actions, adopt employees' perspective, nurture intrinsic motivation, show patience, promote and support self-regulation and self-determination" (Wang & Bain, 2016, p. 266).

The opposite of autonomy-supportive environments is simply controlling environments, organizations whose culture is one of control as is evidenced by pressured compliance, reliance on extrinsic rewards, and the use of top-down ultimatums rather than collaboration (Amoura et al., 2015). These organizations will continue to struggle through the pandemic recovery and ongoing battle for talent.

All organizations benefit when they purposely work to embrace employees as self-directed learners. As the work-from-home dynamic proved, employees relish the ability to direct their daily work cycle and independently seek to expand or acquire new knowledge, skills, and abilities. This directly aligns with the findings of Merriam et al. (2007) who confirmed broad findings that adult learners drive their own learning. Proactive organizations tout this self-determined and self-regulated mindset during onboarding, orientation, and other communication avenues to embed learning agility into the organization's culture.

Lest the reader is confused, pedagogy and andragogy are joined to one another through the ongoing development of the person moving from childhood to adulthood. There are times when rote learning may still be applied to adult learning situations. However, the autonomy to which adults are accustomed and the individual's unique drive to experience the world will almost always be self-directed and self-regulated rather than prescribed and regimented. From a practitioner perspective, Knowles (1979) cautioned that he was not declaring pedagogical approaches were solely beneficial to children and andragogy beneficial to adults. After all, it was clear that adults in some circumstances engaged in pedagogical learning and andragogical frameworks may be suitable for children. Knowles clarified his beliefs by adding "I am certainly not saying that pedagogy is bad, and andragogy is good; each is appropriate given the relevant assumptions. . . These principles must be viewed as a system of elements that can be adopted in whole or in part" (1979, p. 53).

To the organizational leaders, the message is clear: develop an environment in which employees are enabled to flourish. Respect learning agility by providing access to learning opportunities that benefit the employee whether they directly impact the employee's ability to perform the job. Utilize motivation and learning theories when developing compensation systems. Include elements such as tuition assistance and learning sabbaticals. Support mental and physical well-being. By growing a culture that encompasses these elements, the battle for survival will no longer be the focus but rather a pleasant outcome with a significant return on investment.

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