

## **IMPACT OF BLENDED AND ONLINE TEACHING MODALITIES ON ANDRAGOGY**

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### **Abstract**

With technological advancements, new teaching modalities have been adopted – Online and Blended, which has resulted in an increase in the number of people taking online courses. Thus, online courses have become a critical and attractive component of the bouquet of courses any academic institution offers.

A big segment of the online education is the adult learners, who have returned to either complete their education or to attain higher education to climb the ladder in their existing jobs. Blended and Online modalities offer the Working Adult Students immense flexibility and accessibility, making it the preferred way of continuing their education. Today, not only are specific marketing strategies being designed targeting andragogic learners, but programs are being created specifically for them.

This paper conducts an exploratory study of the impact of Blended and Online Modalities on the market of Andragogy, the education of working adults. It aims to understand in detail the concepts of Andragogy, characteristics of the adult learners, how they are different from traditional students as well as their economic significance. This multi-disciplinary study gathers insights to help education marketers frame strategies targeting working adult students, guide academicians plan suitable courses and curricula and instruction designers and e-learning interface developers.

**Keywords: Andragogy; Blended learning; Higher education; Online learning; Teaching modality.**

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## 1. Introduction

Education today has undergone a sea-change from what it was a few decades ago. With the advent of the internet and social media, new teaching modalities have entered the scenario – Online and Blended. As a result of these new modalities, online education has been widely adopted and has resulted in an increase in the number of people taking online courses for education, learning, acquiring new skill sets and even for hobbies! Thus, online and blended courses have become a critical and attractive component of the bouquet of courses any academic institution offers.

A big segment of the online education is the Adult learners, who have returned to either complete the education or to attain higher education to climb the ladder in their existing jobs.

For the adult learner, online instruction (distance learning) has become the preferred way to continue their education to advance in their careers or train for new ones. Adults are enrolling in courses in record numbers. Many colleges are catering to them by providing distance learning, which allows flexibility and accessibility for the working adult.

Adults and children learn differently and with different motivations. The unique characteristics of this group of learners make them very different from the traditional students.

Working adult students are usually concerned with issues of the balance between school, work and family responsibilities, class schedule flexibility and cost. Schools offering variety of professional certifications, short-term certificate programs, and online degrees combine the diversity of a unique learning experience with the convenience of being able to study anywhere and at any time, factors that are especially appealing to adult learners. Eager to provide students with these benefits, colleges and universities have been continually adding more online programs in different fields every year. Adult learning or andragogy needs to be well understood in order to design courses and curricula that cater specifically to the working adult students.

The higher education administrators want to increase revenues by reducing costs [1] (Aslanian&Clinefelter, 2012; Chau, 2010) and increasing enrollment (Mulvenon& Robertson,

2014; Selingo, Carey, & Pennington, 2013), making it imperative to understand online learning and related concepts.

This paper aims to delve deep into the concept of andragogy and the economic significance of this segment to education marketers. The study attempts to understand how the adult students learn, what motivates them, differences between andragogy and pedagogy along with details of online and blended modalities and their advantages with respect to adult learners.

The idea of carrying out this multi-disciplinary research germinated when the researcher took up an additional role of being an instructor in an online course being undertaken by colleagues as part of the organization's faculty development program.

## **2. Review Of Literature**

### **2.1 Definition of 'Andragogy'**

The term "Andragogy" was first coined by Alexander Kapp, a German educator, in 1833. It refers to the academic discipline that reflects and researches the education and learning of adults. Malcolm Knowles, an American educator, considered the Father of Andragogy as he popularized this concept, said that andragogy (Greek: "man-leading") should be distinguished from the more commonly used term *pedagogy* (Greek: "child-leading"). He defined andragogy as a science (Cooper & Henschke, 2003).[2]

The adult learner population, usually defined as adults above the age of 25 years, tends to have different learning needs than the traditional student, ages 18 to 24. The terms "mature student" or "working professional" or "working adult students" are also used to refer to this segment learners who undertake a programme of study later in life than those who – typically at 18 or 19 years of age – enter tertiary studies directly after secondary school. [3]. This means they have previous work experience and knowledge and thus, their characteristics are different from traditional pre-degree adult students. This category of students has drawn more attention from educators in recent years, perhaps as a reflection of a growing recognition of the significant market opportunity that these students represent.

Roque L. Ludojoski, in his work '*Andragogy. Adult person's education*' (1971) admits that this pedagogic theory arises from the need to become aware of the void existing in the educational field to analyze and take part in the adult persons' educational processes. Andragogy's goals would therefore be:

- To formulate the concepts that will make it possible to recognize the particularities of human beings' personalities in their adult age and the specific nature of their educational processes.
- To design the guidelines for a suitable didactic methodology to establish teaching and learning processes among adults.

For Knowles also, it is possible to use Andragogy's principles as a basis for intervention in adult education environments. Andragogy, just as the pedagogic theory, makes it possible to participate in all educational processes in a flexible way.

## **2.2. Characteristics of Adult Learners**

"Adult students are different from traditional school students. Many have responsibilities (for example: family and work) and other situations (for example: mobility, children care, domestic violence and the need to get an income) that may interfere in the learning process. Most adults enter educational programs voluntarily and adapting their classes to their work and family responsibilities. Additionally, most adult students are highly motivated and assignment oriented." (Cercone, 2008).[4]

**Academic Profile** :Most adult students have some previous academic qualifications that may have been left incomplete or they want to achieve more qualifications to better their job prospects. The decision of working adult students to re-start education is voluntary. Thus they are intrinsically motivated and confident.

**Professional Profile** : The adult students have high expectations from the course and hope to get a fast transference into better jobs or promotions. They have an advantage since they are now working in the real world and thus understand the rigors of a job and need for good education to progress in their field. Hence they are more serious and dedicated students. Purcell et al (2007)

[5] noted that graduates who completed their course in their late 20s to 40s were most likely to have taken their courses with a clear intention of enhancing their employment opportunities. On the flip side, they have less time and thus cannot spend too much time on their assignments. Some have spouses and even children, thus prioritizing the job, family and their own continuing education is a juggling act.

**Psychological Profile :** They have a high level of participation and clarity in study objectives. Adult students are independent and have high degree of autonomy thus are eager learners. They have a positive attitude towards learning and sharing. They are hard working since they enroll for further studies knowing that they will have to do a balancing act between their various responsibilities – family-work-study balance.

They may however, have some prejudice of "learning from a younger person" as well as resistance to change, fear of new dynamics, technologies and methodologies.

**Demographic Profile :** Working adult students are not a homogenous group. They are linked only by their decision to participate in higher education at a stage in their life that is well beyond the full-time schooling period. Mature students differ considerably with respects to their demographic characteristics, such as class, ethnicity and gender making it difficult to generalize. Even the type of programs they demand varies a lot.

The majority of mature students are middle class although the take-up of mature working class students is increasing. (Davies 2002; Ross et al 2002).[6][7] Proportionately more people from working class than middle-class origins study as adults than at the school leaving age.

Other demographic characteristics of online learners noted in the literature are (DETC, 2007 as cited by Moore &Kearsley, 2011).[8] Students were :

- 55% male; 45% female
- 73% are employed
- 34% have tuition paid by their employer
- 94% have a secondary education diploma
- 33% have a bachelor degree

- 74% rate of course completion
- 65% average graduation rate
- 93% have access to the internet

**Types of mature students :** Osborne et al (2004) [9] suggest six categories of mature students, each of which reflects different circumstances and motivations of mature students.

- “Delayed traditional students” who have chosen to take time out from their education but re-enter through a traditional route;
- “Late starters” who have undergone a life-transforming event and require a new start;
- “Single parents”;
- “Careerists” who are currently employed and aiming to upgrade skills or qualifications;
- “Escapes” who are employed but want a different career pathway;
- “Personal growers” who want to pursue education for its own sake.

There is some evidence of cultural and social homogeneity across these mature learner groups; for example, 'single parents' may also be 'escapes' as their social circumstances change; women returners may be 'late starters' but also 'personal growers'.

**Motivators :** As per J Fabian, the factors that can affect students’ motivation are - Home environment, classroom environment, school system, peer motivation, teacher motivation. Regular, timely and effective feedback is another motivator. Using technologically advanced tools, especially ones that teach and convey concepts in a visual manner are a big motivator, instead of having long lectures that adult students may find boring or time consuming. The course structure and content should allow for interactivity and collaboration between student-student and student –teacher to ensure higher engagement and deeper learning.

Knowles' theory can be stated with six assumptions related to motivation of adult learning:

1. **Need to know:** Adults need to know the reason for learning something.
2. **Foundation:** Experience (including error) provides the basis for learning activities.
3. **Self-concept:** Adults need to be responsible for their decisions on education; involvement in the planning and evaluation of their instruction.

4. **Readiness:** Adults are most interested in learning subjects having immediate relevance to their work and/or personal lives.
5. **Orientation:** Adult learning is problem-centered rather than content-oriented.
6. **Motivation:** Adults respond better to internal versus external motivators.

Davies et al (2002)[6] noted five motivating factors for becoming a working adult student - an interest in the subject to be studied; the chance to enhance career prospects; a wish to improve existing qualifications; a desire to change the direction of their life; and the fact that they had always wanted to study but never had the opportunity. In other words, personal advancement was a crucial motivator (Woodley and Brennan 2000). [10].

The andragogy model is based on four assumptions related to the concepts that adult distance learners must have the ability, need, the desire to control, and be responsible for their learning.

### 2.3. Comparison of Andragogy with Pedagogy

Knowles published his first article in 1968 about his understanding of andragogy with the provocative title '*Andragogy, Not Pedagogy.*' Wherein he states: "Andragogy is the art and science of helping adults to learn, based on suppositions about the differences between children and adults". Andragogy is considered as an opposite to Pedagogy, which focuses on children's learning, since the learning processes are different, based on the experience adults have acquired through the years.

The educational process in pedagogy and andragogy is very different since the attitudes, the psychosocial development, the motivations, the expectations, the learner's relationship of dependence, previous knowledge of both groups of students are very different . These are summarized in the below table.

Table 1.1 : Comparison of Andragogy with Pedagogy

Attribute	Pedagogy (Traditional students)	Andragogy (Working Adult Students)
Attitude	Level of involvement varies , dependent on tutor	More involved, independent
Previous knowledge	Only previous academic	Have practical knowledge of

	/theoretical knowledge	working in their chosen field
Expectations	Gaining knowledge /subject info for completing studies and getting a job	Transference of new knowledge/skills to their current jobs
Motivation	Motivation is external – the pressure to study and get good grades	Self- motivated and highly motivated individuals
Focus	Content- centric	Problem solving
Use of New technology	Are comfortable	Maybe reluctant
Role of tutor	Larger, bigger role, that of laying out rules and systems	Role of guide and facilitator

While the pedagogist prepares for "afterwards", the andragogist prepares for "today"; to attain immediate personal, intellectual, and economic goals. Motivation is thus different for young and adult students, and so is teaching them.

#### 2.4. Blended and Online Teaching Modalities

Two widely discussed practices of online learning are andragogy and engagement (Bourke, 2014; Zhang & Zheng, 2013).[11][12]. Thus andragogy is one important element of online learning.

A **face-to-face (F2F)** or in-class or traditional teaching modality means the teacher and students are in the same physical location. The F2F class is usually in the form of a lecture wherein students are passive listeners. A huge benefit of this method is the social interaction is possible between teacher -student as well as student-student. The flip side is the geographic limitation and time restriction since the class is synchronous.

In stark contrast, at the other end of the continuum, is the **completely online** modality, wherein the tutor is not the sole source of content which is already provided to students or uploaded. Thus the tutor dons the hat of a mentor and facilitator. Hence, onus of learning is on students who have to be actively involved. This modality provides great flexibility to the working adult



students to access the uploaded content as per their convenience in terms of time and location. There are no geographic limitations, learning is asynchronous and the cohort can consist of students from across the globe. Hence, the online classroom is a global community.

This flexibility is what appeals to the working adult students who can better balance their commitments: work-study-family and is the main the reason for the huge growth of andragogic education via blended and online modalities.

The **Blended or Hybrid modality** is so termed because it is somewhere in the mid of the spectrum, a mix of the two modalities – F2F and online. Anywhere between 20-80% of the content is uploaded online and rest is delivered via F2F.

The main challenge for online and blended modalities is the lack of social interaction between teacher-student and student-student. This can largely be overcome by designing online environments and activities that are interactive and collaborative, by using technologically advanced tools like discussion forums, blogs, wikis, embed videos/ audios or closed Facebook groups.

Demographic Characteristics of Online Learners : One of the most notable characteristics of online learners is that the majority are adults between the ages of 25 to 50 (Moore &Kearsley, 2011). While this does not consist of all online learners, it is important to consider the implications this will have on the teaching practices. Moore and Kearsley (2011), explain the effect of these demographics as, “Consequently, an understanding of the nature of adult learning is an invaluable foundation for understanding the distance [online] learner (p150)”.

## **2.5. Advantages of Blended and Online Teaching Modalities**

Blended and Online learning modalities are a new avatar of distance learning, giving students more opportunities to interact with teachers or peers and by providing increased access to information available on the internet. As mentioned in Section 2.7, the main advantage is the flexibility and ease and convenience of accessing the content. Students can access the course material from home or office in case they have missed out on some F2F classes due to work

pressure. The students ability to juggle all their commitments and still be able to attain a family-work-study balance is their prime concern.

In addition, blended and online education tools help adult students get access to a world-class learning experience when traditional higher education is simply not possible due to financial or personal constraints. It is a boon for a student who suffers from physical or mental disabilities that make learning in a classroom impossible. Online courses, specialisations and degree programs can offer such students an incredible opportunity to continue their education.

In order to move up the ladder in today's competitive world, basic skill sets are not enough. Appraisals and promotions are awarded on the basis of reskilling and continuous upgradation of ones skill sets as well as acquiring new skills that may be required as technology strides ahead, which the younger generation may already be equipped with as part of their traditional education. The blended and online learning modalities, empower working professionals and help democratize education in India by improve the chances of upgrading skills of mid-level professionals. These also ensure faculty development and reskilling - teachers learn from the best in the world and in turn, teach their students. The offline component helps reach the furthest communities, and the online part ensures constant updates and much lower cost of operations.

## **2.6. Significance of the Segment of Adult Learners**

According to a 2016 report by management consulting firm Technopak[13], India's education market is currently valued at \$100 billion and is expected to reach US\$ 116.4 billion in FY 2016-17. The digital learning market is currently estimated at \$2 billion and is expected to touch US\$ 40 billion by 2017.

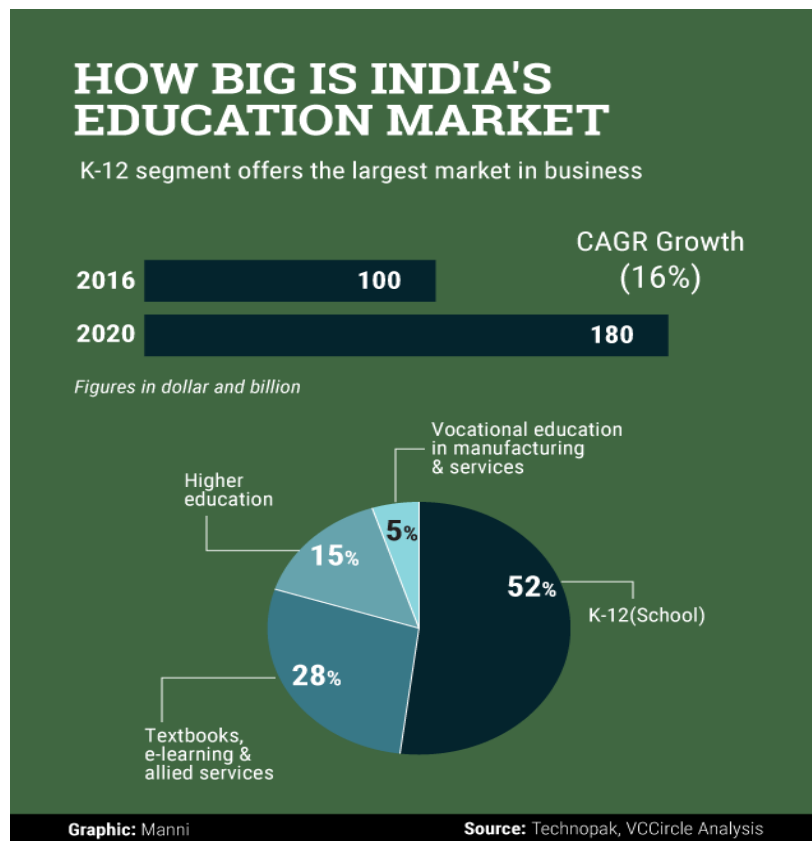
According to the University Grants Commission, in 2016, India has 751 universities and more than 35,539 colleges/higher education institutes. The distance education system contributed a quarter of student enrolments in the higher education system, with over 29 million students enrolled in the higher education systems. The demand for education exists both at the student and employment level with 619 million population (students) falls in the 0-24-year age group.

As per report dated Oct 2016 from Govt. of India[14], India has one of the largest higher education systems in the world, enrolling over 70 million students and has become the second largest market for e-learning after the US. The distance education market in India is expected to grow at a Compound Annual Growth Rate (CAGR) of around 34 per cent during 2013-14 to 2017-18.[15]

India's population pyramid shows the evident 'Youth Bulge'- 43% of our population is below the age of 25 years. Thus the education sector in India is poised to witness further major growth in the years to come as India will have world's largest tertiary-age population and second largest graduate talent pipeline globally by the end of 2020. At present, higher education sector witnesses spending of over Rs 46,200 crore (US\$ 6.78 billion), and it is expected to grow at an average annual rate of over 18 per cent to reach Rs 232,500 crore (US\$ 34.12 billion) in next 10 years.

With more than 370 million internet users and many businesses willing to invest in the future of education, online education in India is well established and poised for huge growth.

Figure 1.2 : Size of Indian Education Market



Source :Rai, J. (2016, November 21). India's education market to nearly double to \$180 bn by 2020. Retrieved January 14, 2017, from <http://www.vccircle.com/news/education/2016/11/18/indias-education-market-nearly-double-180-bn-2020-1>

However, research also shows that 4 % of children never start school, 58% don't complete primary schools, 90% don't complete secondary school and only 10% go on to college. What is going to happen to the 90%? Will some of these drop-outs continue their education sometime later in life? If yes, then they will then come under the category of adult or mature students.

In many countries the traditional pool of 18-to-22-year-old students is declining thus in these markets, education institutions have to adapt to serve new categories of learners.

Online enrollments continue growing at a robust rate, forcing many institutions to engage with the online space more vigorously, or perhaps for the first time. Almost 70% of chief academic leaders say online learning is critical to their long- term strategy.

As is evident from the above statistics, the increasing demand for andragogy has resulted in tremendous potential for the higher education sector. These favourable demographics bring enormous economic opportunities. Adult learners constitute a slice of education segment that has tremendous potential in terms of market size.

### **3. Research Methodology**

This research paper is based on secondary data collected by extensive literature review through books, websites, abstracts, peer- reviewed online journals and dissertations. Statistics regarding the Indian Education segment were taken from data of year 2016 so as to ensure the latest updates.

The method of comparing and contrasting between the different teaching/learning modalities has been used to understand the reasons for the growth of andragogy.

The practical aspects of the paper are based on experiences and personal insights of the researcher, who as a faculty in higher education, started by teaching students via face-to-face modality, transitioned to a hybrid one and finally became an online instructor for faculty development programs.

#### **4. Research Objectives**

The primary objective of the study was to study the impact of blended and online learning modalities on the growth of andragogy. The purpose of this study was to get insights on how advancements in teaching technology are affecting and changing higher education, be it in terms of the market size, teaching methods, student engagement, designing online environments and student interface as well as marketing strategies.

For this, the study started by gaining an in-depth understanding of the psychographics of adult learners, their characteristics and how the andragogic teaching and learning methods differ from traditional pedagogic ones.

The findings of this paper will help education marketers develop effective and efficient marketing strategies focused at the growing segment of adult learners.

Thus we can conclude that this research work is multi-disciplinary, drawing from and contributing to the fields of technology, online learning environment (OLE), education, social sciences, andragogy and connecting all these to benefit education marketeers.

#### **5. Conclusions And Implications**

This study delved deeper into several aspects of andragogy - adult learning, especially with respect to blended and online learning modalities. Working adult students share some common characteristics – are self-directed, intrinsically motivated, looking at immediate transference of the education to better opportunities, but their reasons for choosing the course and their expectations from it are different. The working adult students are a heterogeneous segment.

Blended and online modalities are a tool for providing working adult students with a flexible learning environment, increasing student engagement and ensuring deeper and more practical learning.

The attributes of working adult learners and those of online learners are the same making the online modality a perfect fit for andragogic students.

As is evident from the given statistics, the increasing demand for andragogy, education from working adult students has resulted in tremendous economic potential for the online higher education sector in India.

This exploratory study has many implications for all stakeholders of the online higher education. The characteristics of adult learners have to be borne in mind while planning and designing all aspects of online learning environments. Tutors, university administrators, instructional designers, student interface developers and other professionals working in the design of online environments for adults must understand the attributes of adult learners, especially in terms of its relationship to blended and online learning, so they can make positive social environments using electronic mediums.

Needs of working adult students are very different and understanding them can help us design the right learning/teaching model, curricula, learning outcomes and collaborative assignments to satisfy their needs. Development of a credit accumulation, transfer systems and lateral entry should be based on a thorough knowledge of the aspects covered herein.

The literature review stated that 90 % students don't complete secondary school and only 10% go on to college. With the blended and online modalities taking firm roots, these student dropout percentages will hopefully lower. Additionally, the percentage of students returning to education as adults will be higher as the e-learning environment gives tremendous flexibility and helps

maintain a work-life-study balance. Transition from F2F to blended and online modalities also implies a change in the role and perspective of online instructors as well as their education and technological skills.

## 6. Limitations Of The Study

The limitations faced for the research undertaken for this paper :

**Study Design Limitations** - Since this study is exploratory in nature and based on secondary research, it is not definitive, though it provides ample insights to base future quantitative research on.

**Target group Limitations** - The target group of adult learners is heterogeneous, thus making generalizations difficult.

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