Introduction

Mention of adult learners immediately reminds people of the graying campuses in developed countries such as the United States of America, Canada and those in Western Europe and Northern Europe. These countries and many others on different continents have emerged as learning societies where adult learners have become the bona fide backbone of the economy. Those adult learners who do not engage in continuing education or learning live in what we call developing countries. Research in adult learning indicates the human mind is like a muscle; if we don’t use it, we tend to lose it. Many philosophical sayings in different cultures are derived from adult learning theories or concepts. For example, “many hands make light work” (collective wisdom from adult learners). The late Chinese leader, Mao incorporated this saying into his “Red Book” to encourage people to be engaged in learning and working together to achieve a common goal. In learning societies, no one is to underestimate research in adult learning and professional developments. Advanced research has generated useful knowledge to further enrich adult learning and professional development. It has taken the major players such as Malcolm Knowles, Stephen Brookfield, Jack Mezirow and Patricia Cranton many decades to develop useful theories to equip adult learners to become productive citizens in learning societies and to move from pedagogy to andragogy in their teaching. Even to this day, many researchers draw on the former mentor of Malcolm Knowles, Carl Rogers, to develop guiding principles to become learning facilitators as their teaching style. Sadly, some adult educators still teach pedagogically due to the expectations of external assessors in accreditation bodies. Some scholars lament the fact that the whole educational enterprise has been frozen into the pedagogical model. Critical theory and transformative learning as popularized by Brookfield, Mezirow and Cranton have given researchers new hope in the field. These newer theories expand on the theory of andragogy as presented by Knowles in the 1970s and encourage researchers to think outside the box or think about the andragogical thinking process.

Adult learners’ professional development relies on these theories. Otherwise, professional development would lead to mindless activism. Unfortunately, professional development is often treated as a set of “how to” techniques rather than as a theory-based practiced. As a national and international director of adult education, Knowles was a keynote speaker at numerous conferences, spreading the art and science of helping adults learn (Knowles’ definition of andragogy). Because of his heavy emphasis on the helping role, adult educators now say they enjoy this “helping” profession. Some scholars even say andragogy has caused a revolution in education and training. It is not inaccurate to make such as claim because at least adult learning professionals do not want to be labeled as “pedagogues,” leaders of children. To be more exact, educators in adult learning may say andragogy has changed their teaching style or training method. Outside this andragogical educational arena, pedagogy may still get the upper hand. Critical thinking or critical reflection is the key component of the theory of transformative learning, although recently
theorists propose alternative processes such as intuition and relational learning. Although Mezirow is only interested in learners’ perspective change, transformative learning indeed results in a whole changed person, including a learner’s cognitive (perspective), psychomotor and affective domains. For example, our returning veterans from Afghanistan or Iraq not only changed their perspective about wars, but also changed their attitudes and physical capabilities as a result of being involved in war. Many suffer from post traumatic stress disorder and emotional and relational dilemmas. Most indicate wars launched for whatever political purposes are not healthy and these wounded ones have to depend on taxpayers’ money for further continuing education and even survival. This example corroborates Knowles’ assumption about the result of transformative learning; that is, as learners experience more in life, they are changed physically, psychologically, and spiritually. In other words, learners are no longer the same learners as they age and have more experience in life. When we are young, we do have more fluid intelligence. When we age, we tend to gain more crystallized intelligence, hence wiser as learners.

As soon as Knowles popularized andragogy with its six assumptions or principles of andragogy: 1, the need to know; 2, self-concept of the adult learner; 3, prior experience; 4, readiness to learn; 5, orientation to learning; and 6, motivation to learn, the theory of andragogy has sparked voluminous subsequent research. The Adult Education Quarterly has been subscribed to by over 1,000 university libraries since its early inception a few decades ago. Scholars from other fields contribute articles addressing adult learning in this journal. Even the term andragogy has been misspelled by different journal editors. Knowles himself misspelled the term andragogy in 1968, but later corrected it via correspondence. Most articles follow Knowles’ teachings and Rogers’ five hypotheses (one of them is you cannot teach another one directly; you have to facilitate his or her learning). Most journal articles indicate the paradigm shift from pedagogy to andragogy. In other words, instructors are encouraged to change their role from being information presenters and knowledge authorities to striving to become learning facilitators. Doctoral dissertations over the decades have joined these journal article contributors to test this theory of andragogy. Numerous instruments have been developed to test this theory. For example, Gary Conti developed the PALS (Principles of Adult Learning Scale) and he asked Knowles to approve it. Numerous doctoral students have utilized this instrument to test the theory of andragogy in relation to their own professional experience.

The influence of andragogy and Knowles himself as the father of adult education can be felt in research universities. Open any Websites of those Carnegie Research Universities will suggest that they are “student-centered” universities. It is not hard to imagine that they have derived this “student-centeredness” from Carl Rogers’ “client-centered” therapy theory, later popularized by Knowles. One vivid example to show the influence of andragogy or Knowles is the provost’s Webpage of Fielding Graduate University in California. This Webpage lists Knowles’ teachings and philosophies as the theorem on which the university was founded. What an honor to Knowles! Some teaching universities do not label themselves as student-centered universities but many do, even if this may not be acted on in practice. However, of these nearly 300 research universities in the United States, most of them are chief economic engines for the nation. Many of them have several billion dollars as their endowed funds to support teaching and research. No teaching or research can be successful without appropriate funding. Research informs practice. Teaching would be at a standstill without active research. We teach theories or knowledge and skills generated by research.

As soon as Brookfield, Mezirow and Cranton rekindled the desire of scholars to delve in critical theory and transformative learning theory as newer theories in adult learning, these major players started a movement towards applying these theories to practice. Open books, chapters, and journal articles
reveal voluminous writing related to these two theories. A new journal titled *Journal of Transformative Education* was launched in 2003 and quickly this journal became a tier one journal housed in AAACE (American Association of Adult and Continuing Education). These major players publish articles, book chapters and books to promote their theories. Of over 100 journals hosted by IGI Global, one journal has been particularly devoted to adult education. As I write the preface for this volume, this journal titled *International Adult Vocational Education and Technology* is being circulated in many different countries. Recently, I invited these prominent theorists, Cranton and Brookfield to serve as editors-in-chief to help promote critical theory, transformative learning theory, and other adult learning theories in the field. Below is a copy of news release which gives us a glimpse of how these theorists address the most important theories in the field:

**DR. VICTOR WANG INTERVIEWS AND INTRODUCES NEW CO-EDITORS-IN-CHIEF OF IJAVET: DR. PATRICIA CRANTON AND DR. STEPHEN BROOKFIELD**

*Acclaimed Editors Join Forces for the International Journal of Adult Vocational Education & Technology*

By IGI Global on Apr 18, 2013

As a special Newsroom Post for IGI Global, we asked the acclaimed Dr. Victor Wang, Editor-in-Chief of the *International Journal of Adult and Vocational Education and Technology (IJAVET)* to host an interview addressing his new joint Editors-in-Chief, Dr. Patricia Cranton of the University of New Brunswick, Canada, and Dr. Stephen Brookfield of the University of St. Thomas, USA.

**Dr. Victor Wang:** The *International Journal of Adult Vocational Education and Technology* was first endorsed in 2008 by a peer of Malcolm Knowles, Dr. Edgar Boone. The journal is distributed throughout many countries. We are excited to introduce two new co-editors of the journal, the esteemed Dr. Patricia Cranton and Dr. Stephen Brookfield. We are honored that you both have agreed to serve as editors-in-chief to raise the awareness of the journal to a new level. I grew up in China, studying Marxism. When I read Dr. Stephen Brookfield’s writing on critical theory, I tell colleagues and students, “This is our contemporary Karl Marx, whose books are full of wisdom.” Similarly, I say at national and international conferences, “Dr. Cranton is the Queen of transformative learning...” Your research has truly helped advance and develop the field of adult education. Would each of you tell us something about your academic background and the research and writing you will continue to pursue?

**Dr. Patricia Cranton:** Victor, thank you so much for that wonderful introduction. I am honored to be invited to make a contribution to the IJAVET as a co-editor. My interests in adult education in general are fairly broad, but I have focused my writing and research over the last ten years on transformative learning and authenticity in teaching. In relation to the specific goals of IJAVET, I taught for two decades in a program designed to help tradespeople become teachers of their trades. This was some of the most rewarding teaching I have ever done. I also had the opportunity to conduct research on the transition that tradespeople make as they move to a new identity as “teacher.” I’m never quite sure of the directions that my future research and writing will take, but I have been working
with the use of fiction in teaching and narrative and arts-based learning. When I was teaching in trades program, I found arts-based learning to be a fascinating alternative for folks who were not especially fond of writing essays.

**Dr. Stephen Brookfield:** Critical theory seems to me to provide one of the most helpful sets of explanations as to how people live in communities and organizations, particularly how they experience the dynamics of power. As a teacher, critical theory has made me far more aware of power dynamics in my classroom, and has helped me understand the need to intervene to stop power relations outside the classroom from automatically reproducing themselves in the classroom. The exercises and activities I’ve developed for this purpose are everywhere in my books and on my Website. Critical theory also makes me aware of how dominant ideology - prevailing sets of ideas, practices, values and habits - structure so much of what happens in class, and how students approach learning. Capitalism, white supremacy, patriarchy, heterosexism, ableism - all these ideologies shape how curricula are developed, learning assessed, and teachers approach their work. Ideologies of individualism and capitalism, for example, mean that the assessment of student learning, consideration of what represents scholarly excellence, and models of good teaching, stress individual competition as the norm. Collaboration and the collective generation of knowledge are viewed skeptically as not ‘properly’ academic.

**Dr. Victor Wang:** Most universities subscribe to the e-version of this journal and many other of IGI Global’s journals. What are your thoughts on e-journals and the advantages they may give to readers?

**Dr. Stephen Brookfield:** The explosion of E-communication has revolutionized how knowledge is created and disseminated. Of course, the glaring digital divide means that large sectors of the globe do not have access to adequate modes of information sharing. But as technology becomes cheaper and access grows we have the opportunity to integrate new forms of democratic participation and information sharing into political and educational systems. We are now in an era when knowledge generated at different ends of the globe has the potential to be shared almost instantaneously.

**Dr. Patricia Cranton:** As a faculty member who has been teaching online for more than a decade, I am fully conscious of the advantage of online resources and e-journals. It is important to be accessible to journal readers in general and especially to students of adult education. Thirty years ago, Dr. Malcolm Knowles envisioned a world where adult learners could have free and easy access to resources in order to engage in self-directed learning. It is good to see his vision becoming a reality.

**Dr. Victor Wang:** Thank you for taking the time to answer these questions! Your generosity is greatly appreciated. The journal and its community of scholars/researchers will be well served with your wealth of knowledge, skills and unmatched prior experience as well-respected editors in the field of adult education. I am confident that more universities and researchers from around the globe in the next three years will subscribe to this journal that serves as a premier resource for teaching and learning. Your expertise, prior experience and vision as editors will certainly continue to help advance and develop the field to a new height. No need to say the whole academia will immensely benefit from your leadership as editors in chief of this prestigious journal by IGI Global. On a personal note, I am indebted to your scholarly contributions to this global learning community. Thank you again!
Indeed, their way of addressing these most important theories can help researchers and scholars better understand penetrating articles, book chapters and books written by Cranton and Brookfield. The authors for this volume have diverse academic backgrounds. Most have advanced degrees in adult education. Their cutting edge articles have addressed in-depth and in-breadth tools, trends and methodologies in this important field of adult education. Our society would have not emerged as a learning society without adult education. If a society is to prosper, adult education should play a major role and learning must continue throughout the lifespan. Adult learners are the backbone of any economy. Adult learners need to enter and reenter the workforce to help build our economy. Every country relies on adult education programs. Adult education programs should be designed to help people become productive citizens. By contributing to this volume, these authors and scholars have shared with our readers their real experience concerning tools, trends, and methodologies in adult learning. By reading their chapters, we can have an intimate dialogue with these scholars. Based on their research, our readers and graduate students may conduct similar research in the field. These authors also come from different cultures. Worthy of note is the fact you may read articles by Cranton and Brookfield themselves. I encourage you to capitalize on this opportunity to communicate with these scholars and rest assured you will get a reply if you choose to communicate with them. These scholars believe in Jürgen Habermas’ theory regarding three kinds of knowledge. The second kind of knowledge is communicative or practical knowledge. We gain this kind of knowledge by communicating with our peers and friends.

Advanced research in adult learning and professional development has come a long way. Initially, the field was labeled as an apprenticeship; for example, the process by which a journeyman would do job shadowing under the leadership of a master craftsman. Following the Industrial Revolution, the field was called manual training. After the turn of the 20th century, the field was labeled as industrial arts. After that, it was called vocational education for many decades. Finally, it was called career and technical education given the fact that the field is concerned with one’s lifelong career education and a major component is technology. Every industrialized country is based on manufacturing, and technology has played a major role in developing these industrialized nations into Information Age where we enjoy such novel gadgets such as iPads. Modern tools such as the ubiquitous computer have made research in this field much easier. Many adult learners obtain multiple graduate degrees. Some research addresses how learners with multiple graduate degrees may acquire knowledge, skills and attitudes and how they pass their skills to others, or the next generation in the workforce. Malcolm Knowles’ predecessor, Eduard Lindeman was correct. In an adult education class, it is hard to tell who is doing the teaching and who is doing the learning. The instructor may have expertise in one area; the learners may have expertise in other areas. Learning has become truly experiential; learners may tap into their prior experience, which may serve as the best resources for learning.

In terms of adult learners, we have older adult learners, including the baby boomers (about 70 million in the United States alone; born after the Second World War II). We also have what we call millennials who are the youngest adult learners also termed as digital natives. These learners enjoyed TV, computers and other modern tools. In terms of helping these adult learners learn, adult educators are required to utilize different strategies. Traditional instructional methods may still be helpful. Often times, these learners may require facilitation skills. In other words, these learners may be capable of teaching themselves and do not require their instructors to provide even the foundation knowledge. Adult learners, young or old, may be capable of multi-tasking. Many work for more than one employer. Their energy, enthusiasm, and desire for learning were unthinkable 4 decades ago. Truly, we are living in a learning society in which learners avidly acquire instrumental, communicative, and emancipatory knowledge in
order to get along with other people, overcome oppression, and stay in control of the environment. The more people learn, the more they realize there is still much for them to learn. Our mission is to discover more as we conduct research to understand more about the people, things, and events around us. Our worldviews can be enhanced by conducting research. Our horizons can be widened by conducting research.

Trends are hard to predict in the field of adult learning and professional development. No one could imagine that typewriters would be replaced by computers just a few decades ago. Artificial intelligence has become a buzz term in any academic field. However, it must be pointed that adult learning professionals made the prediction that education in the 21st century would be delivered electronically. Almost all universities in developed countries have delivered their courses via the Internet technologies thus far. Universities in some developing countries have done so in this regard. Because governmental agencies and universities encourage innovation, the next generation computers will not only be, but also perform multiple tasks beyond one’s imagination. It is already a reality that some universities have eliminated required physical textbooks. Innovative publishers have already provided E-books. University libraries are required to subscribe to these E-books and all faculty and students may access any chapters and enjoy free downloads of these chapters by a few mouse clicks anywhere as long as they have a computer and Internet connection. This is a revolution and will be a trend in the near future. Under the guise of “go green,” no employers including universities wish to cut down more trees, which is problematic environmentally. As we continue to live in this digital world, more inventions will make our life easier, more convenient and more flexible. Even in the aging population, researchers have begun to talk about “technology-assisted” living in assisted-living communities. Medical breakthroughs may be accomplished with the use of technology. As humans have entered into the Information Age from the industrialized stage, technology has played a major part. Skye has been used by many universities to conduct dissertation defenses where learners live in remote areas or cannot come to the brick and mortar universities due to their job or family responsibilities. As we have more tools in the field, faculty and researchers can now spend more time on investigating how methodologies may maximize learning. In terms of methodologies, we have the traditional lecture and these methodologies were derived from teaching and learning theories and research. The question remains given the multiple tools on the part of our learners and given the self-directed nature of learning, how many methodologies can we truly apply to help learners learn? This may be a new trend, deserving the utmost attention of researchers and scholars.

Research shows 70 million Americans are baby boomers. 90 million Americans have difficulty understanding literacy information related to technology. 110 million Americans by 2030 will be in their early 60s. The number of older adults over the age of 85 has quadrupled. Life span around 1900 was about 50 years of age. Now, the life span for the average American may be around 80 years. Adults simply live longer, hence requiring more learning and perhaps more training in order to live a productive life. Adults are not just takers from society; mainly, they are contributors to society. As the backbone of any given society, adults push our society forward. They are to pass their knowledge, skills and attitudes to the next generation. Therefore, adults must be educated and trained first before they can become learning facilitators for the younger generations. The bottom line is to encourage adult educators to be exemplary instructors of adult learners who are basically capable of self-directed learning and multi-tasking in the Information Age regardless of their age difference. Then the question becomes how adult educators can become exemplary instructors of adult learners. The literature has specified that exemplary instructors of adult learners are engaged in doing the following:
1. Are more concerned about learners than things and events.
2. Know their subject matter.
3. Relate theory to practice and their own field to other fields.
4. Are confident instructors.
5. Are open to a wide variety of teaching approaches.
6. Encourage learning outcomes that go beyond course objectives.
7. Create a positive atmosphere for learning.

What exemplary adult educators do (1 through 7) is in line with the teachings of Knowles and Rogers. The more we think about adult teaching and learning, the more we agree with Rogers or Knowles in terms of what methods can be used to build freedom. Adult educators who are information presenters or knowledge dictators can only stand in the way of adult learners who are capable of self-directed learning. Exemplary adult educators choose the methods of building freedom among their adult learners. These methods can be reiterated as the following:

If a teacher is desirous of giving his students a freedom to learn, how can this be achieved?

1. Provide resources.
2. Use of contracts.
3. Division of group. Organization of facilitator-learning groups.
4. The conduct of inquiry—participative and experiential learning has been receiving increasing emphasis in the past few decades.
5. Simulation as a type of experiential learning.
6. Programmed instruction as experiential learning.
7. Self-evaluation.

The person who is desirous of creating the conditions for self-initiated, self-directed learning finds that there are a number of methods already at hand which are congenial to this approach.

In summary, this is an exciting volume in which our readers and fellow researchers will be able to communicate with theorists such as Cranton and Brookfield, the former peers of the father of adult education. It is by communicating with others that we gain practical or communicative knowledge as specified by Jürgen Habamas. Our researchers will have multiple opportunities to reflect on these chapters in this cutting edge volume to gain emancipatory knowledge. Rather than providing a long preface, I wish to introduce our readers to some first rate researchers and scholars in the world. Last but not least special thanks go to our Publisher, IGI Global and our editorial board members who work tirelessly around the clock to deliver the print version and E-version of this book and other volumes to our readers and university libraries.

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