Chapter 11
Rethinking the Right Teaching Methods that Work for Online Learners

Victor C. X. Wang
California State University, Long Beach, USA

Beth Kania-Gosche
Lindenwood University, USA

ABSTRACT
This article addresses the phenomenon of why andragogical instructional approaches should work for online learners in the 21st century. As some senior faculty members and institutional administrators are reluctant to embrace education delivered via web 2.0 technologies, this article reveals discussions that will change these misconceptions. This article prompts readers to rethink their instructional strategies that will work well for online learners in particular. Even for face to face courses, instructors should incorporate an online component, as the principles of adult learning lend themselves well to an online environment.

INTRODUCTION
No one has imagined that it was the adult learning professionals who had pioneered the use of information communication technologies to deliver programs to online learners, especially to those referred to as “returning students” or “non-traditional learners” or even “adult learners” in the new century. In fact, it was the father of adult education, Malcolm Knowles, who made the prediction in the early 1970s that education in the 21st century would be delivered electronically. Indeed, his predication came true when universities worldwide began to offer their courses online. Now it is not surprising if a university is teaching most of its courses online or in a hybrid delivery mode, combining elements of both face to face and online learning, not to mention those universities offering exclusively online coursework such as the University of Phoenix or Northcentral University in Arizona, USA. Because of information communication technologies, or web 2.0 technologies,
university courses no boundaries. Although
the exact definition of the term Web 2.0 is widely
debated, in essence it refers to the interactivity
of the Internet. Users no longer passively digest
content; they can easily upload their own text,
pictures, and video as well as comment on those
of others. Consumers can not only skim a book’s
table of contents and first few pages on a seller’s
website, they can also express their own opinion
about the book publically. Regarding the power of
web 2.0 technologies, King (2006) vividly gave
examples of its impact on adult learners, such as
the working mother in rural Nebraska completing
her bachelor’s degree online through her local
state university while her children sleep at night or

The retired bus driver engaged in a collabora-
tive webinar for his class through a University
of Beijing class on the Eastern perspective of
global issues (p. 16). Geographic location is no
longer an obstacle to continuing education as it
once was. Professors of even face to face courses
are utilizing the technology of online learning,
even just to post handouts or turn in assignments
electronically to save paper. “Hybrid” courses,
utilizing some face to face meetings and some
online activities and assignments, are also becom-
ing increasingly popular, as they blend both types
of delivery methods.

While online learners enjoy the flexibility and
convenience of learning anywhere, any time via in-
formation communication technologies, scholars
have begun to pay close attention to the changes
stimulated by the rapid growth of the Internet, the
increasing of globalization of higher education,
and the ever-pressing question of institutional
and instructional quality. While new modes of
educational delivery in the new century through
virtual networks are breaking the traditional mold
of instructional provision, very few people realize
that it is the adult learning principles that drive ef-
fective teaching methodologies for online learners
or returning students. Knowles would not have
made such an accurate prediction without the basis
of the principles of adult learning or andragogical

instructional methods. Because some universities
have effectively used andragogical instructional
methods, they have been able to expand their
educational programs for online learners. Writ-
ing in 2003, Bash noted, “In 2002, the University
of Phoenix, part of the Apollo Group, saw its
enrollment surpass 100,000 students—making
it the largest institution of higher learning in the
United States” (p. 50). While popularity does not
necessarily equate to effective learning, there is
no doubt that traditional universities are also at-
tempts to capture a piece of the online learning
marketplace. These courses are cost effective since
they do not require a physical classroom with all of
the upkeep and expenses that go along with being
on campus. The skills learned when negotiating
an online learning environment may be another
draw for some adult learners. “State of the art
technical skills and subject matter expertise are
the keys to better jobs and new careers for profes-
sionals” (Worley, 2000, p. 94). To be successful,
online courses and degree programs must utilize
the andragogical instructional delivery methods
advanced by Knowles and others. Online learners
of any age must be self-directed to a certain extent,
since there is typically no official class meeting
time like with a face to face course.

However, to effectively teach online, the
professor’s instructional philosophies must be
examined. Traditional methods of instruction,
especially lecture, do not necessarily translate
well in an online environment. As with any
course, preparation for the first implementation
of an online course is often time consuming
for the instructor, but subsequent semesters are
easier since usually only minor modifications to
the course website are necessary. “Instructors
must account for the fact that they are not in the
presence of live students, able to gauge reactions,
and make small adjustments on the spot on an
as-needed basis” (Dennen, 2005, p. 128). In an
online environment, most communication occurs
through text, either email, discussion boards,
instant messaging or chatting, and even wikis,
Related Content

Assessment Processes for Online Professional Development
[www.igi-global.com/chapter/assessment-processes-for-online-professional-development/105247?camid=4v1a](www.igi-global.com/chapter/assessment-processes-for-online-professional-development/105247?camid=4v1a)

Increasing Adult Learner Engagement in E-learning Courses through Learner Case Writing
[www.igi-global.com/chapter/increasing-adult-learner-engagement-learning/46621?camid=4v1a](www.igi-global.com/chapter/increasing-adult-learner-engagement-learning/46621?camid=4v1a)

The Relationship between Job Training and Job Satisfaction: A Review of Literature
[www.igi-global.com/article/relationship-between-job-training-job/43872?camid=4v1a](www.igi-global.com/article/relationship-between-job-training-job/43872?camid=4v1a)

Lessons from the ITS Program: Five Design Strategies on Which to Build Technology-Rich Teacher Education
[www.igi-global.com/chapter/lessons-its-program/61914?camid=4v1a](www.igi-global.com/chapter/lessons-its-program/61914?camid=4v1a)