

Stable Constituents Of The Construct Of The Young Adult: A User Of The Newspaper As An Andragogical Tool

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Abstract

This paper is a part of a larger study that focuses on the interaction among the young adult reader of the print newspaper in Mumbai, the newspaper, and the environment in which they co-exist. The paper is an excerpt of the review of literature of the larger study. The context for the study is briefly presented. The construct of the young adult is evolved from dimensions of domains of knowledge that are relevant for the Newspaper as an Andragogical tool.

Keywords: Young adult; Andragogy; Newspaper; learning;

Introduction:

Newspapers tended to identify young people as their target segment (Zerba, 2011). Our study took learning as approach to the newspaper. Learning of adults was the focus of andragogy (Sisco & Hiemstra, 1990) (Reischmann, Andragogy: History, Meaning, Context, Function, 2004) (Savicevic D. M.) (Rogers C.) (Knowles, The Modern Practice of Adult Education: From Pedagogy to Andragogy, 1970). So, bringing together the adult and learning made us look at this relation through the lens of andragogy. Assuming the newspaper carried information that had all the constituent elements favourable for learning and assuming also that the young adult consumed this information, it was to be expected that learning would take place. However, the question was what constituted learning? We had two paradigms to choose from. These included behaviourism and constructivism. The paradigmatic focus of behaviourism tended to be on studying the bond between stimulus and response, and the degree of accuracy of this bond. Behaviourism tended to view learning as acquisition of a pre-existing and organised body of knowledge that was assumed to be correct. Learning lay in adding-on newer bits of information to the existing reservoir possessed by the individual. Accordingly, behaviourism studied incidence of learning in terms of the quantity of information added-on and the extent to which what was absorbed mirrored what was transmitted (Cohen, 1999) (Bhattacharya & Han). The constructivist paradigm viewed learning as the product of interaction of incumbent information with information that an individual already possessed at a given point of time (Ackermann) (Geer & Rudge) (Hein, 1991). A second difference between behaviourism and constructivism was in the conception of information, itself. Constructivism saw information at two levels. At one level, information was objective and concrete. This

conception of information was shared by both the constructivist and behaviourist paradigms (Vanderstraeten & Biesta). At the second level, information was intangible and subjective. It was intangible because it was seen to be made-up of values that governed actions of human-beings (Vanderstraeten & Biesta). It was subjective because these values tended to differ across groups of people (Hofstede, 2001). This conception of information was salient to the constructivist paradigm. Constructivism viewed learning as the process of creation of knowledge from interaction of objective information with the subjective information. This was why the constructivist paradigm focused on finding-out how the individual went about creating the knowledge that he did create and, explaining why the individual did not create the knowledge that he could have. (Stroud, *Narrative as Argument in Indian Philosophy: The Astavakra Gita as Multivalent Narrative*, 2004) (Vanderstraeten & Biesta) Because the behaviourist paradigm sought to count instances of learning that matched set expectations, it tended to isolate the thing being studied so as to be able to discount everything else as influences (Learning Theory: Models, Product, and Process). Conversely, these influences tended to be the focus for studies in the constructivist tradition because influences explained the obvious. Environment tended to be an umbrella expression that housed these influences also called circumstances (Brookfield, *Emerging voices in Adult Education*, 2011) (Brockett, & Hiemstra, 1999) (Waples, Douglas) (Rogers C.). Therefore, implied within the taking of the constructivist paradigm was the studying of a hypothesised relation considering its interaction with an identified circumstance. Constructivism held that learning from the newspaper tended invariably to be influenced by interaction around the newspaper that was undertaken (Factors that May Predict Newspaper Reading Habits in College Students: Family Newspaper Literacy, Prior Educational Experiences with Newspapers, and Civic Interests) (Barnhurst & Wartella, 1991) (Peer & Nesbitt, 2004). Implied within interaction was the interaction partner. Who this interaction partner was tended to influence what implications he had for the learning of the young adult. (Carmeli, Brueller, & Dutton, 2008) (Oshlyansky, Thimbleby, & Cairns, 2004) We saw literature to lean towards the behaviourist paradigm when studying the relation of the young adult with the newspaper. We went the constructivist way. It suggested to us that the adult resisted transmission. So, it was logical for us to take the constructivist approach to studying the adult's use of the newspaper for learning. But before doing this, it was pertinent to define the adult.

The Young Adult

In most countries, the newspaper industry tended to focus on young people. But, the very conception of young people was varied in literature. This required us to identify and justify measures of the young adult which was a segment of interest both to the newspaper industry and the current study.

Chronological age could be said to be a measure of the length of time that an individual had lived. What was the significance of age? To answer this question, we looked at behaviour. Human behaviour tended to follow a pattern like that of time. Behaviours clustered to constitute an action. An arrangement of two or more actions formed a course of action. Courses of action led to performance of tasks and specific arrangement of tasks led to performance of roles. The human child had to reach a certain age before he could speak. Speech was a behaviour that made possible for the child to interact with other individuals. Thus, speech as a behaviour enabled interaction which was a task. The child would go on to interact with other children as a friend and would have to reach a certain age before he interacted with another individual as a prospective spouse. We noticed that the behaviour of speech remained constant, but age of the individual changed. This change of age opened

the possibility of adding roles that the individual could not perform at an earlier age. Could a child not interact with another child as a prospective spouse? Such an interaction tended to be seen as unwarranted and therefore was likely to be resisted by individuals who themselves might not be party to the interaction. Age, behaviour, and roles tended to interact. Roles that individuals performed in society tended to be associated with phases of life. (Developmental Tasks, 2017) Societies required their members to achieve success in performing a series of tasks that cumulatively translated into human development. American andragogy identified decision-making as a role of the adult (Knowles M. S., 1998; Knowles M., *The Modern Practice of Adult Education: From Pedagogy to Andragogy*, 1970). So, there was consensus that the making of decisions was an adult role. But, this seemingly straight forward relation was complicated by the fact that societies tended to view certain tasks as appropriate to be performed within particular age ranges. And, this age range tended to vary across societies. Cultural expectations that tended to be unique to every society were thought to be explanatory of this difference. Entering workforce and family were roles associated with the adult phase of life. We noted that roles were associated with phases of life, and age bracket tended to be a marker of phase of life. This was to say that age influenced roles of individuals. Participation in workforce was a role. Eighteen years of age was the legal age for individuals to enter workforce, in India. Significance of participation in workforce was that it was said to lead individuals to learning that was an outcome of the work undertaken. This was to say that age mediated the relation between workforce participation and learning. A characteristic of learning acquired as part of work was that it tended to be transferable across situations. This learning tended to be the development and the exercise of mental operations also called higher-order critical thinking skills. The importance of higher-order critical thinking skills was that these led to creation of information that did not hitherto exist. Higher-order critical thinking skills could be acquired both through formal education at higher levels and could be incidental to tasks that were performed by individuals. The possibility of application of critical thinking skills across situations made critical thinking skills a desirable skills-set to be developed among individuals in the twenty first century (21st Century Learning in Schools? A Case study of New Technology High School in Napa, CA) (Malcom, 2006) (Facione, 1990). This was to say that to learn was to develop higher-order critical thinking skills. To say that higher-education programmes tended to focus on development of critical thinking skills was to say that the individual had to finish school before he was eligible for higher-education. Under-graduate and post-graduate academic programmes offered at universities in India were classified under higher education. Enrolment at higher-education programmes presumed completion of primary, secondary, and high-school education. An individual became eligible for enrolment at grade one at the age of six in India. This was to say that the individual would typically be eighteen years of age by the time he could enrol for a higher education programme. Under-graduate programmes offered by universities in India tended typically to span over three to four years. So, an individual tended to be twenty-one to twenty-two years of age by the time he completed an under-graduate programme. In literature, there was broad consensus that a person between eighteen and twenty-four years of age was a young adult; a person between twenty-four and fifty years of age was adult; and, a person over fifty years of age was an old adult (Infed.org, n.d.). A significance of age for the current study was that studies had found adults to progressively tend toward use of media for learning (Livingstone, 2001) (*Exploring the Icebergs of Adult Learning: Findings of the First Canadian Survey of Informal Learning Practices*, 2000). The second significance of age was that age was thought to have implications for maturity in media consumption. Maturity held that advances in age was accompanied by increases in stability and intensity of media use (Sala). Stability came to characterise consumption by the time an individual was in the age range of twenty and twenty-seven. Stability was the regularization of sources of media and the type of

media content that an individual consumed. Specifically, the individual tended to select a certain number of media sources from among those that he had been exposed to for consuming information. Intensity referred to the depth of processing of content consumed. Depth of processing was the application of higher-order critical thinking skills on information consumed from the newspaper. With intensity of consumption, the individual tended to not stop at consumption of information that media presented, but in fact tended to bring higher-order critical thinking skills to act upon this information for creating information that did not hitherto exist and which tended to be more-or-less unique to himself. Together, stability and intensity constituted maturity of media consumption (Sala). This was to say that the young adult tended to consume news from a wide range of sources and tended to consume news on a variety of topics. But sometime in the middle of this phase, he tended towards maturity in consumption.

Andragogy had a different conception of maturity. Maturity in andragogy was ability and willingness to take control (Knowles, *The Modern Practice of Adult Education: From Pedagogy to Andragogy*, 1970). Ability was defined as the transfer of knowledge and skills across situations (Hiemstra, 1994), and which assumed possession of critical thinking skills (Hiemstra, 1994). This maturity was seen to become measurable through characteristics possessed by the individual. The mature individual tended to exhibit independence of thought, individualised decision-making, and critical intelligence (Hiemstra, 1994). In the terminology of self-direction in learning which was a strand of European andragogy, control involved taking ownership for response to a situation (Knowles M. S., 1998). Response was the generation of choices on the direction to pursue, and the taking ownership for consequences of thoughts and actions. We noted that what here was control was decision-making in the constructivist paradigm (Vanderstraeten & Biesta). These were captured by responsibility that American andragogy identified to be the pre-requisite characteristic of the adult individual (Knowles M. S., 1998; Knowles M., *The Modern Practice of Adult Education: From Pedagogy to Andragogy*, 1970). Being responsible for one's own life was identified as a dimension of the self-concept of adult from the psychological vantage point (Knowles, *The Modern Practice of Adult Education: From Pedagogy to Andragogy*, 1970). The assuming of responsibility on the part of the adult was a pre-condition for benefits of the andragogical approach to realise. (Knowles, *The Modern Practice of Adult Education: From Pedagogy to Andragogy*) However, to develop oneself for performance of a role in future was different from undertaking the behaviour in the present. Every phase of life required individuals to perform particular roles and preparing to perform these roles tended to be the developmental task of the previous phase of life (Developmental Tasks, 2017). So, for the adult to perform the role of making decisions, the young adult phase of life was the time when the individual's developmental task was to prepare for decision-making (Developmental Tasks, 2017).

It was time to define the young adult. The young adult was in the age-range of eighteen and twenty- four years. His consumption of information tended to be wide. This variety of information prompted the young adult to attempt application of higher-order critical thinking skills on this information. But, the making of decisions that followed from application of higher-order critical thinking skills had to be voluntarily avoided because it was a role of the next phase of life called the adult phase.

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