

# PRÉVENTEX

## IMPROVING THE LEARNING EXPERIENCE

### Préventex

Association  
paritaire  
du textile

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**T**he objective of this technical information bulletin is to help you foster better learning experiences for adult students. It is primarily intended for teachers of adult students, as there is a significant difference between adult learners and young students in a school environment.

In line with contemporary humanist thinking, Malcolm Knowles (1970), a leading scholar in adult education, defined a pedagogical approach specifically intended for adult learners. Inspired by methods and techniques distinct from those used with youth (*peda* means children and *gogy*, teaching), Knowles suggested the term “andragogy” (*andra* means adult) to designate a methodology specifically adapted to adult education.

In this bulletin we will describe the main elements that make up this approach.



#### Basic principles

The three components  
of training

Putting things into practice

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### ANDRAGOGY IS BASED ON THE FOLLOWING PRINCIPLES:

1. Adults are first and foremost free beings, who progress at their own pace and decide whether to commit to the learning process or not.
2. Adults each have a past and unique experiences that define who they are. The learning process has specific connotations for each adult.
3. Adult learners must be given an opportunity to express their needs and interests. This opportunity for voicing questions, concerns and worries should be given a place in adult education.
4. An adult's desire to learn is a function of the tasks he or she will assume. Learning for the sake of learning is not a major source of motivation for most adults. Learning experiences should have a functional purpose.



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The principles of andragogy dictate that teachers of adult learners need to take into consideration three different levels of learning:

- ◆ **Knowledge**, associated with concepts and information.
- ◆ **Ability**, related to skills, talents and capacities.
- ◆ **Behavioural**, associated with attitudes, values and convictions.

Significant learning experiences will produce changes at all three levels.

As an example, consider the case of employees learning to use new equipment. The training should apply to:

- ◆ Learning about the parts of new equipment and understanding how they work (**knowledge**).
- ◆ Learning how to use and maintain the equipment (**ability**).
- ◆ Appreciating the importance of safety and the value of the new equipment in making work easier (**behaviour**).

The andragogical perspective proposes a humanist approach that puts the adult at the centre of the training process by recognising his or her experiences and creating conditions favourable to the completion of the three components of training.



## THE THREE COMPONENTS OF TRAINING

### Component I

#### The adult learner

Initially, adult learners need to understand why they are following the training session. What are the advantages? Is there a new procedure to be applied at work? Adults have no time to waste and must feel directly concerned by the topic of the training session.

In order to create conditions that favour adult learners, specific characteristics should be taken into account. We suggest three areas.

#### Intellectual knowledge and capacities

Adults have different levels of knowledge of the topic at hand and different intellectual capacities. The person in charge of training should take the time to meet everyone around the table in order to assess the group's knowledge and experience.

#### Academic and life history

Every adult has an academic past which in some cases does not have positive associations for them. Traditional class presentations, still largely used, do not encourage the desire to learn and often relegates adult learners to the role of a passive audience.

In addition to these frames of reference, adults usually have daily concerns on their minds.

#### Learning styles

Every adult has their own learning style - some want hands-on teaching while others prefer theoretical learning.

Because adults learn in different ways, teachers should not limit themselves to traditional methods. They should dare to step off the beaten path and explore new ways of teaching such as case studies, real-life simulations or sharing experiences on the topic.

## Component 2

### CONTENT

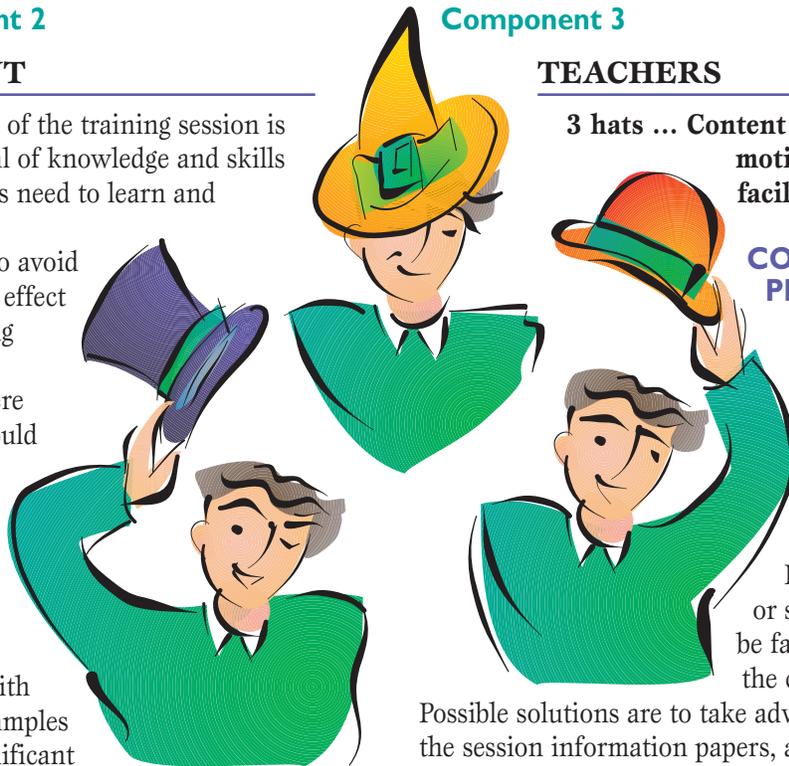
The content of the training session is the sum total of knowledge and skills that students need to learn and acquire. It is primordial to avoid a saturation effect by presenting too much material. Here teachers should remember the three levels of learning.

The content should be presented with practical examples that are significant to adult students.

Prepare examples and exercises that link the session content to the reality of participants.

The importance of students taking an active part in the learning process can never be stressed enough. One hour of theory without any interaction is too long and you run the risk of finding yourself before a very drowsy audience.

Finally, content should be introduced with different media techniques: short presentations, written documents, videos, demonstrations, surveys, personal accounts, practical workshops, visits, and so on.



## Component 3

### TEACHERS

**3 hats ... Content provider, motivator and facilitator**

#### CONTENT PROVIDER

The teacher may be an expert in the training session topic.

However, he or she may not be familiar with the content.

Possible solutions are to take advantage of the session information papers, ask knowledgeable colleagues or rely on the experience of adult participants. Every individual's contribution will increase the cumulative level of expertise.

#### MOTIVATOR

In addition to content providers, teachers are also acting as motivators for the group, to generate and maintain student interest.

#### In verbal language:

- ◆ Ask questions
- ◆ Rephrase comments and questions
- ◆ Summarise and sum up interventions
- ◆ Modulate the tone of voice
- ◆ Encourage participation with comments such as "I hear you", "Interesting", etc.

#### In non-verbal language:

- ◆ Move around the room
- ◆ Show approval by nodding
- ◆ Keep a smiling countenance
- ◆ Look people in the eye

#### Interventions:

- ◆ Suggest activities to encourage participation
- ◆ Allocate fair speaking time
- ◆ Limit comments that are too lengthy or frequent
- ◆ Encourage quiet persons to speak out

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And of course, teachers should be enthusiastic and dynamic. Everyone learns more easily in a relaxed and pleasant atmosphere.

### FACILITATOR

Teachers with an andragogical approach should try to create a working climate conducive to learning. In order to achieve that goal, teachers should keep a respectful attitude and refrain from being judgmental. They have to be good listeners and show empathy. The role of facilitator consists in accompanying adults through the learning process, which involves change. Facilitators make learning easier by devoting special attention to the interaction between adults and the course content.

Taking an andragogical approach implies adhering to humanist values such as respect, freedom and autonomy.

### PUTTING THINGS INTO PRACTICE

So you're going to be a teacher. You have been put in charge of a training session. No need to panic: here is a checklist of things to do.

#### PREPARATION

- ◆ Gather the reference material
- ◆ Define the main components of the course content
- ◆ Establish your training objectives:
  - What are the changes that the session is expected to bring about?
  - Is this new material for participants?
  - "At the end of the session, workers will have learned the following: ..."
- ◆ Structure the course content
- ◆ Prepare questions to verify comprehension and stimulate interaction

- ◆ Prepare practical examples
- ◆ Prepare exercises
- ◆ Determine time of breaks
- ◆ Reserve an adequate and appropriate location for the session

#### ACTION

- ◆ Arrive before participants to look over the location and technical elements
- ◆ Greet participants
- ◆ Assess their knowledge of the topic
- ◆ Survey expectations
- ◆ Introduce training objectives
- ◆ Allow for time to share experiences
- ◆ Be attentive to the level of attention. Let others speak, ask questions
- ◆ Check on correspondence of topic with actual work:
  - Is it applicable ?
  - Is it going to change the way things are done ?
  - Is it advantageous ? Why ? If not, why ?
  - Do participants agree ?
- ◆ Conclude
- ◆ Summarise the training content
- ◆ Evaluate:
  - Comprehension ("Describe what you have learned")
  - Level of satisfaction ("Did you find the session useful ?")

### WELCOME TO THE WORLD OF ANDRAGOGICAL TEACHERS !