

MODEL OF EXPERIENTIAL ANDRAGOGY: DEVELOPMENT OF A NON-TRADITIONAL EXPERIENTIAL LEARNING PROGRAM MODEL

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John Dewey, David Kolb, and others have developed theories, philosophies, and principles that explain the concept of experiential learning. However, most literature on the topic focuses on traditional classroom education. A gap in the literature on the topic of adult non-traditional experiential learning showed a need for a theoretical review of theories, philosophies, and principles that lend themselves to the development of a new model. The Experiential Andragogy model presented here was developed for practical use in non-traditional experiential learning settings, particularly in programs designed for adult learners.

In 2007, a total of 227.7 million people in the United States and Puerto Rico were over the age of 18 (U.S. Census Bureau, 2007). Since adults make up the largest segment of the United States population, it is imperative for facilitators to develop suitable learning experiences in the form of traditional and non-traditional experiential learning programs. The Council for Adult and Experiential Learning (2008) discussed the need for traditional experiential learning programs in the form of postsecondary education; however, there is little dialogue about non-traditional learning programs.

With time for leisure pursuits, along with economic growth and technological advances, the opportunity for increased adult education programs are vast. Adults participate in a myriad of organized and intentional learning experiences; however, it is not always obvious how to develop learning programs for adult learners (Clardy, 2004). To accomplish this task, facilitators of these programs need a model that is practical. Incorporating a non-traditional learning model primarily for adults will benefit facilitators responsible for developing experiential learning opportunities. Clearly, there is a need for an experiential learning model that assists facilitators in creating programs that promote personal growth throughout an individual's lifetime. This article provides a review of philosophies, theories, and principles of experiential learning and proposes a non-traditional experiential learning

program model designed specifically for adults.

THEORIES & PHILOSOPHIES

Experiential education has been developed and influenced by a number of people. John Dewey is considered the father of modern experiential education (Kolb, 1984; NSEE Foundations Document Committee, 1998). Dewey (1938/1998) outlined his philosophy of educative experience in the text, *Education and Experience*. The text was an analysis of traditional and progressive education and highlighted two primary principles: the continuity of experience and interaction. These two principles are the criteria for the value of education and are necessary for interpreting educational qualities of an experience. The principle of *continuity of experience*, or the "experiential continuum," was used to determine which experiences were educationally valuable and which were not. Dewey believed that there was a need for "a theory of experience in order that education may be intelligently conducted upon the basis of experience" (p. 23). Every experience a learner has affects, either positively or negatively, future experiences and becomes a "moving force" for change. An experience can engender future enthusiasm towards new learning through experiences or create an aversion to them, depending on how it is valued by the learner, and is based on biological

habit.

The basic characteristic of habit is that every experience enacted and undergone modifies the one who acts and undergoes, while this modification affects, whether we wish it or not, the quality of subsequent experiences. For it is a somewhat different person who enters into them. (Dewey, pp. 26-27)

Interaction is the second of Dewey's (1938/1998) principles for interpreting the quality of an experience. Experience is not based on internal functions alone; it requires interaction between the learner and their environment. Dewey defined environment as "whatever conditions interact with personal needs, desires, purposes, and capacities to create the experience which is had" (p. 42). Thus, an educator can regulate an experience by controlling the objective conditions (those external to the individual) to provide a fruitful learning environment.

The principles of continuity of experience and interaction work together in a positive educational experience. A learner comes into a new experience having been affected by prior experiences. Due to the effect of continuity of experience on a learner, the facilitator of an experience should focus on interactions and the objective conditions present in a new experience. Education comes directly from an experience that could not be gained through observation alone (Winn, 1959). Dewey (1938/1998) maintained that learners understand the significance of what is experienced through all the senses. Being fully involved in a previous experience affects the significance of future experiences, thus creating a cycle, or process, of learning.

This philosophy is reflected in the experiential learning model created by Kolb (1984) that drew from John Dewey (1938/1998), as well as Jean Piaget (1970/1972) and Kurt Lewin (1951). Many experiential education practitioners and college educators use Kolb's model and consider it applicable to their needs, especially those involved in service learning (Delve, Mintz & Stewart, 1990; Kolenko, Porter, Wheatley & Colby, 1996; Ralston & Ellis, 1997; Williams & Lankford, 1999; Zlotkowski, 1995). Kolb linked education, work, and personal development together as the basis for experiential learning, which he defined as "the process whereby knowledge is created through the transformation of experience" (p. 38). Kolb outlined four

abilities that lead to effective learning: (a) concrete experience, (b) reflective observation, (c) abstract conceptualization, and (d) active experimentation. These abilities form a repetitive cycle that describes how learning occurs (Figure 1).

Kolb's (1984) learning process and model of experiential learning required movement between two dimensions. The four abilities he identified were divided into two dimensions and represented polar opposites. The first dimension consisted of concrete experience and abstract conceptualization, set as polar opposites. The second dimension was composed of active experimentation and reflective observation, also as polar opposites. Kolb maintained that a learner moves, in varying degrees, from actor to observer and from general analytic detachment to specific involvement during the learning process. A simple example of Kolb's model in action is that of a child experiencing a hot stove for the first time (C. Bowar, personal communication, June 1, 2000). *Concrete experience* occurs when learners are able to fully involve themselves in a new experience without bias, such as a child touching a hot burner on a stove. *Reflective observation* allows the learner to reflect upon and observe experiences from different perspectives as when the child realizes the burner is hot and causes pain. *Abstract conceptualization* involves the creation of concepts that integrate observations into sound theories so that the child remembers touching the stovetop results in pain. *Active experimentation* occurs when learners are able to use their self-created theories to make decisions and solve problems. Throughout their lifetime, people who have experienced and evaluated such pain will avoid situations where burns may occur or take necessary precautions.

Kurt Hahn, founder of Outward Bound, provided another perspective of the learning process through the concept of lifelong learning (Emerson, Gager, & Golins, 1980). Outward Bound is a non-traditional

experiential learning program that focuses on outdoor adventures (Godfrey, 1980). Outdoor adventure programs "have traditionally been associated with personal growth and development of the individual and group" (Ewert, 1989, p. 47). Originally formed in Europe as an adventure-education program for boys, Outward Bound programs exist in the United States for both males and females, from youth to adults (Miner & Boldt, 1981).

[Hahn] strongly believed that education is the primary vehicle for changing society and he called for the development of the whole person, physical, emotional and intellectual. He called for an educational process that stressed individual commitment, personal integrity, and values. (Emerson et al., p. 15)

In the Outward Bound process, a learner is placed into unique physical and social environments and given a set of problem-solving tasks. The purpose of these tasks is to create an uncomfortable position for the learner, a state of adaptive dissonance. The learner adapts through mastery of the tasks, which allows the learner to reorganize the meaning and direction of the experience (Emerson et al., 1980). This process has similarities to Dewey's (1938/1998) philosophy in that the learner's growth depends upon overcoming challenges through problem solving. It is also congruent with the views of Chickering (1977) and Piaget (1970/1972) who saw value in disequilibrium. Some lack of fit between a learner and an experience can propel the learner to resolve the problem and reach a better understanding of the experience (Flavell, Miller, & Miller, 1993; Love, 2001). The extraction, reorganization, and redirection of meaning during the Outward Bound process is similar to Kolb's (1984) abilities, reflective observation, abstract conceptualization, and active experimentation. Ideally, after participating in an Outward Bound program, a learner continues to be oriented to living and learning in a new way.

PRINCIPLES OF GOOD PRACTICE

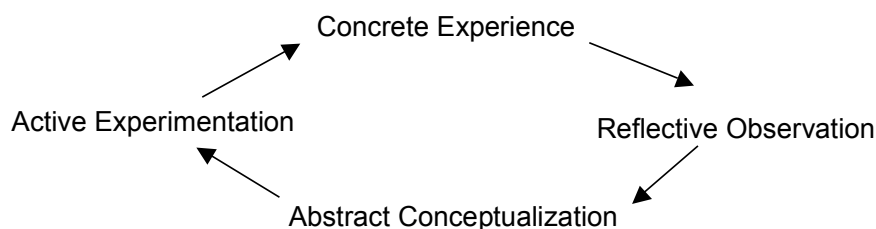
Theoretical development leads to the application of theories. From principles of good practice come theoretical underpinnings that associate these principles with real-world experiences. Four different sets of principles of good practice will be presented. The first focuses on undergraduate education, the second on service learning, the third on experiential education and learning, and the fourth on adult education.

Chickering and Gamson (1987) headed a group to compile principles of good practice relating to undergraduate education. The group worked under the auspices of the Johnson Foundation, American Association of Higher Education, and Education Commission of the States. Chickering and Gamson's "Seven Principles of Good Practice in Undergraduate Education" state that good practice: (1) encourages student-faculty contact, (2) encourages cooperation among students, (3) encourages active learning, (4) gives prompt feedback, (5) emphasizes time on task, (6) communicates high expectations, and (7) respects diverse talents and ways of learning.

Encouragement of contact between students and faculty members (*Principle 1*) was found to increase student motivation and involvement. Encouraging individuals to cooperate in group efforts (*Principle 2*) fosters collaboration, social skills development, and increased understanding. Encouragement of active learning (*Principle 3*) refers to learners becoming involved in the learning process through reflection on past experiences and daily application of what is being learned. Giving prompt feedback to students (*Principle 4*) means helping them assess what they know, providing suggestions for improvement, and teaching self-assessment skills. Time and energy lead to learning, hence the need for emphasizing time on task (*Principle 5*) and effective time management skills. Faculty should have high expectations for students to perform well and communicate those expectations to the students (*Principle 6*). Students learn in a variety of ways. Faculty need to be aware of various learning styles and how best to engender learning and create positive opportunities for diverse learners (*Principle 7*).

Ellen P. Honnet and Susan J. Poulsen (1996), a member of the group that worked on the "Seven Principles," helped develop "Principles of Good Practice for Combining Service and Learning." The research and development of the principles was conducted by the National Society for

FIGURE 1. Kolb's (1984) Experiential Learning Model



Internships and Experiential Education (NSIEE). While these principles are useful for service-oriented education programs like internships, they are also relevant to some experiential education programs (Furco, 1996) and can be applied to programs independent of school environments (Honnet & Poulsen). The principles of good practice state that an effective program: (1) engages people in responsible and challenging actions for the common good; (2) provides structured opportunities for people to reflect critically on their service experience; (3) articulates clear service and learning goals for everyone involved; (4) allows for those with needs to define those needs; (5) clarifies the responsibilities of each person and organization involved; (6) matches service providers and service needs through a process that recognizes challenging circumstances; (7) expects genuine, active, and sustained organizational commitment; (8) includes training, supervision, monitoring, support, recognition, and evaluation to meet service and learning goals; (9) insures that the time commitment for service and learning is flexible, appropriate, and in the best interests of all involved; and (10) commits to program participation by and with diverse populations.

The National Society for Experiential Education (NSEE) Foundations Document Committee (1998) explained that principles of good practice are "the basic elements contributing to the quality of the experience" (p. 19). The Committee described ten primary principles of good practice relating directly to experiential education as (1) intention, (2) authenticity, (3) planning, (4) clarity, (5) orientation and training, (6) monitoring and assessment, (7) reflection, (8) continuous improvement, (9) evaluation, and (10) acknowledgment.

The facilitator of a learning experience must decide on the specific learning and knowledge that should result (*Principle 1*). Once intention is established, an authentic experience (*Principle 2*) that provides relevant and useful information can be identified. The planning process (*Principle 3*), including teamwork and problem solving, is an education experience in and of itself. Good communication leads to clarity of expectations and responsibilities (*Principle 4*) during the experiential learning process. Background information and concepts related to the planned experience are gained during orientation and training (*Principle 5*), which helps learners to consider their expectations, as well as to behaviorally and mentally prepare themselves. Monitoring and assessment (*Principle 6*) must be an ongoing process in

experiential education. During preparation for an experience and actual participation, learners and facilitators decide on methods for measuring the experience and collecting feedback. Reflection (*Principle 7*) is an integral part of experiential education. A number of methods can be used to reflect upon all aspects of an experience, including group discussions, journal writing, and role-playing. Continuous improvement (*Principle 8*) is related to the need for monitoring, assessment, and reflection. As with any program plan, it is imperative to learn how experiences can be improved. While assessment may occur prior to the experience and monitoring during the experience, evaluation (*Principle 9*) takes place after the experience. Measurable outcomes are evaluated, often using qualitative and quantitative methods. The final principle of good practice for experiential education, is acknowledgment (*Principle 10*) or recognition. "I have learned something that matters, used it to accomplish something. I will remember it because it matters and what I've accomplished" (NSEE Foundations Document Committee, pp. 20-21).

In their Instructor of Trainers program, Girl Scouts of the USA (1998, p. 16) presented their philosophy of adult education: (1) learning is a lifelong process; (2) each learner is unique and brings a unique set of experiences to the learning process; (3) adult learners are self-directed and goal-oriented; and (4) the learning process is most productive when adults can apply what they are learning to real life problems and situations.

The experiential learning cycle incorporated by the Girl Scouts (1998), and taught during the training of adult scout leaders, consists of five stages. Stage one, *experiencing*, refers to participation in a learning activity. Stage two, *publishing*, involves group members identifying and sharing reactions and observations as part of a group activity. During stage three, *processing*, group members identify and discuss patterns in their observations of the experience. Stage four, *generalizing*, occurs when theories and concepts are shared and inferences are made in regard to real world principles. Stage five, *applying*, refers to planning behaviors to employ during future experiences. These five stages are cyclical in nature.

EXPERIENTIAL ANDRAGOGY MODEL

After reviewing a variety of philosophies, theories, and principles from social science and education literature, there is a

clear need for a model that is effective for building non-traditional adult experiential learning programs. The model presented here focuses on an adult learner's progress through the experiential learning process as part of a group program.

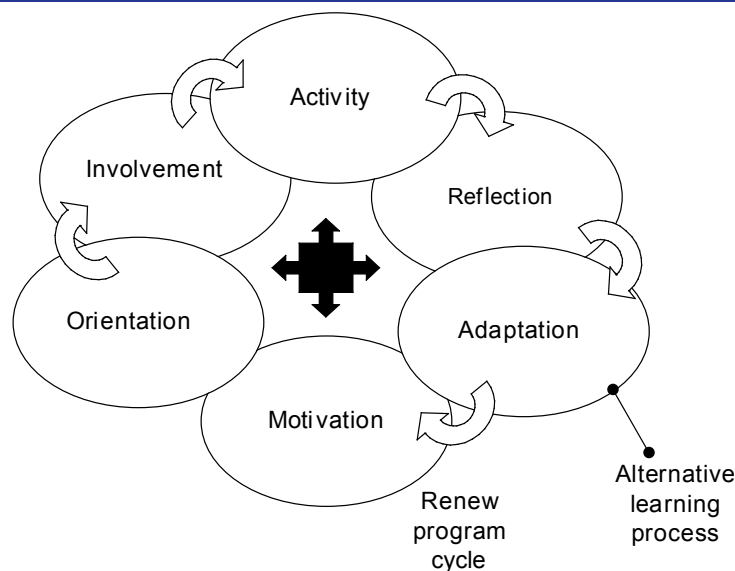
The experiential andragogy program model has six stages: (1) motivation, (2) orientation, (3) involvement, (4) activity, (5) reflection, and (6) adaptation (Figure 2). This is a process model, with one stage leading into the next. It is the process, the interaction between stages, which makes learning possible (Emerson et al., 1980). After the final stage in the model, a learner may choose to continue to participate in an organized experiential learning program or choose to progress from the program into an alternate learning process. Likewise, the process model can be repeated continually over the length of an extended educational program. Such learning processes include learning informally from everyday activities or enrolling in a formal educational institution. Whichever path the learner follows, he or she incorporates the experiential learning skills learned through involvement in the experiential andragogy model into his or her repertoire of knowledge.

Facilitators of non-traditional adult experiential learning programs can best utilize the experiential andragogy program model by providing opportunities for learners to participate in each of the steps. Ultimately, however, it is the learner who is responsible for progressing through the process. Furthermore, each learner must be intrinsically motivated to begin the learning process. No matter how well facilitators develop the program, learners must be personally motivated to participate or the program will not be effective.

Motivation to grow and learn is a fundamental concept of experiential andragogy (Love, 2001). Motivation to participate in learning experiences must come from within the learner. Intrinsic motivation gives the learner a personal reason for participating in, and learning from, a non-traditional experiential learning program. Once an individual learner is motivated, the group experience can begin.

Jill, a 20-year-old woman who has just completed her second year at a university, will be used as an illustration of the model. She has yet to choose a major and is unclear what direction she is heading in life. Jill joins a six-month non-traditional experiential learning program for adults with foci on adventure travel and community service. Jill hopes to map out her future by finding out more about herself and the world she lives in. Jill is intrinsically motivated

FIGURE 2. Experiential Andragogy Model of a Non-Traditional Experiential Learning Program



to participate in the program because she wants to understand herself better.

Orientation is the stage in the process when group members are introduced to one another and to the program in general. This stage is similar in context to orientation and training, which is the fifth principle of good practice relating to experiential education (NSEE Foundations Document Committee, 1998). Orientation is also the time to introduce learners to the concept of experiential andragogy. The majority of adults have spent twelve years or more in a traditional learning environment as they progressed through elementary and secondary education. In an effort to open adults to a style of learning that may be very new to them, facilitators in a non-traditional experiential setting should take time to explain the concept of self-directed learning (Knowles, 1984; Knowles, Holton, & Swanson, 1998).

Upon joining the group, Jill meets fourteen other people similar in age to her own. All have been personally motivated to expand their horizons through the adventure travel and service program. Now that the group is assembled, the facilitator explains what the group will be doing during the course of the program. She explains to the participants that they will be engaged in self-directed learning and presents a number of techniques for personal and group reflection.

Once learners in a program have a personal understanding of why they are participating and the group understands its role in the process, all learners can become involved in planning their experience.

Participants in a non-traditional program operating under the concept of experiential andragogy must be involved in guiding the experiential process and planning activities. Dewey (1938/1998) espoused the need for learner involvement when he wrote on the topic of social control. "Those who take part (in a common experience) do not feel that they are bossed by an individual person or being subjected to the will of some outside superior person" (Dewey, p. 57). Each learner's background and experiences must be incorporated into experience and activity planning (Dewey; Knowles, 1984; Warren & Rheingold, 1996). Adult learners need the opportunity to share their individual knowledge and past experiences for personal validation (Knowles, 1984). The involvement stage includes learners developing goals and objectives, both on a personal level and as a group. This stage is similar to planning; however, planning during an experiential learning process is a tricky issue. Chickering (1977) noted that the very nature of experiential learning means that plans must be flexible. Learners should develop goals and objectives to bring focus to their learning and put serious thought into the nature and purpose of their activities (Dewey). At the same time, they must be flexible and willing to evolve with the experience.

Before embarking on their adventure travel and service, Jill and her cohorts share information with each other about their interests, work experience, and reasons for participating in the program. Each person develops a set of personal goals and

objectives along with those for the entire group. The group decides that they want to challenge fears through their adventures and existing stereotypes through their service opportunities. Jill decides she wants to try as many new activities as possible, even those that are considered high-risk. She also wants to explore her interests in women's issues as she travels and interacts with women.

In the experiential andragogy model, the *activity* stage is similar to concrete experience, Kolb's (1984) first ability in his experiential learning process. The word *activity* is more appropriate here because this entire model represents a learning experience. An activity within the experiential learning process can be active or passive, involve one learner, small groups, or the entire group, and be long or short term.

At their first destination, the group spends one day working as a team as they go white-water rafting. Jill and three other group members spend another day helping plant a community garden that will provide produce for local low-income families. Both the large group adventure activity and the small group service activity provide unique learning opportunities for Jill.

Simply participating in an activity does not necessarily lead to learning. As Dewey (1938/1998) warned, some activities can be "mis-educative," meaning that the learner leaves the activity with negative feelings that can lead to a lack of sensitivity in future activities. One way to counteract mis-education and promote learning from an activity is through *reflection*. Reflection can occur concurrent with an activity (Cranton, 1997; NSEE Foundations Document Committee, 1998; Schön, 1987) or over time (Dewey, 1938/1998; Kolb, 1984). Reflection provides an opportunity for the learner to look back on a specific activity or the experience to-date, and extract meaning from it. The reflection stage includes both individual and group reflection. Techniques for an individual to reflect back upon experiences include quiet contemplation and journal writing. Individual reflection should precede group reflection, thereby enhancing group techniques such as small and large group discussions (Hill, 1977; Love, 2001). Parker Palmer (1993) wrote "As we listen to each other, we hear various versions of the reality, and as those versions confirm and contradict each other we move toward a consensus with each other that is more faithful to the reality beyond us" (p. 94). Torbert's (1972) feedback technique and Homans' (1974) version of exchange theory add to the concept that group reflection is beneficial to individuals and the group.

Experiential learning in groups has been conceived of as a process of opening feedback channels, so that people begin to become aware of their impact on one another, begin to become aware of, and learn the meaning of, their feelings as they relate to their own and other's behavior, and begin to learn how to achieve goals that are personally meaningful to them through the use of intra- and interpersonal feedback. (Torbert, p. 9)

Homans wrote that much of social behavior is in fact an exchange between people that can lead to enduring relationships. Two people, for example, interacting with one another are engaged in a stimulus-response type relationship. Two people acting "in the presence and under the stimulus of the other; each can and does communicate with the other; and the collective result is rewarding to both" (Homans, p. 53). Without active reflection, an activity is an incomplete learning experience. The reflection stage allows a learner to gain insight and brings cohesion to the group.

Jill spends the first half of her third day in the program alone, reflecting on the two activities she has participated in. Her means of reflection is to write in a journal. During the river rafting activity, she had to work in unison with her cohorts and the activity demanded some periods of intense physical involvement. She learned quickly which members of the group were leaders, and that she wasn't one of them. During the service activity planting the garden, Jill was able to speak with some of the local women about issues of concern to them. The second half of Jill's third day is spent with her cohorts. They discuss their rafting adventure and various service activities. Those who were scared to go rafting but participated nonetheless shared their feelings after the fact. Participants who had emotional reactions to their service projects shared their thoughts with the group.

The sixth stage in the program model is *adaptation*. This stage is similar in content to Kolb's (1984) abstract conceptualization ability and the Girl Scouts' (1998) principle that what is being learned should be applied to real life. Additionally, adaptation has similarities to principles of good practice in experiential education, which are continuous improvement, evaluation, and acknowledgment (NSEE Foundation Document Committee, 1998). It is at this stage that learners acknowledge that they have learned and accomplished something, then determine what role the experience will play in their future (Lempert, 1996). Learners in non-traditional experiential learning

programs may have had life-changing experiences. This is especially true for groups who have been together for an extended period or who have been involved in intense activity. The adaptation stage provides an opportunity for individuals to come to terms with the experiences they have had during the program. The adaptation stage is also the time for facilitators to work with students and help them find ways to express what they have experienced, both mentally and physically, especially to those who were not present, such as family members and on résumés. Furthermore, at this stage the learners consider how they will apply what they have learned to future experiences.

After nearly six months in the adventure travel and community service experiential learning program, Jill and her cohorts spend time with the facilitator, discussing whether or not the group and individual goals and objectives have been met. They consider, as a group and individually, what they have learned from their activities and the overall experience. The facilitator helps them decide how to tell their friends and family what they had experienced during the program. They also discuss how the experiences will affect them in daily life, from getting a job to continuing to perform community service. In Jill's case, she is reading back through her journal and thinking about how her experience has helped her realize she wants to return to the university and get a degree in women's studies, with the plan to become an advocate for women's rights. The hardest part of the adaptation stage for all the participants is realizing that after spending six months together, they have become a close-knit "family." They agree that they will develop a web site so that they can keep in touch and continue to support each other through future experiences.

CONCLUSIONS & RECOMMENDATIONS

While John Dewey, David Kolb, and others have developed theories, philosophies, and principles that explained the concept of experiential learning, most literature on the topic focuses on traditional classroom learning. Kolb's (1984) model is general in nature and does not specifically refer to non-traditional educational organizations. He did address the connection of his experiential learning theory to higher education suggesting that universities are the best source for lifelong learning, regardless of a person's age. He referred to educational institutions as the "curators" of social knowledge, meaning that the care of imparting knowledge is a major responsibility of

institutions of higher learning. While this is true, non-traditional educational organizations are sharing responsibility for assisting young people with social knowledge.

This review of pertinent theories, philosophies and principles has led to the development of the experiential andragogy model for practical use in non-traditional experiential learning settings, particularly in programs designed for adult learners. The practicality of this model is its most important feature. As with any aspect of experiential learning, the stages in the model are flexible. "A model is useful only if it is applied flexibly and seen as something quite fluid, rather than as static" (Emerson et al., 1980, p. 17). The experiential andragogy model needs to be tested through applied research. Facilitators of non-traditional experiential learning programs are encouraged to apply this model to develop a strong program that promotes individual personal growth and learning over a lifetime.

ACKNOWLEDGMENT

A description of the experiential andragogy model was previously published in the Fall 2004, *WEA Legend* (volume 16, pp. 7-9).

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