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Building a PSU ETHOS

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Plymouth State University

White Paper: February 17, 2017

[This paper is adapted from a larger manuscript currently out for review: Puglisi, N., & Baker, C. B. (2016). *ETHOS vision: Commitment, action, and self-transformation in higher education.*]

The ETHOS Vision is about responsive change in higher education where integrative engagement replaces silo-centric traditions and all constituent voices are part of the transformation as they co-create a new educational landscape that leads with the student experience. At Plymouth State University, designing, building, and engaging the integrated cluster initiative invites students, faculty, staff, alumni, business partners, community partners, and partners beyond our local borders to co-create our future citizens, leaders, the educational landscape, local and global communities, and the local and global marketplace. By leading with the student experience, we are learner centric in all aspects of academic and administrative experiences. This provides a framework for how we get there.

E –Education

T-Teaching

H-Habitat

O-Organizations

S-Society

It is daunting to think about asking administrators, faculty, and staff to embrace and co-create a new ecosystem while developing a sustainable place-based higher educational institution focused on student-centeredness and built on current and future work force needs. Faculty are collaborative leaders, working within and outside the academy to determine what curricular shifts need to happen to best serve students' future goals. A new model of higher education with forward-thinking, responsive, and relevant change is needed in today's evolutionary world.

The intention is to support place-based education, which is currently threatened by declining enrollments, outdated teaching methodologies, and stagnant organizational designs.

Our focus in this white paper is twofold: to understand the necessity to alter the habitat in which teaching and learning take place and change the way we teach. In this brief paper, we first focus on our evolving role as faculty in higher education. Second, we explore how we change our approach to teaching. As faculty leading this initiative, our roles are evolving as well as our methods of engagement. Higher Education, especially for small public institutions, can no longer continue what it has always done and be successful and sustainable. As teachers, we can become “Educateurs” (Puglisi & Baker, 2013) in the classroom and agents of transformation within the academy’s organizational structure. Educateurs are the entrepreneurs in education as they move educational innovation into practice.

Becoming Educateurs

An Educateur is a transformational professional within the academy, facilitating learning in the classroom, and *actively engaging in the change processes within the organization.* An Educateur is responsible, not only for the learning of their students and their own learning but also the environment within which they teach. It is essential that faculty embrace dualistic, Educateurial roles of teacher and organizational transformation emissary.

The Educateur can evolve to become an accomplished facilitator within the organizational walls as well as in the classroom. Fortunately, the skills are easily transferable. The Educateur co-creates innovative venues in the classroom and within the organization to accomplish an imaginative, reflective, and contemplative environment. The focus for the changes within the classroom and the organization can include: experiential, integrative, community-based and transformational practices restructuring the classroom, the institution and the larger external community.

If we are to make adjustments to the current paradigm of higher education, we have to be willing to modernize the disposition of the community in radical ways. The ETHOS Vision is a conceptual framework providing opportunities for professionals within the walls of the academy to shift past practice to new 21st century ideas. The answers to the following questions are essential before beginning the change process.

- What traditions are to be maintained within the academy?
- How do we create a transition plan to reach transformation?
- What does the transformation look like?

Institutions can engage everyone in the transformational change process by envisioning and finding new ways of providing higher education. This includes new ways of teaching and new ways of structuring our organizational practices. Creating a new *spirit of the culture*, is essential if we are going to transform institutional practices. The belief and customs of the institutions in which we have lived and worked in are dated. They no longer serve 21st century goals and can be re-evaluated by groups working together to co-create the future of the academy. In order for the change to happen, the whole system is invited to be engaged in the process.

Change is often considered disruptive. We disagree with the term *disruptive change* although the concept is accurate. However, by reframing it as *positive growth*, change results in a more robust, sustainable, and creative workplace. Faculty and staff want to work in the place they collectively transform. It takes time and it is messy but the key is to start. The Concerns-based Adoption (Hall & Hord, 2011) model suggests levels of concern inform us that change raises levels of anxiety at all levels, from administrators to physical plant workers. They wonder:

- What will happen?

- How will it impact me?
- Will we be successful?

Courage, collaboration, communication, and creativity can be used to help replace the anxiety of these yet unknown answers. We are suggesting that we transform into an entirely new society that is interdependent on one another in constructive ways.

It is through the co-creation and evolution of the new university that the future unfolds into collective practice. College and universities are seeking new ways to meet changing demands of higher education and create a new way of being (Crow & Dabars, 2015; Watson & Watson, 2011). This means we are moving beyond focusing on the salvation of the academic institution to include working on ways to improve the community and the world, a much higher and more purposeful undertaking.

The crisis in higher education can be motivation for stimulation for growth personally, professionally, and organizationally. A prerequisite for creating transformational change is simply determining what ought to change. We should be willing to work with like-minded and not so like-minded colleagues and administrators and this the best time to take a look at ourselves, who we are and how we engage our work within our organization. This kind of transformation is espoused by Jean Houston's (2012) notion of the social artistry, it is the idea of enhancing human capacities by bringing new ways of thinking, being, and doing to the problems and challenges in the world.

Transformation and whole system change is not an easy task as we are often stuck in our habitual way of perceiving reality. Michael Crow and William Dabars (2015) refer to this as filiopietism, referring to the idea that we lay claim on tradition to the extent that even when it is no longer efficient to do something in a particular way, we continue on doing it with a sense of

loyalty that is actually misdirected. Most times, we do not even realize it when we do it. For this to change, we need to take a new look from a new perspective to see how we might alter what we do. Part of filiopietism involves being invested in protecting our space and our comfort zones. Unfortunately, the four hundred plus year-old tradition of the academy retains more than a trace of its past practice from yesteryear and its culture has remained intact with little modification. Even if we identify the land grant acts of 1862 and 1890 that opened the doors to public higher education, the traditions in which we are entrenched are still one hundred and fifty-five years old and while the world has changed, very little in the academy has changed. We are not saying that tradition is bad but what we are saying is that in order to be relevant to those we serve, re-setting our practices from how we teach to how we do business can mean the difference between being sustainable in the 21st century or not. The academy can no longer depend on past practices if it wants to survive in the future. Beginning the change process and shifting is part of the evolutionary process to move into the present and beyond. As we, faculty, reflect on our own practices in the academy, exploring our own methods of teaching is essential as we meet our responsibilities as an Educateur.

Shifting A Methodology

Pedagogy has been the dominant methodology for educators in the past. Pedagogy comes from the Greek word *paidagogia*, *paidos*, *paid*, which means “child” and *ágō* or *ágōgus* means leader of children (Knowles, 1970; Taylor & Kroth, 2009). The implications of envisioning that we are teaching children can limit how we engage our students in the classroom from how we write our syllabi to the kinds of assignments we create and our expectations we have of course assessments. There are other teaching methodologies that align more readily with the 21st century

academy and the students entering college today. The assumptions underlying pedagogy include the following:

1. The learner only needs to know what is necessary to pass the class according to the understanding of the teacher—the learner does not need to know how what they learn will apply to their lives.
2. The teacher's concept of the learner is that of a dependent personality, therefore the learner's self-concept evolves to that of a dependent personality.
3. The learner's previous experience is of little value as a resource for learning therefore, lectures, assignments, and readings are the main backbone of the pedagogy – previous experience does not matter.
4. Learners become ready to learn what the teachers tell them they need to learn in order to pass the course.
5. Learners orientation to learning is subject-centered—they see learning as acquiring subject matter instead of learning experiences.
6. Learners are motivated to learn by external motivation (grades, teacher approval, parent approval, etc.) instead of any kind of internal motivation. (Knowles, Holton, & Swanson, 2011).

These assumptions describe an approach that is teacher-centric and assumes that the teacher decides what the child needs to know and how the child needs to learn.

Malcolm Knowles (1970) landmark work in education for adult learners can provide insight into how our teaching must change to transform student experience and our academic habitat. By seeing our students as young adults instead of children, we can better meet their diverse learning styles, enhance their learning experience, enable them to own and co-create their

educational experiences, and cultivate a mindset of lifelong learning. “Learning implies change that evolves from the “acquisition of habits, knowledge, and attitudes” (Knowles, Holton, & Swanson, 2011, p. 11). Learning also occurs through interaction and is demonstrated by a change in disposition or capability of the student (Knowles, Holton, & Swanson, 2011).

According to Knowles (1970, 1984), there are six assumptions about the adult learner that can help us shift our approach to how we engage students:

1. **[Learners need to know]** As a person matures his or her self-concept moves from that of a dependent personality toward one of a self-directing human being. How can we set up self-directed experiences in the classroom?
2. **[Self-Concept of the learner]** An adult accumulates a growing reservoir of experience, which is a rich resource for learning. How can we utilize students’ experiences to enhance their learning?
3. **[Prior experience of the learner]** The readiness of an adult to learn is closely related to the developmental basis of his or her social role. How do you design classroom experiences that support student learning in their classroom, campus, and community roles?
4. **[Readiness to learn]** There is a change in time perspective as people mature—from future application of knowledge to immediacy of application. Thus, an adult is more problem-centered than subject-centered in learning. How do you nurture students’ abilities to apply what they learn in your classroom?
5. **[Orientation to learning]** Adults are mostly driven by internal motivation, rather than external motivators. What things, other than grades, motivate your students?

6. [**Motivation to learn**] Adults need to know the reason for learning something. How do you co-create relevant learning experiences with your students?

Treating college students as young adults is an important first step as we evolve beyond the existing paradigm in higher education and create more integrated methods for the learning process to occur. As we redesign and co-create teaching in higher education in the 21st Century, shifting to a learner-centric framework as we design our courses, from the collaborative syllabi to the assignments, to the co-creation of projects, and connecting with communities beyond the campus. Shifting from teaching children to teaching young adults is a natural evolutionary process that is happening across the academy both inside and outside of the United States.

The nature of adult learning is rooted in integration (Knowles, Holton, & Swanson, 2011). This is not a new concept, in fact, researchers and scholars have been studying, exploring, and theorizing about adult learners for over fifty years. Knowles, Holton, and Swanson (2011) establish a historical timeline of the early theories of adult learning and the attempt to make a distinction between teaching children (pedagogy) or teaching adults (andragogy¹). The timeline begins as early as 1833 when, Alexander Kapp, a German grammar school teacher made a distinction between teaching children and teaching adults by associating adult learning with that of methods from the educational theory of Plato. Later in the mid-1800s, a German philosopher, Johan Friedrich Herbart, acknowledged there was a difference between teaching children and teaching adults though he had problems with the word “andragogy” itself. In 1921, the German Social Scientist, Eugen Rosenstock, a teacher at the Academy of Labor in Frankfort, Germany, advanced that adult education required different teaching methods, and a different teaching philosophy if they wanted the education to be meaningful to the students and relevant to their

professional life. Rosenstock did not have issues with the word, andragogy, and thus the term was adopted by other educational theorists (Knowles, Holton, & Swanson, 2011).

In 1951, a Swiss psychiatrist, Heinrich Hanselmann wrote a book entitled *Andragogy: Nature, Possibilities, and Boundaries of Adult Education*. Then later, in 1957, a German educator, Franz Poggeler, wrote a book, *Introduction to Andragogy: Basic Issues in Adult Education*. Since then, research and theorizing about the adult learner has expanded by leaps and bounds, establishing a significant body of literature in the academy. The United States came on board with recognizing the adult learner as uniquely different from the child learner as a result of these early European studies and it is now an established field of study with a growing body of scholarship (Knowles, Holton, & Swanson, 2011).

In 1950, Malcolm Knowles began to formulate his thinking about the adult learner and at a conference in the 1960s at Boston University the term andragogy was discussed as the antithesis of the pedagogical model (Knowles, Holton, & Swanson, 2011). Early theories of pedagogy describe it as an “ideology based on assumptions about teaching and learning that evolved between the seventh and twelfth centuries in the monastic and cathedral schools of Europe” where they taught only young boys (Knowles, Holton, & Swanson, 2011, p. 58). Later, in the nineteenth century as secular schools began to develop and following with public schools, the pedagogical model from the earlier monastic tradition was the model advanced and adopted (Knowles, Holton, & Swanson, 2011). So, the entire educational enterprise in the United States, “including higher education, was frozen into this model” (Knowles, Holton, & Swanson, 2011, p. 60). After World War I, as adult education was being established in the US educational system, the pedagogical model was also used. In this pedagogical model, the teacher takes “full responsibility for making all of the decisions about what will be learned, how it will be learned,

when it will be learned, and if it has to be learned” (Knowles, Holton, & Swanson, 2011, p. 60). This is a model based on teacher-directed learning where the learner is submissively following the teacher’s instructions.

When we compare the assumptions about the adult learners and the child learner, the assumptions pertaining to pedagogy are in opposition to the assumptions of teaching adult learners. Putting this comparison into perspective is not to suggest that one approach is right and one approach is wrong. Studies show that it is important for teachers to “check out which set of assumptions are realistic for a given situation” (Knowles, Holton, & Swanson, (2011). Educators, and in this case, Educateurs, need to be able to know which method is most appropriate to every kind of learner and situation. Additionally, there are other models appropriate for higher education that align with Knowles’s assumptions about the adult learners, transformational learning model and ideas related to self-directed learning (Taylor & Laros, 2014). Educateurs need to be flexible and know when and how to adapt learning strategies based upon individual learners and changing environments. The idea is that even if as an Educateur you believe you need to begin with a pedagogical method, the change that must occur is to strive to move the student from a passive learner to taking responsibility for their own learning; this requires being able to shift into approaches more aligned with the adult learner. This means helping the student to move from a set of pedagogical assumptions to a set of andragogical assumptions should be the goal of the educateur.

As we consider the set of assumptions identified relative to the adult learner, we see an alignment with the idea of play in learning. During a recent cluster guide discussion, Cathie LeBlanc shared her definition of play that she uses in her Creating Games course and in her own scholarship, “freedom within constraints.” The idea behind her framework is that learning occurs

when students try, observe, test, and try again at their own pace and within their imaginative and innovative spirit. This does not mean that students do what they want without regard for constraints. Constraints are necessary to be set by the teacher and the student but having freedom within those preset constraints is also necessary so that students can experience and learn for themselves what works, what doesn't work, and understand the relationship between the constraints and the tasks engaged. There is a large body of literature on play and learning. In his treatise, *Truth and Method*, Hans Georg Gadamer (1975) advanced the central role of play in how we come to know, interpret, and learn. Gadamer (1975) connects play back to the Greek notion of *poiesis* as a creative making that occurs within some kind of constraints or rules.

There are other learning paradigms grounded in play that have a strong history in educational practices such as Maria Montessori's now famous Montessori method or Shinichi Suzuki's method for teaching string instruments, or Jacques Dalcroze's method for teaching about musical rhythms (Holba, 2007). For the young adult learner, engaging in learning through play offers freedom within constraints as a part of their educational journey that cultivates self-directed learning, internal motivation for learning, and having fun making connections to something meaningful and important that is beyond the self.

Conclusion

Transformation to The ETHOS Vision offers a new way of seeing and doing what we do as educators. Seeing ourselves as facilitators of learning, collaborators instead of competitors, and being able to give up some control allowing our students to co-create their own learning with us liberates both students and teachers from the confines of a tradition that was once designed to control and limit the student.

By acknowledging that learning is a social construct, it becomes easier to meet students where they are and help move them to the next level. Jaworski (2011) notes that our “mental model of the way the world works must shift from images of a clockwork machine-like universe that is fixed and determined, to the model of a universe that is open, dynamic, interconnected and full of living qualities (Jaworski, 2011, p. 183). It is time to shift the current model of education from lectures and rows of seats, to an acknowledgment that learning occurs all the time, everywhere and that, if we are lucky, we get to play an active part in the learning journey. It takes courage, respect and patience for each of us to consider changing ourselves. The practice begins with us, the teacher. If we are unwilling to learn, to change, and to participate as teachers in new ways how can we expect our students to? They will follow our lead. How should we lead? “Oppression never occurs between equals” (Wheatley, 2002, p.75); so, we lead by walking along side of them instead in front of them in a closed classroom.

The world is quickly changing and we need to adapt. Social media covers events in real time and an incident in Asia can be watched as it unfolds in any part of the world. Email, texting, cell phones, and social media are continually barraging us with information, on both personal and business fronts. We are transitioning from work-place balance to work-place integration. How do we prepare today’s students to respond to unknown future occurrences? In other words, how do we open the minds and hearts of learners to be able to see around corners, focus beyond the horizon, and imagine a new future.

Jiddu Krishnamurti (1977) stated, “...that is the function of a teacher, of an educator, [is] not just to give you a lot of data, knowledge, but to show you the whole expanse of life, the beauty, of it, the ugliness of it, the delight, the joy, the fear, the agony. So that when you leave this place, you are a tremendous human being who can use your intelligence in life” (pp. 22-23).

More recently, Salman Khan (2013), founder of the Khan Academy states, “Formal education must change. It needs to be brought into closer alignment *with the world as it actually is*; into closer harmony with the way human beings actually learn and thrive” (p. 11). The world is not designed in a lecture format. Life is an interactive process where we respond, react, and act on our part of the world stage. Our purpose as teachers is to prepare students to be the thinkers and leaders who are ready to help support the continuation of life with all of its challenges; famine, disease, war and a host of other struggles. Visionary institutions will not just happen. It will take futurists, dreamers, and creative thinkers to lead the way. These faculty members will need to be strong as the challenges they will embrace will be great. If people can adopt good intention, open mind and compassionate heart we can assist those imaginative individuals forging new pathways. The academy can be a solution-driven organization with a positive impact on community, country, and the world. We can no longer remain behind those invisible ivory towers ignoring the harsh realities facing humanity, disregarding the outside community and living in a closed paradigm. The system as it exists will die on its own if we do not blaze new trails.

As we evolve our approaches to facilitating, guiding, and leading learning across campus, we may integrate both pedagogical and andragogical methodologies as we focus on student experiences, high-impact and project-based learning, and engaging the whole student intellectually, professionally, and socially with the goal of helping all of our students to be intrinsically motivated learners (Pew, 2007). Certainly, we recognize that being able to meet students where they are in a flexible and fluid manner is key to reflecting upon and identifying how to adapt our approaches to leading and learning (Fornaciari & Dean, 2014). As we reflect on the four tools of engagement (First Year Seminar, Open Laboratories, Themed General

Education Program, and a General Education Capstone course) that President Birx has identified as being key to the student experience, we are already shifting to an andragogical mindset.

The First Year Seminar (FYS), open laboratories, having a themed general education program that interfaces with the disciplines, and an integrated capstone experience are some of the first steps we have taken in shifting toward a new approach to learning. For example, in the current **FYS** discussions, we are shifting the framework of the course from an individually faculty-driven question to a challenge/ “wicked problem” that is relevant to the lives of our students, (Rittel & Webber, 1973, p. 155). As our ideas continue to evolve in these discussions, allowing students to co-create their experiences in exploring, investigating, and solving these problems (or more likely solving parts of them), students will be self-directed in their own learning, allowing them to take more of an active part in their learning. Students will be participating in co-creating their learning by engaging in **open lab experiences** and connecting with multiple disciplinary perspectives in an interdisciplinary and transdisciplinary spirit.

The changing nature of our general education program, while currently in the midst of exploring ways to interface with the disciplines/majors in a cohesive manner, the identification of themes and micro-credentials (**theming our general education program**) can make general education more relevant to student experience and complementary to disciplinary expertise. Finally, while we currently have a “capstone” course in our general education program, the Integration Connections course, we have fallen off the path of its true nature and we haven’t used it as a capstone experience. By re-establishing a **capstone based Integration course** in our general education program, students will be better able to demonstrate how their general education informs and connects with their majors, thus students have a holistic understanding of

the interface between various disciplines, which allows students to find meaning and purpose from their educational experiences on their own (and they can articulate it).

As we think about our new institutional mission, vision, and purpose where our engagement is organized by integrated clusters, our administration is led by collaborative teams, and we facilitate student engagement with a growing number of emergent partnerships locally, regionally, and beyond, we are in the midst of educational transformation and evolution. This is a privilege, opportunity, and responsibility. By rethinking the approach we take into the classroom, how we imagine student growth and success, and what we want for our students as engaged citizens in the world, connecting to those six assumptions of the adult learner can transform our students toward being competent/capable, providing them with connections and the ability to interface their learning outside the campus, and enabling them to be contributing members of their communities. Along the way we will continue to see our methods and experiences be nurtured, our thinking will evolve, and we will see our students, ourselves, and our communities will transform into a new and exciting landscape.

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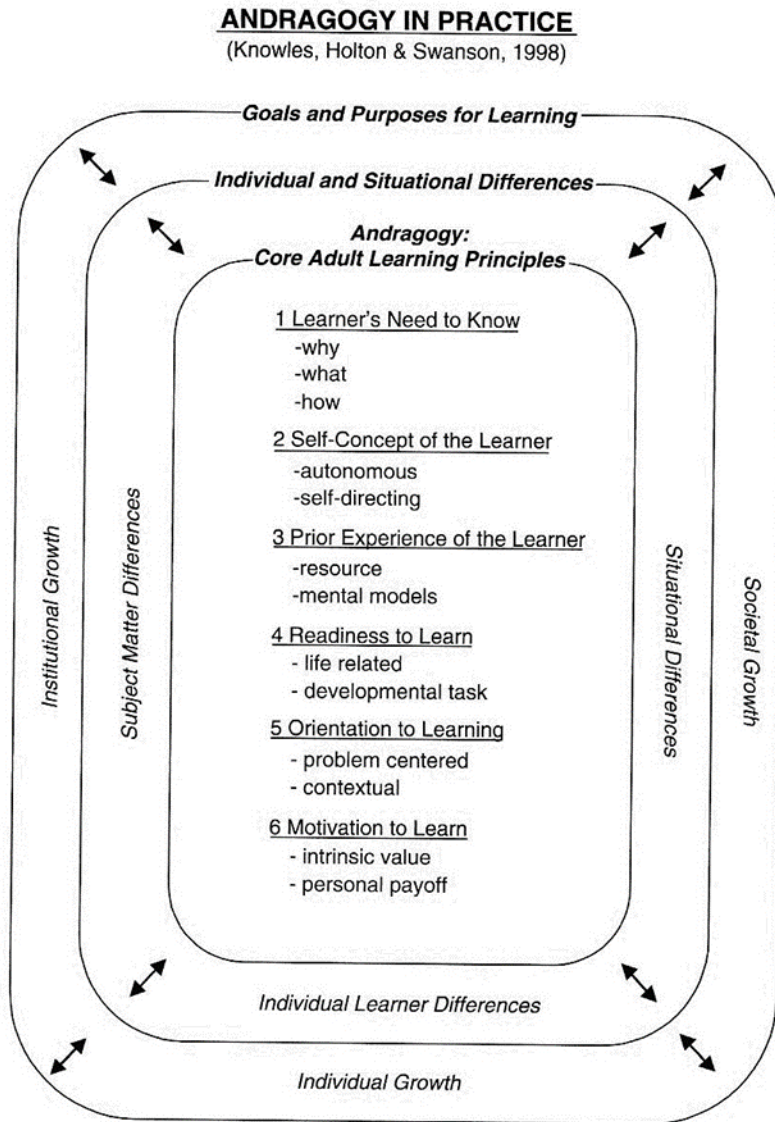


Figure 1-1. *Andragogy in practice* (Knowles, Holton, and Swanson, 1998).

¹ This paper is intended to introduce andragogy as an approach to teaching young adult learners. The literature on andragogy is vast and includes advantages and challenges of advancing it as a formal theory. We intentionally do not cover critique of andragogy as a formal theory, though that will come in a longer, further developed paper. For now, we introduce andragogy as an alternative approach with different assumptions about the whys and hows of learning that are relevant to our students today.