



## **SIGNIFICANCE OF HEUTAGOGY IN DISTANCE EDUCATION**

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### ***Abstract***

*Heutagogy, a form of self-determined learning with the practices and principles rooted in andragogy, has recently resurfaced as a learning approach after a decade of limited attention. In a heutagogical approach to teaching and learning, learners are highly autonomous and self-determined and emphasis is placed on development of learner capacity and capability with the goal of producing learners who are well-prepared for the complexities of today's workplace. The approach has been proposed as a theory for applying to emerging technologies in distance education and for guiding distance education practice and the ways in which distance educators develop and deliver instruction using newer technologies such as social media. In 21th Century, depending on the development of information and communication technology tool, restructuring studies have been also made on education as it is made on each sector. World states strike out the education policies in parallel with the development of communication technologies. Distance Education is a field of education that focuses on the pedagogy, technology, and instructional system designs that aim to deliver education to students who are not physically on site in a traditional classroom or campus. Nowadays, researches on the use of computer networks are becoming increasingly common in distance education technique. This article highlights the changing nature of distance education due to rapid development of technology and also throw light on the different elements and definitions of distance education. The main focus of this article is on the concept of heutagogy along with its significance in distance education.*

**Keywords:** Lifelong learning; heutagogy; self-determined learning; andragogy; self-directed learning; social media; capability; competency; double-loop learning; reflection

### **INTRODUCTION**

Education has traditionally been seen as a pedagogic relationship between the teacher and the learner. It was always the teacher who decided what the learner needed to know, and indeed how the knowledge and skills should be taught. In the past thirty years or so there has been quite a revolution in education through research into how people learn, and resulting from that, further work on how teaching could and should be provided. The field of distance

education has changed dramatically in the past ten years. Distance education, structured learning in which the student and instructor are separated by place, and sometimes by the time is currently the fastest growing form of domestic and international education. What was once considered a special form of education using nontraditional delivery systems, is now becoming an important concept in mainstream education. Concepts such as networked learning, connected learning spaces, flexible learning and hybrid learning systems have enlarged the scope and changed the nature of earlier distance education models. Web-based and web-enhanced courses are appearing in traditional programs that are now racing to join the “anytime, anyplace” educational feeding frenzy. Due to the rapid development of technology, courses using a variety of media are being delivered to students in various locations in an effort to serve the educational needs of growing populations. In many cases, developments in technology allow distance education programs to provide specialized courses to students in remote geographic areas with increasing interactivity between student and teacher.

### **CONCEPT OF DISTANCE EDUCATION**

Although the ways in which distance education is implemented differ markedly from country to country, most distance learning programs rely on technologies which are either already in place or are being considered for their cost effectiveness. Such programs are particularly beneficial for the many people who are not financially, physically or geographically able to obtain traditional education. Desmond Keegan (1980) identified six key elements of distance education:

- Separation of teacher and learner
- Influence of an educational organization
- Use of media to link teacher and learner
- Two-way exchange of communication
- Learners as individuals rather than grouped
- Education as an industrialized form

Distance education has traditionally been defined as instruction through print or electronic communications media to persons engaged in planning learning in a place or time different from that of the instructor or instructors. The traditional definition of distance education is slowly being changed as new technological developments challenge educators to reconceptualize the idea of schooling and lifelong learning. At the same time, interest in the unlimited possibilities of individualized distance learning is growing with the development of each new communication technology. Although educational technologists agree that it is the systematic design of instruction which should drive the development of distance learning, the rapid development of computer related technologies has captured the interest of the public and has been responsible for much of the limelight in which distance educators currently find themselves. Asynchronous or time-delayed computer conferencing has shown the capability to network groups of learners over a period of time thereby challenging Keegan’s 1980 definition that learners need to be taught as individuals rather than in groups. Holmberg

refined the definition by stating that Distance education is a concept that covers the learning-teaching activities in the cognitive and/or psycho-motor and affective domains of an individual learner and a supporting organization. It is characterized by non-contiguous communication and can be carried out anywhere and at any time, which makes it attractive to adults with professional and social commitments. (Holmberg, 1989 p. 168) We have taken the position that the most inclusive and currently workable definition of distance education comes from Garrison and Shale (1987) who include in their essential criteria for formulation of a distance education theory, the elements of noncontiguous communication, two-way interactive communication, and the use of technology to mediate the necessary two-way communication. There is no one definition of open and distance learning. Rather, there are many approaches to defining the term. Most definitions, however, pay attention to the following characteristics:

- Separation of teacher and learner in time or place, or in both time and place;
- Institutional accreditation; that is, learning is accredited or certified by some institution or agency. This type of learning is distinct from learning through your own effort without the official recognition of a learning institution;
- Use of mixed-media courseware, including print, radio and television broadcasts, video and audio cassettes, computer-based learning and telecommunications. Courseware tends to be pre-tested and validated before use;
- Two-way communication allows learners and tutors to interact as distinguished from the passive receipt of broadcast signals. Communication can be synchronous or asynchronous;
- Possibility of face-to-face meetings for tutorials, learner-learner interaction, library study and laboratory or practice sessions; and
- Use of industrialized processes; that is, in large-scale open and distance learning operations, labour is divided and tasks are assigned to various staff who work together in course development teams.

### **CONCEPT OF HEUTAGOGY**

The rapid changes in society, the pervasive nature of new and developing technologies and change in employment patterns from manufacturing to service industries and from physical skills-based to knowledge-based occupations have an impact upon what different courses through distance mode should contain. Heutagogy is associated with capability. It contains principles of teaching that foster and create independence within the learner. From the perspective of distance learners experience a distant driven curriculum there are important attitudes and understandings arising from the idea that there is no longer any certainty about one's job, chosen career, place of work, abode, relationships and economic circumstances. Heutagogy is the principle of teaching based upon the concept of truly self-determined learning. It is suggested that heutagogy is appropriate to the needs of learners in the twenty-first century, particularly in the development of individual capability,



individualized learning and independent learning using the internet-based systems including multimedia, virtual learning environments, online assessments and social software.

In education, heutagogy, a term coined by Stewart Hase of Southern Cross University and Chris Kenyon in Australia (2000), is the study of self-determined learning. The word appears to come from an irregular formation of the Greek words (heurista) meaning to “discover,” (heuretikos) meaning "inventive," (heuriskein) meaning to "find," and (ago) to "lead"; so it is construed to mean "to lead to invention, discoveries, findings" and consists of learning strategies focused on mature learners where a mentor enables quested learning to allow for modification of existing knowledge and creation of new knowledge. This is consistent with the Constructivism of Dewey, 1929, 1933/1998; Montessori, 1946; and Kolb, 1976,1984. This experiential learning through real life experience constructs and conditions knowledge. This learning is problem based adaptive learning that challenges faulty schema, integrates new knowledge with existing knowledge which allows for the creation of original work and innovative procedures. The learning is self-directed formation of new knowledge using Visual/Spatial, Musical/Rhythmic, Bodily Kinesthetic, Verbal/Linguistic, Logical/Mathematical, Interpersonal/Intrapersonal intelligences. The learner analyzes, conceptualizes, and synthesizes experience/prior knowledge creatively generating original work and innovative methods that results in the formation of new knowledge. Heutagogy is the highest order learning where problems are solved using Heuristic problem solving, meta-cognitive knowledge, creativity, and originality.

Heutagogy is the study of self-determined learning and draws together some of the ideas presented by these various approaches to learning. It is also an attempt to challenge some ideas about teaching and learning that still prevail in teacher-centred learning and the need for, as Bill Ford (1997) eloquently puts it, ‘knowledge sharing’ rather than ‘knowledge hoarding’. In this respect, heutagogy looks to the future in which knowing how to learn will be a fundamental skill, given the pace of innovation and the changing structure of communities and workplaces. Heutagogy applies a holistic approach to developing learner capabilities, with learning as an active and proactive process, and learners serving as “the major agent in their own learning, which occurs as a result of personal experiences” (Hase& Kenyon, 2007, p. 112). As in an andragogical approach, in heutagogy the instructor also facilitates the learning process by providing guidance and resources, but fully relinquishes ownership of the learning path and process to the learner, who negotiates learning and determines what will be learned and how it will be learned (Hase& Kenyon, 2000; Eberle, 2009).

A key concept in heutagogy is that of double-loop learning and self-reflection (Argyris&Schön, 1996, as cited in Hase& Kenyon, 2000). In double-loop learning, learners consider the problem and the resulting action and outcomes, in addition to reflecting upon the problem-solving process and how it influences the learner’s own beliefs and actions . Double-loop learning occurs when learners “question and test one’s personal values and assumptions as being central to enhancing learning how to learn” (Argyris&Schön, 1978, as cited in Hase, 2009, pp. 45-46).A heutagogical approach recognises the need to be flexible in the learning,

where the teacher provides resources but the learner designs the actual course he or she might take by negotiating the learning. Thus learners might read around critical issues or questions and determine what is of interest and relevance to them and then negotiate further reading and assessment tasks. With respect to the latter, assessment becomes more of a learning experience rather than a means to measure attainment. As teachers we should concern ourselves with developing the learner's capability, not just embedding discipline-based skills and knowledge. We should relinquish any power we deem ourselves to have. The concept of heutagogy offers certain principles and practices that could be considered as a response to these developments within distance higher education. A heutagogical learning environment facilitates development of capable learners and emphasizes both the development of learner competencies as well as development of the learner's capability and capacity to learn (Ashton & Newman, 2006; Bhoryrub, Hurley, Neilson, Ramsay, & Smith, 2010; Hase & Kenyon, 2000). Heutagogy has been called a "net-centric" theory that takes advantage of the key affordances of the Internet; it is also a pedagogical approach that could be applied to emerging technologies in distance education, as well as serve as a framework for digital age teaching and learning (Anderson, 2010, p. 33; Wheeler, 2011).

### **SIGNIFICANCE OF HEUTAGOGY IN DISTANCE EDUCATION**

Distance Education requires and promotes autonomy, a characteristic central to heutagogical teaching and learning. Students are usually mature and possess life experiences that can help them develop their own learning skills and learning plan to achieve their objectives, and negotiate assessment strategies with their instructor (Blaschke, 2012). Heutagogy is of special interest to distance education, which shares with heutagogy certain key attributes, such as learner autonomy and self-directedness, and has pedagogical roots in adult teaching and learning. Self-determined learning, characteristic of distance education formats such as contract learning and prior learning assessment, is also an attribute of distance education. Distance education and heutagogy also have in common the same audience: mature adult learners. Specifically, heutagogy has the potential to become a theory of distance education, in part due to the ways in which heutagogy further extends the andragogical approach and also due to the evidences it offers when applied to emerging technologies in distance education (such as Web 2.0). Distance education is a unique position for creating learning environments for supporting a heutagogical teaching and learning approach, as well as for contributing to further research into heutagogy. Specific characteristics of distance education that align themselves with heutagogy include:

- **Technology:** Technology's symbiotic relationship with distance education requires that, with each emerging technology, distance educators consider the implications of the technology on distance education theory and practice. Heutagogy has been identified as a potential theory for applying to emerging technologies in distance education (Anderson, 2010; Wheeler, 2011), although additional research and discussion is necessary in order to determine the credibility of heutagogy as a theory of distance education.

- Profile of the distance education learner: Traditionally, distance education has been designed, developed, delivered, and targeted to the adult learner, usually working adults with extensive life experience and more maturity than campus-based students (Holmberg, 2005; Peters, 2001; Moore & Kearsley, 2012; Richardson, Morgan, & Woodley, 1999). The distance education practice has historically been strongly influenced by Knowles' andragogical theory of teaching and learning, and as an extension of andragogy, heutagogy could be considered as a relevant theory for adult distance education.
- *Learner autonomy*: Distance education, as a distinct form of education, both requires and promotes autonomy, a learner skill that is central to a heutagogical teaching and learning approach (Peters, 2001). Because learner autonomy is characteristic of and promoted in distance education learning environments, distance education inherently supports heutagogical practice.

It may be argued that the rapid rate of change in society, and the so called information explosion, suggest that we should now be looking at an educational approach where it is the learner him/herself who determines what and how learning should take place. Heutagogy, the study of self-determined learning, may be viewed as a natural progression from earlier educational methodologies - in particular for capability development - and may well provide the optimal approach to learning in the twenty-first century. This revolution recognises the changed world in which we live. A world in which: information is readily and easily accessible; change is so rapid that traditional methods of training and education are totally inadequate; discipline-based knowledge is inappropriate to prepare for living in modern communities and workplaces; learning is increasingly aligned with what we do; modern organisational structures require flexible learning practices; and there is a need for immediacy of learning. In response to this environment, there have emerged some innovative approaches that address the deficiencies of the pedagogical and andragogical methods.

## **SUMMARY**

People know how to learn; they did it from birth until they went to school. It's a question of helping them remember how to do it. We need to help people have confidence in their perceptions and how to question their interpretation of reality, within a framework of competence. By incorporating heutagogical practice, educators have the opportunity to better prepare students for the workplace and for becoming lifelong learners, as well as to foster student motivation by cultivating students who "are fully engaged in the topic they are studying because they are making choices that are most relevant or interesting to them" (Kenyon & Hase, 2010, p. 170). Distance education has a particular affinity to the heutagogical approach, due to distance education's inherent characteristics of requiring and promoting learner autonomy, its traditional focus on adult learners, and its evolutionary and symbiotic relationship with technology – all characteristics shared with this emerging theory. Because of this affinity, distance education is in a unique position to provide a sustainable



environment for studying and researching this teaching and learning method – and for assessing and evaluating the theory's appropriateness as a theory of distance education.

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