

COACHING MASTERS ATHLETES USING AN ANDRAGOGICAL APPROACH

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WHO ARE MASTERS ATHLETES?

Masters athletes (MA):

- usually over 35 years of age
- acknowledge that they 'prepare in order to participate'
- registered for sport / formal registration to sport club

(Young, 2011)



MAs with coaches (70%) (Young, 2011):

- report strategic use of a coach to motivate themselves (Medic, 2009)
- report a more self-determined profile beneficial to overall psychological well-being and persistence (Medic, Young, Starkes, & Weir, 2012)

COACHES OF MASTERS ATHLETES

Young, Callary, and Neidre (2014)

- Content areas where different approaches may be needed when coaching MAs
- Tailoring of environment, fostering self-determined learners, rationalizing workouts using feedback

Callary, Rathwell, and Young (2015)

- Breadth of preferences for coach behaviors, attributes, and approaches

Rathwell, Callary, and Young (2015)

- Three vignettes of athlete profiles, differing in their motives for swimming, experiences of being a Masters swimmer, and perspectives on competition and being coached

Only one (unpublished) study has considered **andragogy** in a coached sport context (Morris-Eyton, 2008) -



Sport as an **educational process**; coaching for the development of athletes compared to intricacies of teaching students (Jones, 2007)

Educational research needed as a method of understanding coaching (Armour, 2010)

Coach educators often unaware of **theoretical frameworks** used in education to guide their practice (Lyle, 2007)

Correlations between facilitative roles of **teacher and coach** and learning roles of **student and athlete**

Andragogy in practice model has ability to transcend **applicability to sport domain**



Andragogy: the art and science of helping adults learn

ANDRAGOGY IN PRACTICE

(Knowles, Holton & Swanson, 1998)

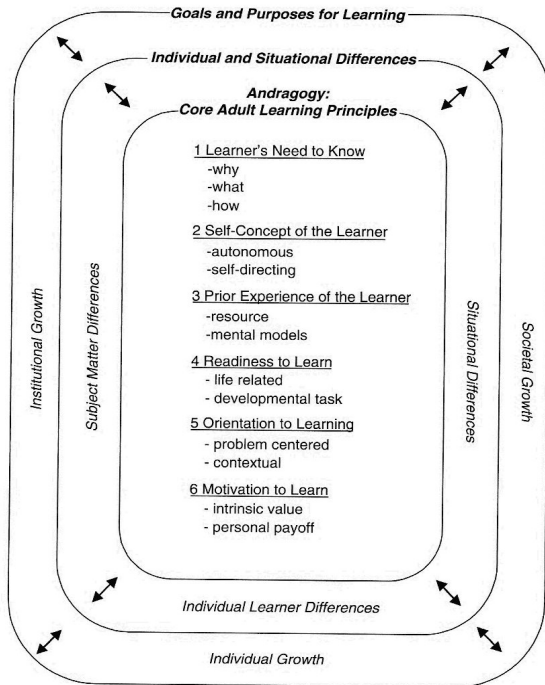


Figure 1-1. Andragogy in practice (Knowles, Holton, and Swanson, 1998).

Adult education principles, and in particular, andragogy (Knowles, Holton, & Swanson, 2012), may help explain adult learning needs and preferences that coaches may use when working with Masters athletes.



Applicability of andragogy in sport

Adult learning principles (Knowles et al., 2012)

- 1. Need to know**
 - How, what, why
- 2. Self-directed self-concept**
 - Personal autonomy in learning
- 3. Prior experiences**
 - Resources for learning, shapes self-identity
- 4. Readiness to learn**
 - Dictated by life situation
- 5. Orientation to learning and problem solving**
 - Real-life context
- 6. Motivation to learn**
 - Intrinsic motivation

Adult learners in sport (coaching context)

- 2 & 4. Adults choose how and what they learn through various modes (e.g., Internet, books, other coaches, mentors, coaching courses) (Werthner & Trudel, 2009)
 3. Primary and secondary socialization experiences influence learning (Callary, Werthner, & Trudel, 2011)
 5. Adults are 'constantly thinking' and working through sport issues (Werthner & Trudel, 2009; Taylor, Werthner, Culver, & Callary, 2015)
- Other refs!

METHODOLOGY

Participants:

- 10 Masters swimmers (5f, 5m) from 8 swim clubs
- Aged 45-65 years
- Weekly training hours $M= 4$, $Range: 2.5-7$
- Coached at least twice per week
- Importance of training $M = 6$, $Range = 4-7$



	Not at all true		Some what true			Very true	
I need to regularly train to get myself ready for my sport competitions.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7

METHODOLOGY

Semi structured interviews

- Each participant was interviewed individually at a time and place of their choosing
- Interview length in minutes: $M = 52$, *Range: 44 – 61*

Interpretative phenomenological analysis (IPA)

- Understand the lived experiences of participants and the meaning behind experiences (Smith, 2010)

Validity (Smith, 2010; Yardley, 2008)

- Member checking
- Independent coders

RESULTS – COACHES INTERACTIONS RELATING TO COMPETITION

Swimmers' preferences about coaching relating to competition, including:

- how coaches help them prepare for competition
- how coaches behave during and immediately following competitions.

All 10 swimmers discussed this theme for a total of 90 quotes.



RESULTS – PREPARING FOR COMPETITIONS

Swimmers liked that their coaches helped give them a competitive edge by coaching them for:

- Competition rules and strategies
- Registration for upcoming competitions
- Structure of training in strategic ways

Coach should not take for granted that adult athletes know the rules of competition

The coach figures out which events are going to be less subscribed. He will say, “Maybe 800 meter breast stroke is your best event, but you know what, there are going to be a lot of people swimming the 800 meter breast stroke. You'd be better to move up to the 200 meter breast stroke, where it's a tough swim but you're more likely to place higher and get more points for the team”... Similarly with the relays, he's just brilliant. If he's putting two or three teams into that relay, he knows how to balance things out. I wouldn't know where to begin with the relays.

RESULTS- DURING AND IMMEDIATELY AFTER COMPETITIONS

Swimmers' preferences:

- provision of specific on-site logistics
- Emotional support
- Performance-enhancing feedback
- Post-race debriefing
- Celebrating athlete accomplishments

The coaches are very, very technical ahead of time but afterwards, you know, we're not kids anymore. So it's not like "you screwed up" or "you had a good day, you had a bad day". It's more positive feedback. Keeping me motivated to want to go back for the next time (competition).

The coach offers us more knowledge than what we know ourselves about the competition itself. For example, I wouldn't have guessed how well my body responds to a proper warm up. I wouldn't have thought my body would respond well to a half hour warm-up and then some extra sprints. I would have thought it would be tiring me out. So to be told that that's the right way to do it, and to see it work – I needed the coach to do that. It's the same thing with cool downs, without that being drilled into you, how important that sort of is, I probably wouldn't do it. And yet when you're doing multiple events in the same day, it's just so important, that recovery point. So managing a long day with warm-ups, cool downs and a certain amount of food and fluids, is not something you do very often. And having that mapped out for you by the coach has helped out at competition.

RESULTS – UNIQUE TO MASTERS ATHLETES

Competing alongside coach or at same venue/same time as coach

- Athletes spoke positively about this experience
- Motivational
- Helped with perception of coach's credibility

Unspoken – problematic issue of feedback and time spent with athlete during competition

He also competes, which is pretty cool and there's always feedback from that perspective. So he'll catch you, he may take some photographs of you, he may even take some video of you. He'll speak to you pretty much as soon as you get out of the pool, unless he has to get back and talk to someone else or **unless he's in his own event**, which is great.

DISCUSSION

Coaches provide information & strategies before, feedback & support during and after competition (Côté et al., 1995)

MSs liked that their coaches competed BUT wanted their coaches' attention and feedback.

- Some MAs are extremely competitive even though they said they were not (Dionigi, 2008).
- Beliefs about competition: serious but not elite (Rathwell, Callary, Young, 2014)
- Nature of adult sport makes MAs less reliant on coaches as efficacy sources (Wilson, Sullivan, Myers, & Feltz, 2004)

MAs disregarded the importance of having a coach at competitive events since they should not appear overly competitive.

Anecdotally –coaches not required to be at competitions, it is a bonus



CONCLUSION



Coaches appear to be an important source of information, support, motivation for MAs in competition.

The importance of a coach at competitions for Masters athletes should not be discounted.

- Coaches should explain basic rules and strategies about competition
- Coaches should spend time at the competition venue supporting athletes and facilitating proper sequencing of athletes' day
- Coaches who compete in the same venue should be aware of the implications of their behaviours
 - they are at once role models (inspirational and credible) and also somewhat removed from providing feedback and support.



THANK YOU!
QUESTIONS?

Funding provided by:



Social Sciences and Humanities
Research Council of Canada

Conseil de recherches en
sciences humaines du Canada

Canada

CAPE BRETON
UNIVERSITY

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