



# Andragogy in the Age of AI: Redefining Adult Learning for the Future Workforce

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## Abstract:

As artificial intelligence (AI) transforms industries and the nature of work, adult education must evolve to meet the demands of a rapidly changing global workforce. This paper explores the intersection of andragogy—the art and science of adult learning—and emerging AI technologies. It redefines traditional principles of adult learning in the context of digital literacy, lifelong upskilling, and adaptive learning environments powered by AI. The study emphasizes the need for learner-centered, flexible, and technology-integrated approaches that align with adult learners' motivations, experiences, and goals. By examining current trends, challenges, and opportunities, the paper provides a roadmap for educators, institutions, and policymakers to foster effective adult learning ecosystems in the AI era.

## Keywords:

Andragogy, Adult Learning, Artificial Intelligence, Lifelong Learning, Workforce Development, Digital Literacy, Adaptive Learning, Future Skills, Human-AI Collaboration, Educational Technology.

## I. Introduction:

### 1.1 Background

Andragogy, a term popularized by Malcolm Knowles, refers to the art and science of helping adults learn. Unlike pedagogy, which focuses on child learning, andragogy emphasizes self-directedness, prior experience, readiness to learn, and relevance of content to real-life tasks (Knowles, Holton, & Swanson, 2015). These principles are especially pertinent in the context of contemporary technological disruptions.

With the rapid integration of Artificial Intelligence (AI) into nearly every sector—ranging from healthcare and finance to education and manufacturing—the nature of work is undergoing profound transformation. McKinsey Global Institute (2021) predicts that by 2030, up to 375 million workers worldwide may need to switch occupational categories, largely due to automation and AI. This paradigm shift necessitates a reevaluation of adult learning frameworks to ensure workers can adapt, reskill, and thrive in increasingly digital and automated environments.

In this AI-driven age, adult education must transcend traditional models and incorporate adaptive learning technologies, micro-credentialing, and just-in-time learning to meet evolving industry demands. The principles of andragogy offer a robust foundation for reimagining adult learning in ways that align with technological innovation, personalization, and the need for lifelong learning.

### 1.2 Purpose of the Review:

The primary purpose of this review is to examine how foundational andragogical principles are being reinterpreted, adapted, or challenged in response to the integration of Artificial Intelligence (AI) into educational and workplace environments. As AI reshapes the skills landscape and the modalities through which learning occurs, there is a growing need to assess whether traditional adult learning theories remain sufficient—or if they require significant reconfiguration to stay relevant.

This review seeks to explore the intersection between AI and adult learning by analyzing current research, pedagogical innovations, and real-world applications. It aims to highlight how



AI technologies such as intelligent tutoring systems, learning analytics, and personalized learning platforms are influencing adult education practices.

The following table presents a curated review of 20 key studies examining the intersection of Artificial Intelligence (AI) and adult learning. Each entry highlights the study's context, focus area, and major findings relevant to andragogy in the age of AI.

**1.3 Review of Related Literature:**

**Table 1. Selected Literature on AI-Enhanced Adult Learning**

#	Author(s) & Year	Context / Population	Focus	Key Findings
1	Gupta et al. (2024)	College-level adult learners	Intelligent tutoring systems	Adaptive problem selection & real-time feedback support self-directed learning.
2	Gupta & MacLellan (2025)	Technical college adult students	Tutor engagement & impact	Usage of tutors correlates with higher assessment scores.
3	Woo & Choi (2021)	SLA / adult language learners	AI-based language tools	Machine feedback improved error correction and language acquisition.
4	Goel et al. (2025)	Adult online learners	AI-Augmented Learning Architecture	A4L enables scalable personalized learning via data analysis architectures.
5	Wolters et al. (2024)	Adults in higher education	AI literacy	Identifies growing need for adult AI competence and literacy frameworks.
6	Chen et al. (2020)	Education broadly	AIED review	Highlights ethics, privacy, bias, and the importance of adaptive systems.
7	Eynon & Young (2021)	Policy / lifelong learning	AI discourse in lifelong learning	Explores differing narratives and the need for critical, inclusive approaches.
8	Osolase et al. (2024)	Adult learners / workforce training	HRD perspective	AI reshapes roles and necessitates reskilling within organizational frameworks.
9	“Integrating AI into Adult Ed” (2023)	Adult distance learners	Generative chatbots, ELIZA	Evolution from CAI to LLMs offers real-time feedback and grading.
10	Scoping review (2022)	Higher/adult education	AI literacy	Calls for clear definitions, assessments, and course structures.
11	Smart Learning Env (2024)	Education broadly	AIED challenges	Lists privacy, equity, design, and teacher readiness as core challenges.
12	Khan (Khanmigo) review (2024)	K–12 to adult learning context	Personalized tutoring	AI tutoring aids struggling learners, but accuracy and bias are concerns.
13	Wolff & Lun (2024)	Classroom learning	Pedagogical avatars	AI avatar tutors could assist, though societal acceptance is key.
14	FT letter (2025)	General learners	Critical thinking vs AI	Warns against overreliance; human judgment remains



				essential.
15	Guardian article (2025)	University students	Critical thinking in humanities	AI-generated essays may undermine development of critical skills.
16	Adaptive learning wiki (2025)	Environments broadly	Adaptive learning systems	86 % studies show positive effects on learning outcomes.
17	Pedagogical agents wiki (2024)	Applicability: all ages/adults	Pedagogical agents	Agents mimic social roles and increase engagement and retention.
18	Immersive learning wiki (2024)	Adult vocational training	VR immersive learning	Simulations enhance skill retention and motivation.
19	Reciprocal HML (2023)	Adult professional users	Human-machine learning interaction	Emphasizes continuous, reciprocal learning between humans and AI.
20	Robertson et al. (2024)	Generative AI in higher learning	Prompt protocols	Structured prompts enhance co-construction of knowledge with AI.

### 1.3 Research Questions :

1. How is AI transforming adult learning paradigms?
2. What are the emerging AI-driven tools and strategies supporting andragogy?
3. How can educators and institutions align with these changes to better prepare adult learners?

## II. Methodology:

### 2.1 Research Design

This study adopts a systematic literature review (SLR) as the primary research design. The SLR approach provides a structured, transparent, and replicable method for collecting, analyzing, and synthesizing scholarly literature. It is particularly useful for identifying theoretical advancements, technological developments, and pedagogical trends over time. This review focuses on literature published between 2015 and 2024, a period during which AI applications in education have grown significantly. Following the framework outlined by Tranfield, Denyer, and Smart (2003), this methodology ensures that the review is both rigorous and comprehensive.

### 2.2 Data Sources

The literature search was conducted using multiple reputable academic databases to ensure a broad and balanced representation of relevant research. These databases include Scopus, Web of Science, ERIC (Education Resources Information Center), Google Scholar, and JSTOR. These sources were chosen for their extensive indexing of peer-reviewed literature in education, technology, and the social sciences. The combination of these databases

enabled access to a wide variety of interdisciplinary research related to AI and adult learning.

### 2.3 Inclusion Criteria

To ensure the relevance and quality of the literature included in this review, specific inclusion criteria were applied. First, only publications written in English were considered. Second, all selected studies had to explicitly focus on topics related to adult learning, andragogy, or the application of AI technologies in these areas. Third, only peer-reviewed journal articles, conference proceedings, and white papers were included. Finally, the review was limited to publications from the 2015–2024 period to capture recent developments and current perspectives.

### 2.4 Exclusion Criteria

Publications were excluded from the review if they did not meet the academic or topical standards set by the inclusion criteria. Specifically, non-academic sources such as blogs, news articles, and editorials were omitted due to their lack of peer review and scholarly rigor. In addition, studies that focused solely on K–12 education or children’s learning, without any connection to adult education or andragogical principles, were excluded. Lastly, publications with redundant content, limited scope, or non-substantive findings were not included in the final analysis.

## III. Thematic Analysis:

### 3.1 Redefining Andragogical Principles with AI

The integration of Artificial Intelligence (AI) into adult education is significantly reshaping



traditional andragogical principles. One of the most notable shifts is the movement away from instructor-centered approaches toward learner-driven models. In conventional adult learning environments, the instructor often served as the primary source of knowledge and guidance. However, AI-enabled platforms now empower learners to take control of their educational journeys, aligning closely with Malcolm Knowles' foundational principle of self-directed learning (Knowles et al., 2015).

AI technologies facilitate autonomous, self-paced learning, which caters to the diverse needs and schedules of adult learners. Tools such as intelligent tutoring systems, adaptive learning environments, and AI-powered recommendation engines enable learners to progress at their own

speed while receiving continuous feedback and support. This shift not only enhances accessibility but also supports lifelong learning, a critical need in today's dynamic workforce landscape.

Furthermore, AI plays a pivotal role in personalizing learning experiences, which reflects Knowles' emphasis on the importance of prior experience and individual relevance in adult education. Through data analytics and machine learning, AI systems can adapt content based on learners' performance, preferences, and goals, thereby offering tailored learning pathways. This level of customization reinforces the core andragogical belief that learning should be experiential, practical, and aligned with personal and professional objectives

**Table 2. Transformation of Andragogical Principles in the Age of AI**

<b>Traditional Andragogy (Knowles)</b>	<b>AI-Enhanced Adult Learning</b>	<b>Impact on Learners</b>
Instructor-centered	Learner-driven	Increased autonomy and control over learning process
Fixed pace and curriculum	Self-paced, adaptive learning paths	Flexibility for working adults and diverse schedules
Generalized content	Personalized content based on learner data	Higher engagement and relevance
Human feedback and assessment only	AI-assisted feedback and real-time assessment	Immediate, data-driven insights for improvement
Emphasis on prior experience	AI adapts based on experience and performance	Deepens learning by integrating personal background

### **3.2 Personalized and Adaptive Learning**

One of the most transformative impacts of Artificial Intelligence (AI) in adult education is the development of personalized and adaptive learning environments. AI-powered platforms such as Coursera, edX, and Duolingo increasingly employ machine learning algorithms that adjust content delivery based on real-time learner performance (Khosravi et al., 2022). These systems analyze individual progress, response patterns, and engagement levels to tailor instructional materials accordingly. This ensures learners receive content that is appropriately challenging, relevant, and aligned with their personal learning trajectories.

A central feature of these platforms is the provision of real-time feedback and learning analytics. Unlike traditional models where feedback is delayed and often generalized, AI systems

provide instant, data-informed responses that help learners identify strengths and address weaknesses immediately (Ifenthaler & Yau, 2020). These analytics not only foster motivation but also support self-regulated learning, a key tenet of andragogy. Dashboards and progress-tracking tools allow both learners and educators to set goals, monitor development, and adapt strategies to enhance learning efficiency and engagement.

Overall, AI's capacity to personalize educational experiences at scale aligns closely with Knowles' andragogical principles—particularly those that emphasize learner autonomy, relevance, and experiential learning. As such, adaptive learning platforms are not only advancing technology but also reinforcing the foundational goals of adult education



**Table 3. Features and Benefits of AI-Powered Adaptive Learning Platforms**

Platform	Key AI Feature	Benefit to Adult Learners
Coursera	Adaptive course recommendations	Content aligns with learner goals and interests
edX	Performance-based content adjustment	Improved mastery through individualized pacing
Duolingo AI	Real-time error correction and gamification	Boosts engagement and retention in language learning
Khan Academy	Mastery-based progression with feedback	Supports competency development at the learner's pace
LinkedIn Learning	Skill gap analysis and learning path suggestions	Helps align learning with career development goals

**3.3 Lifelong Learning and Reskilling**

The rise of Artificial Intelligence (AI) is rapidly transforming the global workforce by both displacing traditional roles and creating new job categories. As automation takes over repetitive and rule-based tasks, workers must continually reskill and upskill to remain competitive. This shift has made lifelong learning an essential component of professional survival and success in the 21st-century labor market (World Economic Forum, 2023).

In response, many adult learners are turning to microcredentials and modular learning options, which offer flexible, targeted, and time-efficient pathways for acquiring new skills. These learning formats—often delivered through AI-enhanced platforms—allow individuals to stack credentials, tailor their learning to specific career goals, and adapt quickly to changing industry demands (Oliver, 2019). Platforms such as Coursera, Udacity, and LinkedIn Learning have

popularized this approach by integrating AI-driven personalization, progress tracking, and career alignment features.

Moreover, corporate training ecosystems are increasingly integrating AI to support ongoing professional development. Companies are leveraging AI for skill gap analysis, customized training recommendations, and performance prediction, thereby creating a data-informed culture of continuous learning (Dede et al., 2021). These strategies not only support employee development but also enhance organizational agility and innovation.

In this context, andragogical principles are being redefined to emphasize adaptability, relevance, and self-motivated learning. The AI-driven demand for reskilling fosters an environment where adult learners are not just recipients of training but active participants in shaping their learning journeys.

**Table 4. AI and the Reskilling Imperative for Adult Learners**

Trend	Description	Example Applications
Job Displacement and Creation	Automation eliminates old jobs and introduces new AI-driven roles	AI analysts, automation coordinators
Microcredentialing	Short, stackable credentials that offer focused skill development	Coursera Specializations, Google Career Certs
Modular Learning	Flexible, bite-sized learning modules for specific competencies	LinkedIn Learning, edX Professional Certificates
AI in Corporate Training	Personalized, data-driven employee development programs	IBM's AI Skills Academy, Microsoft Learn AI

**3.4 Digital Divide and Ethical Concerns**

While AI has opened new frontiers in adult education, it has also amplified existing inequalities, particularly through the digital divide. Access to AI-enhanced learning platforms often depends on stable internet connectivity, digital devices, and a baseline level of digital literacy—resources that are unevenly distributed across socioeconomic, geographic, and generational lines (Van Dijk, 2020). As a result,

adult learners from underserved or rural communities may find themselves excluded from the benefits of AI-driven education, deepening the gap in opportunities for lifelong learning and reskilling.

In addition to access barriers, ethical concerns surrounding the use of AI in education demand urgent attention. Data privacy is a primary issue, as AI-powered systems frequently collect and



analyze vast amounts of learner data to deliver personalized experiences. Without robust safeguards, this data could be misused or inadequately protected, compromising learner trust (Williamson & Eynon, 2020). Moreover, algorithmic bias presents another challenge: AI systems trained on skewed datasets can unintentionally reinforce existing societal inequalities, marginalizing certain groups in learning assessments, course recommendations, or career guidance.

Finally, the growing reliance on AI requires that adult learners possess not just subject knowledge but also a foundational level of digital literacy to navigate complex platforms effectively. Educators and institutions must therefore prioritize inclusion, transparency, and ethical accountability when integrating AI into adult learning environments, ensuring that technological advancement does not come at the cost of fairness and equity.

*table 5. Key Digital and Ethical Challenges in AI-Enhanced Adult Learning*

Challenge	Description	Implications for Adult Learners
Digital Divide	Unequal access to devices, internet, and digital literacy	Limits participation in AI-enhanced learning
Data Privacy Risks	Collection and potential misuse of personal learner data	Erodes trust and raises compliance concerns
Algorithmic Bias	AI outcomes influenced by biased or incomplete training data	Reinforces inequities in assessments and guidance
Digital Literacy Gap	Lack of technical fluency to use AI-driven platforms effectively	Reduces learner autonomy and confidence

### 3.5 The Role of Educators

The rise of AI in adult education is not only reshaping how learners engage with content but also transforming the role of educators. Traditionally seen as content deliverers, instructors are increasingly adopting the role of learning facilitators and AI navigators. In this capacity, educators guide adult learners through AI-enhanced platforms, curate resources, and ensure learning remains relevant, ethical, and aligned with individual and professional goals (Holmes et al., 2019).

This shift necessitates a critical new competency: AI literacy for educators. Teachers must understand how AI functions, its limitations, and its ethical implications in order to support

learners effectively. This includes being able to interpret AI-generated analytics, identify bias or inaccuracies in algorithmic outputs, and make informed pedagogical decisions using AI tools (Luckin et al., 2016). Without this literacy, there is a risk that AI will become a "black box," undermining educators' ability to scaffold learning or address issues of equity and fairness.

Moreover, as facilitators, educators must focus on developing soft skills, critical thinking, and digital resilience among adult learners—capabilities that AI cannot replicate. This human-AI partnership positions educators as vital mediators in maintaining learner agency and ensuring that technology serves educational, not just operational, purposes.

*Table 6. Changing Role of Educators in AI-Enhanced Adult Learning*

Traditional Role	Emerging Role with AI Integration	New Responsibilities
Content Deliverer	Learning Facilitator	Scaffolding personalized, AI-supported learning
Subject Expert	AI Interpreter and Navigator	Explaining AI outputs and addressing limitations
Assessor	Analytics-Informed Coach	Using AI insights to tailor feedback
Skill Developer	Critical Thinking and Soft Skills Mentor	Teaching skills AI cannot replicate

## IV. Discussion:

### 4.1 Implications for Policy and Practice

The integration of AI in adult learning requires a fundamental rethinking of institutional strategies and national education policies.

Educational institutions must embrace flexible, hybrid learning models that utilize AI to support personalized, data-driven instruction. These models can help address the varied schedules, learning



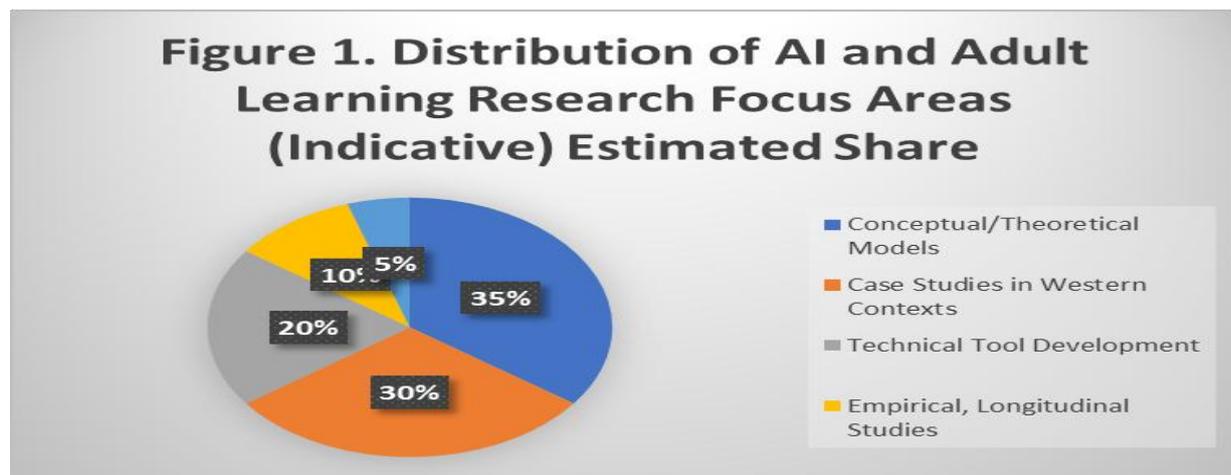
preferences, and life circumstances of adult learners (Holmes et al., 2019).

At the policy level, there is a pressing need to promote inclusive access to AI-enhanced learning, particularly for marginalized and rural communities. Governments should invest in digital infrastructure, affordable internet, and device accessibility to bridge the digital divide (Van Dijk, 2020). In addition, policies must enforce ethical standards that regulate how learner data is collected, used, and protected. Frameworks should be implemented to prevent algorithmic bias, promote transparency, and ensure accountability in AI-driven decision-making processes (Williamson & Eynon, 2020).

#### 4.2 Alignment with Future Workforce Needs

The demands of the future workforce are rapidly evolving in response to AI's growing role across industries. Consequently, adult education must shift toward developing future-proof skills such as critical thinking, creativity, collaboration, and digital literacy (World Economic Forum, 2023). These skills are essential for tasks requiring human judgment, ethical reasoning, and interpersonal interaction—areas where AI remains limited.

Adult learning programs must also anticipate emerging job roles shaped by AI, such as AI compliance officers, human-machine interaction specialists, and algorithm auditors. This can be achieved by fostering industry-education partnerships that facilitate curriculum co-design, real-time labor market alignment, and the development of modular, stackable microcredentials tailored to specific workforce needs (OECD, 2021).



#### 4.3 Limitations in Current Research

Although scholarly interest in AI and adult education is growing, the current research landscape remains underdeveloped in several key areas. A majority of existing literature consists of theoretical frameworks or exploratory case studies, with limited empirical or longitudinal studies to measure the sustained impacts of AI tools on adult learning outcomes (Zawacki-Richter et al., 2019).

Moreover, there is a geographic and socioeconomic bias in the research. Most studies are concentrated in high-income, Western nations, leading to an underrepresentation of experiences from low-income and non-Western contexts. This imbalance reduces the global applicability of current findings and risks excluding critical insights from underserved populations (Alam & Ahmad, 2022).

#### V. Conclusion:

The integration of Artificial Intelligence (AI) into adult education is fundamentally transforming the landscape of andragogy. By enabling personalized, adaptive, and self-directed learning, AI aligns with Malcolm Knowles' core principles of adult learning, such as learner autonomy, relevance of content, and the value of prior experience. Moreover, AI-powered platforms offer scalable opportunities for lifelong learning, making it possible for adults to upskill and reskill continuously in response to shifting labor market demands.

However, this transformation also presents critical challenges. Ensuring equitable access to AI-enhanced education is paramount to prevent deepening the digital divide. The ethical implications of data usage, algorithmic bias, and surveillance in learning environments must be



addressed through robust policies and transparent design. Additionally, educators require targeted professional development to act not only as content facilitators but also as ethical and technical mediators of AI systems.

To truly prepare adult learners for the AI-influenced future workforce, educational systems must adopt a strategic and agile approach—embracing innovation while remaining grounded in the values of inclusivity, fairness, and human-centric learning. When thoughtfully implemented, AI has the potential not to replace traditional andragogical principles, but to redefine and enhance them for the demands of the 21st century.

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