

## **The Student Customer Phenomenon**

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*Demands for adult education represent a billion dollar industry in the United States. Competition for the adult education business continues to expand among community colleges, trade schools. Accommodating non-traditional lifestyles is a trend that extends into the realms of higher education in the forms of learning on demand. The discussion begins with a description of the “first wave” of historical foundations of teaching with the guided nature of pedagogy. The “second wave” shifts towards the practice of andragogy. The “third wave” represents advances in adult learning theory introducing dominating perspectives in transformative and transformational learning and the “fourth wave” in the evolution of higher education and degrees on demand.*

### **INTRODUCTION**

Life on demand is the new normal in American culture. Accommodating non-traditional lifestyles is a trend that extends into the realms of higher education in the forms of learning on demand (Allen & Seaman, 2009), training on demand (Maliszewski, Nespoli, & Rosa, 2013), and grades on demand (Baer & Cheryomukhin, 2011). Traditional college students continue to transform into non-traditional student workers insisting on advanced college degrees without significant student loan debt or long-term commitments. The discussion begins with a description of the “first wave” including a review of historical foundations of teaching starting with the guided nature of pedagogy. The “second wave” shifts towards the practice of andragogy. The “third wave” represents advances in adult learning theory introducing dominating perspectives in transformative and transformational learning. However, degrees on demand are becoming the fourth wave in the evolution of higher education. The new millennium represents a new era of student customers, and measurement of student customer satisfaction. The higher education industry is no longer student learner centered but customer service driven. The student customer phenomenon is here!

### **PEDAGOGY AND THE FIRST WAVE**

By the most basic definition, teaching is an established doctrine by which educators, through prearranged action, exercises his or her will, experiences, and expertise over another individual for the purpose of instruction and training (Compayré, 1900). Philosophical arguments by Socrates (Davidson, 1898), Aristotle (Payne, 1886), Plato (Davies & Vaughan, 1852), and later John Frederick Herbart (Herbart & De Garmo, 1913), suggests the purpose of education includes the ability to teach new skills, enhance self-awareness, and to develop problem-solving and critical thinking skills. Methods of teaching, during the early origins of educational curriculum development, would consist of three categories,

including intellectual education, moral education, and physical education (Compayré, 1900) known as pedagogy.

Through the centuries, the basic premise of pedagogy remained the same within secondary and higher education systems around the world (Hailmann, 1874). Curriculum development continued to focus on the intellectual education, moral education, and physical education of the learner based on the period of history. The seventeenth century is the first major challenge to pedagogy, whereas modern humanity experienced significant cultural shifts, which include a successful challenge to the Spanish supremacy, the Thirty Year's War in Germany, major challenges to monarch rule in England and France, and revolutions in the Netherlands. These major cultural shifts significantly influenced pedagogy by adding a new element called realism.

### **PEDAGOGY AND REALISM**

Integration of realism into the pedagogy model encouraged educators to consider natural phenomenon occurring within individuals, social establishments and educational curriculum rather than primarily focusing on literature and moral educational doctrines (Cordasco, 1976). Realism allowed teachers and learners to explore individual thought and challenge traditional institutional barriers. Additional influences of realism on education curriculums, involving church and state, supported individual exploration of science and government (Graves, 1914). Realism provides a new thought process of idealism with an attempt to reconcile the past with the future.

### **THE NEW THOUGHT PROCESS OF IDEALISM**

During the Roman era, the average age of an individual was 25. However, increasing human longevity indicates men and women are living until the age of 70 suggesting traditional learners include persons from older age groups. Historically, the definition of a learner was a young child attending secondary school while young adults advanced to university educational systems. By the twentieth century, the average age of an individual was 70 years, suggesting increases in the age of the traditional learner. As adult learners began to enter the university educational system, to enhance their knowledge or desire for different careers, the original pedagogy educational model did not consider the adult learner's maturity, experience, and ability for self-direction versus the immature, dependent characteristics of the traditional younger learner (Lippitt, 1969). In response to the deficiencies in pedagogy to meet the needs of adult learners, andragogy represented the second wave in the evolution of a new adult learning theory. As realism and idealism become an important part of pedagogy, characteristics of the traditional learner began to shift.

### **ANDRAGOGY THEORY**

Andragogy theory was an attempt to expand well-established educational theories to address modern educational demands, for the emerging population of adult learners. Alexander Kapp, a grammar school teacher, first introduced the beginnings of andragogy theory in Germany in 1833, and within a few years, there was significant opposition from a well-known German philosopher, Johan Friedrich Herbart (Knowles, 1978). Herbart was responsible for preventing the emergence of andragogy, as a challenge to pedagogy, for nearly a hundred years.

However, thoughts about andragogy emerged again in 1921. A German educator, Eugen Rosenstock, argued adult learners required different instructional techniques by stating, "It is not enough to translate the insights of education theory [pedagogy] to the situation of adults...the teachers should be professionals who could cooperate with the pupils" (Knowles, 1978, p. 19). Rosenstock's' proposal for a shift in how educators interact with adult learners intrigued many social scientists, but the theory of andragogy did not obtain acceptance and eventually faded away. Discussions regarding andragogy did not occur again until 1951, when a Swiss psychiatrist, Heinrich Hanselmann, wrote *Andragogy: Nature, Possibilities, and Boundaries of Adult Education*.

A proposition by Hanselmann suggested adult education should include emotional development as well as instructional development, whereas the focus of instruction involves the process of critical thinking and the ability to control emotions (Hanselmann, 1951). Hanselmann's argument about andragogy allowed educators and theorists to consider possibilities for enhancing adult learning. During the next decade after publishing Hanselmann's book, debates regarding andragogy became more popular in England, France, Venezuela, and Canada, with an offer of the first Bachelor of Andragogy degree occurring in Montreal (Knowles, 1978). Andragogy slowly became popular in the United States from 1951 to 1975. Malcolm Knowles was the first theorist to introduce andragogy as a viable adult learning theory in the United States when he authored *The Modern Practice of Adult Education: Andragogy versus Pedagogy*.

Significant influences from the educational models implemented in England, France, Venezuela, and Canada, supported propositions by Knowles that traditional pedagogy consists of four major assumptions, including concepts of the learner, roles of the learners' experience, readiness to learn, and orientation of the learner (Knowles, 1970). Within the traditional pedagogy model, the learner is dependent on educators. Expectations for educators include accepting responsibility for instructional material in the learning environment. The experience of learners, within a pedagogical framework, provides minimal value. Learning occurs at the same pace as their peers, entrance into the educational system directed by society, and learners view education as an expected process with skills learned to be used later in life (Knowles, 1970). Knowles argued that for adult learners, the pedagogy based learning model might not meet the needs of adult learners and the andragogy model might be a more effective alternative. Four major assumptions of the pedagogy model support the evolution of adult learners from learner dependency to self-directedness. Adult learners gain experience and seek an educational process that incorporates those experiences, learners arrive with attitudes suggesting they are ready to learn, and adults have a desire to learn new skills, and view education as a way to achieve full potential in life (Knowles, 1970). Knowles claimed andragogy could expand into a new educational theory to meet the specific educational demands of adult learners, which is the adult learning theory.

## **ADULT LEARNING THEORY**

Knowles theorized that to meet the educational demands of adult learners; a new theory should be developed and implemented. This new approach to adult learning, the adult learning theory, should help adult learners develop new skills, enhance self-awareness, and to develop problem-solving and critical thinking skills. The foundation of the educational experience should support the idea adults may benefit from "early success experiences that will help build positive self-concepts as learners" (Knowles, 1970, p. 46), and the definition of success is different for adult learners than younger learners. To achieve adult learner success, educational curriculums includes the following principals: learning climate, diagnosis of needs, the planning process, conducting learning experiences, and evaluation of learning (Knowles, 1970).

Knowles argued the learning climate should form two categories, including physical space and psychological climate (Knowles, 1970). The physical space should be favorable for adult learning by providing an adult like atmosphere where classrooms are similar to meeting rooms. Informal arrangements encourage adults to feel comfortable interacting with their cohorts, while nurturing an atmosphere of acceptance, respect, and "freedom of expression without fear of punishment and ridicule" (Knowles, 1970, p. 47). Unlike learning environments consistent with the pedagogy model, adult learners should self-diagnose learning needs. It would be beneficial to identify competencies and work with instructors to bridge learning deficiencies using educational objectives (Knowles, 1970). By allowing students to identify their competencies and learning opportunities, learners become part of the educational planning process. Knowles encouraged support for involving learners in educational planning since "human beings tend to feel committed to a decision (or activity) to the extent that they have patriated in making it (or planning it)" (Knowles, 1970, p. 48).

Conducting learning experiences is a vital role within the adult learning model, as learners introduce life experiences into the educational environment and learn from each other. Educational instructors act as

a resource person, technician, and a catalyst for discussion and students and instructors share the traditional teaching role (Knowles, 1970). Lastly, unlike traditional evaluation of learning, adult learners may benefit from self-evaluation, rather than have another adult judge performance. Knowles argued traditional grading educational practices within the adult learning climate can lead to the adult feeling childlike, disrespected, and forms a dependency on both the instructor and the desire to focus on the grade rather than the learning experience (Knowles, 1970).

Knowles continued to discuss the adult learning theory through a series of publications by suggesting the adult learner is a neglected species, and higher education should change to accommodate the unique needs of adult learners. He emphasized adult learning educational models should be changed to allow students to be directly involved in the course objectives and deliverables. Higher education institutions began to experiment with the implementation of andragogy in the course development exhibited student success and engagement (Kerwin, 1981; Murray, 1982; Closson, 1996). Evolutions of theories occur over time and strengthen, transform or create new theories to accommodate the needs of a changing society and educational curriculum.

### **THIRD WAVE OF ADULT EDUCATION: TRANSFORMATIVE AND TRANSFORMATIONAL LEARNING**

Transformative emerges as one of the key words encouraging consideration of new thoughts about adult learning and adult learning theory. Transformative learning became popular in the early 1980's with Jack Mezirow, Emeritus Professor of Adult and Continuing Education at Teachers College, Columbia University. Development of Mezirow's transformative learning theory represents the third wave of adult education. The theory of transformative learning (Mezirow, 1981; Mezirow, 1990; Mezirow, 1991; Mezirow, 1995; Mezirow, 2000; Mezirow, 2003; Mezirow, 2009; Mezirow, 2012) encouraged a shift in perspective when describing diverse adult learners. According to Wang and Cranton (2001) "this theory is capable of explaining how adult learners make sense or meaning of their experiences, hence perspective transformation, which is the heart and soul of this very popular theory in the field" (p.60). Primary assumptions of Mezirow's theory include the need for adults to understand "how to negotiate and act upon individual purpose, values, feelings and meanings rather than those assimilated from others. An individual goal is to gain greater control over all lives as socially responsible clear thinking decision makers" (Mezirow, 2000, p.8). Transformative learning theory suggests socialization and acculturation in childhood associated with influence from family, teachers, and significant relationships provides a foundation for determining what is rational in a world that can appear irrational (Wang & Cranton, 2011). "A person's frame of reference or habitual ways of thinking, feeling and behaving are influenced by underlying cultural, political, social, educational, and economic assumptions about the world that become an expression of a particular point of view with the passage of time" (Wang & Cranton, 2011, p.59). As an individual encounters new experiences there are challenges to existing frames of reference (Wang & Cranton, 2011). Criticisms of Mezirow's theory suggest it is too rational and there is excessive emphasis on the individual. Transformative theory does not address emotions, imagination, and social change. However, Mezirow (2000) insists transformative learning theory is a theory in progress.

Since the 1990's Taylor, Cranton & Associates revealed 15 years of published materials and presentations in the form of articles, books, and conference papers related to transformative learning. The increase in diverse publications associated with the subject of transformative learning suggests a shift in attention to an alternative perspective of adult learning theory. Scholarly writers made significant connections between transformative learning and education (Cranton & Wright, 2008), transformative learning and pedagogy (Lysaker & Furuness, 2011), and transformative learning and business ethics (Tello, Swanson, Floyd, Caldwell, 2013). Additional evidence of shifting perspectives in professional literature continued to occur with the topic of transformational learning.

### **TRANSFORMATIONAL LEARNING**

Various scholars including Mezirow (1995), Cunningham (1998), Brookfield (2000), and Ellsworth (2005) provide diverse definitions for transformational learning. Assumptions associated with

transformational learning theory suggests adults demonstrate higher levels of commitment when they believe that training goals are important and adults are in control of the learning method (Mezirow, 2000). Support from peers, and persons in leadership positions are two components, in transformational learning theory, that contribute to the success of adult learning (Mezirow, 2000). There is recognition, in transformational learning theory, for adult learning goals resulting in improved performance at individual and group levels (Mezirow, 2000). Cunningham provides an additional perspective that suggests, “Through transformational learning, adults develop an “alternative map of reality, grounded by a political standpoint” (Cunningham, 1998, p. 23). Brookfield summarizes the meaning of transformational learning by stating “in general, transformational learning theory refers to learners developing more open and inclusive worldviews and recognizing how “uncritically accepted and unjust dominant ideologies are evident in everyday situations” (Brookfield, 2000, p. 36). Ellsworth (2005) encourages a focus on transformational learning with firm connections in everyday life experiences. Adult learners engage in informal spaces of learning. Descriptions of transformational learning encourage visions of the learning process and as incomplete self-development that is constantly changing.

However, despite the dominance of transformative and transformational learning theories Merriam (2008) suggests changes continue to evolve from the individual learner’s perspective to multidimensional perspectives. “Adult learning research and theory building are expanding to include more than just an individual, cognitive understanding of learning” (Merriam, 2008, p.97). It appears adult learning theory is transforming into a patchwork quilt of diversity. The demand for a non-traditional adult learning experience is supporting the expansion of non-traditional business and marketing of higher education. These transformations are contributing to a fourth wave of education. The student customer is the current representation of the non-traditional consumer.

#### **FOURTH WAVE OF EDUCATION: STUDENT CUSTOMER**

Demands for adult education represent a billion dollar industry in the United States. Competition for the adult education business continues to expand among community colleges, trade schools, private training consultants, the corporate world and proprietary business (Braverman, 2013; Hoskins, 2011; Shinagel, 2012). A growing target market of non-traditional consumers consists of women, career changers driven by job dissatisfaction, and current employees who are encountering changes in requirements by employers seeking higher levels of education to achieve higher levels of competency in the workforce (U S Department of Education, 2002). Additional trends within the adult education arena indicate transformations from descriptions as teachers to facilitators, mentors, or coaches who have the ability to manage diverse learning experiences for an adult population. Considering these significant changes, observations in the professional literature suggests thoughts of reframing adult learning theories and characteristics of non-traditional students.

#### **TRANSFORMING ADULT LEARNING PERSPECTIVES**

Initial origins of nontraditional students consisted of returning military service veterans. The GI Bill, provided access to the college and university experience for a significant number of veterans towards the end of World War II and the Korean Conflict (Ogren, 2003). The 1970’s and 1980’s revealed a non-traditional movement towards unique perspectives of adult learning including andragogy and self-directed learning. In the 1990’s a shift towards transformative learning encouraged new thoughts for adult learning theory to continue evolving for the next ten years. Recent updates indicates emergence of additional theoretical perspectives suggesting perceptions of students as customers and according to Newman (2014) “transformative learning theory was the dominant discourse in the academic world of adult education by 2009” (p. 346). In addition, perspectives associated with transformational learning also became a prominent contemporary adult learning theory Mezirow (2001). Shifts in the professional literature and topics at professional conferences continue to influence previous thoughts about adult learning.

Characteristics of adult learning include various contexts, where learning takes place in the workplace evolves as a multidimensional phenomenon, not just a cognitive activity (Merriam, 2008). Recommendations for understanding adult learning involve consideration of historical and sociocultural

contexts. The workplace, social movements, and non-Western cultures are forms of context that expand thinking beyond andragogy and focus on the individual learner (Merriam, 2008). A significant shift suggests a different approach to adult learning that does not focus on understanding adult learning from the individual learner's perspective. A contemporary approach is to consider the adult learner as part of diverse contexts including home environment, work environment, or sociocultural community including middle-class Americans (Merriam, 2008). This evolution of thought encourages consideration of the adult learning process as a connection to a unique context resulting in a systemic perspective of learning in adulthood. Currently, the journey continues towards exploring the context associated with the traditional student decline.

### **THE TRADITIONAL STUDENT DECLINE**

Traditional is not an accurate description of the majority of students who attend colleges and higher education institutions in the United States. Recent data included in reports by The U.S. Department of Education (2002) and American Council on Education indicates a decline in the traditional description of students. According to Carreiro & Kapitulik (2010) "historically, there is an assumption that traditional students enroll as a full-time college or university student shortly after graduating high school, rely on their family for financial support, work part-time or not at all, and have no dependents of their own" (p. 248). However, recent data from an advisory committee on student financial assistance 2010 report, *The Rising Price of Inequality (RPI)*, indicating, "substantial enrollment shifts triggered by family financial concerns are moving initial enrollment of qualified high school graduates away from four-year colleges." (p.1) Changes in the behaviors of traditional students are significant because additional research suggests external factors impact students who are at the beginning of their college experience determine levels of persistence and ability to complete a degree. Results from the RPI project highlight the decreasing number of "more than 3 million bachelor's degrees from 2000 to 2009 because of financial barriers" (p.1). Data from The National Center for Education Statistics (2002) indicates, "a small number of college and university students, just 27%, met all of the criteria that describes a "traditional student" in academic year 1999–2000" (p.1). "Statistics indicate that a significant number of undergraduates are employed, financially independent, parents, who delay enrollment" (Carreiro & Kapitulik, 2010, p. 235.). Non-traditional students encounter significant challenges and unique obstacles on their journeys toward a degree. The ability to balance school, full-time employment, childcare, and diverse non-academic responsibilities create hard choices for elevating academic work to a higher level of priority. According to the criteria used by the US Department of Education, three out of four college students would be consistent with the description of non-traditional (US Department. of Education, 2002). There appears to be a significant shift in the current higher education context. The traditional undergraduate is the exception rather than the rule (US Department of Education, 2002). The rise of the non-traditional student is evident in three waves from the 1930's to the twenty-first century. However, additional descriptions continue that include other types of new students in higher education who also represent the fourth wave.

### **THE NEW STUDENTS IN HIGHER EDUCATION**

Significant events included large numbers of non-traditional students appearing on college campuses. "The impact of this category of students increased to elevations approaching unprecedented levels. Higher education scholars gave the 1970s' – 1980s non-traditional students the label of the new students in higher education" (Falk & Blaylock, 2010, p.21). The new students in higher education usually share the same characteristics, which include being older than the typical college student, classified as part-time, not financially dependent on parents, work full-time while enrolled, and may have dependents (National Center for Education Statistics, 2002). Nontraditional students also request course schedules during evening hours or weekends, seek "student-friendly" course flexibility if job transfers occur, seek tuition discounts because of minimal use of campus services, and are focused upon what their program will do to establish them in a career to enhance their path along a career they have already chosen to pursue (Falk & Blaylock, 2010).

## **NON-TRADITIONAL NEWER STUDENTS**

In the 1990s, the transformation continues with the emergence of “nontraditional newer students” (Falk & Blaylock, 2010, p.22). This group of unique adult learners will continue to emerge in the higher learning market in increasing numbers. Newer students will demonstrate their significance by influencing the diversity and service delivery on college campuses by sharing several characteristics. These characteristics include often work minimum wage jobs; and do not have access to employer-sponsored employee tuition assistance programs, frequently have meager financial resources, and typically have extensive needs for remedial/developmental education (English language proficiency, writing skills, reading skills, study skills, math competency, etc.) in multiple areas, and (Falk & Blaylock, 2010). A common thread among the different types of non-traditional students includes diverse obstacles and challenges while pursuing a degree in higher education resulting in abilities to “balance school, full-time employment, childcare, and other non-academic responsibilities” (Carreiro & Kapitulik, 2010, p. 235). However, additional considerations include exhibition of different behaviors by non-traditional students are consistent with the behavior of customers.

## **STUDENTS AS CUSTOMERS**

Classifying a student as a customer is a relatively new term used in higher education. Changes in demographics, needs, and affordability of college through grants, scholarships, and financial aid; the typical higher education student is no longer young, unemployed, and single (Rinnander, 1977). Instead, the college classroom is a mix of ages, experience, life-stages, and different educational expectations. College classrooms have become a marriage between pedagogy and andragogy and sometimes instructors assume the role of marriage counselor. As marriage counselors, re-framing the focus includes perceiving education as a service, education as a commodity, and education as a corporation as modern methods of attracting and retaining new non-traditional students.

## **EDUCATION: AS A SERVICE**

A customer of any product or service views the transaction of buying a good or service as a fulfillment of a need or want. The level of service a customer receives when the transaction occurs begins to form a loyalty bond with the seller. Strong loyalty bonds increases the probability customers may repeat business with the seller, higher demand on service quality, and service expectations from diverse customers. There is a connection between the perception of customers and customer service expectations when product value is relative to product price, and product value and product price are both relative to customer service (Hallowell, 1996).

Modern trends indicate sellers of all types of products and services focus on not only product and price, but also the customer service experience. A current debate suggests higher education is consistent with the classic definition of service considering delivery of a product and assignment of value by the customer. Higher education is a process that produces a relatively intangible product, providing environments for concurrent consumption of knowledge, and teaching engage consumers in the purchase process to gain the most value (Schneider, Hanges, Goldstein, & Braverman, 1994). However, a significant connection includes perception of value and level of satisfaction.

Measuring student satisfaction has become so important in higher education; the majority of higher educational institutions use some type of student satisfaction tool to determine overall student satisfaction. Diverse satisfaction measurement tools may consist of brief student surveys using Likert scales, quantitative surveys, or qualitative surveys. Additional measurements focuses on student experiences including financial aid, student services, academic counselors, instructor knowledge, classroom engagement, and course relevance to current or future career goals (Gruber, Fuß, Voss, & Gläser-Zikuda, 2010). Educational services also contain educational commodities.

## **EDUCATION: A COMMODITY**

Teaching, as a commodity, relies on the ability to organize, package and sell academic research to increase profits of the university. The strategic ability to organize education products and degree

programs fulfil student and customer needs and desires (Kauppinen, 2014). The main goal of education is to meet demands of the marketplace by producing students with the knowledge and skills, which allow graduates to contribute to society (Nica, 2014). However, education is shifting from a traditional foundation of learning involving the ability to teach new skills, enhance self-awareness, and develop problem-solving and critical thinking skills, in combination with financial rewards for a student's investment. For example, many higher education institutions compare the cost of obtaining a Bachelor's Degree or a Master's Degree with expectations of increases in life-long earnings to justify investment in the degree program. Students determine if the completing the degree program provides the desired return on the investment at a particular college or university. The next stage of the student analysis is to compare costs to determine the appropriate return on investment.

This return on investment is the basis for a capitalistic and commodity driven society. Marx argued a commodity is something we need or want in which we currently do not possess and is sold in the marketplace for a value determined by supply and demand (Marx, 1906). Considering this perception of a commodity the value of an education is market driven. Employers often advertise for open positions within the organization that require a Bachelor's or Master's degree while adjusting salaries consistent with levels of education and accumulation of work experience. Because of this new type of education commodity transaction, academic capitalism is becoming the new business model for many higher education institutions. Academic capitalism is a shift that is occurring in higher educational institutions to meet the demands of a new economy by operating more like a corporation. The focus on price, product, place, promotion, and profit provides a product and service that meets the consumer needs and wants of a student customer (Slaughter & Rhoades, 2004; Kauppinen, 2014). However, competition in the marketplace is fierce and education as a corporation is the current model for sustaining organizational change.

### **EDUCATION: AS A CORPORATION**

Similar to nearly all corporations, competition is what drives all innovation, new product or service development, delivery of services, and promotion, and price. Higher education operates similar to a traditional corporation, but they compete for students, faculty, and funding to sustain their daily operations and improve their academic ranking among their peers (Pak, 2013). As higher education institutions receive less money from traditional sources, state and local governments and endowment grants, the competition for students has significantly increased, resulting in an increase in marketing, pricing, and placement strategies among many higher education institutions (Burnett & Collins, 2010).

A similarity within many corporations includes marketing the organization's products or a service to attract or retain new customers is crucial to future success. Higher education is not immune to effective strategies, and must employ these strategies in ways to attract the student customer to achieve growth and sustainability of the organization. Higher education is becoming one of the fastest growing businesses worldwide and is accounting for nearly \$65-billion in annual revenue and approximately three percent of global services (Wu & Naidoo, 2011). As the higher education marketplace continues to grow, the competition for students and aggressive marketing strategies by higher education institutions may also increase, resulting in new cost-benefit message delivery strategies.

With the deployment of new marketing and educational strategies to attract and retain new students, higher education institutions may use a variety of student satisfaction surveys to identify the positive and negative student experience including strengths, weaknesses, and opportunities. Comparisons with traditional non-educational organizations suggest these surveys would help identify quality of products and services. In higher education, since the product and service delivery is not the same as a traditional non-educational organization, simply adapting non-higher education type surveys to identify student experience may not produce the same desired outcomes. Instead, higher education, student satisfaction, survey questions should focus on the difference between what the student expected to receive from his or her experience with the university and what was actually experienced (Voss, Gruber, & Reppel, 2010).

One of the major flaws of using student satisfaction surveys in higher education is the universal single definition of quality (Voss, Gruber, & Reppel, 2010; Voss, 2009). Higher education marketing strategies

and universal student satisfaction surveys allow prospective and even current students, to become more aware of higher education opportunities and other competitors. Similar to any other corporation competing for the consumer's attention in a saturated or hyper-competitive industry, with many choices, may require higher education institutions to develop more creative marketing including diverse degree programs. Clear reasons why their degree programs are faster, easier, and more cost-effective than the competing institutions would be necessary.

The new normal for the American economy continues to reveal consumer purchasing for instant gratification. Popular trends continue for immediate access to news, social media, and entertainment. Obtaining a smart phone, smart phone applications, high-speed internet service, online shopping, online banking, ability to pay bills online and access to websites that provide multiple price and product comparisons drive formation of bundled services to offer consumers. Higher education institutions must become more "relevant" by addressing the needs of the new student customer. Student customers are seeking connections between educational products, services, and valuable learning experiences that provide the best advantages for competing and advancing in the workplace. Therefore, higher education business models may benefit from an evolutionary shift towards providing services to student customers by developing a new learning model consistent with the demands of student demographics that have already become part of the fourth wave of education.

## CONCLUSION

Life on demand is the current standard in American culture that fuels the need to accommodate non-traditional lifestyles. The significant influence of life on demand suggests a transformation in the population of non-traditional student workers obtaining advanced college degrees. The purpose of this discussion was to provide an overview and description of the "first wave" including a review of historical foundations of teaching that starts with the guided nature of pedagogy, the "second wave" shifting toward andragogy, and the "third wave" and advances in adult learning theory introducing dominating perspectives in transformative and transformational learning. However, degrees on demand are becoming the fourth wave in the evolution of higher education.

The authors of this article encourage recognition of a significant shift occurring in higher education toward redefining nontraditional students whose behaviors are consistent with customers. This growing phenomenon suggests the need for students, faculty, and staff who are part of higher education institutions to transform the existing educational culture, to ensure the ability to attract and retain students. Confirmation of this shift requires future research including qualitative and quantitative methodologies that include students and instructors. The potential development of scholarly and practical models will assist educators, students, and business leaders in higher education to develop degree programs that meet the challenges of a global economy, changing demographics in the workplace, and advances in technology. Consequently, additional research may confirm that some type of shift is occurring in higher education and the education industry is no longer student learner centered but student customer driven.

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