Exploring Heutagogy - The Digital Twist in Self-determined Learning and Education

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Abstract:
Heutagogy is a term that refers to a **self-determined learning model** where learners take an active role in their own learning. Unlike pedagogy (teacher-led learning) and andragogy (adult learning), heutagogy places a significant emphasis on the learner's ability to plan, manage and evaluate their own learning experience. In a heutagogical approach, learners are considered capable and motivated to direct their own learning paths, encouraged to set their own learning goals, choose learning methods and assess their own progress. This approach assumes that learners are not just passive recipients of information but are actively engaged in constructing their knowledge and skills through the involvement and the use of various resources and **technologies** that empower learners to access information, collaborate with others and create their own learning experiences. It is particularly relevant in today's dynamic and information-rich environment, where the ability to learn independently is highly valuable thus standing in contrast to more traditional educational models where the teacher or instructor plays a more central role in directing the learning process. The term "heutagogy" was coined by **Stewart Hase** and **Chris Kenyon** in the early 2000s and has gained attention in discussions about innovative and **learner-centered approaches** to education. The implications of heutagogy are diverse and can impact various aspects of education and learning, some of which are treated in this article especially from the point of view of technology use to facilitate self-directed learning; online resources, collaborative tools and digital platforms can support learners in accessing information, connecting with others and creating their own learning environments.

Keywords: *heutagogy, technologies, self-determined, learner-centered, engaged.*

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In today's information-rich culture, the aptitude to learn autonomously and adaptively is paramount, it goes beyond the achievement of knowledge, it is aimed at fostering critical thinking, creativity, and problem-solving skills crucial for accomplishment in a rapidly progressing world. Learning is now perceived, especially after the pandemic period, as a multifaceted procedure necessitating the student to move further than simply acquiring information and abilities - it is not just repetition and modelling, it needs novel networks and more creative insights to be completed. Heutagogy is a term that refers to an erudition theory and instructive practice that places stress on learner self-government and self-determined education moreover "To be an agent is to intentionally make things happen by one's actions. Agency embodies the endowments, belief systems, self-regulatory capabilities and distributed structures and functions through which personal influence is exercised, rather than residing as a discrete entity in a particular place." (Bandura, 2023:2).

The notion was first presented by Stewart Hase and Chris Kenyon in 2000, while the term is somewhat new, the concepts behind it has origins in preceding instructive philosophies and models, such as constructivism and experiential education. Heutagogy trials old-fashioned ideas of educational leadership and pedagogy allowing teachers to converse to more facilitative roles, such as guiding learners and providing support. "The essence of heutagogy is that in some learning situations, the focus should be on what and how the learner wants to learn, not on what is to be taught. Hence this approach is very different from the more formal and traditional way of teaching people. In heutagogy the educational process changes from being one in which the learned person (teacher, tutor, lecturer) pours information into the heads of learners, to one in which the learner chooses what is to be learned and even how they might learn it. It represents a change from teacher – centered learning to learner – centred learning." (Hase, Kenyon, 2000:7). Derived from the **Greek word heutagogia**, this concept means "self-directed learning" or "self-determined learning" and proposes a didactic theory and approach that focuses on self-directed knowledge, compared to pedagogy (teacher-directed education) and andragogy (adult-directed education), thus placing a strong prominence on learners taking control of their own educational process. It is seen by its advocates as particularly suited to the demands of the 21st century, where rapid transformation and the need for incessant erudition are prominent and aligned with the idea that learners need to be equipped with the skills to navigate an ever-evolving knowledge landscape, independently.

Heutagogy places a strong accent on **learners' independence** who are encouraged to take accountability for their own education, set their own goals, determine their own learning route and foster a sense of individuality and self-direction. "From a social constructivist perspective, the learner builds his knowledge through active interaction with his physical and social environment." (Scorțan, 2021:143). It promotes **flexibility** and **elasticity** in learning, adjusting to different learning environments, use various resources and develop the skills needed to learn independently, particularly relevant in the context of information and technology. **Self-determined learning,** as the name says, challenges customary notions of educational leadership and pedagogy permitting teachers to transition to more facilitative roles, guiding learners and providing sustenance rather than acting as the primary source of information. Applying heutagogy in education requires a modification in the outmoded roles of teachers and learners, meaning teachers should become facilitators or guides, providing support and resources while allowing learners to take the lead in their education, often seen as well-suited for

adult teaching and constant learning, where individuals are driven by personal and professional developmental goals. Although is not a one-size-fits-all method and its usefulness can depend on factors such as learner features, theme, subject matter and educational framework, the repercussions of heutagogy are varied and can influence various aspects of education and learning.

The **self-directed nature** of heutagogy emboldens critical thinking and problem-solving abilities making learners not just learn information by heart but energetically engage with it, inquiring conventions and making networks to real-world circumstances. When learners have more govern over their erudition process they may exercise more sophisticated levels of motivation and assignation to create "active and constructive learning that can be applied later in social, professional and cultural terms." (Lăpădat, Lăpădat, 2020a:142). The talent to choose themes of interest, set particular goals, and agree on learning methods can augment the general learning experience and permanent education. By developing the abilities to direct their own scholarship, furthermore because "it is the human nature itself to pursue the maximal outcome at the minimal amount of effort." (Bușu, 2022:98), individuals are better furnished to continue learning all through their lives, acclimatizing to new defies and acquiring new needed skills and awareness.

Self-directed learning - resources and approaches

Set explicit learning goals: one needs to outline what it is that she/he wants to achieve through self-directed learning and then institute specific, measurable, achievable, relevant, and time-bound **(SMART) goals** to guide the hard work.

Advance a learning/ strategy design: One needs to create an organized plan outlining what she/he requires to learn, how they will learn it, the time allowed for when they anticipate to achieve each momentous. For all these to be successful learners should break down larger goals into smaller, convenient tasks and "activities that are meant to encourage the student's creativity, critical thinking and communication skills." (Stoian, 2019a:131).

Find learning materials / resources: students should exploit a variety of interactive resources such as books, online courses, tutorials, podcasts, videos and forums, nevertheless choose resources that align to fit their own personal learning styles and goals.

Manage time productively: learners ought to allocate dedicated time for learning daily or weekly and stick to the schedule by eliminating inconsistencies and creating a favorable learning environment.

Rehearsal dynamic learning: the keenly engagement with the material is done by taking notes, briefing key points, asking questions and relating concepts through practice exercises or projects "in order to obtain better student outcomes" (Stoian, 2019b).

Pursue feedback and reflection: students should solicit feedback from peers, mentors, or instructors to measure the progress and identify areas for perfection, moreover reflect on their learning experiences and adjust their methodology as needed. "Students who account to have warm interactions with their peers and teachers also have the inclination to show better academic self-drive and engagement than students who lack this reciprocal affect." (Bărbuceanu, 2022: 185).

Stay driven: partners in the process of education need to find intrinsic motivation by connecting the learning goals to personal interests, passions or long-term aspirations nevertheless recognize and celebrate one's realizations and stay resilient in

the face of challenges. "Increase of motivation and enthusiasm of students and teachers through active involvement in the process of live communication, possibilities of language acquisition are increasing thanks to the cooperation, interaction and communication in learning language." (Chiriţescu, Păunescu, 2017:376).

Embrace inquisitiveness: learners must cultivate a curious mindset by exploring new topics, asking probing questions, seeking out diverse perspectives and furthermore be opened to experimenting with different learning techniques and styles.

Stay structured: heutagogical learners must stay organized to maintain clarity and focus, keep track of their progress, resources and notes using tools like digital or physical notebooks, spreadsheets or task management apps.

Constant appraise and adjust: students ought to regularly assess their learning goals, progress and strategies, adjust the learning approach based on what works best for them and receive feedback from the learning journey. "This result can be accomplished by personal and social awareness and proper emotional feedback in specific circumstances." (Buşu, 2020:205). By incorporating these strategies into the self-directed learning practice they can boost their effectiveness and achieve the desired learning objectives more efficiently. Assessment in heutagogical environments may need to shift from outmoded methods to more vigorous and personalized tactics that could focus on the process of learning, reflective practices and the ability to apply knowledge in real-world situations. Heutagogy frequently embroils **the use of technology** to assist self-directed learning: **online resources**, collaborative tools and **digital platforms** can provision learners in accessing information, emotionally linking with others and creating their own learning environments. "Emotions therefore accompany the students (…) and may interfere with learning or consolidate it." (Scorţan, 2022:146).

Technology integration

Collaboration and networking: Heutagogy often involves combined learning and networking allowing learners to connect with others and share related interests, creating groups of practice that outspread beyond customary classroom boundaries. Different cultural perceptions on education and individual learning styles may influence how heutagogical principles are applied and practiced. While heutagogy offers a favorable structure for learning in the 21st century, its efficacious carrying out requires cautious deliberation of the learning background, the needs and vulnerabilities of the learners and constant support for both educators and students. "In the universe of communication, there is practically a vulnerability of reception of the individual who perceives himself to be a unique and original snowflake." (Lăpădat, Lăpădat, 2020b:121). Technology can play a substantial role in supporting heutagogical approaches to learning, providing learners with admission to infinite amounts of information: online resources, e-books, educational websites and databases that empower them to explore topics of concern, autonomously.

Online learning platforms: learning management systems (LMS) and online course platforms propose a diversity of tools that provision self-directed learning from which learners can select when and where to study, access multimedia materials and interrelate with online groups and post pandemic "vulnerable groups" (Paraschivu, Cotuna, 2021:573). Social media platforms and online communities generate spaces for learners to link, share knowledge, and collaborate accordingly. These virtual communities can augment not only the social aspect of learning and provide opportunities for peer-to-peer learning but furthermore enhance "social well-being"

aimed to increase the resilience status of the communities." (Olimid, Olimid, 2022:91). Adaptive learning technologies use algorithms to shape learning practices based on individual evolvement and needs, allowing learners to focus on areas where they need perfection. Mobile devices enable learners to access educational content anytime, anywhere while mobile apps, podcasts and other moveable technologies support heutagogical learning by providing elasticity and availability. Online courses, webinars, and interactive simulations, in a variety of formats, offer miscellaneous learning experiences from which students and learners can select and engage with the content in a manner that suits their predilections and educational styles. Tools such as video conferencing, cooperative documents and virtual reality can facilitate collaborative learning proficiencies so that students can work together on projects, share ideas and contribute to a mutual consideration of a subject. Technology can make available tools for self-assessment, reflection and goal setting for learners to track their advancement, set intentions and reflect on their education journey. It's important to note that the effective integration of technology in heutagogical approaches requires thoughtful design and consideration of learners' needs, additionally, **digital literacy** becomes crucial as learners navigate online resources and engage with various technologies to support their self-directed education. "The present tense conditions the listeners to actively listen and be involved in the activity of learning in the present with a view of improving the future." (Chirițescu, Păunescu, 2021:102)

Several **AI tools** can be leveraged to augment heutagogical learning practices such as adaptive learning platforms:

Augmented Reality AR for learning: integrates **AR** to create immersive learning experiences allowing learners to discover virtual surroundings.

Brightspace insights: provides learning analytics to track students' advancement, ascertain areas of strength and weakness and provide insights to both learners and educators.

Carnegie learning: utilizes **AI** to provide tailored tutoring in math, acclimating to individual learner needs and providing real time feedback.

Duolingo: language learning app that uses **AI driven chatbots** to engage learners in interactive dialogues, providing instant feedback.

Edmondo: offers a platform for joint learning, allowing students to bond, share resources and work on projects together.

Knewton: an adaptive learning platform that personalizes learning resources based on specific student performances and preferences.

Natural Language Processing NLP: IBM Watson Tutor Incorporates NPL to create a conversational interface for tutoring, adapting to students' responses and guiding them through the learning process.

Project based learning platforms: combine elements of gammification with project-based education, encouraging partnership, permitting students to take possession of their projects.

Voice assistants in education: **Alexa for education**, incorporated voice activated **AI** to assist with information recovery, language learning, and educational Q&A.

Chatbots: when applying AI tools for heutagogical learning it is fundamental to reflect on the unique needs and predilections of learners, to endow learners to take control of their education accordingly. AI tools should be designed to maintain and enrich self-directed learning journeys by assimilating new concepts such as **chatbots**

into a heutagogical learning setting. A chatbot is a computer software program that mimics and processes human dialogue - a conversational agent - (either written or spoken), allowing individuals to interconnect with digital devices. A chatbot is designed to simulate dialogue with human users, especially over the internet. These programs are typically powered by artificial intelligence **(AI) algorithms** that allow them to comprehend and reply to user interrogations or instructions in natural language. A chatbot, a computerized program that linkages with learners like a human would, can offer personalized supervision by considering the learners' preferences, goals and past exchanges, can provide recommendations for learning resources, endorse personalized study strategies and offer leadership on setting attainable goals and intentions. Learners can obtain immediate feedback on their work and progress through exchanges with the chatbot facilitating them to understand their strengths and areas for enhancement in real-time, nurturing a continuous feedback circle. The chatbot can recommend applicable learning materials based on the learner's interests, existing knowledge level and learning inclinations, including articles, videos, books and other assets that align with the learner's objectives in order to "…boost personal, social and professional growth in his future career and social interaction within the academic environment or imminent job." (Bărbuceanu, 2019:46). Chatbots are used in countless solicitations, such as client service, information recovery and they can range from modest rule-based systems to erudite AI models capable of understanding situations and engaging in more complex discussions. Chatbots in education are renovating the way students learn and interrelate with course materials. These intelligent systems can support a diversity of tasks, including responding questions, providing feedback, distributing personalized learning proficiencies and even easing discussions and group teamwork.

Learners can use the **Socratic, TutorAI** chatbot to ask questions and seek elucidation on concepts they find thought-provoking and the program can deliver explanations, examples and supplementary resources to aid in understanding and prompt learners to reflect on their learning experiences. By asking questions about what they've learned, their trials and their objectives, the chatbot can aid learners advance **metacognitive skills** and become more self-aware about their learning process. Chatbots assist learners in setting genuine goals, breaking them down into convenient tasks and creating a span for achieving those goals henceforth endorsing a sense of ownership and accountability in the education process. The program can enable concerted learning experiences by connecting learners with analogous interests or goals, suggest study groups, argument forums or collaborative projects, promoting a sense of community among self-directed learners. For language learners, a chatbot can provide conversational rehearsal, can involve in dialogues, asses language errors, provide vocabulary and grammar guidelines, creating an overall interactive language learning experience. The chatbot can offer motivational posts, positive fortification and prompts to keep learners on track. Additionally, the chatbot is bendable and flexible to cater to the sundry learning styles and inclinations of individual learners in a heutagogical framework. Consistent updates and enhancements based on user feedback can boost the usefulness of the chatbot in supporting self-directed learning. Celebrating realizations, no matter how small, subsidizes to a positive learning experience.

"Heutagogy in underpinned by the assumptions of two key philosophies: humanism and constructivism. As mentioned above, the idea of the learner being central to the educational process is a humanistic concept." (Hase, Kenyon, 2000:21). Heutagogy symbolizes a transformative methodology to learning that enables

individuals to become self-directed, lifelong learners by assumption of principles of self-rule, critical reflection, teamwork and incessant learning, thus offering a pathway towards a more vigorous, adaptive and all-encompassing educational landscape. As educators and learners steer the densities of the 21st century and post pandemic period heutagogy positions itself as a guiding light of authorization, revealing the complete potential of learners to flourish in a speedily shifting world.

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