Pedagogy vs. Andragogy: A False Dichotomy?

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This article is not pointedly aimed at technology education, but it addresses an issue that is becoming increasingly germane to educators working with nontraditional students—a larger segment of the people we teach. **CI**

What is an adult learner? Much of the literature on adult learning indicates that teachers teach adults differently than pre-adults and that most of the contrasts are associated with teachers' perceptions of learner characteristics. An awareness and acceptance of our values and an understanding of our personal philosophies are very important before forming a working definition of what and who an adult learner is to us.

Age is the characteristic mentioned often when describing an adult learner. Most educators assume that it is easy to distinguish an adult learner from a younger learner – just look at the difference in years. But the difference goes beyond age and years. Think about the many possible concepts of an adult such as a dictionary's definition or biological, physiological, legal, social, psychological, spiritual, and moral definitions. These concepts include defining an adult as fully developed and mature, as someone who can reproduce him or herself, as someone who is responsible for his or her own actions, as someone who can legally vote, and as someone who exhibits behavior that indicates a sense of right and wrong.

The various concepts of an adult learner become even more confusing when we try to integrate them with our personal beliefs of what an adult learner should be. It is usually risky to to make generalizations about behavior based solely on age. Also, in reflecting on the many concepts of an adult, there are important individual questions we have to consider. What will we use to build the educational framework for our adult learners? What will we use to guide us in our actions in our treatment of adult learners? Whose concept of an adult learner will we use?

According to Davenport and Davenport (1985), the identification of what is unique about adult learning (in contrast to child or youth learning) has been a long-standing effort in adult education. They reasoned that if this difference could be identified, then the research territory of adult education could be based on these theoretical distinctions.

Before 1950, many educators assumed the same theories of learning and instruction worked for both adults and children. Since formal education in the United States has focused largely on those between ages 6 and 21, most research before the mid-1960s centered on people in these age groups. Many teachers of adults begin to question the validity of pedagogical assumptions in the early 1960s.

Pedagogical and Andragogical Models

The histories of pedagogy and andragogy are both interesting and complex. Pedagogy evolved in the monastic schools of Europe between the 7th and 12th centuries. The term is derived from the Greek words *paid*, meaning "child" and *agogus* meaning "leader of." Thus pedagogy literally means the art and science of teaching children (Knowles, 1973).

Pedagogical assumptions made about learning and learners were based on observations by the monks in teaching simple skills to children. These assumptions were further adopted and reinforced with the spread of elementary schools throughout Europe and North America in the 18th and 19th centuries. When educational psychologists started scientifically studying learning around the

turn of the 20th century, they limited their research mostly to the reactions of children and animals to systematic instruction. This reinforced the pedagogical model (Knowles, 1980).

In the early 1920s when adult education began to be organized systematically, the teachers of adults found some problems with the pedagogical model. One was that pedagogy was based on the premise that the purpose of education was the transmittal of knowledge and skills. Adult learners seemed to feel this was insufficient and frequently resisted teaching strategies that pedagogy prescribed, such as lectures, assigned readings, drills, quizzes, note memorizing, and examinations. Dropout rates were high. Teachers also noted that many of the assumptions about the characteristics of learners in the pedagogic model did not fit their adult students (Knowles, 1980).

The term *andragogy* was coined in 1833 by the German teacher Alexander Kapp, who used it to describe the educational theory of Plato (Nottingham Andragogy Group, 1983). A fellow German, John Frederick Herbert, disapproved of the term, and the term subsequently disappeared from use for almost a century. By 1921, the term had reappeared in Europe, and during the 1960s it was used extensively in France, Holland, and Yugoslavia (Davenport, 1987). Andragogy was first introduced to the United States in 1927 by Martha Anderson and Eduard Linderman, but they did not attempt to develop the concept (Davenport & Davenport, 1985). Lindeman did, however, emphasize a commitment to a self-directed, experiential, problem-solving approach to adult education (Davenport, 1987).

Knowles (1980) was exposed to the term *andragogy* from a Yugoslavian adult educator in the mid-1960s. His definition of andragogy was developed as a parallel to pedagogy. Andragogy is based on the Greek word *aner* with the stem *andra* meaning "man, not boy" or adult, and *agogus* meaning "leader of." Knowles defined the term as "the art and science of helping adults learn" in an effort to emphasize the differences between the education of adults and children (Davenport, 1987).

According to Knowles (1980), the goal of adult education should be self-actualization; thus, the learning process should involve the whole emotional, psychological, and intellectual being. The mission of adult educators is to assist adults to develop their full potential, and andragogy is the teaching methodology used to achieve this end. In Knowles' view, the teacher is a facilitator who aids adults to become self-directed learners (Darkenwald & Merriam, 1982).

Although Knowles' definition of andragogy focuses on the teacher's role, his andragogical theory is based on characteristics of the adult learner. His four assumptions are that as individuals mature (a) their self-concept moves from that of a dependent personality toward one of increasing self-directedness, (b) they accumulate a growing reservoir of experience that becomes a rich resource for learning and a broad base upon which they can relate new leanings, (c) their readiness to learn becomes increasingly more oriented to the developmental tasks of their social roles and not the product of biological development and academic pressure, and (d) their time perspective changes from one of future application of knowledge to one of immediate application, giving them a problem-centered rather than subject-centered orientation to learning (Darkenwald & Merriam, 1982; Davenport, 1987; Knowles, 1973, 1980).

According to Darkenwald and Merriam (1982), these assumptions epitomize much that is important about adult learning and development. The first two assumptions (that adults are independent beings and have forged their identities from unique personal experiences) are drawn from humanistic philosophy and psychology. The last two assumptions (dealing with an adult's readiness to learn) help us understand adult learning from a psychosocial development perspective. These assumptions, when combined with principles related to the learning process, can offer the adult educator an understanding of the interrelationship between adulthood and learning.

In order to further distinguish between the pedagogical and andragogical approaches to design and operate adult educational programs, Knowles (1973) compared his andragogical model of human resource development with that used by most traditional educators, which he called a *pedagogical* model.

The pedagogical model is a content model concerned with the transmitting of information and skills. For example, the teacher decides in advance what knowledge or skill needs to be transmitted, arranges this body of content into logical units, selects the most efficient means for transmitting this content (lectures, readings, lab exer-

cises, films, tapes, for example), and then develops a plan for presenting these units in some sequence.

By contrast, the andragogical model is a process concerned with providing procedures and resources for helping learners acquire information and skills. In this model, the teacher (facilitator, change-agent, consultant) prepares a set of procedures for involving the learners in a process that includes (a) establishing a climate conducive to learning, (b) creating a mechanism for mutual planning, (c) diagnosing the needs of learning, (d) formulating program objectives (content) that will satisfy these needs, (e) designing a pattern of learning experiences, (f) conducting these learning experiences with suitable techniques and materials, and (g) evaluating the learning outcomes and re-diagnosing learning needs.

Pedagogy versus Andragogy: The Debate

Although andragogy has become popular both within and outside adult education circles and andragogical approaches are commonly employed in adult education, nursing, social work, business, religion, agriculture, and even law. It has had its opponents as well as its proponents. Much of the controversy stems from a difference in philosophy, classification, and the underlying values attached to the term *adult education* (Davenport & Davenport, 1985).

Houle (1972) preferred to view education as a single fundamental human process and felt that even though there were differences between children and adults, the learning activities of men and women were essentially the same as those of boys and girls. He rejected andragogy as an organizing principle in adult education and perceived it as a technique. He was joined by London (1973) and Elias (1979) in questioning andragogy's theoretical status, general utility, and how it was different from progressive education applied to adults. They preferred to stress the oneness or unity in education. In 1980, Knowles retreated somewhat by stating:

> I am at the point now of seeing that andragogy is simply another model of assumptions about learners to be used alongside the pedagogical model of assumptions, thereby providing two alternative models for testing out the assumption as to their 'fit' with particular situations. Furthermore, the models are probably most useful when seen not as dichotomous but rather as two ends of a spectrum, with a realistic assumption in a given situation falling in between the two ends. (p. 43)

He also indicated that there were occasions when andragogy might be used with children and pedagogy with adults.

McKenzie (1979) defended andragogy on philosophical grounds declaring that "the existential differences between children and adults require a strategic differentiation of education practice" (p. 257).

After a review of the experimental literature comparing andragogical and pedagogical methods, Rachal (1994) concluded: "In general, the bulk of the experimental and quasi-experimental work done to date suggests an approximate equivalence between andragogical approaches and pedagogical ones on both achievement and learner satisfaction. Ultimately, practitioners will continue to employ methods that work for them" (p. 1).

Cross (1981) described Knowles' claim that andragogy could be viewed as a unified theory of adult education as "optimistic." Hartree (1984) found that Knowles' work presented three basic difficulties for adult educators: (a) confusion between whether his theory is one of teaching or one of learning, (b) confusion over the relationship he sees between adult and child learning, and (c) ambiguity as to whether he is dealing with theory or practice. She also questioned the soundness of the basic assumptions underlying the theory or practice of andragogy.

Mohring (1989) took issue with both andragogy and pedagogy. She contended that the terms *andragogy* (implying the education of adults) and *pedagogy* (meaning the education of children) are etymologically inaccurate. Although pedagogy is derived from *paid*, meaning "child," from antiquity it has also stood for education in general—without reference to learners' ages. Andragogy is derived from *aner*, meaning adult male and not adult of either sex, therefore excluding women. In view of efforts to purge English of sexist words, she proposed the use of a new term, *teliagogy*. Based on the Greek *teleios*, meaning "adult," it would include both sexes.

Resolutions or Alternatives?

As an alternative approach to the pedagogy-andragogy issue, Knudson (1980) proposed replacing both with the term *humanagogy* because it is pedagogy and andragogy combined. Unlike the separate terms of pedagogy and

andragogy, humanagogy represents the differences as well as the similarities that exist between both adults and children as learning human beings. It approaches human learning as a matter of degree, not kind. Humanagogy might be likened to a "holistic" approach to adult education because it does not throw away what adult educators already know about the way children learn and what they know about the way adults learn; rather, it takes this knowledge and puts it in perspective. Knudson (1980) believed that ignoring the principles of pedagogy from adult education excludes our childhood experiences. He also believed that the concept of humanagogy takes into account the development of the whole human being from birth to death. In presenting the humanagogy approach, Knudson reminded educators that both the pedagogical and andragogical approaches have something to offer. "Like the Chinese symbol of yin and yang, they are at the same time opposites and complements and equally necessary" (p. 8).

In view of the inherent problem associated with the terms *pedagogy* and *andragogy*, Rachal (1983) proposed self-directed and teacher-directed learning. He believed that, in addition to being more self-explanatory, these terms are not restricted to one particular clientele because they eliminate the child-adult issue. The voluntary nature of adult learning activities is one of the cornerstone assumptions of andragogy. Voluntarism, however, is measurable by degree. Employees attending in-service training may be a volunteer only in the most hollow sense of the word. The motivation may be there, but it may be more extrinsic than intrinsic. In relating voluntarism to the self-directed and teacher-directed approaches, the self-directed approach is clearly more appropriate to the highly motivated, preferably intrinsically motivated, learners. Lesser motivated learners may profit from a more teacher-directed approach.

Rachel (1983) noted that these two approaches are not neatly dichotomous and mutually exclusive. The teacher-directed approach would still require the instructor to follow a free exchange of ideas and to allow students to pursue personal interests (through papers, projects, or presentations) as long as they went along with the course objectives. In the self-directed approach, instructors would still set the general requirements for the course and serve as more than merely resource persons. They must also provide leadership and take primary responsibility for evaluation.

Kerka (1994) also addressed the notion of self-directed learning. She dispeled three myths associated with self-directed learning. The first is that adults are naturally self-directed, when, in reality, their capability for self-directed learning may vary widely. The second myth is that self-direction is an all-or-nothing concept. Again, instead of the extremes of the learner versus other direction, it is apparent a continuum exists. Adults have varying degrees of willingness or ability to assume personal responsibility for learning. These may include the degree of choice over goals, objectives, type of participation, content, method, and assessment. The third myth is that self-directed learning means learning in isolation. In truth, the essential dimension of self-directed learning may be psychological control that a learner can exert in any setting—solitary, informal, or traditional.

Davenport (1987) believed that adult education could survive quite nicely without andragogy, but that there is some merit in redefining the term, clarifying it conceptually, and testing it empirically. Because andragogy is such a "catchy" word having public relations value for adult education, Davenport (1987) believed it "simply begs for a second look." In his opinion, redefining andragogy could be as simple as returning to and broadening its original definition. Knowles' (1980) inconsistency in distinguishing pedagogy from andragogy is perceived as part of the problem.

The literal and original definition of pedagogy and andragogy also can allow for both teacher-centered and learner-centered activities. Both the child leader and the adult leader may be at different times directive and non-directive, authoritative and facilitative, etc. (Davenport, 1987).

Expanding these literal and original definitions of pedagogy and andragogy to the "art and science of teaching and facilitating the learning of children" or, in the case of andragogy, adults would also have an advantage. These definitions are consistent with the beliefs and research results of many authors who claim that selection of learning approaches has little to do with age and a lot to do with other variables such as learning style, content, goals of instruction-learning, and even gender (Davenport, 1987).

Davenport's (1987) third step, after acknowledging the public relations value of the word *andragogy* and returning to its original definition, would be to organize knowl-

edge and theory in a systematic fashion. Assumptions, including those of Knowles (1980), have to be placed in the form of a hypothesis and then tested. Only those that survive their trial would become part of the theory of andragogy. Then, andragogy theory would have genuine explanatory and predictive powers.

According to Davenport (1987), this approach would include many similarities between child and adult education and still provide a place for the discovery of differences. In addition to possessing significant public relations value, Davenport believed that "andragogy also has the potential of serving as a unifying framework for adult education if definitional problems can be worked out, and if old and new assumptions are rigorously tested before possible incorporation into a larger theory" (p. 159).

If the andragogy versus pedagogy debate is truly based on different philosophical perspectives of the world, it may never be resolved. Adult educators who adhere to an integrated worldview will reject andragogy and stress unity in education. Those who adhere to a differential worldview will accept andragogy and reject the all-inclusive orientation to education (Davenport & Davenport, 1985). Most important is that the visibility of andragogy has sharpened our awareness and understanding of adult learning.

A major key for educators is to be aware of their personal philosophies for working with adult learners. Zinn (1983) developed the Philosophy of Adult Education Inventory (PAEI) in order to assist adult educators in identifying their personal philosophy and to give them information about their beliefs. The inventory is self-administered, self-scored, and self-interpreted.[1]

This inventory provides a premier—a place for educators to explore their perceptions of learner characteristics. For example, if you find you are inspired by a humanistic philosophy, but your students need someone to clearly direct their learning process, then this may cause problems.

Many theorists believe the andragogy-pedagogy classification is not perfect, but they cannot agree on a viable alternative either. Polson (1993) asked the question: "Is the 'adult learner' a recognizable, single entity for whom there is one best way to teach, or for whom there is one best way to learn? No. There is no agreement in the literature as to what constitutes an adult learner." Perhaps, given the very nature of those engaged in educational research, the solution is not to find an answer, but to continue to ask acute questions!

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[1] Permission to reproduce and use the PAEI© may be obtained by contacting the author at Regis College, West 50th and Lowell Blvd., Denver, CO 80221-1099. Phone (303) 458-4088.

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