

## Articles

### THE METAMORPHOSES OF ANDRAGOGY

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#### *Abstract*

*Andragogy and adult education (frequently used synonymously) reflect the involvement of adults in learning. This article presents an overview of the origin and early usage of the term andragogy as it evolved in Europe and in North America. In doing so, a number of issues are identified, the varying uses of the term are described, and the influence of these historical developments on the theory, practice, and identity of present day adult education in Canada are emphasized. The article concludes by making a number of interpretive reflections on the implications this evolution and debate on the concept has for today's field of practice and search for identity.*

#### *Résumé*

*Les termes «éducation des adultes» et «andragogie», qui reflètent habituellement l'engagement des adultes face à leur propre apprentissage, sont souvent employés comme synonymes. Nous proposons ici un survol des origines et des premiers usages du terme «andragogie» en Europe et en Amérique du Nord. Après avoir identifié les principaux enjeux et décrit les divers usages du terme, nous aborderons l'influence de cette évolution sur la théorie, la pratique et l'identité des praticiens en éducation des adultes.*

Evolution of the concept *andragogy* is integral to understanding the development of adult education as a field of practice. In this article, the term *adult education* might have been used in place of *andragogy*, as historically and presently the terms frequently are used synonymously. *Andragogy* has

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<sup>1</sup> The title of this article parallels one on pedagogy written by Francine Best (1988).

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been selected for the title of this article because it illustrates the classical root of the development of adult education, and also provides a link between North America and Western Europe. In Canada, the graduate program in adult education at the University of Montreal has traditionally used the term *androgogie*.

Another reason for using the term andragogy stems from an underlying assumption within graduate programs in adult education in Canada: that graduates should have a basic appreciation and understanding of the development of ideas, theory, programs, and concepts relating to their chosen field of study and practice. For example, graduates should be familiar with such organizations as the Mechanics’ Institutes, the Women’s Institutes, the Workers’ Educational Association, the Antigonish Movement, the National Farm Radio Forum, as well as with such concepts as the social gospel, mathematics, lifelong learning, and community development. Being familiar with the evolution of andragogy is the foundation for professionalism in adult education.

This article uses andragogy as a vehicle to illustrate the issues which adult educators perceived and grappled with over the years, in defining their specialized field of practice and theory, which gives meaning to contemporary practice. The concepts we use are important to our professional history—for example, the use of andragogy by adult educators to distinguish their practice from pedagogy (the traditional education of children). Much of the struggle to develop an appropriate vocabulary and to understand the intentional learning of adults had been a philosophical as well as a methodological one, and therefore has generated debate among practitioners.

### **Historical Reflections**

The history of non-formal education, for children and adults, is as old as the history of human beings. Learning and education are synonymous with living, and people have always organized their learning in order to survive, to understand, and to create. *Education* as used here refers to organized or intentional learning.

#### ***Origin of the Concept and Terminology***

In the 1700s and into the 1800s, a number of forces and factors influenced the way in which learning was organized and also the content and location for

that learning. These factors included: the industrial revolution and the mobility of people from rural to urban areas, to work in factories and other non-traditional occupations; the increasing technological sophistication of navigation, war, and commerce; the number of private societies that were established to educate the masses of society, many of whom were illiterate (such as the Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge, the Society for Encouraging the Industrious Poor, and the Society for the Diffusion of Useful Knowledge). Various organizations were being established during this time, all of which had an educational component, such as the Mechanics' Institutes (1825 in England), cooperatives, trade unions, correspondence societies, and the development of university extension programs.

All of these and other activities helped to extend the educational opportunities for the working masses of society (including the opportunities to become literate, at least to the point of being able to read the scriptures). The rapid increase in educational programs for adults meant that more planners of these programs were in a position to observe the characteristics of adults as learners, as well as the factors which motivated adults to learn, the values placed on knowledge, and the ways adults used knowledge. Nevertheless, in the early beginnings, the teaching done in the majority of these adult programs paralleled the way in which children were generally taught, often using an authoritarian and lecture approach.

One of the first detailed descriptions of these new adult schools, and probably the first history of English adult education, was given in the book by Thomas Pole, a medical doctor who was, among other things, a member of the Bristol, England, society for teaching the adult poor to read the Holy Scriptures. His book, published in 1814, was called *A History of the Origin and Progress of Adult Schools*; it provided "an account of some of the beneficial effects already produced on the moral character of the labouring poor; and considerations on the important advantages they are likely to be productive of to society at large." The book included an appendix containing rules for the governance of adult school societies, and the organization of the schools. Pole laments that

benevolent individuals, or preceding generations, have exerted themselves for the education of youth; but that these exertions have been inefficient or too limited, is proven by the great proportion of the labouring poor, arrived to years of maturity, who have suffered, and are still suffering inexpressible loss in respect to their mental concern, from the lamentable ignorance which still prevails amongst them. (p. i)

Pole was among the first persons to note the phenomenon of adult education and its role in society, and coined the term *adult education* to identify the phenomenon.

During Pole's time elementary education was regarded as an act of charity, and during this time and with varying motives there was a vigorous initiation of charity schools and the provision of inexpensive devotional literature, for adults and for children. These and other programs later became the foundation upon which theories of popular education for adults were eventually based.

In 1833 the term *andragogy* was coined by Alexander Kapp, a German grammar school teacher. The term was intended to describe the educational theory of the Greek philosopher Plato. Selecting the Greek root of the term *andragogy* was intended to make a distinction between the teaching of adults as opposed to pedagogy, the teaching of children. The term reflected the various programs for adults being established during this period, although it appears that *andragogy* and *adult education* were used synonymously.

Perhaps the most innovative and far reaching institution created during these times was the Folk High Schools, founded by Bishop N. F. S. Grundtvig (1783-1872) of Denmark. Warren (1989) points out that Grundtvig conceived these schools for adults as a reaction against the system of education of children and the irrelevance of education to living a productive life. Warren comments:

The 'black schools' of Denmark . . . resembled the German model which forced people up or out of the system in accordance with their success in emotionless logic and endless memorization channelled all too often through foreign Latinity. This tyrannical combination, Grundtvig asseverated, would stifle rather than enlighten the human development of any soul. (p. 216)

Warren continues:

Since the kind of schools envisioned by Grundtvig did not exist, they would need to be created. In these folkhighschools, students would be encouraged to bloom rather than be educated to conform. (p. 216). . . . Lectures mostly must be discarded because students were there not only to be taught by teachers but to teach their instructors in turn. (p. 217)

Warren goes on to compare the andragogical assumptions of American adult educators and those of N. F. S. Grundtvig, and notes the major effect which

Grundtvig's thinking had on E. C. Lindeman, referred to as the father of adult education in the U.S.A.

Davies (1931) points out that, "Grundtvig had a rooted aversion to teaching methods which consisted in criticizing and theorizing without reference to concrete experience" (p. 89). He further elaborates on Grundtvig's thoughts on education:

With the period of youth, from eighteen onwards, there comes, according to Grundtvig, the moment of 'spiritual creation' which gives the educator his [or her] richest opportunity. Hence the process of education would be incomplete, and would fail to a great extent of its effect, unless the claims of this period were taken into account, and schools established to give young people, not a technical or vocational education, but an 'education for life', and one which would fit them to go on educating themselves after they left the school. (p. 87)

The folk high schools, intended primarily to provide peasants with education, spread initially to other Scandinavian countries and then elsewhere. They have greatly influenced the development of a philosophy relating to the education of adults.

### ***Influence of Humanistic Social Philosophy***

A number of simultaneous forces which were taking place in the 1800s profoundly influenced the thinking about adult education in the next century. The tendency to compare the education, needs, and experiences of children and adults; a reaction against authoritarian, void-of-life, rote memory; and the lecture approach (characteristic of the pedagogy of the times) encouraged a number of people to think of education for adults as different from the *education of children*. The development of thinking about adult education as essentially non-formal was, in part, a reaction against perceptions of formal education.

Other, sociological forces were in evidence as well. A humanist philosophy was increasingly being expounded during these times, and this philosophy influenced those who were involved in conceptualizing the practice of adult education. This philosophy helped to provide an alternative to the traditions of pedagogy, which an increasing number of adult educators were looking for. The Enlightenment of the 18th century was a protest against forces threatening humanity, such as industrialization which represented the mechanization of mankind, as well as political forces which threatened cultural

identity. These were the early years of the social sciences as we know them today. The growth of these social sciences, including adult education, paralleled the continued growth of the humanities.

The humanistic philosophy focused on the dignity and autonomy of human beings. It expressed itself as a revolt against authority and developed a holistic view of people. In educational practice, it became learner/student-centred; it encouraged learners to be self-directing, to seek their potential; and it believed that individuals should be, and should want to be, responsible for their own learning. The humanist assumption was that people have a natural tendency to learn and that learning will flourish if nourishing, encouraging environments are provided. The process or journey of the educational experience itself was being valued, and the role of ‘teacher’ and ‘student’ were being re-examined and described, such that the teacher frequently came to be seen as a facilitator and also as a recipient learner. These humanistic ideas developed over time, but they paralleled the development of educational thoughts about adults as learners.

Griffin (1987) observes that by the end of the 19th century, “ideas and concepts of adult education could be thought of primarily as an exercise in applied adult learning theory in a social context” (p. 159). Griffin explains:

The origins of adult leaning discourse can be traced to nineteenth century social and political thought, notably to varieties of sociological functionalism, political liberalism, and theories of progress and change. These ideas, unlike those of other, school-oriented education theory, had not been transformed by ideological conflicts in the public sphere. As a result, there was scope for a much more systematic analysis of adult education in relation to alternative social policy models, thereby bringing it into line somewhat with our approach to other social policies of welfare or redistribution, with which adult education is often, in practice, linked. (p. 159)

This concept of learning within a humanizing social context *provided the* impetus for expansion in usage of both the concepts and the terminology of andragogy during the early to mid 20th century.

### **Andragogy in the 20th Century**

Eugen Rosenstock, a German social scientist and a teacher in the *Academy of Labour* in Frankfort, is credited with re-introducing the term

*andragogy* in 1924. He urged that a separate method and philosophy be used for adult education and claimed that it was insufficient to translate pedagogical concepts into an adult situation. Knowles (1984) explains that Rosenstock advocated "The teachers should be professionals who could cooperate with the pupils; only such a teacher can be, in contrast to a 'pedagogue,' an 'andragogue'" (p. 80).

As with the development of new thought, a number of events increasingly focused on adult education as a field of practice as well as a field of study, meaning that adult education was developing its own body of knowledge and research. One can note for instance the 1929 World Conference on Adult Education held in England, sponsored by the World Association of Adult Education. The conference was intended to encourage international cooperation in adult education.

### ***International Expansion of Adult Education and Usage of the Term Andragogy***

In 1947, a division of adult education within UNESCO was established, followed over the years with world conferences on adult education in 1949, 1960, 1972, 1985, and 1997. The 1960 event took place in Montreal, reflecting Canada's visibility and leadership in the international field. In 1964 UNESCO launched the Experimental World Literacy Program. In 1965, the UNESCO international committee for the advancement of adult education accepted Paul Legrand's report recommending the endorsement of the principles of lifelong education. The establishment of the International Council for Adult Education in 1973 and the various events it has organized since then, and the development of graduate departments of adult education or *andragogy* in most regions of Canada contributed to the specialization of adult education. Kidd and Timus (cited in Husen & Postlethwaite, 1985) point out, in the *International Encyclopedia of Education*:

In some countries, indeed, particularly in Europe, the term '*andragogy*' has been coined... Its use has been strongly resisted in some parts of the world, but in most countries where adult education is established as a field of practice, the area covered by *andragogy* is nevertheless recognized as a distinctive field of study. (p. 100)

Similarly, speaking about socialist states, Livecka (cited in Husen & Postlethwaite, 1985) says,

the need to develop principles and practices appropriate to adult education led to the formulation of the concept of andragogy. Research and study in Yugoslavia, Hungary, and Poland has concentrated on the development of its theory and application. In other socialist states, although andragogy may not be an accepted term, theoretical research has concerned itself with the same problems, notably the place of adult education in a system of lifelong education and the place of adult education in socialist thought and life. (p. 175)

Also writing in the *International Encyclopedia of Education*, and cited by Husen & Postlethwaite, A. Krajnc of Yugoslavia (now Slovenia) points out that andragogy

has only achieved general acceptance in a few European countries—Poland, the Federal Republic of Germany, the German Democratic Republic, the Netherlands, Czechoslovakia, and Yugoslavia. It also appears sometimes in other professional literature, for example in UNESCO documents. In English-speaking countries the adoption of the term has on the whole been resisted. Such penetration as it has achieved in the United States has been greatly assisted by Malcolm Knowles' advocacy. (p. 267)

W. Rokicka, documentalist with the UNESCO International Bureau of Education (in her personal communication with Shirley Wigmore at the Ontario Institute for Studies in Education) writes that although the term andragogy is found in some UNESCO documents, UNESCO does not recommend the usage of the term andragogy and seldom uses it in its publications.

In spite of resistance in some quarters, the term andragogy has a relatively wide-spread usage in some quarters, as illustrated in a study undertaken by Claude Touchette (1982), a professor of andragogy at the University of Montreal. He elaborates on the diversity of the term, pointing out that "the term *andragogy* is synonymous with the term *adult education*." Touchette points out that whereas the French-language publication of UNESCO's Fourth Conference on Adult Education, held in Paris in 1985, uses the term *andragogy* in the broader sense, the English version uses the term *continuing education* (p. 26). Touchette goes on to report that:

According to directory data, 17 universities out of 95 (that is 18%) teach andragogy. These universities are located in Italy, Sweden, Poland, Yugoslavia, Quebec, The Dominican Republic, Tanzania and India. No

mention is made of universities in Venezuela, Peru, Costa Rica, Germany and the Netherlands, which also have andragogy programs. For most of these universities, as for Quebec, the meaning of the term *andragogy* encompasses all dimensions of the phenomenon of adult education and cannot be reduced to a single methodology or approach, as certain English-language publications suggest. This wide definition is derived from the German and Yugoslavian conceptualizations of andragogy. (p. 27)

### *Drawing a Sense of Commonalities among Differences in Terminologies*

Perhaps one of the most extensive theoretical discussions on andragogy written in Europe is the article by Ger Van Enkevort (1971), who was with the Dutch Centre for Adult Education. In his article "Andragology: A New Science" he cites the characteristics of andragogy specified by professor Ten Have, and claims that *andragology* "is a social phenomenon of a specific kind (p. 44) . . . cannot be considered as merely an application of the behavioural sciences and/or of sociology (p. 45-46) . . . [and] is an effort to break down the separations between the different forms of andragogical action and theory" (p. 46).

When speaking of approaches to theory building and research in adult education in East Europe, a Canadian, Jindra Kulich (1984), points out that adult education in the East European countries is viewed very broadly so as to include formal, non-formal, and cultural educational programs. He also points out, "A spirited debate has been going on in Central and Eastern Europe since the late 1950s as to the place of the study of adult education in the system of the social sciences" (p. 128). Kulich also points out that Polish authors vary considerably in their position on the use and relationship of andragogy and pedagogy. Some argue that "andragogy is an independent science, drawing on many social sciences and it has close ties with pedagogy" (p. 129). But Kulich says that the terms adult pedagogy and andragogy are used "interchangeably to denote the study of education, self-education and training of working youth and adults" (p. 128). In these writings one can note that there is some agreement on andragogy being a science, sometimes viewed within the social sciences. Kulich concludes by saying:

The term adult pedagogy is quite common in East European writing and, although illogical in terms of the definition of pedagogy as the education of children and youth, prevalent elsewhere, is consistent with a Central

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and East European view of pedagogy as the all-embracing science of education. (p. 135)

There is a great deal of literature which relates to the discussions about the meaning and place of andragogy but only a few more examples will be given. The Andragogy Group (1981) at the University of Nottingham in England speaks of pedagogy with adults versus andragogy and goes on to elaborate on the assumptions on which they base their continuum, the poles of which are traditional and progressive education. Within the African context, Kabuga (1977) voices the opinion that, "education in any society . . . which employs the techniques of pedagogy is oppressive, silencing and domesticating . . . and is premised on the authority of the teacher as well as on a static culture" (p. 1). However, he says, andragogy is "premiered on a dynamic culture" (p. 2) and the application of andragogy is relevant and meaningful in education at all levels.

Finally, Savicevic (1968) concludes that andragogy is "A relatively independent scientific discipline within the general science of education. This means that andragogy is not a 'branch' of pedagogy, although it is an integral part of the general science of education. However, a sharp line cannot be drawn between pedagogy and andragogy, because they both study the education process in various fields" (p. 52). The next section carries this debate to North America.

### **The Andragogy Debate in North America**

In 1926 Lindeman published "Andragogik: The Method of Teaching Adults" in the *Worker's Education Journal* and also published his book *The Meaning of Adult Education*. The following year, Anderson and Lindeman published *Education through Experience*. Although these publications introduced the term andragogy to North America, it was not popularized until over four decades later.

In *The Meaning of Adult Education*, Lindeman (1926/1961) proclaimed his belief in the humanizing aspect of education:

The resource of highest value in adult education is the learner's experience. If education is life, then life is also education. (p. 6). . . . The best teaching method is one which emerges from situation-experiences. (p. 115). . . . The first step toward liberation is taken when an individual begins to understand what inhibits, frustrates, subjugates him [or her]. We

learn to be free when we know what we desire freedom for and what stands in the way of our desire. (p. 46)

He also expressed his perception of education for adults as distinctly purposeful:

My conception of adult education points toward a continuing process of evaluating experiences, a method of awareness through which we learn to become alert in the discovery of meanings. (p. 85). . . Orthodox education may be a preparation for life but adult education is an agitating instrumentality for changing life. (p. 104). . . Teachers of youth assume that their function is to condition students for a preconceived kind of conduct; teachers of adults, on the other hand, will need to be alert in learning how the practical experiences of life can enliven subjects. The purpose of adult education is to give meaning to the categories of experiences, not to classifications of knowledge. (p. 123)

Although Lindeman wrote about *Andragogik*, reflecting a European influence, in his major writings he uses the term *adult education*, implying that he perceives the terms to be synonymous. In his writings he also reacts against orthodox pedagogic education and searches for an in-depth alternative and idealistic method of educating adults.

### ***The Progressive Philosophy Underlying the Introduction of Andragogy in North America***

Particularly during the early 20th century, in Canada and the United States, a progressive philosophy was developing, which paralleled the introduction of the concept of andragogy (in Europe) and the humanistic philosophy which it implied. This progressive philosophy promoted the *attainment of freedom* through understanding, and the relationship of education to one's daily life. Educators saw progressivism as a way of democratizing knowledge; they valued a problem solving and learner centered approach to education, valued the experience of learners, and placed a great deal of emphasis on the experiential and also the experimental contribution it made to education. Education was seen as an instrument of social change and the teacher was perceived as being a facilitator of change and growth. As with the humanistic philosophy discussed earlier, progressive and other forces worked together to break the traditional monopoly on knowledge.

The social, geographical, political, and economic context within Canada, at any given time, determined not only *what* adults learned, but *why* and *how*.

New paradigms of practice were being created through such activities as the Antigonish Movement, the Mechanics' Institutes, the Workers' Educational Association, the Women's Institutes, the Banff School of Fine Arts, Frontier College, and the expansion of university extension programs. All of these programs (see Draper, in press) and many more were intended to extend the opportunities for adult learning; to introduce innovative ways of organizing and delivering educational programs, dealing with the economic and other realities of daily living; and to humanize society. The writings of Fitzpatrick, Corbett, and Kidd illustrate these changes, as does Coady's (1939) book *Masters of Their Own Destiny*.

In the United States, through his 1970 publication, *The Modern Practice of Adult Education: Andragogy Versus Pedagogy*, Malcolm Knowles drew serious attention to andragogy in the North American context. In it he presented his initial perception of pedagogy and andragogy as separate and opposing educational ideologies, saying that pedagogy is based on a now obsolete premise—that is, the idea that the purpose of education is to transmit culture. The title of chapter three of his book poses his thoughts at that time: "Andragogy: An Emerging Technology for Adult Learning—Farewell to Pedagogy." Knowles' 1970 theorizing states that andragogy differs from the assumptions about child learning, on which traditional pedagogy is based, in four distinct ways:

An adult's self-concept moves from one of being a dependent personality toward one of being a self-directing human being; he [sic] accumulates a growing reservoir of experience that becomes an increasing resource of learning; his readiness to learn becomes oriented increasingly to the developmental tasks of his social roles; his time perspective changes from one of postponed application of knowledge to immediacy of application, and accordingly his orientation toward learning shifts from one of subject-centeredness to one of problem centeredness. (p. 39)

A critical examination of these and other points made by Knowles shows that all of the above assumptions can be applied to children and youth.

By the middle of the decade, Knowles modified his thoughts from those expressed in 1970. In the second edition of his book, published in 1980, Knowles writes that "Andragogy is simply another model of assumptions about learners to be used alongside the pedagogical model of assumptions" (p. 43). He now refers to *pedagogy* as the body of theory and practice on which teacher-directed learning is based and *andragogy* as that which is based on self-directed learning. The pedagogical orientation is characterized by

dependent concepts of the learner, subject-centeredness, a formal authority-oriented climate, planning primarily done by the teacher as the authority figure, and evaluation being primarily done by the teacher. The andragogical orientation would be the opposite of these as poles on a spectrum.

Following Knowles' 1970 publication came in 1972 *A Trainers Guide to Andragogy*, a United States Department of Health, Education and Welfare publication. The andragogical process is referred to and described: The development, organization, and administration of programs in applied andragogy involves continuous circular application of the following seven steps, namely, setting a climate for learning, establishing a structure for mutual planning, assessing interests, needs and values, formulating objectives, designing learning activities, implementing learning activities, and evaluating results (reassessing needs, interests and values) (pp. 10-11). Later in this publication, when discussing "andragogy—a balance of freedom and control," it is stated that, "The educational model of andragogy is based on the psychology of William James and the educational theory of John Dewey both of which envision man [sic] as capable of directing his own destiny" (p. 91). This statement is interesting, since much of Dewey's writings were about progressive education for children.

### *Stimulation of Critical Discussion and Research*

Knowles' original and subsequent writing sparked considerable discussion from his colleagues in Canada and the United States. Houle (1972) was one of the first persons to give a critical response to Knowles, taking the position that learning and education are essentially the same for children and adults:

*If pedagogy and andragogy are distinguishable, it is not because they are essentially different from one another but because they represent the working out of the same fundamental processes at different stages of life.* (p. 222)

Similarly, Brundage and MacKeracher (1980) say, "To the extent that adults and children are different, learn in different ways, and need to be helped to learn in different ways, it is appropriate to discuss andragogy and pedagogy as separate issues. To the extent that adults and children are similar, the dichotomy is inappropriate" (p. 6).

More recently, there followed in the *Journal of Adult Education* a series of articles expressing the opinions of various adult educators. Yonge (1985) comments:

A Pedagogy–Andragogy difference cannot be justified by focusing on teaching and learning. When the Pedagogic and the Andragogic are viewed as two modes of human accompaniment, the critical differences between them become clear. The Pedagogic involves an adult accompanying a child so the latter may eventually become an adult. The Andragogic involves an adult accompanying another adult to a more refined, enriched adulthood. Thus, there is a difference in the participants and in the aims. Both agogic events involve a relationship of authority, but Pedagogic authority rests on a different base and is of a different character than Andragogic authority. These differences qualify the meaning of everything that occurs in these contexts: e.g. the 'same' teaching strategy will have a different meaning in these two types of situations. (p. 166).

Yonge does conclude however that andragogy should not be used as a synonym or substitute for adult education, which he says is much broader than the use of andragogy in his paper (p. 13).

Also in the *Journal of Adult Education*, Elias (1979) argued that there is no important difference between teaching children and teaching adults, which he illustrated by critiquing Knowles' original five assumptions about andragogy. McKenzie (1979) responded to Elias' thoughts and presented a philosophical position that assumes an existential difference between adults and children. Davenport and Davenport (1985a) published "A chronology and analysis of the andragogy debate" and conclude, "it is time for the andragogy debate to move to a higher level" (p. 158). That same year (1985b) they published "Andragogical–Pedagogical Orientations of Adult Learners: Research Results and Practice Recommendations." Carlson (1989) points out that "Knowles appropriates the term for his own purposes . . . he cast aside the humanistic European definition of andragogy . . . and redefined andragogy as 'an emerging technology for adult learning'" (p. 225).

In "A Critical Theory of Adult Learning and Education," Jack Mezirow (1981) outlines a charter for andragogy. He says that "andragogy, as a professional perspective of adult educators, must be defined as an organized and sustained effort to assist adults to learn in a way that enhances their capability to function as self-directed learners" (p. 137). Mezirow goes on to

present a 12 point charter of andragogy, of which the first three points are cited here. A theory of adult learning and education is intended to:

1. progressively decrease the learner's dependency on the educator;
2. help the learner understand how to use learning resources—especially the experience of others, including the educator, and how to engage others in reciprocal learning relationships;
3. assist the learner to define his/her learning needs—both in terms of immediate awareness and of understanding the cultural and psychological assumptions influencing his/her perceptions of needs. (p. 137)

### *Viability of Andragogy as a Theory*

In recent years in North America, questions have been raised about the viability of andragogy as a theory. Merriam (1988), for instance, discusses the term under the heading of theories of adult learning and goes on to say: "The best known 'theory' of adult learning is andragogy. It is based upon four assumptions, all of which are characteristics of adult learners. . . . This theory . . . has given adult education 'a badge of identity' which distinguishes the field from other areas of education" (p. 189). However, Merriam comments: "It has also caused more controversy, philosophical debate, and critical analysis than any other concept/theory/model proposed thus far . . . Since he [Knowles] no longer claims andragogy to be unique to adults." In her writings about adults as learners, Cross (1981) comments:

Whether andragogy can serve as the foundation for a unifying theory of adult education remains to be seen. At the very least, it identifies some characteristics of adult learners that deserve attention. It has been far more successful than most theory in gaining the attention of practitioners, and it has been moderately successful in sparking debate; it has not been especially successful, however, in stimulating research to test the assumptions. Most important, perhaps, the visibility of andragogy has heightened awareness of the need for answers to three major questions: (1) Is it useful to distinguish the learning needs of adults from those of children? If so, are we talking about dichotomous differences or continuous differences? Or both? (2) What are we really seeking: Theories of learning? Theories of teaching? Both? (3) Do we have, or can we develop, an initial framework on which successive generations of scholars can build? Does andragogy lead to researchable questions that will advance knowledge in adult education? (pp. 227–228).

In theorizing about andragogy as a relational construct, Pratt (1988) develops an interesting model of dependency–competence and states some andragogical presuppositions, arguing that:

Andragogy and pedagogy can better be compared and understood if we consider the variations in learner dependency with respect to specific situations and attempt to analyze the type of teacher–learner relationships best suited to those variations. Thus, both andragogy and pedagogy may partly be defined via the nature of relationships that develop out of situational variations and the characteristics of learner dependency. (p. 164)

Similarly, Joblin (1988) helps to deal with the empirical questions that are raised in comparing the andragogical and pedagogical approaches, pointing out that “Arguments, then, can be presented that both defend and refute the notion that adults are more self-directed than children and youth” (p. 122).

In examining the North American literature on andragogy, one can only conclude that the metamorphoses of the concept continues. It has been referred to as a theory of learning, as a philosophical position, as a political reality, and as a set of hypotheses. In the extensive listing in the database of the U.S. Education Resources Information Center (ERIC) clearinghouse on adult, career, and vocational education, the term andragogy has also been referred to as a learning system, a technique, a process, a set of principles, a method, a new technology, a model, and “a process oriented toward problem solving” (Brown, 1985). In fact andragogy was only adopted as an ERIC descriptor in 1984, but not without debate on the appropriateness of the root of the term, and its gender bias. A flavour of this debate is illustrated by Mohring (1989) in a paper called “Andragogy and Pedagogy: A Comment on Their Erroneous Usage.” Mohring comments:

Using andragogy to stand for educating adults and pedagogy for educating children is etymologically inaccurate. Although pedagogy derives from ‘pais’, meaning child, from antiquity pedagogy also stands for education without reference to learners’ ages. Andragogy derives from ‘aner’, meaning adult male, not adult of either sex. Given the efforts to eliminate “sexist” words, why introduce a new one? We would be served better by using English than by using etymologically inaccurate Greek. If Greek is desired, ‘teleios’, not ‘aner’, is the Greek word for the English ‘adult’. Andragogy should yield to teleiagogy, thereby including adults of both sexes. (p. i)

Feelings continue to be mixed about the term andragogy, and the debate continues. Not all of the debate is as critical as Hartree (1984):

Whilst in a sense he [Knowles] has done an important service in popularizing the idea of andragogy, it is unfortunate that he has done so in a form which, because it is intellectually dubious, is likely to lead to reflection by the very people it is most important to convince. The debate surrounding andragogy may have served to bring it to the public eye, but it is also likely to damage its credibility. (p. 209)

Tennant (1986) expresses similar feelings as those expressed by Hartree:

Moreover, it is important to abandon some of the myths about adult learning which have general currency . . . the myth that our need for self-direction is rooted in our constitutional makeup; the myth that self-development is a process of change towards higher levels of existence; and the myth that adult learning is fundamentally (and necessarily) different from child learning. (p. 121)

Podeschi (1987) comments that there is confusion about andragogy in the American adult education field and that this is partly explained because “theoreticians who debate andragogy are caught often in an unconscious complexity about the kind of issue in which they are involved: empirical proof or philosophical premise” (p. 14).

In his article “Andragogy after Twenty-Five Years” Pratt (1993) sets out to answer one central question: What contribution has andragogy made to educators’ understanding of adult learning? He comments:

For some, andragogy has been a prescriptive set of guidelines for the education of adults. For others, it represents a philosophical position vis-a-vis the existential nature of adults. For still others, it is an ideology based on beliefs regarding individual freedom, the relationship between individual and society, and the aims of adult education. . . . Andragogy has been adopted by legions of adult educators around the world and has influenced the practice of adult education across an impressive range of settings. Very likely, it will continue to be the window through which adult educators take their first look into the world of adult education. (p. 15)

Pratt concludes, “while andragogy may have contributed to our understanding of adults as learners, it has done little to expand or clarify our understanding of the process of learning. We cannot say, with any confidence, that andragogy

has been tested and found to be, as so many have hoped, either the basis for a theory of adult learning or a unifying concept for adult education" (p. 21).

The next and last section summarizes and presents some reflections on what has been presented in this paper.

## Summary and Reflections

### *The Early Years*

Pole was the first to write extensively about the phenomenon of adult learning; he coined the term adult education, in 1814. His writings emphasized that there was a need to extend the opportunities for adult learning (initially focusing on moral education and reading the Christian scriptures). It was not enough, he said, for society to focus only on the education of children. Kapp coined the term androgogy, meaning the education of adults, as compared to pedagogy. Grundtvig continued the criticism of the authoritarianism of pedagogy and the irrelevance of what was generally taught in the schools, especially to young adults. He spoke of the need for a philosophical shift in educational thought, such that experience was valued, and that there was a need to develop innovative methods in educating adults. He expressed the idea of "education for life." Out of his efforts came the Danish Folk High Schools (primarily providing non-formal education for young adults who needed an education at a higher level than elementary school).

A humanist philosophy was being expounded during these times, as a revolt against authority. This philosophy focused on the dignity and autonomy of human beings, and continued to search for and develop alternative methods of teaching adults. By the end of the 19th century, a discourse on adult learning had begun.

### *The European Perspective*

In the 20th century, *andragogy* was reintroduced. Rosenstock urged a separate method and philosophy for adult education. The International Encyclopedia noted the similarities of meaning of adult education and andragogy, as fields of practice. Adult education was also seen as a distinctive field of study, reflected in the various university graduate programs which were being established.

Krajnc held that adult education and andragogy were synonymous terms. Touchette's international study supported this view and concluded that

andragogy encompasses all dimensions of the phenomenon of adult education and cannot be reduced to a single methodology. Van Enkevort argued that adult education was not merely an application of the behavioural sciences but was a separate field. In his international writings, especially on Eastern Europe, Kulich places the study of adult education as a theory or science within the social sciences. He reported that adult education was to be viewed broadly, to include formal, non-formal, and cultural educational programs. Savicevic also saw adult education in broad terms and as a separate discipline. However, a negative stereotype of pedagogy prevailed, as part of the struggle to legitimize adult education as a distinct field of practice and study.

### *The North American Perspective*

Grundvig greatly influenced Lindeman as did humanist and progressive thought. Lindeman (and others) theorized about adult learning in terms of the role of experience, the factors which inhibited learning, and the application of knowledge and self-evaluation, as ways of distinguishing—at least ideally—between the education of adults (andragogy) and the education of children (pedagogy).

Knowles was introduced to andragogy by a colleague from Europe and perpetuated the dichotomy between andragogy (adult education) and pedagogy. In contrast, Houle viewed pedagogy and andragogy as representing the same fundamental processes, albeit at different stages of life. Yonge saw the two concepts as representing different modes of human development. Tennant even argued that andragogy promoted some myths about adult learning. Pratt's view was that what adult and child education hold in common is situational variations and characteristics of learner dependency.

### *Reflections*

A discussion on andragogy is not irrelevant to the metamorphoses of adult education in Canada. Beginning in the 1700s in Western Europe, attempts were made to describe the practice of adult education and to distinguish it, at least theoretically, from pedagogy, the traditional education of children. Adult educators began to observe that using these formal traditional approaches to education (pedagogy in schools and universities) did not necessarily work, especially in non-formal educational settings for adults. They began to ask "Why?" and "What should be?" As a way of communicating what was perceived to be different about the education of adults (and since part of the

distinction was to contrast the education of adults with the education of children), it seemed natural that early adult educators would look for a word which was grounded in the classical Greek language, as with the origins of pedagogy. Hence the term andragogy was coined.

The early uses of andragogy were intended to contrast (often more ideally than in practice), a philosophical difference between the methods used to teach adults and the methods used to teach children. The perceived voluntary act of learning was an important influencing factor which led adult educators to explore alternative approaches to organizing learning. Such educators also acknowledged the importance of the learning process, apart from the content to be learned. Humanistic and humanitarian forces greatly influenced the initial meaning given to andragogy. Adult educators also began to recognize and articulate the importance which experience had when adults engaged in education, the things which motivated adults to learn, and the ways adults retained their learning through application and practice.

The evolution of andragogy was carried into the North American scene by Lindeman, although he generally used the term adult education. In his early writings, Knowles perpetuated the differences between pedagogy and andragogy (preferring this term rather than adult education) and to a great extent defined andragogy by what it was not, compared to pedagogy. That is, pedagogy was seen to represent formal schooling, it was authoritarian, other directed learning and subject matter oriented. Andragogy, on the other hand, represented a less authoritarian, out of school education, an inner or self-directed form of learning which was problem or project oriented, a learner centered approach to learning, and was essentially non-formal. Andragogy had a goal of changing the status quo and therefore was linked to social change and liberalization.

In today's context, these distinctions between andragogy and pedagogy are essentially theoretical and present a false dichotomy. In retrospect, the debate seems naive and ignores the attempts by pedagogues to seek *alternative* methods for teaching children. All one has to do is to examine the reality of practice in educational programs for children and those for adults to see that each represents all variations for organizing learning. All of the philosophical traditions, be they liberal, behaviourist, progressive, humanistic, or radical (see Elias and Merriam, 1984) are witnessed in educational (formal and non-formal) programs for adults and children. Some settings in which adults (and children) learn are authoritarian, others humanistic; some are directed by outside forces, others are self-directed by individual learners; some programs

do not allow for individual interpretation or value the experience which the learner brings to an educational setting, others do allow for these things; and so on. The method used in an educational setting is relative and contextual.

Although the debate in Europe shifted away from defining andragogy (adult education) by what it was not (compared to pedagogy), the popularizing of andragogy in North America by Knowles focused on the differences between these two terms, emphasizing the humanistic characteristics of andragogy and ignoring the humanistic character of pedagogy. If andragogy is defined as being humanistic and progressive then how is adult education defined if the two terms are not synonymous?

Much of the debate on andragogy and pedagogy seems to imply that there is a simplistic consistency in human development—for example, it is not experience alone which sets adults apart from children nor is it even accumulated experience (as this also applies to children) but the kind of experience which one has. In some situations, children have far more experiences and knowledge than adults. The debate, as presented here, also ignores the immense amount of non-formal education engaged in by children, or the extent to which adults commit themselves to formal education. Both approaches span the lifetime of individuals. Mezirow's charter of andragogy, one might argue, applies just as well to children as to adults.

Is andragogy a theory, as argued by some? If so, what is the theory? From the data presented in this article, there is strong evidence that andragogy/adult education are not theories of learning. However, from the field of study of adult education (e.g. university graduate programs) come theories, principles and assumptions which help to explain and understand (adult) learning.

It is intentional learning which is the essence of adult education/andragogy. Therefore, one can argue that the generic definition of adult education/andragogy is not determined by the content, skills, attitudes or values being learned (such as literacy education or professional continuing education); by any particular age group of adults; by the sponsoring agency or location of the educational program; or by the methods of teaching and learning being used. These are only variables for describing specific educational programs. The key to which philosophical orientation is most appropriate at a given point in time is determined by the intent of the adult learner and the time and resources available.

Over the years, adult education has come to be viewed as a process of facilitating and managing the intentional (formal and non-formal) learning of

adults (always accompanied by incidental or informal learning). A criticism might be made that the above view of adult education is too broad and all encompassing (although internationally and historically the tendency has been to use a broader rather than a narrower definition). The same comment could be said of other fields of study, all of which use "all-encompassing" definitions to define their fields (e.g., political science, sociology, economics, geology, anthropology and psychology).

In conclusion, tracing the metamorphoses of andragogy/adult education is important to the field's search for identity. In searching for meaning (historically and contemporarily) adult educators have had to engage in debate, to create and refine the terms which they use, as well as to strengthen the theoretical base of their field of practice and study (through research) within the social sciences. The search for meaning has also been an attempt to humanize and understand the educational process.

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