

ANDRAGOGY – THE SCIENCE OF ADULT EDUCATION: THEORETICAL ASPECTS

Nataliya MACHYNSKA ^{a*}, Halyna BOIKO ^a

^a The Ivan Franko National University of Lviv, 1, Universytetska str., Lviv, 79000, Ukraine

Abstract

The article seeks to reveal the theoretical bases of andragogy as a science. The issue of adult education is regarded separately from that of child education, and is known as “andragogy”. There are differences in children and adult learning. The basic assumptions about adult learners are different from those about child learners in terms of: his/her self-concept, his/her readiness to learn becomes increasingly oriented towards the developmental tasks of his/her social roles, a growing reservoir of experience. It is easy to understand why these differences are relevant in selecting teaching methods to avoid to treat the student as dependent on others and not respect his/her identity, to consider boundaries and abilities of an adult student who is independent and capable. Children also learn from their experiences, perhaps even more naturally than adults, and without conscious reflection. The article analyses the main principles of andragogy such as: considering the needs of adults when planning and evaluating their instruction; experience (including mistakes) provides the basis for the learning activities as adults are mostly interested in learning subjects that have immediate relevance and impact on their job or personal life; adult learning is problem-centered rather than content-oriented. The instruments used in the research were: the study of the scientific literature, case studies, systematic observation.

Key words: Andragogy, education, learners, methods, pedagogy

1. Introduction

When one thinks about education and the skills needed to be an educator – to instil knowledge in others – one may think that the skills needed for such a task are, more-or-less, the same for all teachers and all learners. However, perhaps this thinking is flawed. In the modern age, the field of

* Corresponding author. PhD Nataliya Machynska
E-mail address: nataliya.machynska@lnu.edu.ua

adult education is often regarded separately from that of child education and is known as “andragogy”.

According to Malcom Knowles (1980), there are two basic assumptions about adult learners that are different from those about child learners (Knowles, 2019). The first assumption is that of self-concept. The scientist notes that as a person matures his/her self-concept moves from one of being a dependent personality toward one of being a self-directed human being, in contrast to pedagogy, where the child-student is “dependent upon the instructor for all learning” (Clipa, 2014; Yazdani, 2019). This is tied to the student’s identity as an adult. That is, as Knowles writes, one is psychologically an adult when he/she perceives himself/herself to be wholly self-directing. And at that point, he/she also experiences a deep need to be perceived by others as being self-directing. It is easy to understand why this difference is relevant: teaching methods that treat the student as dependent on others do not respect the identity, boundaries, and capabilities of an adult student who is independent and capable. For example, a child may need tutoring and careful step-by-step guidance with certain tasks, or to be given a ready-made plan, whereas an adult can determine all these things by himself/herself. In fact, assuming otherwise is offensive to adults. The second assumption is about adult learner experience: as a person matures he/she accumulates a growing reservoir of experience that becomes an increasing resource for learning (Knowles, 2019), whereas a child-student has little experience that could be tapped as a resource for learning and thus the experience of the instructor is most influential.

2. Etymology of the word “andragogy”

The development of andragogy was dealt with by F. Piuheler, P. Jarvis, L. Touros. Scientific research was carried out by K. Ushinskyi, M. Pirogov, V. Vodovozov, E. Medinskyi and others. Modern research on andragogy in Ukraine has been conducted by: O. Anishchenko, S. Arkhipova, S. Priyma, N. Bidiuk, L. Lukyanova, N. Nychkalo, L. Danylenko O. Ohiyenko, N. Protasova, V. Oliynyk, V. Putsov, L. Sihayeva, in different historical periods.

In 1833, German teacher Alexander Kopp first used the word “andragogy” (the education of adults, rather than pedagogy, the education of children) to refer to elements of Plato’s theory of education. The term was later taken up in 1921 by Rosenstock, who said that adult education required special teachers, methods and philosophy. In the latter half of the twentieth century, Malcolm Shepherd Knowles (Knowles, 2019), executive director of the Adult Education Association of the United States of America, wrote the first major accounts of adult education, and premised five essential differences between adult learners and child learners. Despite

Knowles' name still being most-immediately associated with the field of adult education, his opinions are subject to debate, and even discredited.

The terminology dictionary on *Adult Education* (Lukyanova & Anishchenko, 2014) provides the following definition of andragogy: “Andragogy” [from Greek. aner (andros) and agein (ago) – “andros” – an adult, “agein” – to lead] – is: a) a subdiscipline, a section of pedagogy that studies the processes of stimulation, upbringing, retraining, self-improvement, self-development of an adult throughout his life; b) the science of the adult learning specificity, taking into account age, educational and life needs, available and latent abilities, capabilities, individual characteristics and experience, psyche and physiology, as well as forms and methods of organizing adult learning in order to deepen their knowledge, ensure their educational and cultural needs, achievement of individual goals, self-realization of personality; c) a branch of scientific and humanitarian sphere of knowledge, an educational direction, a theoretical discipline. Based on the research of O. Pashko (2013), we offer a comparative table of the main provisions of andragogy and pedagogy (Table 1).

Table 1: Comparison of the leading provisions of pedagogy and andragogy

Andragogy	Pedagogy
Adult learning	Teaching children
<i>Independence</i>	
An adult is autonomous, an independent decision maker	The child is addicted, directed by an adult
Mutual exchange of training transactions	Teacher dominates – a depended learning
Mutual assistance relationships	Mentoring relationships
<i>Experience and communication</i>	
Ability to take/ connect with life	Limited life experience
The multifaceted focus of communication is between everyone	One-way communication – from teacher to student
Everyone's experience is valued as a learning resource	Teacher experience is valued as a main course
<i>Willingness to learn</i>	
An adult knows what he wants to learn and why	The training course is defined in advance
Participants are grouped into interest groups	Learners are grouped by marks and grades
The facilitator helps participants to identify their learning needs	The teacher decides on the training course
<i>Time perspective / Orientation in learning</i>	
The need to apply knowledge in life/work as soon as possible	The child learns for the future, “stores” knowledge
Emphasis on the problem	Emphasis on the subject
Work on today's problems today	The subjects are learning now for future use

According to *The Ukrainian Pedagogical Encyclopedic Dictionary*, “andragogy” is an adult pedagogy, one of the pedagogical sciences that deals with the problems of education, self-education and adult education. The task of andragogy is to work on the content, organizational forms, methods and means of adult learning, the use of media, radio and television for this purpose; a determination of optimal intervals between periods of intensive training, functioning of professional courses depending on the nature of production (Honcharenko, 2011).

3. Analysis of assumptions on andragogy

There are a number of objections to the assumption above. As for andragogy: what is it and does it help think about adult learning? Andragogy points out that there are times when a substantial amount of new information in a particular field becomes available, thus rendering the adult’s experience irrelevant. In such an instance, the adult must rely *on the experience* of the instructor, who is familiar with the subject and the new information in that field.

Knowles’ article (2019) raises a *second* objection, stating that children also have real experiences that are no less consuming, and still have to be returned to, entertained, and made sense of. Children also learn from their experiences, perhaps even more naturally than adults, and without conscious reflection.

The article also states that we have to ask the question, what is being learnt, before we can make judgements. We argue that adults are more conscious of their experience and value it more than children. That is, adults have more difficulty accepting things contrary to their experience. Thus, when teaching adults, one should be more conscious of their experience than with children.

The *third* concerns readiness to learn: as a person matures, his/her readiness to learn becomes increasingly oriented to the developmental tasks of his/her social roles, whereas child-learners are told what they have to learn in order to advance to the next level of mastery (Yazdami, 2019). This seems to imply that adults are ready and want to learn when they need something, that is, when their role in society would benefit in some way from the knowledge that would be acquired. Certainly, it seems that adults are more aware of the need to learn, whereas children must be convinced of it. Yet, perhaps this is only true in the context of formal classroom education. The authors again raise several objections to this assumption of Knowles, primarily that it reduces education to the acquisition of skills, assuming that we learn things that are useful rather than interesting or intriguing, or because something fills us with awe. It also thoroughly underestimates just how much we learn for the pleasure it brings (Andragogy: what is it and does

it help think about adult learning?). Adults acquire new hobbies, learn how to play a musical instrument or sports, simply for the enjoyment of it.

The fourth assumption pertains to the student's orientation to learning: as a person matures, his/her time perspective changes from one of postponed application of knowledge to immediacy of application. As a result, his/her orientation toward learning shifts from one of subject-centeredness to one of problem centeredness (The Adult Learning Theory – Andragogy – of Malcolm Knowles). For children, learning is a process of acquiring prescribed subject matter... (Yazdani, 2019). Content units are sequenced according to the logic of the subject matter. This is similar to the previous assumption, since this is a pragmatic approach to learning. "Andragogy" posits that this assumption concerns effective teaching, saying that subject- or problem-centeredness is conditioned. The scientist further counters this assumption, stating that [m]uch of adults' most joyful and personally meaningful learning is undertaken with no specific goal in mind. It is unrelated to life tasks and instead represents a means by which adults can define themselves (Andragogy: what is it and does it help thinking about adult learning?).

The fifth assumption, added in 1984, is motivation to learn: as a person matures the motivation to learn is internal (The Adult Learning Theory – Andragogy – of Malcolm Knowles), whereas for the child-student learning is primarily motivated by external pressures, competition for grades, and the consequences of failure (Yazdani, 2019). "Andragogy" states that Knowles considered this to be the result of school conditioning, and that it is built on the pragmatic approach that adults learn in order to act and fulfil tasks and roles. Yet this is again limited to the context of formal classroom education. Outside the classroom, children love to learn, and will sit for hours on end reading about dinosaurs and countless other interesting creatures, simply because they find it interesting and want to know more.

The five assumptions about adult learners put forth by Knowles seem to apply only to the formal classroom setting. Further, even in that context, it seems that these principles are very much debated. Those who disagree, such as the author, put forward counter examples, indicating that children are much more like adults than Knowles seems to realize.

4. Four principles of andragogy

In addition to his five assumptions about adult learners, Knowles also posited four principles of andragogy, which he put forward in 1984. Knowles' principles have been debated, adapted, expanded, and rehashed by various people over the last half-century. For example, Wikipedia's

article on andragogy presents seven principles of adult learning, adding the principles that adults learn best in an informal situation, and adults want guidance and consideration as equal partners in the process. Core Net Global proposes fourteen principles for adult education, ranging from “learning is fundamentally social” to “repetition increases my retention of critical information (Adult Learning Techniques, CoreNet Global). Yet these are embellishments on Knowles’ original theory.

The first principle of Knowles’ four is that adults need to be involved in the planning and evaluation of their instruction. Or, worded differently, adults need to know why they need to learn something before undertaking it (Houde, 1992). In our own experience, we find that we are more satisfied when we have some sense of control of what we are learning. Joseph Houde states that there is a correlation between knowing the benefit of learning and the motivation to learn, whereas not knowing why learning something is important is associated with a state of low or no motivation. He writes that the lack of motivation, simply going through the motions, can be overcome by making clear the connection between an action and the desired outcomes, and making clear the individual’s ability to accomplish the task. He goes on to explain that an adult learner becomes motivated to learn when it is clear that the learning is connected to the learner’s goals and that the learner is able to learn the material.

Knowles’ second principle of andragogy argues that experience (including mistakes) provides the basis for the learning activities. Learning is best built upon that which we know – our experience. Houde posits that this principle can affect motivation in the classroom. If the experience of the student is valued by the teacher, the student’s needs for relatedness (desire to feel satisfied with their involvement with others in a general sense) and competence (the desire to experience having an effect on one’s environment) are not undermined. Houde explains that, if the student’s experience is not valued by the instructor, this causes an internal conflict in the student, and the student will discount the instructor in favour of personal experience (Houde, 1992).

The third principle states that adults are most interested on learning subjects that have immediate relevance and impact their job or personal life (The Adult Learning Theory - Andragogy - of Malcolm Knowles). We find that we have trouble in being motivated to study subjects that seemingly have no relevance to our life.

The fourth principle is similar to the third, and states that adult learning is problem-centred rather than content-oriented. Learning must be relevant as it is often motivated by the presence of problems and the desire to fix them. Houde states that the key difference between these two

principles is getting the adult to start learning, while the second is engaging the adult as he is learning. Both of these are based on the practicality of the content to be learned. The adult learner strives to use new learning to increase competence and solve problems in his life (Houde, 1994). Content-focused learning is uninteresting to the adult who wishes to solve problems.

5. Models of the University of the Third Age

Jean Lewis Levesque proposes five models of third-age universities (Sogun, 2012). In particular:

- Western European or "Vellas" model, which is closely related to, or part of the university;
- The Anglo-Saxon model, which is especially practiced in the UK and in various English-speaking countries, where mutual support for learning is a dominant feature;
- The North American French-language model follows the "Vellas" model, but with significant student involvement in course planning;
- South American model based on "Vellas" with involvement in education of the majority of the elderly population;
- Chinese model focused on community life and the preservation of traditional culture.

The Universities of the Third Age are increasingly popular in the world and in Ukraine today. One of the reasons for their occurrence is the increase in the number of retired members due to the fact that life expectancy is increasing. As a result, there is a need to develop new approaches to educating them and, in general, to create the conditions for them to find their place in society. The Universities of the Third Age were launched in France, Belgium, Switzerland, Quebec, and later spread to Europe and the Scandinavian countries such as Spain, Italy, Poland, Sweden, Finland and later to the United Kingdom, Australia, New Zealand, Malta and Cyprus. The first university emerged from the initiative of Professor Pierre Wellas in Toulouse in the early 1970s.

The development of adult education in Ukraine begins in the second half of the twentieth and early twentieth centuries, and it should be considered in the context of continuity on the basis of humanistic values. The concept of continuity of adult education learning is realized through:

- the formation of adult needs and the ability to learn;
- access to all types of education based on individual abilities of a person;
- formation of interdisciplinary programs for gaining parallel and additional specializations;

- providing the adult with the opportunity to freely choose different types of learning: formal and informal.

Adult education requires not only relevant theory and practice of teaching, but also specially trained staff – teachers, tutors, etc. In Ukraine there are The Universities of the Third Age established by the state or non-governmental organizations. State institutions are established by regional, city, district and territorial centers. Often, existing Universities are the basis for such Universities, whose teachers agree to hold classes for the elderly in parallel. Non-state founders of The Universities of the Third Age may be: public organizations, charitable foundations, educational institutions of non-state ownership, individuals, etc. For example, Lviv University of the Third Age (LUTA), which was created on the basis of Lviv Institute of Postgraduate Education and Pre-University Training.

LUTA was created to implement the principle of lifelong learning for retired members and to support physical, psychological and social abilities. The main tasks are to provide services for the organization and conduct of free training, as well as educational activities for the elderly. LUTA learners can be retired people with education at any level and interested in participating in educational programs. Volunteer teachers are involved in organizing the training of LUTA students in higher education institutions and schools, specialists in the department of social protection of the population, health care and more. Elderly people are trained without formal testing of their knowledge and skills. The school year at LUTA consists of two semesters. The first semester is October-December; the second semester is February-May. In LUTA there are classes in the following subjects: the basics of Media Literacy; basics of Psychosomatics; Gerontopsychology; Music therapy; Polish; English; Computer Literacy; Art; Creativity in human life; Architecture of Lviv; History of Lviv; History of culture of Lviv region; Psychology of stress..

6. Conclusions

In conclusion, Malcolm Knowles attempted to develop a comprehensive theory for the education of adults. He posited that adults are different from children in certain important ways, and thus must be educated in a different way. His method focuses on the identity of the adult and his self-perception, psychological needs and motivations. His pragmatic approach assumes that adults wish to solve problems and produce results in their life. Yet his approach seems limited, insofar as it assumes that learning takes place only in the classic classroom setting.

Education and learning in more informal learning environments would have a different approach and an explanation than that which Knowles provides. It is for these reasons that Knowles' theory is openly debated and interpreted by those concerned with education. Despite that, however, Knowles' name is inseparably associated with the field of adult education, and his contributions are very significant.

Today, the interest of retired members in education is growing rapidly. Existing Universities of the Third Age in Ukraine cannot provide education for all applicants due to poorly developed structure, lack of funding and staff. But andragogy, as a science, is constantly evolving, moving into new spaces every time, exploring the actual needs of people and developing strategies and methods for effective adult learning.

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