ANDRAGOGY: ITS RESEARCH VALUE FOR PRACTICE

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Abstract: Although andragogy became popularized in the 1970's and 1980's in the USA through the work of Malcolm Knowles, its original introduction into the USA was in 1927 by E. C. Lindeman and M. L. Anderson. However, the oldest known published document using the concept was authored by a German -- Alexander Kapp, in 1833. Much of the published literature in recent times has focused on the popularized use of the term, reflecting either a wholesale support of Knowles' version of andragogy, or a "debunking" for the reason of what some call Knowles' unscientific approach.

This study seeks to determine the major foundational works published on andragogy in order to provide a clear and understandable linkage between the research on andragogy and the practice of andragogy. Although there are hundreds of dissertations and publications researching at least some aspect of Andragogy, after extensive content analysis, eighteen (18) major English language works reflecting six (6) themes, form the most broad, deep, understandable and justifiable foundation linking research, theory and practice in andragogy. These publications are described within this paper and identified with an asterisk (*) in the reference section after the conclusion of the paper.

Introduction and Background

Andragogy has been used by some as a code word for identifying on the education and learning of adults. It has been used by others to designate different strategies and methods that are used in helping adults learn. Still others use the term to suggest a theory that guides the scope of both research and practice on how adults learn, how they need to be taught, and elements to be considered when adults learn in various situations and contexts. Again, still others consider andragogy as a set of mechanical tools and techniques for teaching adults. Then others consider that andragogy implies a scientific discipline that examines dimensions and processes of anything that would bring people to their full degree of humaneness.

Although andragogy became popularized in the 1970's and 1980's in the USA through the work of Malcolm Knowles and others, its original introduction into the USA was in 1927 by Lindeman and M. L. Anderson. However, the term was first authored by Alexander Kapp (1833) nearly a century earlier in a German publication. (To see a copy of this publication please go to http://www.andragogy.net) Since the introduction of andragogy into the USA, extensive published English language literature has addressed and critiqued various aspects of its conceptual meaning and use. However, much of what has been published focuses only on its popularized use, reflecting either a wholesale support of Knowles' version of andragogy and the attendant excitement it generates, or a fairly straightforward debunking and dismissal for the reason of what some call Knowles' unscientific approach. Most of the published material on andragogy that reaches beyond these limitations is largely untapped and not understood, but nevertheless provides a broader and deeper foundation of the concept and its application to the theory, research and practice of adult education and adult learning.

It has been suggested by Savicevic (1999) that andragogy is defined as a scientific discipline, which deals with problems relating to adult education and learning in all of its manifestations and expressions, whether formal or informal, organized or self-guided, with its scope of research covering the greater part of a person's life. It is linked with advancing culture and performing: professional roles and tasks, family responsibilities, social or community functions, and leisure time use. All of these areas are part of the working domain of the practice of adult, continuing, community and extension education. It could be said that a clear connection is established from the research to practice of andragogy, with andragogy being the art and science of helping adults to learn and the and the study of adult education theory, processes, and technology all relate to that end.

The Research

The purpose of this study was to answer the question: What are the major foundational English works published on andragogy that may provide a clear and understandable linkage between the research on andragogy and the practice of andragogy within the field of adult education? A search of the topic – andragogy – revealed that time would not permit the study of all sources identified because the list is still expanding through continuing discovery of additional references (there are more that 170 doctoral dissertations focused on the topic). However, the numerous sources that were tapped included scientific research studies, theoretical think pieces, and reports on experiences and/or results from practical applications. The interpretative form of research sought out the major themes in the text of works on andragogy that were studied. The major themes discovered are: Evolution of the term andragogy; historical antecedents shaping the concept of andragogy; comparison of the American and European understandings of andragogy; popularization of the American concept of andragogy; practical applications of andragogy; and, theory and definition of andragogy.

Evolution of the Term Andragogy. Van Gent (1996) asserts that andragogy has been used to designate the education of adults, an approach to teaching adults, social work, management, and community organization. Its future lies only as a generic term for adult education and as a complement to pedagogy. Draper (1998) reflects on and presents an overview of the historical forces influencing the origin and use of the term andragogy: the humanistic social philosophy of the 1700s & 1800s, early twentieth century labor movement in Germany and USA, international expansion of adult education since World War II, commonalities of different terminologies, the debate in North America, the progressive philosophy underlying andragogy in North America, stimulation of critical discussion and research, and the viability of andragogy as a theory. He concludes, "Tracing the metamorphoses of andragogy/adult education is important to the field's search for identity. The search for meaning has also been an attempt to humanize and understand the educational process."

Historical Antecedents Shaping the Concept of Andragogy. Savicevic (1991, 1999a) suggests that Socrates, Plato, Aristotle, the Sophists, Ancient Rome, the epochs of humanism and the renaissance all reflect thoughts and views about the need of learning throughout life, about the particularities and manners of acquiring knowledge in different phases of life, about the moral and aesthetic impact. He also credits J. A. Comenius in the seventeenth century with being regarded the founder of andragogy with his primary wish to provide comprehensive education and learning for one and all to the full degree of humaneness, and urging the establishment of special institutions, forms, means, methods and teachers for work with adults. In addition, he theorizes that the institutional basis for adult education actually formed in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries in Britain and other countries with the emergence of Mechanics' Institutes, workers' colleges & educational associations, university extensions, board schools for adult instruction, correspondence education, and people's universities.

Henschke (1998a) goes back earlier in history and claims that the language of the Hebrew prophets, before the time of Jesus Christ, with the meaning of various Hebrew words -- learn, teach, instruct, guide, lead, and example/way/model -- provides and especially rich and fertile resource to interpret andragogy. He expects that by combining a probe of these words and elements with other writings, a more comprehensive definition of andragogy may evolve.

Comparison of the American and European Understandings of Andragogy. Savicevic (1991, 1999a) provides a critical consideration of andragogical concepts in ten European Countries – five western (German, French, Dutch, British, Finnish), and five eastern (Soviet, Czecho-Slovak, Polish, Hungarian, Yugoslav). This comparison shows common roots but results in five varying schools of thought: Whether andragogy is parallel to or subsumed under pedagogy in the general science of education; whether agology (instead of andragogy) is understood as a sort of integrative science which not only studied the process of education and learning but also other forms of guidance and orientation; whether andragogy prescribes how teachers and students should behave in educational and learning situations; the possibility of founding andragogy as a science is refuted; and, that endeavours have been made to found andragogy as a fairly independent scientific discipline. Savicevic (1999a, 1999b) clearly aligns himself with the fifth school of thought in that this research aims toward establishing the origin and development of andragogy as a discipline, the subject of which is the study of education and learning of adult in all its form of expression. Thus, it requires an understanding of andragogy in Europe and America through comparing and contrasting.. He identifies the problem, the framework of study, the research methodology, the similar and different findings, and the various perspectives in these two places that have the longest traditions and/or strongholds in andragogy.

Robb (1990) believes that South African andragogics can enable improved understanding between Continental European and American adult educationists. However, for this improvement to take place, he sees the need for three further studies: whether andragogy terminology is necessary; whether adult educationists are scientists; and, where adult educationists differ in America and Continental Europe, that could pave the way for a more adequate description of what andragogy is.

Popularizing of the American Concept of Andragogy. Anderson and Lindeman (1927) were first to bring the concept to America. Although they clearly stated that andragogy was the method for teaching adults, the term did not take hold in the new land until many year later. Knowles (1970, 1980, 1989, 1996) acquired the term the in 1967 from Dusan Savicevic and infused it much of his own meaning garnered from his already extensive experience in adult education. He then combined his expanding practice around the world, his university teaching of budding adult educators, and the publication of **The Modern Practice of Adult Education: Andragogy and Pedagogy** during the 70s & 80s. This American version of andragogy became popularized as a result. The main structure of his andragogical expression took the form of a process design instead of a content design, with assumptions and processes. The assumptions about adult learners are: they are self-directing, their experience is a learning resource, their learning needs are focused on their social roles, their time perspective is one of immediate application,

they are intrinsically motivated, they want to problem-solve, and they want to know why they need to know something. The learning processes adults want to be actively involved in are: a climate conducive to learning, cooperative planning, diagnosing their needs, setting objectives, designing the sequence, conducting the activities, and evaluating their progress.

Practical Applications of Andragogy. Mezirow (1981) developed a critical theory of adult learning and education, and laid the groundwork for what he called a charter for andragogy that included twelve core concepts. Suanmali's (1981) doctoral dissertation focuses on the agreement of 174 adult educators, including professors and practitioners, on the of those core concepts that all related to self-direction in learning. The major theme was that to assist adults to enhance their capability to function as self-directed learners, the educator must: decrease learner dependency, help learners use learning resources, help learners define his/her learning needs, help learners take responsibility for learning, organize learning that is relevant, foster learner decision-making and choices, encourage learner judgment and integration, facilitate problem-posing and problem-solving, provide supportive learning climate, and emphasize experiential methods.

Billington's (1988, 2000) doctoral dissertation studies sixty men and women to determine what key factors helped them grow or if absent made them regress and not grow. The seven factors were: a class environment of respect; their abilities and life achievements acknowledged; intellectual freedom, self-directed learning, experimentation and creativity encouraged; learner treated fairly and as an intelligent adult; class is an intellectual challenge; interaction promoted with instructor and between students; regular feedback from instructor.

Henschke (1998b) emphasized that in preparing educators of adults, andragogy becomes a way of being or an attitude of mind, and needs to be modeled/exemplified by the professor. Otherwise, if we are not modeling what we are teaching, we are teaching something else.

Knowles (1970, 1980) provided in these books numerous examples of the successful practice of andragogy.

Theory and Definition of Andragogy. Simpson (1964) very early proposed that andragogy could serve as a title for an attempt to identify a body of knowledge relevant to the training of those concerned with adult education. He posited that the main strands could be parallel to what already existed in child education. The main strand would be the study of: Principles of adult education, the study of adults, educational psychology of adults, and generalized andragogical methods for teaching adults. He issued a call for adult education to do this.

The most comprehensive of all the publications on andragogy is a book that includes thirty of the author's publications within a twenty-six year period (Savicevic, 1999). His work has addressed how andragogy has and will shape the literacy, the work place, universities, training and research, the humanistic philosophies, the evolution and future of andragogy and the practice of adult education. He also provided a number of descriptions and definitions of andragogy.

Henschke (1988a) attempted a descriptive definition of andragogy that moved in the direction of calling it a scientific discipline of study.

Krajinc (1989) in echoing some others provides the most succinct and pointed definition of andragogy to date, and perhaps the most beneficial, as she states, "Andragogy has been defined as...'the art and science of helping adults learn and the study of adult education theory, processes, and technology to that end'."

Conclusion: Implications of Applications of the Findings to the Practice or Theory

While it has not been possible to go into the depth needed for a better understanding of andragogy in this paper due to space limitations, hopefully the six major themes that have emerged are enough to encourage the adult education practitioner and researcher to continue her/his exploration (practice and/or research) of the concept of andragogy. One value of this research for practice is that much of it emerged out of research as indicated by the title of Dusan Savicevic's book (1999), **Adult Education: From Practice to Theory Building.** A second value is for those practitioners who are willing to use andragogy as a means for: finding out, learning, and ascertaining new things for their own growth; understanding and realizing fresh ways to improve their practice of adult education; and, enhancing the enlightenment and illumination of the adult constituents they serve on their journey to a full degree of humaneness.

In the USA, much of the study of andragogy has been based on a popularized version, which has its origins in the work of Malcolm Knowles. However, the first known use of andragogy is in 1833, where Alexander Kapp uses it in a discourse on Plato. Anderson and Lindemann brought the concept to the USA in 1927. While it has continued in Europe, often it has done so as a societal concept, going beyond education. The European and American versions have their differences, but a study of both is necessary to fully understand the term and put it into practice .

References — Note: (*) indicates major foundational English work in andragogy

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