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Andragogy: The International Foundation for Its Research, Theory and Practice Linkage and HRD

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Major works published in English from national and international sources on Andragogy are presented here, in order to provide a clear and understandable linkage between the research, theory and practice of andragogy and its application to HRD. The six themes provide a foundation for the linkage: Evolution of the term; historical antecedents shaping the concept; comparison of American and European understandings; popularizing of the American concept; practical applications; and theory, research, and definition.

Keywords: Andragogy, Lifelong Learning, International

Andragogy has been used by some as a code word for identifying 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. Nadler (1989) stated that HRD is based in learning, and every HRD practitioner should have an understanding of the theories of Adult Learning. There is a broad spectrum reflected in the practice of andragogy, and the extensive literature publication over a long period of time on andragogy [some of which will be introduced and discussed in this paper], opens the door for the theoretical framework of this study to be focused on andragogy.

Background

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 1926 by E. C. Lindeman, and again 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) Previous to and 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.

One the one hand, there are numerous instances and variations where adult educators tended in the direction of Knowles' version of andragogy with using a practical approach when facilitating adults learning within their own setting and context. Kabuga (1977) advocates using highly participative teaching/learning techniques with children as well as adults in his native Africa, despite the fact that he has not tested them there. Eitington (1984, 1989, 1996) promotes pro-active engagement of learners in most every situation throughout the book containing twenty-one chapters, six hundred pages, and one hundred usable handouts. Hoffman (1980) emphasizes the differences between children and grown-ups (adults) and children, with "schooling" being for children and "learning" being for adults. He affirms his successful use of active learning techniques in working with more that 600,000 adult participants. Baden (1998) developed and outlined twenty-seven different themes with accompanying interactive techniques that he perceives as being extremely useful in the process of helping association executives become more effective in fulfilling their responsibilities. Zemke and Zemke (1980, 1996) selected at least thirty ideas/concepts/techniques that they think we know for sure about adult learning. They asserted that if it is our job to train adults – whether they want to be trained or not – these ideas can give insight and practical help. Henschke (1995) focused on

describing a dozen different episodes with groups in various settings, where he applied his *understanding and adaptation of Knowles' the theory of andragogy, and then detailed some of the results he considered successful of using that approach with the participants.*

On the other hand, there are numerous instances and variations where adult educators tended to dismiss Knowles' version of andragogy as being quite inadequate, unscientific, misleading to adult educators and lacking in understanding of the concept. Hartree (1984) asserts that if viewed from the psychological standpoint, Knowles' theory of andragogy fails to make good its claims to stand as unified theory because it lacks coherent discussion of the different dimensions of learning; and, equally, if viewed as philosophy, it falls short because it does not incorporate an epistemology. Davenport (1987) presents a case for questioning the theoretical and practical efficacy of Knowles' theory of andragogy, growing out of his perhaps adding to the confusion with his paradoxical definitions of andragogy and pedagogy and with his assumptions that lack clarity and solid empirical support. Davenport finished with the argument that some adult educators argue that adult education should simply drop the word from its lexicon. Jarvis (1984) writes that the theory of andragogy has moved into the status of an established doctrine in adult education, but without being grounded in sufficient empirical research to justify its dominant position. Brookfield (1986) claims that with andragogy [most probably as exemplified by Knowles] not being a proven theory, adult educators should be hesitant to adopt it as a badge of identity or calling themselves 'andragogues' with the attendant belief that it represents a professionally accurate summary of the unique characteristics of adult education practice. Pratt's (1987, 1993) stance appears to be that andragogy is a relational construct, and that the further debate of it, presents tension between freedom and authority, between human agency and social structures, thus seeming to stall the consideration of the usefulness of Knowles' conception of andragogy. Ferro (1997) charges that the use and meaning of the term, *andragogy,* has spawned a debate on the term and fostered the creation of additional unclear terms intended to define aspects of adult education; but he makes a plea for adult educators instead to concentrate on what they know best, the planning and delivery of learning opportunities for adults. Hanson (1996) calls for adult educators not to search for a separate theory of adult learning [andragogy], but rather that we remove many of the unsubstantiated assumptions based on almost utopian beliefs about the education and training of adults linked to uncontextualized views of learning and empowerment.

The weakness of the above picture is that both sides seem to stop short in their discussion and understanding of andragogy. The focus is mainly on the pros and cons of Malcolm Knowles' treatment and interpretation of the concept. Thus, our interest in researching the concept of andragogy takes us past the experience [albeit, a positive experience] of Knowles' presentation of it. We are interested in investigating all the literature we could find and had time to analyze. Of course, this is an ongoing search. In our quest, we found that 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 HRD and Adult Education within adult learning.

It has been suggested by Savicevic (1999) that andragogy is defined as a scientific discipline, which deals with problems relating to HRD and 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 HRD and Adult 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 study of HRD and Adult Education theory, processes, and technology relating 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 HRD and Adult Education? Following are two major underpinnings relevant for the decisions on what was included: Any material we became aware of [in the English language, since we only are able to speak or read in that language] that presents various aspects of the concept of andragogy as viable and worth consideration for the field of HRD and Adult Education on a world-wide basis; and, a presentation and view of the content of andragogy within any country of the world and with no date/time boundaries. A library search of various ERIC data bases was conducted: Adult Education Research Conference; Midwest Research-to-Practice Conference; Lifelong Learning Research Conference; Canadian Association for the Study of Adult Education; Standing Conference on University Teaching and Research in the Education of Adults; Academy of Human Resource Development; Commission of Professors of Adult Education. Dissertation Abstracts International

database was accessed and we found that there are more than 170 doctoral dissertations focused on the topic. From these databases we limited ourselves to selecting those that most notably contained a full emphasis on andragogy and not just a tangential mention of the term. Library materials that we had become aware of during a number of years were part of the material included. Bibliographical references in all of the above materials led us to more materials. Numerous international sources were tapped and included scientific research studies, theoretical think pieces, and reports on experiences and/or results from practical applications of andragogy. 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, research 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

Wilson's (2002) research into the historical emergence and increasing value of andragogy in Germany and the USA, among other things discovers a connection between a foundational element in adults' capacity [even into the later years] to continue learning – a concept labeled as 'fluid intelligence' – and its being enhanced through andragogical interventions in self-directed learning.

Allman (1983) predated Wilson regarding this same connection between placticity in adult development. She asserted that this concept and research coupled with Mezirow's (1981) and Knowles' (1970, 1980) understanding of andragogy could be linked with her ideas on group learning and then merged into a more comprehensive theory 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 and concurrent with the time of Jesus Christ, along 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, Czech-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 endeavors 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 and interactively 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

Lindeman (1926a, 1926b, 1961) presents an interesting picture of the method for teaching adults. Basically he asserts (1926a) in his first use of the word andragogy, that the method for teaching adults is discussion, which he says is different from the teaching of children. In his classic book *The Meaning of Adult Education* (1926b), he never uses the term andragogy, but does include a chapter entitled, "In terms of method." A thorough analysis of this chapter reveals that he extensively explores, describes and explains the discussion method. Consequently, it seems safe to assume that he laid the earliest groundwork in the U.S.A., for a major practical application of andragogy as the method for teaching of adults.

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 (1988, 2000) in her doctoral dissertation studied sixty men and women to determine what key factors helped them grow or if absent made them regress and not grow. The nine 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.

Johnson (2000) believes that built into andragogy is a method for engaging learners in the discovery of meaning for them in their personal and professional lives. During his forty years in the field, in a wide variety of settings he successfully tested and applied this andragogical method with many participants affirming the results.

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, Research 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 HRD and 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.

Poggeler (1994) listed ten trends which he hopes will be helpful for future development of European andragogical research, including: international knowledge, comparative understanding, political influences, a clear picture of *adult* as the 'subject' of adult education, concentration on the thirty to fifty age group, explaining the *social structure* of the clientele, "development-andragogy" of the Third World, criteria for successful learning and teaching, understanding the "lifeworlds" of the participants, and new types and alternatives of adult education. Some of these may also be applicable to the USA.

Zemyov (1994) clearly states that the most important trend in adult education in Russia is the application and further development of Knowles' (1970, 1980) theory of adult learning, andragogy, in the process of education. He further states that Knowles' concept of andragogy [the art and science of helping adults learn] "...which scientifically founds the activity of the learners and of the teachers in the process of the determination of goals and tasks, of content, forms and methods, of organization, technology and realization of learning, is considered now in Russia by many scholars and teachers as a fundamental theoretical base for adult education. The main scientific and practical problem for the adult educators consists in finding out the most appropriate combination of pedagogical and andragogical models of learning for obtaining assigned objectives of learning for a learner in an actual situation." (pp. 36 & 37).

Boucouvalas (1999) insists that although refined methodological or epistemological tools and indicators are critical for sound research in comparative andragogy, the role and influence of the 'self' of the researcher in the research process, is an equally critical element to be considered.

Johnson (2000) sees andragogy as an approach to learning that includes a focus primarily on the needs of the learner in every aspect of his/her life. He also asserts that given most, if not all definitions in the social science literature, andragogy could qualify as a theory or at least an emergent theory.

Rachal (2000) finds little empirical evidence that andragogy provides better results from learning than other approaches. However, he identifies from nineteen empirical studies, insights that may contribute toward helping "...establish...criteria for an operational definition of andragogy suitable for implementation in future empirical studies of andragogy." He later (2002) clearly identifies seven criteria: Voluntary participation, adult status, collaboratively-determined objectives, performance-based assessment of achievement, measuring satisfaction, appropriate adult learning environment, and technical issues.

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.

Reischmann (2000) indicated that in 1994 he changed the Otto Freiderick University, Bamberg, Germany, "Chair of Adult Education" to "Chair of Andragogy." His understanding differentiates "andragogy as the research" and "adult education as the practice" in the education and learning of adults.

Henschke (1988a) attempted a descriptive definition of andragogy that moved in the direction of calling it a scientific discipline of study. Furter (1971) proposed that universities recognize *a science for the training of man* to be called andragogy, with it purpose to focus not on children and adolescents, but on *man throughout his life.*

Merriam (2001) posits that the scholarship on andragogy since 1990 has taken two directions. One stream seeks analysis of the origins of the concept or its usage in different parts of the world, thus becoming a touchstone for professionalizing through the establishment of a scientific discipline. The other stream critiques andragogy for its

lack of attention to the context in which learning occurs. She emphasizes that andragogy as one of the two "pillars" of adult learning theory (self-directed learning being the other pillar) will continue to engender debate, discussion, and research, thus suggesting that in so doing, it will further enrich our understanding of adult learning.

Cooper and Henschke (2001) in midyear identified eighteen English language articles and studies as foundational to the theory of andragogy in its relationship to practice. Showing the continuing discovery and expansion of a much broader than Knowles' conception of andragogy, the number of documents referenced and analyzed in this article contributing to the international foundation for its research, theory and practice linkage now stands at thirty-four.

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'."

Conclusions: Implications of Applications of the Findings to the Linkage of Practice, Theory or Research

Although 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 human resource development practitioner, theorist and researcher to continue her/his exploration (theory, practice and/or research) of the concept of andragogy. Readers aware of other English language works that may add to the foundation of andragogy, are invited and encouraged to inform the authors so as to add to the discussion and contribution of this topic within HRD and the Adult Education Fields and to the constituencies served by those involved.

The interpretative form of this 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, research and definition of andragogy. However, the most striking observation of all the themes is the strength of the foundation that will help advance adult education, which emerged in the last theme – the theory, research and definition of andragogy. Simpson gives four strands for the training of adult educators; Poggeler lists the ten trends which he hopes will help future andragogical research; Zemyov sees Knowles' view of andragogy as being the fundamental scientific foundation of the theory base of adult education in Russia; Boucouvalas posits the importance of the researcher in the research process; Johnson sees andragogy as fulfilling all the criteria of a theory; Rachal provides seven criteria for empirical research in andragogy; Savicevic's work in andragogy is the most comprehensive to date; Reischmann represents a shift of understanding in the direction of andragogy; Henschke calls for andragogy to be a scientific discipline of study; Furter proposed that andragogy be recognized in universities as a science for the training of man throughout his life; Merriam posits that scholarship on andragogy is one of the two major pillars of adult learning research and theory; Cooper and Henschke provide an ongoing investigation into the comprehensive concept of andragogy; and Krajinc provides a very succinct and pointed definition of andragogy.

Another value of this research for practice is that much of the research emerged out of practice as indicated by the title of Dusan Savicevic's book (1999), *Adult Education: From Practice to Theory Building.* A final value of this research for practice is the benefit of those researchers and practitioners who are willing to intentionally 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 research or practice of HRD and 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. Originally Lindeman only very cryptically introduced the concept to the USA in 1926, and repeated it with Anderson in 1927. While the concept 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 continued study and research of both are necessary to make more visible andragogy's broad foundation, its linkage with fully understand the theoretical concept, and putting it into practice.

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