

HISTORICAL ANTECEDENTS SHAPING CONCEPTIONS OF ANDRAGOGY:  
A COMPARISON OF SOURCES AND ROOTS

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*ABSTRACT: Although there is not one standard definition of the term "andragogy" in any one country or the numerous countries in which it has some recognition, andragogy is becoming a rallying term to identify theory, research and practice in the realm of adult education in some countries around the world, while finding resistance in others. Probing into and understanding some of the historical antecedents -- sources, roots and perceptions (or misperceptions) -- which have shaped and continue to shape varying conceptions of andragogy, may help to clarify and articulate a definition and direction for the further study of andragogy as an important field of inquiry as well as an important scientific endeavor. A comparison will be made between the contexts and experience bases out of which this issue and term is addressed.*

*Introduction.*

There is not one standard definition of the term "andragogy" around the world. However, it is a term that has some recognition in numerous countries. Andragogy is becoming a rallying term to identify theory, research and practice in the realm of adult education in some countries, while finding resistance in others. This study suggests that probing into and understanding some of the antecedents -- sources, roots, perceptions and misperceptions -- which have shaped and continue to shape varying conceptions of andragogy, may help to clarify and articulate a definition and direction for the further study of andragogy as an important field of inquiry as well as an important scientific endeavor.

Two areas seem to be the most obvious to begin this inquiry. The first part will work toward a definition of the term andragogy. The second part will probe ancient Hebrew language antecedents contributing to and enriching the conceptions of adult education prior to the emergence of the term andragogy.

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*Toward A Definition -- Arguments Pro and Con of the Value of Andragogy*

Ferro (1997) a U. S. American asserts that with Knowles popularizing of andragogy in the United States, it spawned other terms which are confusing. Thus, he would abandon the term. However, in his argument he shows no understanding of the origin of the term andragogy. In addition, he makes no attempt to acknowledge that this word is in numerous dictionaries and encyclopedias.

Others refer to things that relate to what Malcolm S. Knowles has done with the term, concept, and practice of andragogy. Carlson (1989) a Canadian describes the 'pros' and 'cons' of Knowles' approach to andragogy. Pastuovic (1995) a Croation indicates that Knowles' kind of andragogy shapes the structure of the fundamental sciences of adult education and application of their discoveries in the development of a specific technology of adult education. Lai (1995) a U. S. American says that Knowles' kind of andragogy is a philosophical informant perspective which frees people from dominance, toward self-directedness in pursuing their faith which is all part of U. S. individualism. This certainly is consistent with Knowles' (1991, 1996) andragogical dream of everyone becoming a self-directed learner in lifelong learning.

Lawson (1996) from Nottingham in the United Kingdom, perceiving from a philosophy and ethics point of view, equated humanism and andragogy, much as he perceived Knowles has done. He says that andragogy has humanistic characteristics which are desirable such as: the self-actualizing person, self-direction, and the teacher as facilitator. Furthermore, he suggests that this concept of andragogy fits right in with a very open culture and political philosophy which permits freedom. This is referred to as "philosophical psychology." Lawson also suggests that with Rank, Rogers, Sedlin, Maslow, Erickson and Lindeman as Knowles' reference points, rather than probing the background of andragogy and its emergence, it becomes infused with his meanings rather than its own.

This interpretation may or may not be accurate. However, it may help to focus attention on the difficulty there has been in finding a common definition for the term. In addition, various voices herald the usefulness of Knowles' variety of andragogy: Somers (1988) from Applachia in the U. S. A., says that it works well with the development of mental health programs; Kubaga (1977) from Africa was very impassioned in seeing andragogy as an emancipatory tool and proposed using it for the educational development of both adults and children; and, Jarvis (1996) from the United Kingdom, suggests that Knowles along with others like Cyril Houle helped provide some of the dominant theories which emerged with graduate adult education programs in the U. S. A., and andragogy, as one of those theories, provided an identity in contrast with school education.

Another Englishman, Brookfield (1991, 1994, 1996a & 1996b) says that andragogy is just one name among others for treating adults as adults, according them the respect they desire, and he related the term with experiential learning, with experience being the adult learners' textbook -- a continuous process of evaluating experience. He further asserts that experience is central to the concept of andragogy which describes practice in societies as diverse as the U. S. A., United Kingdom, Netherlands, France, Poland, Russia, Estonia, former Yugoslavia, Finland, and former Czechoslovakia. The most pressing research need is the effect of the teacher on the learners, with Livecka (1991) out of Eastern Europe saying that the research need for developing principles and practices appropriate to adult education gave rise to the formulation of the concept of andragogy.

Others join the chorus of opinion on the value of andragogy. Heimstra (1994, 1996) a U. S. A. Professor, equates andragogy with one branch of scholarship in self-directed learning. Van Gent (1994) from the Netherlands sees that it can only be in the form of a generic term for adult education and as a compliment to pedagogy. Duke (1987, 1991, 1992, 1994) sees it as identifying different and innovative teaching methods for adults who act in their own best self interest. Merriam and Cafferella (1991) both U. S. A. Professors say andragogy has, more than any other force, caused more change, controversy, debate and critical analysis than any other adult education or human resource development concept thus far.

#### *Toward a Definition -- Trial Ideas*

Most of the forgoing talk about the value and/or usefulness of andragogy, contributed little toward a definition of the term, except for emphasizing the helpfulness of including these ideas in the definition. However, some have directly attempted definitions. Jarvis (1990) from the United Kingdom says the andragogical cycle includes: study of needs and motives, planning the educational process, programming the educational content, preparing and organizing the process, implementing and evaluating the process, and product of the exercise. Knowles (1990, 1998) says that the teaching/learning relationship needs to be equal, open, and democratic with a psychological climate of mutual respect, collaborativeness, mutual trust, supportiveness, openness, authenticity and humaneness. Peters and Jarvis (1991) indicate that the andragogue -- the person who accepts and practices andragogy: accepts each student as a person of worth, respects learners' feelings and ideas, seeks to build relationships of mutual trust, and exposes his own feelings.

Krajnc (1991) from Slovenia defined andragogy as the art and science of helping adults learn and the study of adult education theory, processes and technology to that end. Rubenson (1994) from Sweden supports what he indicated as Krajnc's idea of forming a distinct science of andragogy which stems from Yugoslavia, Poland, United States, Germany, and Netherlands. Beyond this, Savicevic (1988) a researcher from Belgrade has suggested that a scientific system of andragogy would include: general andragogy, adult didactics, history of andragogical ideas, comparative andragogy, social andragogy, labour andragogy, military andragogy, penological andragogy, andragogy of free time, andragogy of mass communications, family andragogy, and methodology of andragogy. The major tasks of this scientific enterprise would at least include: individual and psycho-physical development, social-philosophical and historical aspects of adult education.

While a definition is nowhere near complete at this juncture, it certainly becomes obvious that there are some strong ingredients present which would give some substance to a definition. It is a concept with increasing merit that needs consideration. However, some additional sources and roots for the concept may be helpful in the formulation of a definition and some direction.

#### *Tracing the Roots, Sources and Antecedents of Andragogy*

The most comprehensive treatment known by this author of the historical emergence of the term "andragogy" and some of the ingredients which earmark working with adults is presented by Savicevic (1991, 1995). He suggests that andragogy not only includes the process of education and learning, but also the dimensions of social, philosophical, contextual circumstances, moral, aesthetic, cultural, and anything else that would bring all people to their full degree of humaneness. In addition, he says that andragogy implies a scientific discipline examining problems of adult education and learning in all of its manifestations and expressions, whether formal or informal, organized or self-guided.

The fact is that although the term "andragogy" is only known to have originally emerged in the early 1800s in Germany, the concepts undergirding the term existed much earlier with Comenius in the 17th century and even back into the ancient times. Knowles (1989) attributed Cyril Houle, his teacher at the University of Chicago, for both his Masters and Doctors Degree, with having informed him that all the great teachers of ancient times were teachers of adults. These included: Confucius and Lao Tse in China; the Hebrew Prophets and Jesus in Biblical times; Aristotle, Socrates and Plato in ancient Greece; and Cicero, Euclid and Quintillian in ancient Rome. So it is suggested that they perceived learning as a process of active mental inquiry, not passive reception of transmitted content. And it was the Hebrews that helped invent what we now call the case method, in which the leader or one of the group members describes a situation, often in the form of a parable, and together with the group explores its characteristics and possible resolutions (Knowles, 1990, 1998). As another method, the Rabbinical Schools also asked questions and answered questions by asking more questions as a means for arriving at improved insight or even the truth of the matter being investigated.

Although it is not within the scope of this paper to explore each of these and their conceptual contributions to working with adults, one of these groups -- the Hebrew Prophets -- seems to be an especially rich and fertile resource, while being an untapped antecedent to the concept of andragogy. The Hebrew language is probably one of the richest in the world, having gone through little change, with the meaning of words remaining largely in tact over the centuries.

Furthermore, the particular interest of this author which prompts the choice of the Hebrew language concepts and their contribution to the antecedents of andragogy, grows out of his experiential connection in several regards. He has a clergy history: studying the rootage of Christianity in Judaism; inquiring into the Hebrew and Greek linkages between the "Tanakh/Old Testament Scriptures" and the "B'rit Hadashah/New Testament Scriptures" which some refer to as combining to comprise the Complete Jewish Bible; and, has observed the recent waning of a great gulf of historic separation between Christians and Jews, originating in about the second and third centuries of the common era and moving now toward more understanding of each other and mutual caring consideration.

This author also has been very closely allied with the popularization of andragogy in the United States: having received his Doctoral Degree at Boston University while studying with Malcolm S. Knowles; and, having further researched, refined and put into practice, within his own university professorial and adult, continuing education faculty career, the principles of andragogy which he learned and, has also applied these principles in numerous other settings with adults in their contexts from forty countries around the world. Consequently, there are insights which he has gained within these experiences which he wishes to bring into the debate on andragogy, and feels could contribute to further clarification, direction setting and study of this important scientific endeavor.

Thus, some of the Hebrew words which would be naturally used with the growth and development of adults and their accompanying meanings will be considered in turn. The list would at least include: Learn, teach, instruct, guide, lead, example/way/model. Although there are numerous Hebrew words depicting each of these English words, space and time will only allow the most prominent ones to be included here. And these have a broad enough scope which will include the social, philosophical, existent circumstances, level of education, nature of contents, and expressions of the person which in turn influences the learning, a concern of Savicevic's (1995) about Knowles' andragogy concept seeming exclusive focus only on individualistic learning. Moreover, Knowles' writings and the way many, if not most, interpret them may have a tendency to confirm this perception of his almost exclusive focus on learning, albeit individualistic learning. However, when this author developed and delivered the Professional Eulogy at the Memorial Service for Malcolm S. Knowles in December, 1997, his remembrance and reflection bore the clear picture that Malcolm (as he liked to be called) was much more than just a facilitator focused on "the art and science of helping adults learn," his definition of andragogy. Malcolm was to this author: Originator, teacher, helper, carer/care giver, benefactor, guardian, master, shepherd, advisor, progenitor, counselor, consultant, mentor, friend, gracious host, and a human being. He and Hulda, his beloved wife of 62 years, were a couple who modeled love of, caring for, and devotion to each other (Henschke, 1997-1998).

As a person Malcolm was representative of the broader perspective of andragogy which includes the additional dimensions beyond learning. Now, to the Hebrew words which seem to expand the concept of andragogy, and are also antecedent to the emergence of the term.

*Learn.* The Hebrew word is “Lamadh.” It has the idea of learning, studying, becoming accustomed to, exercised in, instructing, training, practicing, being taught and trained. This one word had wrapped up in it what it took two Greek words to express: to learn and to teach (Zodhiates, 1984, 1990; Brown, 1979). Where the separation came, derived from research focused on theories about how animals and children learn, which mistakenly assumed that this must be applicable to adults (Knowles, 1990, 1998). Hence, those adult educators dissatisfied with what was happening needed to develop their own research on how adult learn. Additionally, anyone who considers adults as animals that learn missed to point of this debate. Adults are humans and not animals.

*Teach.* The Hebrew word is “Yarah.” It has the idea of shooting arrows, pouring rain, casting, laying a foundation, erecting, establishing, irrigating and giving water, putting out words. The word has the connotation of aiming for something (Brown, 1979; Zodhiates, 1984, 1990). It is a continual process much in the same way Plato, Aristotle and Socrates emphasized the need for learning throughout life (Savicevic, 1991).

*Instruct.* The Hebrew word is “Sakhal.” It has the idea of showing oneself attentive to, understand, consider, make wise, ponder, cleverness, being prudent, circumspect, desirable to look upon, cause to make wise, to have intellectual comprehension, insight, expertise and skill, knowing the reason for something (Brown, 1979; Zodhiates, 1984, 1990). This certainly implies the perception of the adult learner being proactive much like a self-directed learner, but also requires the presence of someone who would provide direction, mirroring and feedback as well as raising questions (Knowles, 1989, 1990, 1998).

*Guide.* The Hebrew word is “Yaats.” It has the idea of counselling together, consulting with one another, to devise, decide, plan, propose, and advise, to exchange counsel as a king with his advisors (Brown, 1979; Zodhiates, 1984, 1990). The organizational environment of climate in andragogy to be first rate must be one conducive to learning and supportive of education. And Leonard Nadler (Knowles, 1998) suggests that by far the most critical role of human resource developer/adult educator/andragogue is that of consultant/guide, with the sub-roles of advocate, stimulator, change agent. If he/she perceives him/herself essentially as a teacher (in the traditional sense) administrator, manager of the logistics of learning experiences for collections of individuals, he/she will have little influence on the quality of the learning environment of the organization. Only if the consultant/guide defines his/her client as the total organization and his/her mission as the improvement of its quality as an environment for growth and development, will he/she be able to affect its climate positively.

*Lead.* The Hebrew word is "Nachah." It has the notion of guiding, going in the direction of, turning eyes toward, bringing, just as the pillars of cloud and fire indicated the way to go for the Children of Israel, treating kindly, moving on a path to benefit (Brown, 1979; Zodiates, 1984, 1990). The Greek word for lead is "ago" which forms part of the word "andragogy." It carries with it the same concept as the Hebrew word "Nachah," to lead, bring along gently and without violence which certainly implies the idea of letting the learning process take its natural and due course.

*Example/Way/Model.* The Hebrew word is "Derekh." It means a going, way, journey, walk, road, manner, path, way of life. It refers to the actions and behavior of humans. The word is used to denote some wonderful things which leave no trace that is externally visible to the physical eye, but are as they are because of their nature. The wonderful things are: the way of an eagle in the air, the way of a serpent upon a rock, the way of a ship in the heart of the sea, and, the way of a man with a maid. Looking to the heavens, one cannot say that an eagle has passed there. Looking to the rock, one cannot say that a serpent has wound its way around it. Looking to the high sea, one cannot say that a ship has been steered through it. Looking to the maid, one cannot say that a man has had intercourse with her (Brown, 1979; Zodiates, 1984, 1990). The Greek word "tupos," carries with it the idea of a constituent element of a model of some current reality, or that which is yet to be developed, a pattern to be imitated or copied (Thayer, 1979, 1981; Zodiates, 1984, 1990). Thus, when the suggestion is made that theory and practice needs to be congruent when working in any regard with the development and/or education of adults in every respect, including helping them learn, it would appear, to be the most consistent way in the nature of things, for the way of working with adults to be a process of modeling, setting an example, walking the talk (Knowles, 1990, 1998; Henschke, 1998a & 1998b).

Some of the earmarks indicated of being a model or setting an example are in speech, manner of life, love, and trust. The Zaddik Rabbi is very articulate in making certain that his behavior or manner of life exemplifies and models what is being taught; thus, going so far as to say that he in his very being *is* the teaching (Kopp, undated). A sterling illustration of this principle is found in David Flussers' (1997) description of how he, being an Orthodox Jew, was influenced and stirred by the manner of life and behavior of the Bohemian Brethern in Czechoslovakia who were Christians, to occupy his professorial, scholarly pursuits, at the Hebrew University in Jerusalem, with the person and message of Jesus. He said that this resulted from the fact that these Christians placed such a strong emphasis on the teaching of Jesus and on the early, believing community, and these things coupled with the humane atmosphere in Czechoslovakia at the time he was growing up, that he never experienced any sort of Christian aversion to his Jewish background, and in particular, he never heard any accusation of deicide directed against his -- the Jewish -- people.

*Conclusion*

In this study, an attempt has been made to move closer to another definition of the term "andragogy." This was based on identifying elements others have included in their writings concerning andragogy. In addition, probing into the meanings of some ancient Hebrew words which, as antecedent to the emergence of the term andragogy, may contribute to providing the term with a more comprehensive meaning regarding bringing adults to maturity.

So, possibly andragogy would be a scientific discipline for the study of the theory, processes, technology, and anything else of value and benefit including learning, teaching, instructing, guiding, leading, and modeling/exemplifying a way of life, which would bring adults to their full degree of humaneness.

This may be a more complete description of andragogy, if not qualifying as a definition of the term. However, this could contribute to further enrichment of the concept, and encourage additional probing into this important scientific discipline. The future of this area continues to depend on the research to be conducted.

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