

Andragoški center Republike Slovenije  
Slovene Adult Education Centre

**RETHINKING ADULT EDUCATION  
FOR DEVELOPMENT**

**II.**

**Conference Proceedings**

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## **Workgroup II Pedagogy and Andragogy: Relation between the Education of Children and the Education of Adults**

**Leader of the Group: Jost Reischmann (Germany)**

**Co-leader: John Henschke (United States of America)**

1

Comparative research confirms the global fact that adult education exists as a growing field of practice, comprising learners, "educators", programs, and organizations. The central question under investigation in working group II. was whether on top of this field of practice there exists a set of theories that form a genuine professional, scholarly, academic discipline for the education of adults, in some languages called "andragogy" - and how it relates to "pedagogy".

2

This was the smallest of the four working groups. Does this mean that this question is no longer of priority to the experts? Or that it is solved? That it is unsolvable? Or that it makes little or no difference whether it is solved or not?

3

In our work on the pedagogy/andragogy controversy, we searched for a definition of "pedagogy". A preliminary clarification could be reached by using the Webster-dictionary of the American language that offers two revealing definitions: "pedagogy: art and science of teaching" and "pedagogue. a teacher, esp. a pedantic one" (!)

It seems that many critical discussions of adult educators (including the widely cited list "Comparison of Assumptions and Design Elements of Pedagogy and Andragogy" by Malcolm Knowles 1971) refer to the second connotation, not to the theories that were developed in centuries of pedagogical science. As a result of this discussion, it is recommended for further discussion to discriminate between the two connotations: Do we talk about.

- a) an elaborated scientific discipline, or
- b) a poor/pedantic practice?

The participants agreed that too much adult education today is executed like school-training (or even worse).

## 4

Focusing on the term "andragogy" (which in many countries seems to be known only to the experts) the group shared the experience (which surprisingly was not found in the "Outstanding Experts Studies") that from **outside** (for example teachers, professors of social science, and the public) adult education is not seen as a specific or characteristic field of theory and genuine practice. Andragogy is not perceived as a distinct academic subject and a practice with own characteristics.

From **inside** (professors and experts of adult education) without any doubt and without exception the insiders clearly feel a specific andragogical identity in theory and practice. It is claimed, that

- a) a relatively consistent and reliable body of knowledge exists, and furthermore
- b) this is different from school education

This leads to two conclusions and recommendations to the scientific community of andragogy

4.1 On the strategic level, it seems urgently necessary to make these specifics of andragogy more visible - to claim loudly and clearly a distinct field of practice and theory. In this regard, the "Outstanding Experts Research" could list and group the specifics of adult education identified by the experts, making the main arguments easily available would contribute to the outside and inside identity of andragogy.

4.2 For the internal discussion between andragogy, it was suggested not to limit "pedagogy" unfairly to poor/pedantic practice. Pedagogy as a scientific discipline never claimed to treat children childishly, to make them dependent, or to limit the educational activities to transmission techniques. It seems helpful to check the theories, methods, and research that pedagogy as science of education has developed, and to sort out what is also valuable for adult education.

## 5

Tentatively, some examples are given for these categories

5.1 Specifics of andragogy (pedagogy of little help)

- horizontal relation teacher-learner
- life context of learner and motivation
- focused on "making the learners learn" instead of teaching
- supporting the learners to find their own goals and methods, leaving responsibility on the learners' side

5.2 Specifics of pedagogy (little or no application to andragogy)

- Outside standards, i.e. educational measurement, compulsory curriculum

- school organization, i.e. classes, full-time grades, drop-out
- punishment, behavior problems
- developmental psychology

### 5.3 Pedagogy can be helpful for adult education (but sort out)

- toolbox of methods
- historical experiences, i.e. professionalisation of education
- classical authors (i.e. Comenius, Humboldt, Dewey, ...) dealing with general problems of human education and transformation
- heuristic patterns for educational problems, i.e. controversy of training vs. education, technique of describing objectives, didactical analysis of content.

## 6

The working group could not test whether the developed categories can be used as an analytical structure for question 2 of the "Outstanding Experts Research Project" - but it seems worthwhile to test it

This group decided that the discussion in educational literature on both andragogy and pedagogy warrants continuing scientific inquiry into the contents and underlying concepts and efforts to using and clarifying both terms. Although the term andragogy first originated one hundred and sixty years ago, and the term pedagogy emerged perhaps a hundred years earlier, both refer to the basic human life process "of becoming a person". Continued probing into our foundations could serve us well as we support members (both adults and children) of our global society on their lifelong and lifewide way of learning.