

ANDRAGOGY.

Dear colleagues,

I am working in a "Centre for Andragogic Research". Therefore, my position will be clear for you. For me "Andragogy is not a false or a misleading concept".

1. It is in the first place a very useful one.

1.1. It clarifies things.

During the thirty years I am working in this field, a lot of people asked me "what are you doing for living"? I had to explain what "Andragogy" means. One can think, that's a hard job. But it is a very simple one. I asked them: you know where "pedagogy" stands for? Mostly they say "yes". It concerns the teaching and learning of children. Well, I said, "andragogy" concerns the teaching and learning of adults and my job is seeking the best way to help adults to do so. And they understand. ~~Sometimes they are a little bit frightened. Then, one can read the question in their eyes: "will you send me back to school?" I think, they find that they have better things to do.~~

You see, "Andragogy" is a very simple, clear and useful concept.

But I understand. In a university context, it is a little bit more complicated. A new discipline has to gain a place between the others and that's not always simple. To make things even more complicated, on the Flemish universities, following the Dutch, they introduced terms as "agogy", "social agogy" and "agology".

1.2. "Andragogy" is also a very useful notion because it sounds quite important.

I think, that was one of the reasons why the institute where I am working was named the "Centre for Andragogic Research". Indeed, the founding fathers of my institute had to obtain a subvention from the Government on a fund for "Collective Scientific Research". In such a case it's always indicated to use a word that nobody understands but sounds well. In 1963 only some people know really where "andragogy" stands for. (I had to explain it to my own professor in pedagogy at the university).

"Andragogy" sounds important., (and still it is).

2. Is "andragogy" also a "just" concept? I think so.

2.1. First, let's look to "andragogy" as a philosophical concept.

Prof. M.A.J. LANGEVELD, one of the most influential theoreticians on pedagogy in the Dutch-speaking part of Europe, wrote in his "Beknopte theoretische paedagogiek" (1959) - the object of pedagogy is "helping children and adolescents to become adults" and he mentioned as the object of "andragogy" (that he named an ugly bastard word) "helping adults to be adults". Therefore "adult education" is "different". (p.45), he wrote (X)

LANGVELD M.A.J.: Beknopte theoretische paedagogiek, Groningen, ^{HOUWANS} Wolters, 1959, p. 45.

"ought"

In his view "an adult" is, by definition, a person who has to make his own choices and has full responsibility for his acts. The fact that not everybody at all stages of life behaves as such is not relevant, because "adulthood", in that conception, has a normative meaning. "Adults" (in our culture) "has" to behave as responsible and self-directed people and children "have" to be educated to that end. The educational sciences in his view are at the first place "practical sciences" and therefore also "normative sciences", in the meaning the German philosopher KANT (Theorie der praktischen Vernunft) has given to this notion.

This is not the same as the Dutch concept of "agogy" as shaped by TEN HAVE. (X) Some colleagues, as said, prefer to use the term "social agogy" as a "general notion for the theory of "forming, guiding, helping of social happenings, social behaviour, interpersonal relationships, life in groups and so forth". In fact "agology" can be seen as a meta-discipline about "influencing social systems".

2.2. Second ; "Andragogy" as a political concept.

The idea of "lifelong learning" is in essence a political concept. It says that everybody has, lifelong and for the full breadth of life, the right to learn what he needs to survive and to contribute on the development of the society he belongs. As a consequence of this principle, society has to change their approach of education, as well in profit for the people as for society them self. But, to many people and to many states still see "learning" as a mission for the first period of life and as a question of sending people to schools. The distinction between "pedagogy" and "andragogy" can help to change their mind and lead to a more human and effective approach of helping people "learn" and get mastery about their life.

Further. Politicians, if they see clearly what's happening in the field of education, must know that "adult education" still is and will be the most expanding part of the education system and that they have to investigate in scientific knowledge and theory about this subject.

2.3. Third. "Andragogy" can be seen as a practical concept.

In that sense it stands for a common body of knowledge used by all those working in the field of adult education. This common discipline links the diversity of practices, institutions, activities, client-systems and learners in the field of adult education.

If it becomes a part of the professional identity of all those working in this field, it will enlarge the number of people who can profit from this discipline.

In this way our acceptance of the concept of "andragogy" may also contribute to the process of professionalisation, which is the theme of this conference.

The more all those involved in adult education accept andragogy as a helpful discipline for the work they do, the better the opportunities for the development of the profession.

H. Hinnekint.

(X) T.T. TEN HAVE; KLEIN BESTEK VAN DE AGOLOGIE (???)