

Appendix N

Andragogy in Developing Countries*

Charles Kabuga

Author's note: This is one of the most impassioned statements I have seen for the organization of all of education around the andragogical model in developing countries, particularly in Africa. It is not in itself a case example of an application, but a plea for the application of the andragogical model.

It can be illustrated that education in any society—whether African, European, or any other, which employs the techniques of pedagogy—is oppressive, silencing, and domesticating, among many other ills. For example, there is no doubt in my own mind that because traditional African education was one-way traffic, glorifying the teacher whose wisdom could not be questioned, it oppressed, silenced, and domesticated the learner. Such an education might have produced men with great memories, but not so many men with developed thinking faculties. It appears to me that people who remember most may not necessarily be the ones who think more. While remembering is a backward-looking activity, thinking is a future-looking one, and it is my

* From *Adult Education and Development* (half-yearly Journal for Adult Education in Africa, Asia, and Latin America), September 1977. It was titled, "Why Andragogy?"

conviction that any dynamic society needs more of such future-looking citizens. It is because pedagogy does nothing other than develop the memory of the learner that it is outmoded, either as a tool for the education of children or of adults.

There is no doubt in my mind too that Western education is oppressive, domesticating, and silencing not for any other reason than that it employs the techniques of pedagogy. It is no wonder therefore that white educators themselves have expressed their distrust in this education. Ivan Ilich's *Deschooling Society* (1970) is a typical example of a violent attack on Western education which we are anxious to modify rather than throw overboard. In this book the author advocates that there should be no schools in society, that whoever has a skill to sell should advertise it, and those who wish to learn it should apply.

Whether such pedagogically conceived education is locally consumed or is exported to other countries as it was to Africa, it still retains its oppressive characteristics. However, it is worse when it is exported than when it stays in its natural habitat.

Oppression at the Level of Content and Techniques

It is worse abroad because it oppresses at two levels: (1) *the level of content* and, like all pedagogically conceived education, at (2) *the level of techniques*. Consider the white man's content of education in Africa, for example. The white man stressed the empire where the sun never set but not the Great Sudanic Kingdoms. The white man taught the greatness of the Duke of Wellington and the barbarism of Shaka the Zulu. Such irrelevant, ethnocentric information devalued and demoralized the knowledge of the old men with their accumulated relevant experiences. The white man's irrelevant and alien information violated a basic educational principle—that of learning from the known to the unknown. We started with the unknown and we have remained in the unknown. The violation of this principle therefore meant that we were turned into human tape recorders or meaningless and static pieces of knowledge.

Meaningless as it was, the converted young African teachers reaped large economic and social benefits from teaching the content of the white man's education. To learn, or rather to cram, the white man's content of education became such a profitable industry that all the Africans hankered after it. In turn, this devalued the content of traditional African education. Even today, many of us seem to be happy that our children speak English better than they speak the mother tongue.

In Africa, therefore, we should be unhappy about this education not only at the level of content but also at the level of techniques. Unfortunately, because the content of our education is alien, we seem to have concentrated more on

its modification than on the modification of techniques. For example, we have been very anxious to include in our curriculum subjects like agriculture as though it is possible to turn out farmers from school gardens. If we wish to rid our education of its crippling characteristics, we must show equal concern for both the content and the techniques. As far as I am concerned, Africanizing the syllabus does not liberate the learner as long as the techniques used carry with them oppressive, domesticating, and silencing characteristics. Thus, any content transmitted pedagogically is incapable of being useful or functioning or liberating. It is incapable because such content of education merely gets stored in the heads of learners and awaits recollection at an appropriate moment. Such content may be likened to undigested food. Just as food builds our bodies when we have digested it and made it a part of us, the educational content we acquire becomes useful when it helps us solve the problems we meet through our processes of growth and development. Pedagogy, with its techniques of narrating, receiving, memorizing, and repeating, prevents the digestion of the content, particularly the alien content, so that it is not used. We need new techniques.

Before thinking about such new techniques, we have to be absolutely clear about what we want out of education. It will be only then that we shall look for techniques which will give us what we want. We can, however, straight-away say that unlike the case of pedagogy, the new techniques have to be premised both on the dynamic nature of society and that of the students and teachers—all of whom are in a constant process of maturation. These techniques must lead the learner to the realization of the most important thing education can give.

In my view, the most important thing education can give to anyone is "how to learn." This concept is beautifully illustrated by the words of a great Chinese poet by the name of Kuan Tzu who once said:

If you give a man a fish, he will have a single meal.
If you teach him how to fish, he will eat all his life.

Life is such an endless research problem that no student can ever come out of any educational institution with ready-made solutions to it. The best that a student can hope to come out with are the techniques of learning and thinking about any problem life might present. With such techniques, the student will have been prepared to manage life on his own and discover new knowledge for himself. Then, it will be easy for him with such techniques to see the relationship of things and facts which were otherwise isolated and meaningless. These techniques will be his master-key both to the doors of life and the rooms of ignorance where the light of knowledge must shine.

Why Andragogy?

Unlike pedagogy, which is premised on a static culture, andragogy is premised on a dynamic culture. This is so because of the dynamic learner characteristics on which andragogy is built. Of the adult learner characteristics, I wish to address myself to only three, the instructional implications of which appear more difficult to apply to the education of children. The first one of these is that of *self-concept*.

Simply put, self-concept is the image each one of us has of himself. As each person grows, his self-concept moves from being a dependent personality to a self-directing one. Increasingly, we become autonomous individuals capable of taking decisions and facing their consequences. We resent being treated as if we were children. Because of such self-concepts, Knowles [1970, 1973] observes that no adult learner will ever learn under conditions incongruent with his self-concept.

In such a situation, andragogy recommends that the learner be allowed to participate in diagnosing his educational needs, planning his experiences, and developing a suitable learning climate.

It might be argued that these andragogical techniques cannot be employed in the education of children who, after all, are dependent personalities—at least physically and emotionally. These techniques may further be considered unsuitable on the grounds that children cannot be involved in the diagnosis of their needs and the planning of their educational experiences because they are too young to know their needs and their experiences are limited.

In my view, the school strikes, riots, rebellions, and all the abundant discipline problems in classrooms together with the cry for involvement in the university decision-making processes by students largely stem from lack of recognition of the self-concept of students. It is my submission that because it recognizes this learner characteristic, andragogy becomes a relevant and meaningful tool in education at all levels.

Unfortunately, we have shied away from it with regard to youth education and as a consequence done irreparable harm to the creativity of our children that comes with the development of the self-concept. In spite of their rebellions and strikes, children have failed to liberate themselves from the horrors of pedagogy simply because we have tamed them with either the stick or the carrot of a desired career. Because self-concept is so closely linked with intrinsic motivation, techniques which do not exploit it, at any level, are ineffective educational tools. As I see it, the techniques of andragogy are capable of adequately exploiting the learner's self-concept. This being so, these techniques should be employed at all levels of education because children see themselves as self-directing fairly early in life.

Experience is the second characteristic of the adult learner that I propose to discuss. It is argued that because the adult has lived longer than the child he has a variety of experiences which make him a rich resource in the class. In order to exploit this educational resource, andragogy requires techniques like work conferences, group discussions, seminars, field projects, and consultative supervision. In this way, the learners and teachers share experience to the advantage of all.

Such techniques may appear inapplicable to the education of children because it is difficult to imagine seminars and conferences for children. However, let it be said that children, like adults, have experiences, and each child is definitely a rich resource. Where pedagogy went wrong was to require children to learn adult experiences which children never appreciated because they did not understand these experiences. What needs to be pointed out is that just as adults may benefit from the experiences of their fellow adults, children will also benefit from the experiences of their fellow children. As a matter of fact, children learn more (at least horizontally) from their peers than they learn from adults. By using the techniques of andragogy, peer learning will be greatly enhanced and made more meaningful and rewarding. And these techniques can be used in the education of children because andragogy does not over-emphasize the student contributions. Rather, it invites a dialogue between the teacher and the learner and between learner and learner with the teacher serving as a guide, a resource person, and a manipulator of the environment in order for the learner to be afforded experiences appropriate to his needs and potentialities.

In youth education, just like in the education of adults, the teacher has to discover the language of the learner in order for him to pitch what he wants to teach at the level of the experiences of the learner. Without first discovering the language of their experiences, the teacher will merely be turning the learner—child or adult—into a receptacle of the meaningless words of the teacher. Learners will inevitably be tongue-tied, for the words in the experience of the teacher are alien to them. By way of an illustration, it was only after Paolo Freire [1970] had discovered that he should go to the people in order to discover the words in their universe which he used to write ABC primers for them that he was able to teach them how to read and write in 45 days. Otherwise, the other primers written in words from Freire's universe were meaningless to the learners. Discovering the universe of adults, therefore, is just as important, necessary and possible as discovering the universe of children if our teaching is to be liberating.

The third learner characteristic I wish to discuss is that of *time perspective*. Because most adults learn in order to be equipped to overcome problems which current-life situations present, they wish to put to immediate use what they learn. They are mostly motivated to learn because they are seeking solu-

tions to the problems they encounter in their roles as parents, workers, citizens, and so on.

In this regard, andragogy recommends that teachers of adults be people-centered rather than being subject-matter-centered and, as such, the subject matter concept of curricula should give way to one which is problem-centered. Andragogy further recommends that the starting point for every learning situation ought to be the problems which the learners have on their minds.

It might be argued that since the problems of children are taken care of by their parents, children are not so much motivated to learn in order to overcome problems of current-life situations. As such, children are considered to have a perspective of postponed application of what they learn. Consequently, it may be argued that in their case we can afford a curriculum of seven or eight subjects rather than a curriculum of problem areas.

Further, it might be argued that since their problems are taken care of by the adult world, children have no problems with which teachers can start as in the education of adults.

Let it be emphasized that if this learner characteristic holds true for adults, it also holds true for children. One may ask: Are we sure that the children do not wish to apply immediately what they learn? Are we adults not the ones who have decided that children should be stores of information in the hope that it will be useful to them at some future date? And what is wrong with children applying what they have learned immediately? What is wrong with using problem-centered ways in teaching children? If the aim of education is to develop the children to think, must we not systematically and consciously teach for transfer through formulating trial problems for children to solve? Are we not aware that such problem-solving activities for young children lead to new learning?

Conclusions

In my estimation the few inventors Africa has had are not necessarily a creation of the white man's education. They invented even though education did not use the techniques of andragogy. The pedagogical methods of postponed application killed our interests to be creative. That is why we must go barefoot when we export our hides and skins. We must either wear nylon or dress shoddily because we export our excellent cotton. We must import glue because we throw away the hoofs of the animals we butcher. We must import buttons because we cannot make them. We must import barley for beer brewing because we do not see the value of sorghum. We must import plastic toys because we cannot see how rich our environment is. We must borrow colors

to name our things as though our vegetation does not have all these colors. We are poor because the products of our education have no respect for local things. We are consumers rather than producers because we are parrots rather than thinkers.

It is a fact that all of us have been disillusioned by this Western-type education. We have attempted to modify it to serve our needs. Unfortunately, by trying to adapt it to our habitat, we have made it impossible to think afresh about an education that will save and serve us.

As I see it, true education may be found in andragogy. Accordingly, I invite all serious-minded educators to examine it and give it the appraisal it deserves. For me, the advantages of andragogy are many. First, it is a double-barreled gun with tremendous potential for liberating both youths and adults to believe in themselves, to think and to create. Second, by inviting a dialogue between the teacher and the taught, it puts an end to the long-standing problem of teacher-student contradiction where, in the words of Freire, "the teacher teaches and the students are taught; the teacher knows everything and the students know nothing; the teacher thinks and the students are thought about . . . [1970, p. 59]. Andragogy, therefore, shatters the myth that knowledge is the private property of teachers. Because it rightly assumes that no teacher can really teach in the sense of make a person learn, andragogy believes that one person merely helps another person learn.

The third advantage of andragogy is that it does not divide education into compartments of adult and youth education. It means helping human beings learn. With it, education is a meaningful whole seeking to exploit the best in a human being at whatever age he is. It seeks to utilize all sources of information and rejects the myth that the written word is the only source of information. With andragogy, therefore, it is possible to educate without necessarily making people literate for immediate social and economic development. It is only after we have weaned ourselves from falsely equating knowledge and learning with schools and have acquired skills of how to learn that we shall become self-directed learners making use of any resources available to turn ourselves into fully functioning, liberated human beings.

Bibliography

- Adams-Webber, J. R. *Personal Construct Theory: Concepts and Application*. New York: Wiley-Interscience, 1979.
- Adult Education Association. *Adult Learning*. Washington, D.C.: Adult Education Association, 1965.
- _____. *Processes of Adult Education*. Washington, D.C.: Adult Education Association, 1965.
- _____. *Psychology of Adults*. Washington, D.C.: Adult Education Association, 1963.
- Alford, H. J. *Continuing Education in Action: Residential Centers for Lifelong Learning*. New York: Wiley, 1968.
- Allender, J. S. "New Conceptions of the Role of the Teacher." *The Psychology of Open Teaching and Learning*. Edited by M. L. Silberman, et al. Boston: Little, Brown, 1972.
- Allport, Gordon. *Becoming*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 1955.
- _____. *Pattern and Growth in Personality*. New York: Holt, Rinehart, and Winston, 1961.
- _____. *Personality and Social Encounter*. Boston: Beacon, 1960.
- Anderson, Scarvia, et al. *Encyclopedia of Educational Evaluation*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 1974.