In defence of andragogy

Frank Milligan

This paper supports the continued use of the term andragogy in Project 2000 nurse education programmes. It is argued that the theory of andragogy, and its supporting philosophy, methods, and research, are consistent with both the means and ends of contemporary nurse education. Some of the recent pressure felt in relation to use of alternative terms, such as critical pedagogy, are linked to wider socio-political influences and it is argued that it is essentially a sign of the times that andragogy has now come under threat. The call, from some, for a return to pedagogy is also seen as an attempt to reassert an increased degree of control over the student by those educationalists. This article is also a response to the article by Philip Darbyshire (1993) which questions the viability and relevance of the term andragogy.

INTRODUCTION

During the initial stages of a re-validation process for a Project 2000 course moves were made to drop the term andragogy as it was seen as a poorly defined and unnecessary theory. It was argued by some that it could be replaced by a form of pedagogy. The article by Philip Darbyshire (1993), and the critical pedagogy of Paulo Freire were used as evidence to substantiate such a move. I prepared a paper supporting the continued use of andragogy and this article represents the points put forward in that discussion paper and is an exploration of other issues generated through the debate that subsequently took place.

After briefly exploring the theory of andragogy, and criticism made of it and the work of Malcolm Knowles, its relationship between the nursing concept of care and pedagogy/andragogy is explored along with the issue of student-centred education. After conceptualis-

ing andragogy as a discrete area within the broad field of pedagogy the work of Paulo Freire is examined as an example of the diverse nature of pedagogy.

ANDRAGOGY

Andragogy has become a well-known term in adult education associated with a particular approach to the education of adults (Knowles 1985, Sweeney 1986, ENB 1987, Ho 1991 Savicevic 1991, Nielson 1992). It has broad roots that encompass European origins (Nottingham Andragogy Group 1983, Savicevic 1991), although the perceived need for a specialist field of adult education goes back to the time of Ancient Greece (Savicevic 1991). Malcolm Knowles is the name most commonly associated with andragogy and his explanations have come in for criticism by several different authors (Nottingham Andragogy Group 1983, Jarvis 1984, Darbyshire 1993). Knowles is occasionally attributed with sole development of the theory (Jarvis 1984).

Details of the underlying principles of andragogy can be found elsewhere (Nottingham Andragogy Group 1983, Knowles 1990, Nielson 1992, ENB 1987). From these authors the key elements of andragogy might be summarized thus: facilitation of adult learning that can best be achieved through a student-centred approach that, in a developmental manner, enhances the student's self concept, promotes autonomy, self-direction and critical thinking, reflects on experience and involves the learner in the diagnosis, planning, enaction and evaluation of their own learning needs. There are variations in interpretation from a European perspective and these can be found in Savicevic (1991).

The perceived need for nursing curricula to move towards an andragogical approach was made clear by the English National Board (ENB) (1987). Broad support appeared to be given to such moves although the artificial dichotomy used by the ENB, of pedagogy – andragogy, rather detracted from the validity of their approach.

CRITICISM OF ANDRAGOGY

There is ongoing debate on many educational issues and andragogy is no exception, with a variety of authors questioning either the viability of andragogy as an educational theory or the details of its exact nature. The Nottingham Andragogy Group (1983) were dissatisfied with

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elements of Knowles' construction and so systematically developed their own which had a firmer base in developmental psychology. They also supported their work with the pedagogy of Paulo Freire. The Group were clear that their construction of andragogy had been guided by a wide range of research and theory. Their model was also developed using an action research approach and so reflected ongoing evaluations of its effectiveness.

Both Jarvis (1985) and Darbyshire (1993), like the Nottingham Andragogy Group, were critical of the developmental differences between adults and children described by Knowles although substantial clarification on this matter is given by the Nottingham Group.

Further criticism has been made in relation to the initial dichotomy Knowles created when contrasting the aims and methods of pedagogy with those of andragogy (Darbyshire 1993). Knowles does acknowledge in his later writings that this was an early error (Knowles 1990, Nielson 1992). Of particular issue was the self-motivation that adults were seen as possessing in contrast to children. The examples cited, by Darbyshire, of children's enthusiasm and self-motivation in education are similar to those given by Knowles, who latterly accepted that self-direction and autonomy, in the learning process for children, was a positive move. The issues of self-direction and autonomy, in the education of children, can be reviewed further in Cohen (1983). The term pedagogy does not relate solely, in its usage, to the education of children, as will be shown. This point is pursued with some vigour by Darbyshire (1993) and also by Cohen (1993).

Darbyshire was also critical of the qualitative differences in experience adults were seen to have over children in andragogy. However, the impression gained from reading Knowles (1985, 1990) is that it is the *quantity* of experience that is seen as significantly different and not the quality (see also Nielson 1992).

The argument put forward by both Jarvis (1985) and Darbyshire (1993), with regard to

Knowles' linkage of adult motivation to learning matters related mostly to their own work, does appear to be implicitly conservative – consistent with what is often termed the *work ethic*. My own experience in education leads me to suggest that motivation often leads to learning being pursued in areas that are, at times, quite unrelated to work yet positive for the individual.

Jarvis (1984) also highlights the similarities between andragogy and the romantic curriculum as described by curriculum theorists such as Lawton (1983). Within a romantic curriculum classification and framing, concepts introduced by Bernstein (see also Webb 1981), are such that curriculum subject matter is integrated and both students and tutors have some control over both its delivery and ongoing development. Such notions appear consistent with the aims of Project 2000 curricula (French & Cross 1992). Jarvis (1984) argues that andragogy is 'an incompletely formulated theory of the romantic curriculum'. However, it is argued here that it is perhaps more accurate to conceptualise it as a discrete theory of adult education (Savicevic 1991) that is consistent with many aspects of a progressive romantic curriculum.

Rather than perpetuating the dichotomy of andragogy–pedagogy, it is perhaps practical to conceptualise andragogy as a field within the broad concept of pedagogy (Savicevic 1991). Such a view is shown in Figure 1. Definitions of 'pedagogy' given by the *Oxford English Dictionary* (2nd ed, 1989) – it does not cite andragogy – include, 'The art and science of teaching', 'The work or occupation of teaching'.

Although such a view appears practical, in that discussions made under the heading of pedagogy may still be used within an andragogical approach (for example the use of Freire's pedagogy by the Nottingham Andragogy Group), it is important to separate andragogy from other methods that fall under the broad remit of adult education. For example, the recent government led moves towards vocational training may or may not include
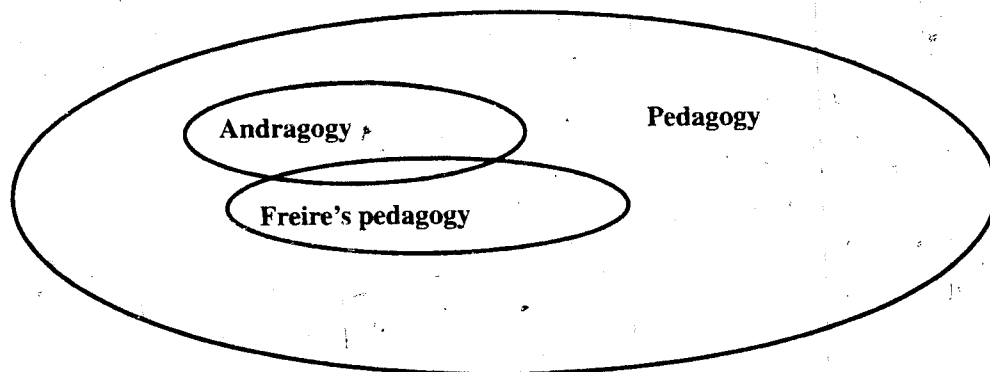

Fig. 1. The relationship between the broad field of pedagogy and those of andragogy and the work of Freire.
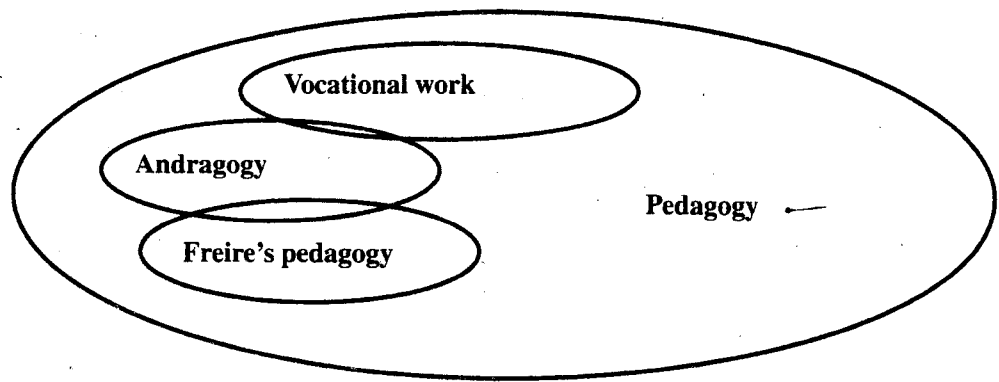
Fig. 2. The relationship between the broad field of pedagogy, andragogy, Freire and vocational work.

methods that are consistent with the theory of andragogy. There are in any case significant philosophical differences between training and education (Moore 1986), and vocationalisation is not education (Quicke 1989). These other forms of education, for example vocational, could also be drawn within pedagogy (see Fig. 2) although their philosophical status as education or training is debateable.

ANDRAGOGY AND CARE

One of the important arguments pursued by Darbyshire (1993) was the link between pedagogy and care. The concept of caring and its relevance to the nurse educator is reviewed in Paterson & Crawford (1994) who demonstrate, through their analysis, what a complex issue this is. Amongst the many characteristics described by Moore (1986) in his philosophical analysis of education, an educated person is said to possess (in the normative sense) intellectual abilities that have been developed so that they are sensitive to matters of moral and aesthetic concern. These seem consistent with the characteristics of a person disposed to care, supporting Darbyshire's argument in the sense that pedagogy is concerned with sensitivity and awareness. However, issues related to the nursing concept of care have also been linked to the theory of andragogy.

Examination of the salient features of andragogy, as described in the model put forward by the Nottingham Andragogy Group '(1983), show some consistency with modern descriptions of care. These features are:

- Non-prescription
- Issue centred
- Problem posing and knowledge creation
- Continuous negotiation
- Shared individual and group responsibility for learning
- Valuing process as part of learning

- Equality
- Trust, openness, care and commitment
- Mutual respect
- Integrated thinking and learning.
        (Nottingham Andragogy Group 1983)

Parallels between these features and the concept of care can be found in the work of Boykin & Schoenhofer (1990). In their analysis of care they highlight issues such as mutual respect that, 'teaches us how to be human by identifying ourselves with others' (Watson, cited in Boykin & Schoenhofer 1990). The features of trust, openness, commitment and negotiation are also to be found in the analysis by these authors.

Although Darbyshire's assertion that pedagogy is fundamentally caring appears accurate there seems little doubt that both humanism and care have been lacking in many educational processes undertaken under the banner of pedagogy (Cohen 1993). A historical fictional account of such experiences is given by Dickens in *Hard Times* (originally published in 1854) and Heron warns of the '... unprocessed distress caused by having been victims of oppressive educational methods...' (Heron 1989). Freire (1987), as it will be shown, also emphasises the potentially oppressive nature of pedagogy.

Burnard (1991) argues that andragogy in nurse education is consistent, in terms of the relationship developed between the student and the facilitator, with that required of the practitioner. Sweeney goes on to warn that if the traditional asymmetrical power relationship in favour of tutors is not questioned, 'clinical practice will further suffer through a mirroring of the asymmetrical power relationship between teacher and student in nurse/patient interaction' (Sweeney 1986). The consistency that andragogy displays in relation to the concept of care, and the advantages in terms of mirroring the dynamics of the nurse/patient relationship, add weight to the usage of andragogy in nurse education. Such consistency,

between educational and practice methods, is expounded by Cohen: 'Education within nursing must be congruent with the values of caring and reflect the human care paradigm' (Cohen 1993).

THE PEDAGOGY OF FREIRE

To support the argument put forward here, that pedagogy is diverse in nature, I will briefly examine the views of Paulo Freire whose pedagogy is frequently cited as pertinent to nurse education (Cohen 1993). Freire's *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* (1985) is similar in many ways to the approach to education broadly supported through andragogy (the term is not used by Freire). His influential educational work took place mainly in South American countries such as Brazil, Nicaragua and Chile from the 1960s onwards (Mayo 1993) and an understanding of this background, including involvement with the Catholic Radical Movement, is important in making sense of his views (Styler 1984). He sought to liberate the oppressed from the domestication imposed by their oppressors through a Liberating Education that '... places emphasis on participation and dialogue, horizontal relations between educator and educatee, a problem posing education ...' (Mayo 1993). Teachers '... pose the problems they see as a result of their knowledge' (Styler 1984). Freire supported strongly the notion that the educational is political, and his approach and terminology, including reference to praxis (Freire 1985), demonstrate his alignment with a South American Christian Marxist philosophy. Early in his career he referred to Che Guevara as, '... one of the great models of a self-effacing teacher' (Freire 1978).

Freire makes it clear that pedagogy can be used as a method of establishing control over individuals for essentially political purposes. His banking concept of education is often cited. In such a pedagogic approach the teacher deposits the information in the student without dialogue; he warned that knowing is not eating facts (Freire 1987). This *banking* form of education represents *adaptation* to the world rather than *transformation* of the world (Cohen 1993). In the latter knowledge is no longer static and becomes more personal and valuable, and therefore more consistent with the aims of modern nurse education (French & Cross 1992). Furthermore, the concept of transformation is also seen as central to the andragogical process (Mezirow 1983).

The point behind briefly describing Freire's work here is not to unduly criticise it, for I broadly support both his educational methods and his sociological views, but to highlight the fact that it is a specific form of pedagogy (within the broader remit of pedagogy as the art and science of teaching), very similar in its aims to andragogy. Furthermore, his work can be used within an andragogical approach, as shown by the Nottingham Andragogy Group (1983).

ANDRAGOGY, A SIGN AND A VICTIM OF THE TIMES

Having thus far given support to andragogy, and showed the specific nature of Freire's pedagogy, it is now necessary to examine the possible motivation behind current criticisms of andragogy.

Significantly, Jarvis notes that andragogy took off in the 1960s when 'the romantic curriculum and ideas of knowledge for the sake of self-development and self-expression became the vogue, experience and project work became commonplace, the integrated day became a way of life in some schools' (Jarvis 1984). It was, as he calls it, 'a sign of the times' in that andragogy reflected, and was consistent with, its contemporary social context, although it would also have been a significant challenge to more traditional educational views common at that time and, as I will show, still common today.

What then might today's 'times' be considered to be. We live in the wake of the 'Post-Thatcherite Philistine Hurricane' (a term used in the arts section of *The 'Guardian* newspaper shortly after her resignation), an era that devalued (and *The Guardian* and others argued damaged) the arts and more liberal forms of education. There are, of course, the persistent references to 'Back to Basics', which in educational terms seem to imply a move away from radical/liberal educational methods, although little, if any, clarification is given on what such methods might be. The strict control of curriculum content achieved through the National Curriculum and the assessments that go with it mitigate against recent moves towards a more student centred approach; a direct consequence of the influence of the New Right in education (Quicke 1989). The emphasis on defined outcomes, as opposed to educational process, is perhaps a manifestation of the institutionalised ideology of behaviourism that Mezirow (1983) warns pervades both education (Bevis & Murray 1990) and psychology. Behaviourism has a historical association with pedagogy: no such links can be argued for andragogy. A symptom of this behaviourism, in nurse education, may be found in the work of Ashworth & Morisson (1991) who have argued that the def-

inition of competence, a concept of some significance to nursing, has been adversely influenced by a behaviourist approach and they point to the Government as broadly encouraging this.

Evidence that both classification and framing in Project 2000 courses have become more rigid and defined (NFER 1992, Sweet 1992), suggest that in the uncertainty generated by this curriculum innovation, control was sought at the expense of process. Specific outcomes were given priority and the andragogical approach valued by the ENB (1987), and the other authors cited here, suffered (NFER 1992, Sweet 1992). It seems that the broader socio–political climate may already be affecting Project 2000 course curricula and the definition of competence.

The value of process in education, an integral part of andragogy, is rather clouded when comments from the United Kingdom Central Council (UKCC) are examined – *'Today's rules are concerned with outcomes*, not with the process by which those outcomes are to be achieved' (UKCC 1986, original emphasis). Such a view is inconsistent with the promotion of andragogy as published the following year by the ENB (1987).

Furthermore, the issue of control and the movement of increasing amounts of control, in the educational process, towards nursing students over the last decade, which includes the increasing use of experiential and student centred teaching methods, is continuing to cause tensions for some educationalists. This change of focus, from teacher towards student, has mirrored similar moves in the nurse/patient relationship. Primary nursing and the value of partnership in the nurse/patient relationship being examples (Bayntun-Lees 1992). Could it be, therefore, that the questioning of andragogy is also an expression of a perceived need to re-establish control in the student/educator relationship. Such control would be consistent with what many educators would have been familiar with in their own previous education, practice and management experience (Cook 1991). The exposure to didactic methods perhaps held attractions for some who subsequently went into nurse education (Dennison & Kirk 1990).

Bevis & Murray (1990) warn that effecting changes in educational attitudes and philosophy is notoriously difficult and the ENB (1987) anticipated such problems in producing the *Managing Change* packs. Cook (1991) supports this argument through an analysis of issues pertinent to the theory-practice gap in nursing. Examining some of the literature on the gap and the socialisation pressures on students in the practice areas. Cook argues that educational methods can be directed at meeting the needs of the educator rather than the needs of the student. The same has been argued for practice where the needs of the nurse and the institution can be met at the expense of the patient (Cook 1991).

Consideration should also be given to the potential effects the move into higher education has had on some of the issues raised here. With high student numbers and the more didactic methods that are common in such institutions, student centredness and the value of experiential methods may not be regarded as highly as is often the case in nurse education. Support is given to this notion by Savicevic who, in explaining the comparatively limited use of andragogy in this country compared to our European neighbours, noted: 'British sources reveal the least amount of data on andragogy. The reasons for this may be sought in the traditional conception of teaching' (Savicevic 1991).

CONCLUSION

To conclude, the following points are put forward in this paper. Andragogy is an educational theory supported by literature, research and the ENB. It is also a concept with substantial European meaning. Under the banner of andragogy, a great deal of positive change has been achieved in adult education since the 1960s and in nurse education in the last decade. The more central role of students in their own educational process is perhaps the best example of this. It is a practical educational theory that, I feel, has meaning for many nurse educationalists of today. It is consistent with the concept of care and mirrors, in terms of relationships, that which is commonly sought in nursing practice. It can be conceptualised as a discrete field within pedagogy and represents a continuing challenge to all those involved in nurse education. We need to reflect critically on our own motivation, and the methods we use, and whether it is students' needs that we are meeting when we suggest change, or our own. For these reasons the value of debate put forward by Darbyshire (1993) is questioned as is the continuing portrayal of pedagogy and andragogy as a dichotomy.

Jarvis (1985) makes it clear that education cannot be separated out from the wider socio–political climate (similar support is given by Freire (1987) and Mayo (1993)), and in the light of the pressures described here it is hardly surprising that andragogy is strongly questioned at this point in time. The recent hesitancy with regard to continuing use of andragogy is a sign of the times, and there seems to be little sub-

stantive evidence to support such reservations. If we wish to be consistent, as educationalists, with the views and warnings put forward by Jarvis (1985) and Freire (1978, 1985, 1987, Mayo 1993), then we must be politically aware and active in our defence of educational methods that we find useful and appropriate, yet are politically unfashionable or perhaps too challenging, in the wider socio–political context. Not to act in such a way would perhaps turn us into the blundering rhinoceroses that Freire (Mayo 1993) cites as a product of the domestication imposed by oppressors.

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