

Chapter 4

A Productive Decade of Andragogy's History and Philosophy: 2000–2009

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ABSTRACT

With the foundation of andragogy having been laid, there was a serious attempt at investigating its value. Some felt that a broad scope was established in the practice to support growth in learners, with any mention of adult learning needing to include andragogy. Others perceived that andragogy produced unproductive debates along a binary path, with its being too caught up in individualization, the politics of exclusion, conformity, and de-contextualizing adult learning. However, some research revealed numerous dimensions of andragogy. The connection with distance learning became very strong and solid. New applications of andragogy were spawned into foreign language learning, internet learning, validation of the adult instructor's perspective, the public school, emotional intelligence, and an interlinking with brain research. The long range projection of andragogy saw a strong resurgence in numerous research papers being put forward through conferences and publications with the world-wide foundation being established thorough documentation of the materials. Savicevic looks far into the future and credits Knowles with a meritorious place in the advancement of andragogy. Many new applications over an extensive period of time were increasing.

4.1 INTRODUCTION

As the History and Philosophy of Andragogy continues to unfold and its dimensions become more visible, some scholars may move beyond just focusing on the pros and cons of Malcolm

S. Knowles' involvement with it. The first 167 years since its inception helped to establish the foundation. The last ten years that andragogy has been discussed, will reveal its being extensively researched and indicate how it has informed much of the practice of adult education. The extent of literature written about and/or published on andragogy shows about an equal balance in volume

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between the initial 167 years (from 1833 into the beginning of 2000) and the next decade (from early in the year 2000 through a major part of the year 2009)—a decade of productivity.

4.2 INVESTIGATING ANDRAGOGY'S VALUE 2000-2003

Billington (2000) found a number of key andragogical factors that were very valuable in helping adults grow and if absent made them not grow and in fact regress. Those factors were: a class environment of respect; their abilities and life achievements acknowledged; intellectual freedom, self-directed learning, experimentation and creativity encouraged; learner treated fairly and as an intelligent adult; class time intellectually challenging; interaction promoted with instructor and between students; and, regular feedback from instructor.

Rachal (2000) discovered little empirical evidence that andragogy provides better results from learning than other approaches. However, he identified from nineteen empirical studies, insights that may contribute toward helping establish criteria for an operational definition of andragogy suitable for implementation in future empirical studies of andragogy.

Likewise, Gehring (2000) was concerned about applying principles of andragogy in the correctional setting. His tentative conclusion affirmed that although not all residents of correctional settings are ready to take full responsibility for their learning; there are some who are. These mature students, who deserve recognition as whole persons, will benefit from having the facilitator apply andragogical principles in their learning activities. Although residents of correctional situations are frequently 'late bloomers', they are quite capable of learning and maturing.

Taylor et al. (2000) in their near 400 page volume, asserts that "...no discussion of approaches to teaching adults would be complete without

mention of *andragogy...*" (p. 359), the approach developed by Knowles, who in their estimation combined it with constructivism, humanistic and cognitivist learning. Added to this, were andragogical assumptions about the design of learning, principles, characteristics, key successful factors, learner motivation, motivation barriers, curriculum design, and teaching delivery in the classroom.

To the arguments that question the value of Knowles' approach to andragogy, Maehl (2000), in addressing the philosophical orientations of a number of adult educators, suggests that Knowles led in the direction of making andragogy quite humanistic that gained wide adoption in the field. This also was fused with other philosophies, particularly in human resource development applications. He also emphasized that Knowles elaborated his ideas of self-directed learning within the context of andragogy. This influenced a generation of adult educators, through his sensitive and nurturing spirit, to adopt the practice of andragogy broadly. What drew and maintained a strong following was what Maehl described Knowles as advocating:

An adult learning program should facilitate access by providing easy approach, a welcoming environment, supportive services, and adaptability to individual circumstances. The program should establish a friendly climate of learning for adults, both in a physical facility that is suitable and in a psychological environment that is warm, mutually respectful, trusting, supportive, and collaborative. The program should involve learners in diagnosing their learning needs, setting learning goals, designing a plan of learning, managing the learning experience, and evaluating learning outcomes. An important device for accomplishing all these steps in learner involvement is the learning contract that a learner and teacher, or facilitator, develop mutually. Knowles also believed the process should be characterized by respectful acknowledgment of the learner's previous experience; adaptability to changes in the learner's circumstances during the

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