

Pedagogy or Andragogy: What's the Difference?

*"None but the truly humble become good teachers of adults."
~ R.Gessner*

Modern dictionary definitions of pedagogy highlight the art of teaching or training (The Free Dictionary, 2011). Malcolm Knowles (2005) further characterizes pedagogy as the "art or science of teaching children" (p. 61) based on the Greek origin of the word. The term pedagogy derives from the Greek word *paid*, meaning "child," and *agougos*, meaning "leader of." Very literally then, pedagogue means "leader of children." The pedagogical model allocates full responsibility to the teacher for what subject will be learned, how it will be learned, and ultimately whether the concept has been learned by the student. Based on assumptions of learning and teaching evolved in European monastic and cathedral schools between the seventh and twelfth centuries, pedagogy is the educational model from which most U.S. schools, including higher education, derive.

Basic Premises of Pedagogy

- Learners only need to know what the instructor teaches. The basic purpose for learning the material is to pass the course. Learners do not need to understand how what they are learning will apply to their lives outside the classroom.
- The instructor's perception of the learner is that of a dependent entity. Therefore, the learner begins to see himself as a dependent entity.
- The learner's previous knowledge is of little consequence as a resource for learning. The essential components of the learning process are the teacher, the textbook, and supplemental educational materials.

- Learners become ready to learn what the instructor tells them they must learn to succeed in the course.
- Learners organize information according to subject matter. Instructors must organize material in a logical manner.
- Learners are motivated by external factors (e.g., parental or instructor approval, good grades).

Pedagogical standards seem appropriate in the first years of an individual's learning process.

However, as the individual matures the need for external direction diminishes, therefore assumptions of the appropriateness of the pedagogical model decrease significantly as the individual ages. Consequently, exploration of specific assumptions about adult development and learning emerged (Knowles, et al., 2005).

The first historic use of the term "andragogy" was by German high school teacher Alexander Kapp in 1833. Although Kapp did not develop a theory of andragogical principles, he did describe learning as a necessary lifelong process in his book *Plato's Educational Ideas*. Kapp argues that self-reflection, intrinsic motivation, and higher self-efficacy is the purpose of human life and learning happens not only through instructors but also through life experience. In 1968, Malcolm S. Knowles developed the theory of andragogy and published an article entitled *Andragogy. Not Pedagogy*, which established him as the leading theorist on adult education in the United States (Reischmann, 2011). Knowles' theories emphasize the adult learner as self-directed, intrinsically motivated, and possessing relevant previous knowledge in most learning scenarios. The assumptions of the andragogical model differ significantly from those of the pedagogical model.

Basic Premises of Andragogy

- Adults need to understand why they need to learn something. The information has to have meaning for their lives and be of some applicable benefit.
- Adults are self-directed and have a deep psychological need to be acknowledged by others as capable of self-direction.
- Adults arrive in learning scenarios with a wider variety of knowledge and experience than children. This previous knowledge can be of assistance in a new learning situation but can also be a hindrance if it results in the individual being less open to new concepts. In either case, adults expect their prior experience to be acknowledged.
- Adults are task-centered learners. They become ready to learn subject matter based on the need for certain learning in order to cope with their lives.
- Although adults respond to external motivators like promotions or higher salaries, they are more motivated by intrinsic factors like self-esteem, job satisfaction, and quality of life (Knowles, et al., 2005).

The principles and assumptions of andragogy are constantly studied and refined. Although most educational institutions are established according to the pedagogical model, theorists and educators are realizing the need for alternative forms of practice in the adult learning process. Adults learn differently than children, are motivated to learn for different reasons, and view themselves as “learned learners.” Andragogical practices support the more mature characteristics of adults and foster self-efficacy and higher learning.

References

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