

Chapter 18

Paradigm Shifts in the Pedagogical Approaches: Andragogy–Heutagogy–Synergogy

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ABSTRACT

The last century took us from covered wagons on the pampas to rockets on the moon. Similarly, education has observed a meritorious shift in the new millennium from the conventional methods to the emergence of contemporary approaches. The conventional education systems were based on certain philosophies, theoretical frameworks, and practices which maintained a sluggish environment wherein educating meant to transmit knowledge from expert to amateurs. However, these values and systems do not harmonize with the needs of the current dynamic environments where there is an unbelievable pool of advanced information. In light of this rapidly changing knowledge-based society, the role of teaching and learning is changing dramatically. Now is the era, where countries are looking for the emergence of 'edupreneurs'.

Tell me and I'll forget. Show me and I'll remember. Involve me and I'll understand. - Confucius (551 BC-479 BC)

INTRODUCTION

Education has traditionally been seen as a pedagogic relationship between the teacher and the student. Pedagogy, the art of science and teaching the child, embodies a teacher-focused education (Knowles, 1984) where the teacher dominates the classrooms. This approach assumes the teacher being the repository of knowledge and taking full responsibility about what the learner needs to learn, when it is to be learned, and indeed how it should be learned. This pedagogical slant develops the role of the student to be a dependent one and the relationship between the student and his/her peers as a competitive one.

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Pedagogical learning is purely based on the possession of skills and knowledge through transmittal techniques, such as lectures, demonstrations, text book reading, audio visual presentations and examinations. Students are motivated to learn due to external pressures such as competition for securing higher grades, fear of failure and at times due to fear of punishment. Learning is confined to a pre-planned curriculum for all students so that it can easily be monitored and evaluated. It addresses the issue of what is to be learned “The Content”, and not how it is to be learned “The Process”.

Referring to such problems, teachers should, therefore, now realize the fact that a new era has begun as novel and unorthodox ways of learning and teaching are emerging in digital learning environments. Many educational institutions have now integrated a great number of contemporary, international, technology driven and inter-culturally grounded contexts which have developed new pedagogical configurations that no longer resemble conventional forms of teaching. Teachers, therefore, must not only be aware of this paradigm change, but of the necessity to become active agents of this change. At the same time they also have to shoulder the responsibility of protecting the interest of students as exaggeration of technological advances may dehumanize the process of teaching and learning and thus may become detrimental to their learning process and to the education system as a whole.

Dewey (1902) argues that “in order for education to be most effective, content must be presented in a way that allows the student to relate the information to prior experiences, thus deepening the connection with this new knowledge”. This art of learning is known as “Andragogy”. Andragogy is the study of self-determined learning. It is in deep contrast with pedagogical teaching which focuses on transmitting the content. Andragogical education facilitates the process of the acquisition of the content. The techniques used for sharing knowledge are experiential such as brainstorming sessions, syndicate discussion groups, problem solving sessions, learning cycles, simulation exercises, role plays and the like. Learning programmes are designed around real-life situations which engage the student actively in the process and hence enables them to apply the knowledge and skills gained straightaway.

Moving few miles ahead; many academic institutions have successfully implemented a much newer approach that is known as “Heutagogy”. Heutagogy allows students to develop their abilities of self-instruction and therefore becoming self-directed learners. This is a learning approach that focuses on the students’ total involvement in designing the content and the process. A shift towards heutagogy enables the learners to undergo a paradigm shift for his/her holistic development of individual capabilities and capacities for questioning one’s own values and assumptions. In today’s digital learning environment, where students are confronted with a wealth of information that can be transformed into knowledge, students do not learn in a systematic conventional manner, rather in a concurrent and intuitive way. There is no place in this world for the inflexible, the unprepared, and the ostrich with head in sand, and this applies to organizations as well as individuals too. Capable people are more likely to be able to deal effectively with the emerging turbulences in the surrounding environment in which they live by possessing an ‘all round’ capacity. A heutagogical approach recognizes the need to be flexible in the process of learning where the teacher provides resources but the learner designs the actual course he or she might undertake. Thus, learners might read around critical issues or questions and determine what is of real interest and relevance to them and then negotiate further upon reading and assessment tasks. With respect to the latter issue, assessment becomes more meaningful as it underlines the learning experience rather than being a mere means to measure success/ achievement. As teachers we should concern ourselves with developing the learner’s capability instead of embedding discipline based skills and knowledge which eventually may prove to be a drawback in the long run.

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