

Chapter 1

Beginnings of the History and Philosophy of Andragogy, 1833–2000

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ABSTRACT

Andragogy had a very slow beginning over a period of almost one century as a term referring to the theory and practice of adult education. Numerous elements were involved in the seventy years it took to establish its foundation: starting in England and the USA; andragogy and human resource development [HRD]; andragogy and self-directed learning [SDL]; conflict between supporters and detractors; comparing European and USA perspectives; trust in learners' abilities; scientific foundation of andragogy; skepticism and its counter-balance; and, antecedents of andragogy. Trends in usage and considering its possible benefits set the tone for the future of andragogy from 2000 forward.

INTRODUCTION

History and philosophy of andragogy was chosen as the topic to be addressed rather than history and philosophy of adult education. The reason for this is that there are already numerous published volumes of the history of adult education: M. S. Knowles – *History of the adult education movement in the United States*; Stubbelfield, H. W., and Keane, P. – *Adult Education in the American Experience: From the Colonial Period to the Present*; Kett, J. F. – *The pursuit of knowledge under difficulties: From self-*

improvement to adult education in America, 1750-1990; and, Fieldhouse, R. and Associates – *A history of modern British adult education*. These are a few of the excellent published volumes on the history of adult education. There is one strong volume that is now in its third edition on the philosophy of adult education: Elias, J. and Merriam, S. B. – *Philosophical foundations of adult education*.

This chapter is mainly limited [with a few exceptions] to a chronological history and the accompanying philosophy of andragogy during the initial 167 years, in line with when the English language documents were published.

DOI: 10.4018/978-1-61520-694-0.ch001

BACKGROUND OF NEARLY A CENTURY: 1833-1927

The term ‘andragogy’, as far as we know, was first authored by Alexander Kapp (1833), a German high school teacher. In the book entitled ‘Platon’s Erziehungslehre’ (Plato’s Educational Ideas) he describes the lifelong necessity to learn. He begins the book with a discussion on childhood. However, from page 241 to 300 he turns attention to adulthood – Andragogy or Education in the man’s age [a replica of the document is available at <http://www.andragogy.net>]. Kapp argues that education, self-reflection, and educating the character are the first values in human life. He then refers to vocational education of the healing profession, soldier, educator, orator, ruler, and men as the family father. Here we find patterns which repeatedly can be found in the ongoing history of andragogy: Included and combined are the education of inner, subjective personality (‘character’); outer, objective competencies (what later is discussed under ‘education vs. training’); and, that learning happens not only through teachers, but also through self-reflection and life experience, which makes it more than ‘teaching adults’.

The term andragogy lay fallow for many decades, perhaps because adult education was being conducted without a specific name to designate what it was. Nonetheless, in the 1920s Germany became a place for building theory and another German resurrected the term. Rosenstock-Huessy (1925) posed andragogy as the only method for the German people and Germany, despirited and degenerated in 1918 after World War I, to regenerate themselves and their country. He suggested that all adult education (andragogy), if it is to achieve anything original that shapes man, which arises from the depths of time, would have to proceed from the suffering which the lost war brought them. Historical thinking is a fundamental dimension of andragogy, in that historical events are to be analyzed for what can be learned from them so that past failures might not be repeated. In this

way the past becomes unified with the present and future – history past becomes unified with present knowledge and action for moving us toward the future. In andragogy, theory becomes practical deed, in the responsible word, in the crucible of necessity; however, practical deeds become the stuff of theory. Andragogy is not merely ‘better’ as an educational method for this purpose; it is a necessity.

About the same time, Lindeman (1926a) from the USA traveled to Germany and became acquainted with the Workers Education Movement. He was the first to bring the concept to America. Although he clearly stated that andragogy was the method for teaching adults, the term did not take hold in the new land until many years later. Lindeman presented an interesting piece on the method for teaching adults. Basically he asserted (1926a) in his first use of the word andragogy, that the method for teaching adults is discussion, which he says is different from the teaching of children. Moreover, in his classic book *The Meaning of Adult Education* (1926b), he never uses the term andragogy, but does include a chapter entitled, ‘In terms of method’. A thorough analysis of this chapter reveals that he extensively explores, describes and explains the discussion method. Consequently, it seems safe to assume that he laid the earliest groundwork in the USA for a major practical application of andragogy as the method for teaching adults. In addition, Anderson and Lindeman (1927) reiterated the concept as it was brought to the new land of America.

ESTABLISHING THE FOUNDATION OF ANDRAGOGY: 1964-1980

England and the USA 1964-1970

Another extensive period of time elapsed until the term andragogy was used again in published literature. This time, it appeared in Great Britain. Simpson (1964) proposed that andragogy could

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