

## Chapter 4

# From Pedagogy to Andragogy: Transitioning Teaching and Learning in the Information Technology Classroom

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### ABSTRACT

*It is generally accepted that there are differences in the way children and adults learn. Pedagogical philosophies and practices about classroom instruction, activities, and the roles of both the educator and learner are typically associated with primary and secondary education. The concept of andragogy, however, deals with the art and science of the adult learner. The andragogical classroom looks quite different than the pedagogical, and features more student-centered instruction, self-directed learning, and emphasis on the needs of the individual learner. Many adult learners are familiar with the pedagogical approaches used in primary and secondary education. Those learners may find principles of pedagogy employed in higher education as well, which may not be effective. Is a pedagogical approach appropriate in higher education? What role does content play in pedagogical versus andragogical decisions? Most importantly, what approach results in student learning? Using the information technology classroom as an example, pedagogical and andragogical approaches to instruction are compared, and strategies for transitioning from pedagogical to andragogical approaches are illustrated. An empirical research study on preferred ways of learning is also included in this chapter. While the examples discussed in this chapter relate to the information technology classroom, the material presented is applicable in a variety of learning situations.*

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## **INTRODUCTION**

“How does one learn?” This is a question around which books and articles are written, theories are developed, research studies are conducted, discussions and debates are held, and courses at colleges and universities are facilitated. Especially for those in the education field, this question has been pondered for years, and as of right now, there have been no definite, fool-proof conclusions made. While we may not know exactly how people learned, we do know that learning depends on a variety of factors, including the age and experience of the learner. We also know that because of factors like age and experience, adults learn differently than children. These differences are represented in the concepts of pedagogy and andragogy, which are, respectively, theories about how children learn and about how adults learn.

This chapter will begin with a discussion of pedagogy and andragogy. Each will be introduced, and comparisons will be made. An empirical study on teaching methods will be presented in this chapter as well. This study brings the voice of the learner into the discussion of pedagogy versus andragogy. Conclusions regarding both pedagogical and andragogical approaches in the teaching of adult learners follows that study. To set the stage for this discussion, background information on important variables that form the foundations of the chapter follow.

There are several variables that must be explained in order to more clearly frame both the study presented in this chapter, and the chapter conclusions. Because the type of course to be examined is the post-secondary information technology (IT) classroom, a description of IT education (ITE) is presented. The mission and goals of primary/secondary and post-secondary education are compared and contrasted, as are differences in child and adult learners. Characteristics of the pedagogical and andragogical ITE classrooms are also presented.

It is easy to make claims about the merits of andragogy versus pedagogy in a chapter such as this one without firm evidence of the benefits of doing so. This chapter is different in that it contains an actual empirical research study on student opinions regarding the teaching of IT courses. Students were asked for their opinions about aspects of pedagogy and andragogy, along with their preferred methods for learning IT-related topics. The study will be described in this chapter, and findings will be discussed. As the title of this chapter suggests, a great deal of research suggests that transitioning from pedagogy to andragogy is appropriate in the teaching of adults. Based on this research and on the results of the empirical study described in this chapter, recommendations will be made and examples of ways to make the transformation from pedagogy to andragogy will be presented.

## **BACKGROUND**

### **A History of Pedagogy**

The concept of pedagogy has evolved over time. Over a century ago, Compayre and Payne (1885) define pedagogy as “the art or practice of education” (p. vii). Pedagogy, they believed, was associated with “the doctrines and the methods of educators” (p. xi) and included “the premeditated action which the will of one man exercises over other men in order to instruct them or train them” (p. xi). As evidenced in this quote, a characteristic of pedagogy is the idea that the teacher instructs or transmits information to the learner, who absorbs or learns it. From the start, pedagogy was teacher-directed learning, and that concept hasn’t changed. Characteristics of pedagogy today include the idea that the instructor is in charge, and is responsible for all aspects of the teaching process, including needs assessment, planning, goal-setting, teaching, and evaluation (Robinson, 1995).

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