

Pedagogy vs. Andragogy

by Tom Whitby (May 3, 2013)

Over this last year I have been fortunate to have been sent to many education conferences on behalf of SmartBrief in pursuit of content and guest bloggers for ***SmartBlog on Education***. It is a dream job for a retired educator and an education blogger. The intent is to always keep the educator's voice on SmartBlog authentic and relevant. In that capacity, I have attended and conducted a multitude of workshops on various education topics. Since I am no longer in the classroom, and have no need to apply what I learn about current teaching methods in a classroom setting, I often attend these workshops as an observer, or even a critical observer in some cases.

In conference after conference, and workshop after workshop I have observed successes and failures in the methods employed by presenters to get their material across to their audiences. Of course my biggest criticism is that too many presenters view the people in the room as audiences, and themselves as some sort of entertainer. Of course a successful presenter is part entertainer, as is any teacher, but more importantly, he or she is there at a conference workshop to educate educators and that is a primary goal. For that goal to be met presenters might be better served thinking of the people in the room as learners, and employ their best skills as an educator. In fairness to most presenters, the best do just that.

Much can be learned as an educator by watching what works with a bunch of teacher/learners. Of course there are some who would argue that these are adult learners and shouldn't be compared to kids. I used to think that as well, but I am not as sure, after all that I have observed. I found one of the best explanations of adult learning in this article: "Adult Learning Theory and Principles" from *The Clinical Educator's Resource Kit*.

According to the article Malcolm Knowles an American practitioner and theorist of adult education, defined andragogy as "the art and science of helping adults learn". Knowles identified the six principles of adult learning as:

- Adults are internally motivated and self-directed
- Adults bring life experiences and knowledge to learning experiences
- Adults are goal oriented
- Adults are relevancy oriented
- Adults are practical
- Adult learners like to be respected

After considering these principles and observing many of them first hand at these professional conferences, I started to wonder if the reason why these same principles do not apply to kids, at least on the secondary level, is because we prohibit them from happening in our education system. Do we limit our students learning by blocking access to the very things that motivate us as adults to learn?

Can Students be self-motivated and self-directed? As adults some might say we are "pursuing our bliss" therefore, we are self-motivated and self-directed. Are our students bereft of bliss, or are we blocking out their bliss?

At the more successful conferences providing adult learning environments I have observed many things that aided the learning of adults. The best conferences provided Internet access for all. This enabled adults to use varied and sundry laptops and mobile devices. I still revel at the memory of a room full of learners listening to Chris Lehmann at the Educon Conference as he placed notes on a white board. When he was finished with his illustrated point in the conversation, 40 adults stood up and took a picture of the whiteboard with their mobile devices (mostly cellphones) for later reference. Student classrooms might have over 40 students in them but how many are allowed to take pictures of the teachers' notes?

Of course the resounding positive comments from any of these learning environments is that there is a love of the conversation, as opposed to the lecture. That is common at Educon and it is the mainstay of the most successful Edcamps. Of course that conversation method is not the focus of teaching kids. Most educators focus on direct instruction and lecture as the mainstay for their lessons.

Then there is the cry from a multitude of adult conference learners that they hold teacher-presenters in the highest regard, because they are authentic. They have been in the classroom, and have paid their dues, so to speak. When real classroom teachers talk about education, it is relevant and real. This is a common sentiment among adult conference learners. I guess that relevance is important to the adult learner. When it comes to the kid learners are they even given a smattering of relevance or are we steeped in curriculum some of which may have been around since the mid 1900's?

Of course the biggest outcry from adult learners at conferences comes when they are subjected to PowerPoint presentations that are text-laden and read to the learners word for word by the presenter. This is the most egregious of mistakes and often the initiator of an exodus by the adult learners from the room. What alternative do kid learners have given the same set of circumstances?

Maybe as adult learners we need to take a look in the mirror before we resume our role as teachers for kids. In the final analysis, I do not think that there are differences in the way we learn as adults, or kids, but rather the differences lie in the opportunities afforded to learn. If we respected kids more as learners, they might be more self-directed and motivated in their learning. If they are allowed to participate in their learning, they might take more ownership. What learner wants to own something that is not in his, or her interest to own? If we can understand better how we learn best, maybe we can alter how we teach to be the best.

Pedagogy vs. Andragogy

	Pedagogical	Andragogical
The Learner	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The learner is dependent upon the instructor for all learning • The teacher/instructor assumes full responsibility for what is taught and how it is learned • The teacher/instructor evaluates learning 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The learner is self-directed • The learner is responsible for his/her own learning • Self-evaluation is characteristic of this approach
Role of the Learner's Experience	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The learner comes to the activity with little experience that could be tapped as a resource for learning • The experience of the instructor is most influential 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The learner brings a greater volume and quality of experience • Adults are a rich resource for one another • Different experiences assure diversity in groups of adults • Experience becomes the source of self-identify
Readiness to Learn	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Students are told what they have to learn in order to advance to the next level of mastery 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Any change is likely to trigger a readiness to learn • The need to know in order to perform more effectively in some aspect of one's life is important • Ability to assess gaps between where one is now and where one wants and needs to be
Orientation to Learning	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Learning is a process of acquiring prescribed subject matter • Content units are sequenced according to the logic of the subject matter 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Learners want to perform a task, solve a problem, live in a more satisfying way • Learning must have relevance to real-life tasks • Learning is organized around life/work situations rather than subject matter units
Motivation for Learning	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Primarily motivated by external pressures, competition for grades, and the consequences of failure 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Internal motivators: self-esteem, recognition, better quality of life, self-confidence, self-actualization

Table is from [floridatechnet.org](http://www.floridatechnet.org) as reported in <http://www.educatorstechnology.com/2013/05/awesome-chart-on-pedagogy-vs-andragogy.html> and retrieved May 6, 2013.