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Introduction and problem statement.

This chapter offers an overview of the origins and development of andragogy, since the German teacher Kapp (1833) first mentioned the term. This overview explores the close relationships with adult education and addresses some of the major debates that dominated the development of andragogy, in specific its assumptions, the scientific foundations and its critical ambitions. The main focus of andragogy has been: helping adults learn and develop, creating favorable conditions for learning and development in a work environment as well as in their private lives. Several of these topics still play an important role in the current advances in Human Resource Development. However, the conceptual elaboration, the empirical evidence and thus the scientific development of andragogy have been rather complicated since it has been a field of study at a number of universities in Europe, the United States and Asia.

The chapter ends with an inventory of research questions for the future development of andragogy. The main question leading this exploration is what andragogy still can contribute to the further advancement of human resource development in a knowledge society.

Origins and development of andragogy

Andragogy comes from the Greek 'anere' [adult] or 'andras' [adult man] and 'agein' [leading] or 'agogos' [helping others to learn]. Kapp (1833) probably was the first who used the term Andragogy in his writings on 'Platon's Erziehungslehre' [Plato's Educational Ideas], describing the importance of education in adult life including self-reflection, the development of character and vocational education. It is not clear why he used the new term andragogy for adult education, as in the first half of the 19th century there was a growing interest in educating adults in Europe and the United States, offering reading classes, cultural programs and upliftment of the under-privileged. Almost hundred years later the Hohenrodter Bund introduced andragogy in Germany and presented a new direction (Neue Richtung) in adult learning (Reischmann, 2004). Andragogy was a rather theoretical concept mainly used to denote the development of a free mind as opposed to 'demagogy'. Lindeman's experiences at the

Academy for Labor at Frankfurt, Germany led to the first introduction of andragogy in the United States (Lindeman, 1926).

'Pedagogy is the method by which children are taught. Demagoguery is the path by which adults are betrayed. Andragogy is the true method of adult learning.' (Anderson & Lindeman, 1927, p 2-3).

In this introduction we not only read the distinction between the teaching of children and the facilitation of learning of adults, but also the ambition of andragogy to create critical awareness for oppression and the need for emancipation. The concept was strongly influenced by the inter-war period (1918-1939). The social and economic reconstruction was in need of a humanistic approach to democratic development.

These early explorations of andragogy as a concept for adult learning remained largely unnoticed until the 50th and 60th in the last century when in Europe and in the United States a new interest emerged in adult learning and andragogy in specific. The work on adult learning and andragogy by Malcolm Knowles is regarded as probably the most influential in spreading the popularity of andragogy, especially in the United States (Knowles, 1970; 1980; 1990; Knowles, Swanson & Holton, 2011). In Europe Andragogy played a role in several countries spreading from Germany in 1947 (Pöggeler, 1994) to the rest of Europe (Savicevic, 2006) where in the sixties and seventies the term became quite common for adult learning (Henschke, 2008; Reischmann, 2004).

Andragology in the Netherlands and Flanders

In the Netherlands and Flanders the development of andragogy followed a different path, strongly influenced by the work of Ten Have, professor of social pedagogy at the University of Amsterdam. In 1966 his chair became the first official chair of andragogy (Van Gent, 1991). Ten Have (1973) proposed an elaborate system of 'agology', distinguishing between the practice of andragogy and specific methods of andragogical work, named 'andragogics' and the scientific study of andragogy, named andragology. He placed andragogy - as the study of social work with adults - between pedagogy (educational work with children) and gerontology (the study of guidance of elder people). In the Netherlands andragogy was not restricted to adult learning and adult education. It encompassed the broad domain of 'social agology' including community work, social work, counseling, mental health care, social and cultural upliftment, emancipation and social change.

This concept of a broad domain of agology and andragology in the Netherlands as it developed in the 1970's was an almost natural result of the long history of the School for Social Work founded in 1899 [*Opleidingsinrichting voor Socialen Arbeid* and later *School voor Maatschappelijk Werk*, and later *Sociale Academie*], which was one of the first professional training institutes in the world for social work (Van Gent, 1991). At that time social work and welfare had strong links with cultural development and adult education in view of enrichment and upliftment of deprived people.

During the reconstruction period after World War II the social agology and later andragology was inspired by Lewin's work on 'planned change', which Ten Have considered as an acceptable third way between complete freedom of liberalism and the strong central control of communism. Neither the individual, nor the large masses were object of study, but the small group and community work in the welfare state became the focal point of study (Van Gent, 1991).

Ten Have and Knowles knew each other and respected each other's work. Knowles was impressed by the work of Ten Have, which he saw as an important source of inspiration (Knowles, 1970). Nevertheless, the broad interpretation of Dutch andragology as the scientific study of social change and cultural work, guiding adults and their professional development in the context of the civic society and the labor market, soon narrowed down to adult education.

Academic recognition and decline

In 1970 andragology was admitted as an official study in the Netherlands and recognized degrees were awarded at several Dutch universities. Initially, the main purpose was providing academic training and research as a scientific support for professionals active in social work, cultural guidance of adults and community development. On the other hand Ten Have (1986) and his successor Nijk were convinced that a theoretical foundation of andragology underpinning the new academic discipline needed top priority. In this controversy between scientific basis and relevance for day-to-day practice academics and practitioners never found reconciliation. 15 years later in 1985, the official status as an academic discipline ended due to several internal university conflicts and influenced by societal changes. The economic crisis of the seventies speeded up the transformation of the welfare state with trained professionals into the concept of 'the caring society' run by volunteers. There was no need anymore for academic trained professionals in social and cultural community work (Van Gent, 1996). The scientific discipline of andragology

had not yet reached a recognized international reputation. As in many other countries the study of adult, vocational and corporate education was taken over by the departments of pedagogy, education, psychology and the business schools. The training in the fields of social work, welfare and community development lost their academic background at university level and continued mainly in institutes for higher vocational education.

The wide domain of 'planned social change' offered broad opportunities for diffuse studies and practices, often lacking focus and coherence. As a result the Dutch andragogy never managed to grow towards a mature and respected academic identity. As was the case with andragogy in many other European countries, the lack of empirical research and the sparse research publications in the English language inhibited a growing academic recognition and left interesting local experiments rather unknown to an international readership.

The relatively short history of andragogy in the Netherlands shows many commonalities with discussions and debates on andragogy in the United States, as well as on adult education and Human Resource Development more recently. The need for academic recognition, the development of coherent research programs and the normative disputes about object and methods are recurrent issues.

Andragogy as an international concept?

The important influence of Knowles has spread internationally, promoting andragogy as a science of understanding and supporting lifelong learning and life wide education of adults (Reischmann, 2004; Knowles, Swanson & Holton, 2011). In most publications andragogy includes a humanistic conception of self-directness and autonomous learners, and the term is used in the Netherlands, Belgium, the United Kingdom, Germany, Switzerland, Finland, Yugoslavia, the Czech republic, Slovenia and Estonia (Savicevic, 2006; Henschke, 2008). Outside Europe and North America we find references to andragogy in South Korea, Venezuela and the People's Republic of China where Deng Xiao Ping designated an important role to adult learning and andragogy in the transformation of the planned economy to a socialist market economy (Zang, 1996 in Cooper & Henschke, 2003). In most countries the concept is closely related to adult learning and the academic support for professional development in the domain of adult education and lifelong learning. However, it is difficult to make a clear delineation between andragogy, adult education and human resource development (St. Clair, 2002). Today, in the Netherlands and Flanders the

concept of andragogy still refers to a much broader field of study, including interventions in the domain of social work, welfare, community work, and mental health care, with a strong emphasis on promoting change for increased wellbeing of citizens. In the recent manifesto of the alumni of the study of andragogy at the University of Amsterdam this broad field of study has been redefined and applied to current developments in society like diversity, urban education, knowledge productivity, integration of immigrants and leadership development (Andragologen Alumni Amsterdam, 2012).

However, the expanding interpretation of object of study, the wide variety of methodologies, diffuse terms and internal disagreements, and the lack of international exchange and cooperation did not contribute to a strong and focused development of andragogy as a respected discipline of academic endeavor.

Discussions and debates on andragogy: Self-directedness, critical awareness and emancipation

When we look at the available literature on andragogy (Davenport, 1987; Draper, 1998; Henschke, 2008; Heimstra, no date; Van Gent, 1996), many discussions take place on matters of definitions, assumptions and epistemology. Should andragogy be scientifically rooted or mainly practice driven? Is self-direction a viable principle for academic study? Why should small group activities get more attention than individual and mass approaches? Is learning of adults in a society at risk of greater importance than professional development of employees in commercial industries? Is personal growth leading or performance improvement? It seems as if the fierce debates about the right answers took most of the energy at the expense of the design and research of specific contributions to better understanding and solving matters related to learning and development.

The disputes on the academic foundations and viability of andragogy go back to the roots of adult learning theory, focusing on individual learning experiences (Lindeman, 1926), the need for critical consciousness and liberation (Freire, 1970), the interventions for promoting well-being (Ten Have, 1973), emancipatory learning and critical theory (Habermas, 1984) and critical, reflective thinking and analysis (Brookfield, 1987; Mezirov, 1981). These normative laden aspects of emancipation, liberation, critical awareness of oppression, promoting self-directedness and autonomy always have been part of the discussions about adult education (Brookfield, 1996) and andragogy in specific (Merriam, 2001). Somehow the debates

about andragogy reflect the turmoil of the on-going development in society and economy, and the accompanying political discourses. In a community driven society the plea for self-directedness can be seen as individualistic and even anti-social, whereas mass communication in a post-Nazi period is easily connected to indoctrination and demagoguery. In societies with large power distance, segregation, deprived minorities and inequity, the engagement of professionals in performance improvement for the upper class is easily criticized. It looks as if academic disciplines like andragogy, adult education and human resource development are very sensitive to these value orientations, as they are closely related to influencing human behavior and development.

The assumptions underlying the direct facilitation of the development of individuals through improving the educative quality of their environment (Knowles, 1980, 1990) and the normative aspects of lifelong learning and the new educational order (Field, 2000), all these key issues played an important role in the acceptance of andragogy as a scientific discipline. In combination with weakly developed prestige in the settled academic world, the struggle for recognition of andragogy in a changing and tough output driven academic system has never ended.

The relationship between andragogy and Human Resource Development

When we overlook the history of andragogy since the term has been used for the first time almost 180 years ago, what can it contribute to current HRD?

When we perceive *“HRD as an organizational process [that] comprises the skillful planning and facilitation of a variety of formal and informal learning and knowledge processes and experiences, primarily but not exclusively in the workplace, in order that organizational progress and individual potential can be enhanced through the competence, adaptability, collaboration and knowledge-creating activity of all who work for the organization.”* (Harrison & Kessels, 2004, p 4-5.), then andragogy can easily be viewed as one of the founding building blocks for HRD. Especially, when we take into account the learning and development aspects of adults in the context of their professional work, andragogy has offered valuable principles for organizing meaningful learning environments. Knowles (1980) and Knowles, Holton, and Swanson (2011) further developed the set of assumptions on which andragogy has been based. Important elements are the facilitators’ responsibility to help adults move from dependency toward increasing self-directedness; personal experiences as a rich resource for learning, especially when related to real-life tasks and

problems; the development of capabilities and competencies in a meaningful way; and the dominant role of intrinsic motivation and self-esteem. When we consider andragogy as an important foundation for human resource development, its historical background strongly contributes to the development of a learning paradigm that inherently values self-efficacy. The critical roots of andragogy favor the idea of the independent and autonomous learner striving for freedom of choice and emancipation. Pre-described performance improvement in the interest of dominating others does not fit with the origins of andragogy.

Andragogy in learning and working

Although the andragogical approach does not provide a clear delineation between what can be considered adult education and what cannot, its set of assumptions stated several decades ago, still offer helpful guidelines in designing a work environment that is conducive for learning and knowledge development. The Nottingham Andragogic Group (1983) has somewhat reinterpreted Knowles' andragogical concepts in terms of their beliefs about adults and adults' abilities in specific to think creatively and critically in learning settings. It is important to become aware of the assumptions that adults have uncritically accepted as governing their conduct and lives. Therefore, the andragogical approach encourages adults to critically reflect and not to accept another's interpretation or meaning on the basis of hierarchy and authority. Facilitators of adult learning should create a climate conducive to learning, including mutual trust and respect, and collaborative activities. It is important that adult learners participate in needs assessment, setting goals, searching for relevant resources, and jointly evaluate their learning process and outcomes. These design principles directly stem from the contributions of Lindeman to andragogy (Brookfield, 1984). Later, the collaborative and communicative design of learning environments has been empirically tested, and became known as the relational approach to corporate education (Kessels & Plomp, 1999).

Andragogy and the knowledge economy

HRD plays an important role in an emerging knowledge economy, as human beings are the main knowledge producers. In a knowledge economy, growth is based on improvement and innovation of work processes, products, and services and is a result of knowledge productivity (Kessels 2001; 2004). Knowledge productivity requires personal involvement and individual learning, in a favorable social context. Through the lens of knowledge productivity, the work environment should

transform into a supportive learning environment. The development of knowledge and its application to the improvement and innovation cannot be managed in a conventional way. Successful innovation is not an industrial production process; it requires personal involvement, dedication and intrinsic challenge of a large proportion of the workforce. Moreover, innovative knowledge work requires creative thinking and critically reflective work behavior of emancipated professionals. This inevitably leads to employees whose shared interests, passion, responsibility, reciprocal appeal, and career awareness will challenge traditional power positions. To better understand these developments, a renewed interest in andragogy will emerge, as it has a long tradition in social, critical and emancipatory learning. Therefore, when HRD is to play a prominent role in an emerging knowledge economy, it needs to rediscover andragogy as part of its foundations, as it offers valuable assumptions on self-directed, individual learning in combination with the social network for collective knowledge productivity (Kessels, 2004; Kessels & Poell, 2004).

Conclusions on a future agenda for andragogy and HRD

Andragogy has a turbulent history when it comes to the specific attention for helping adults to learn and develop. This domain of study not only marked the shift from teaching of children towards helping adults in their learning, it also promoted self-directedness, autonomy, emancipation and social cooperation in the wider context of their work and living. HRD and andragogy share this interest in the facilitation of adults in their learning and professional development. Due to the lack of official academic recognition of andragogy these important aspects of human resource development also seem to get lost. In an emerging knowledge society where lifelong learning, knowledge development and innovation seem to become the license to participate a renewed study of the above critical pillars of andragogy will be necessary for the further advancement of HRD. The critical awareness associated with andragogy can also be found in the critical perspectives of HRD (Bierema, 2008; Fenwick, 2004). Human development in view of a knowledge society, in specific the reciprocal relationships between individual growth, corporate prosperity and community development in a knowledge economy need to be better understood (Kessels & Poell, 2004).

In some countries like the Netherlands and Flanders andragogy claimed a broad domain of study including social change, far beyond the primary focus of employees in the world of work as it is generally studied in HRD.

Does andragogy inspire HRD to broaden its horizon of inquiry or is such an expansion of the field a potential pitfall and will it burden HRD with the same discussions on the lack of focus and devastating debates about academic rigor that led to the decline of andragogy?

From the current economic crisis another intriguing research question emerges directly related to andragogy. This economic and even ecological crisis has often been ascribed to the perverse financial performance triggers of financial institutions, corporations and even government agencies. What new perspectives does an andragogical lens offer when examining human development and growth in the context of a fair and sustainable society?

Since the German teacher Alexander Kapp (1833) coined the term almost 200 years ago, andragogy still can offer valuable assumptions and building blocks for human resource development. Especially, when we refer to a humanistic and emancipatory approach promoting critical reflection and awareness, while avoiding mere instrumental methods for facilitating learning, development and growth of adults in the context of their work, andragogy will have a meaningful contribution in an emerging knowledge society.

Further reading

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