

What's Between Pedagogy and Andragogy?

By ROBERT J. MARSHAK

Trainers and facilitators are familiar with two basic and distinct models of teaching/learning: pedagogy and andragogy.¹ These models advance from fundamentally different assumptions about the learning process and the learner, and prescribe different instructional methodologies and techniques.² Pedagogy is usually described as teacher centered: The teacher sets the learning goals, directs the learning process and evaluates results. Pedagogy is characterized by a subject/topic orientation; the use of lecture and other cognitive techniques; the structuring of suitable rewards and punishments (reinforcements) to encourage learning; and, in general, the pivotal role of the teacher in imparting new knowledge or skills. Pedagogy is considered, at least by its critics, as appropriate for the education and training of children and, in some limited circumstances, adults.

Andragogy, on the other hand, is usually described as learner centered: The learner is responsible for achieving his or her own learning goals through self-direction and evaluation, aided by a "facilitator" rather than a

"teacher." Andragogy is characterized by a problem/project orientation; the use of experience-based techniques; the facilitation of self-motivation to encourage learning; and, in general, the pivotal role of the learner in acquiring new knowledge or skills. Andragogy is considered, at least by its proponents, as appropriate for the education and training of adults.

Mixed situations

The pedagogy versus andragogy debate has been a lively one in recent years in training and education communities. Critics of each abound, and the controversy has served to advance both theory and practice. A dilemma for practitioners (trainers, facilitators, teachers), however, is that they often encounter *mixed* situations, in which the attributes of both models are present, e.g., adult learners and directed learning goals. Some examples of these mixed situations are:

- Training programs that must include certain components specified by higher organizational levels, whether or not the target population sees them as valuable;
- Executive development programs predicated on individual development plans, but in which participants know that important others have preconceived ideas concerning course content and methodology;
- Career development programs in which participants are formally or informally evaluated

for career advancement, based on how well they perform in the program;

- Nontraditional college programs which must conform to university requirements with respect to examinations, grading and the like;
- Professional development programs that must include components addressing the knowledge and skills specified as necessary for the profession.

All these examples could be addressed in a purely pedagogical manner. Few are, because they involve adult learners. All the examples violate some of the conditions of the andragogy model: Goals are partially or totally predetermined; external evaluations are imposed; some learning is dictated; and so forth.

Because the situation is mixed, mixed signals about the learning environment abound. Participants are asked to assume responsibility for their learning *and* are held accountable for certain specified content. Originality and creativity is encouraged *and* punished if it deviates too far from the prescribed course of study. Trainers are encouraged to allow participants to accomplish their own learning *and* to teach them what they need to know. In the extreme, these mixed messages lead to the kinds of "crazy" training encounters we have all experienced at one time or another:

- Highly dependent participants who can't seem to get enough instructions and directions, suddenly behaving in

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highly counter-dependent ways when detailed directions are given.

- Very participative trainers who suddenly become dictators over seemingly minor matters.
- Trainers and participants who are totally out of sync with each other; on different wave lengths; miscommunicating to an extreme degree.

An analogy

Trainers need to define and name the phenomenon of learning situations with "mixed" characteristics. We need go no farther than the linguistic roots of our two learning models to find a useful analogy. *Peda* for child and *andra* for adult suggest a third stage in human development, one that is neither pure child nor adult yet has some attributes of each. That human development stage is adolescence. It has the mixed characteristics, mixed messages and "crazy" behavior that we have been describing.

Adolescents are neither children nor adults; they are treated sometimes as one and then the other. Parents fluctuate between expecting them to be responsible for their own behavior and telling them what to do. Adolescents respond sometimes in highly dependent ways and at other times in highly counter-dependent ways. It is a period of development that has no special identity of its own other than being both and neither child and adult. It is, in short, an excellent analogy for the mixed training situations we have described. Thus we can refer to such mixed situations with a term that recalls their closest human development counterpart: *adolegogy*.

Coping with adolegogy

Just as one does not cure adolescence, but instead copes with it, one does not cure adolegogy training situations. Instead, trainers and participants need to cope with these situa-

tions. The following are some suggestions for coping:

- First, recognize and admit that you are dealing with adolegogy. The situation will be difficult, but there is no need for apology.
 - Once you recognize that you are dealing with adolegogy, work with it, not against it. Do what you can to move as close as possible to one of the purer models, but don't waste energy being angry or guilty that the situation is not perfect.
 - Explain to others that the situation is mixed. Be open about the situation's constraints; the worst possible approach is to try to rationalize them away. Always remember how an adolescent reacts to phrases like, "We are doing this for your own good," or, "You'll thank us for this later." Both may be true, but in adolegogy, as in adolescence, they fall on deaf ears.
 - Be open with your feelings and receptive to others'. Adolegogy can be tough on both trainers and participants. Mutual support in a mutually difficult situation can be very helpful.
 - Finally, model and encourage mature responses to the situation. The situation may be adolegogy, but the people in it don't have to behave like parents and adolescents. But don't be surprised if they do.
- Adolegogy is difficult. It breeds seemingly irrational behavior. It happens to everyone who has ever stepped into a classroom as trainer or participant. There is no cure, but trainers and participants alike can cope with it.

References

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2. Knowles, M. *The adult learner: A neglected species* (2nd ed.). Houston: Gulf Publishing Company, 1978.



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