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Title:

The Institutional Path For Change in This Age: Andragogy, not Pedagogy

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Body of text:

The entire ontology (manifested beliefs about teaching and learning) of higher education is misconceived: it does not fit with the proven realities of learning, and does not fit at all with the new nature of knowledge construction in a Web 2.0 world. The education establishment needs to say goodbye to pedagogy and hello to andragogy to create a better fit. Here's the difference:

In pedagogy, the concern is with transmitting the content, while in andragogy, the concern is with facilitating the acquisition of the content.

There is little doubt that the most dominant form of instruction in Europe and America is pedagogy, or what some people refer to as didactic, traditional, or teacher-directed approaches. A competing idea in terms of instructing adult learners [including first-year college students], and one that gathered momentum within the past three decades, has been dubbed andragogy. <http://www-distance.syr.edu/andraggy.html>

Pedagogy is associated with teaching children while andragogy is associated with teaching adults. The view of learning offered by andragogy is ancient but refreshed in the 20th century by John Dewey and Malcolm Knowles, among others. A recent book is required reading for all:

Conner, M. L. "Andragogy and Pedagogy." *Ageless Learner*, 1997-2004.

<http://agelesslearner.com/intros/andragogy.html>

The five principles of andragogy:

1. Letting learners know why something is important to learn
2. Showing learners how to direct themselves through information

3. Relating the topic to the learners' experiences
4. People will not learn until they are ready and motivated to learn.
5. Requires helping them overcome inhibitions, behaviors, and beliefs about learning. Conner, M. L. "Andragogy and Pedagogy." Ageless Learner, 1997-2004. <http://agelesslearner.com/intros/andragogy.html>

And, keeping these 5 principles in mind, you can help your students get ready to begin their learning adventures within the safety of your facilitation and guidance.

This approach – andragogy -- to teaching and learning has been mostly behind the scenes for decades waiting for its moment to come forward. *This is the moment:* the Web extends the classroom infinitely and andragogy is the appropriate response. Now is the time to consider basing all curricula on andragogical principles. This helps faculty better understand the changes needed to teach and learn in a technology-drenched world.

One essential fact provides the proof that we must reframe our ontology (our fundamental assumptions about our entire enterprise):

Students now have orders of magnitude more opportunities to gather evidence of learning and *this evidence can be shared and assessed.*

In other words, a new principle can be added to the andragogical approach: the autonomous learning your students engage in now will not require a leap of faith on your part that something good is going on. Your students can gather evidence of what's going on and you can assess that evidence. If anything, you have *more* oversight of the learning process than in a lecture mode. Technology greatly extends your reach.

We are beyond the era when student's learning experiences left no trace except in the minds of the learners and were thus invisible. We are now in the era when

student learning experiences can be visible because of the everywhere and all-the-time (ubiquitous and universal) presence of Web connections. See: <http://crossroads.georgetown.edu/vkp/> and similar work under the aegis of the Carnegie Foundation for Teaching's Scholarship of Teaching and Learning for more on visible knowledge and also Carnegie's Knowledge Media Lab.

All that is done digitally can be captured in some way and then can be shared. This frees students from having to be in a classroom to learn. As a result of the freer choices of learning venues and constructs, educators everywhere are beginning to design problem or project-based learning curricula or active-learning opportunities, service-learning, field-experiences, gap-year experiences, internships, and on and on through all the open-education options used over the past half-century to create more opportunities for authentic, evidence-based learning.

No college or university that I know of has not considered portfolios or implemented one. The portfolio – we can drop the “e” before portfolio because we now take for granted that portfolios are digital – is what makes this year, this moment in the millennium, the right moment for the move from pedagogy to andragogy.

With methods and practices associated with the five principles of andragogy cited above, students need a digital tool set to realize the advantages of the andragogical approach. They need a Web 2.0-like interface for their own portfolio to gather evidence of their learning. Institutions need an assessment management system (often incorrectly called ePortfolios) for teachers to report on their students' learning as assessed in their portfolios. With these enabling technologies, we can start to go not *against* the flow – our learning technologies have radically changed and they offer new tendencies not there before – but with it.

Our academic system has grown in reverse order. Subjects and teachers constitute the starting point, [learners] are secondary. In conventional

education the [learner] is required to adjust himself to an established curriculum....Too much of learning consists of vicarious substitution of someone else's experience and knowledge. Psychology teaches us that we learn what we do....Experience is the adult learner's living textbook. [Connor]

Even though going with the flow using evidence-based learning (eVBL – Boston University presentation, September 26, 2008, Batson) is the correct path forward, higher education institutions face these obstacles:

- 1 Portfolios represent *ongoing* evidence-gathering to show growth in learning which is *continuous*, not segmented into 15-week chunks, yet almost the entire higher-education enterprise is oriented around those 15 or 10 or whatever-week chunks. This is a fundamental organizational disconnect between the realities of a *process* of learning and the segmented way we run our business now.
- 2 Evidence-based learning, based on the andragogical method, is actual student-centered learning and actual student-centered learning requires major adjustments in how we manage learning – it is not delivery of content – which never made sense anyhow – but is instead facilitating a process.
- 3 Evidence-based learning presents an emperor-has-no-clothes challenge: knowledge sources and experiences are not, after all, rare any longer. So how can colleges and universities charge for seat-time access to something that is no longer rare?

We are not at a tipping point – that has already happened – but at the point of wondering why we're still wearing coats when summer sun is shining. We are at a Sartor Resartus moment – the tailor re-tailored. Our apparel, our ontology about teaching and learning, has abruptly become inappropriate and unworkable. It is time for andragogy and evidence-based learning,