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Errors in training strategies: pedagogy vs. andragogy

Differences between training strategies for children and adults.

The word "pedagogy" consists of the Greek words paidi (child) and needle (guide); the "andragogy", instead, from the words andras (man) and needle (guide). Both words refer to learning strategies, but each refers to distinct philosophies.

Following this logical thread, it is easy to deduce that andragogy refers to the methods and approaches used in adult education, aimed at self-realization, at acquiring experience and at solving problems, while pedagogy is an educational method in where the student is guided by the teacher for orientation, evaluation and acquisition of knowledge.

However, some apply the pedagogical theory to professionals.

What are the differences between Pedagogy and Andragogy?

Pedagogy

- student depends on the teacher. The teacher is responsible for training and evaluation
- student has little experience, so the teacher is in a position of influence
- student is guided in learning (passage by passage) by the teacher
- training is dictated by the teacher and divided by the same into logical units and sequences
- student is guided by an extrinsic motivation (for example, parents and teachers). Training is complete when you are positively evaluated: promotion vs. rejection.

Andragogy

- student is self-sufficient, responsible for his own learning and puts in place self-evaluation mechanisms
- trainee uses his own life experience as a basis for learning. The teacher must have the ability to understand the different backgrounds and build learning on existing bases. Adults learn from the teacher, but also from other students ("peer-education").
- training is not motivated by the teacher's guide but is based on the life experiences of the students (precisely because of these the students choose a specific course). Students rarely start from scratch on a topic, but rather fill in knowledge gaps.
- trainee independently decides to participate in the course, usually driven by a problem or a gap concerning his private or professional life.
- student is guided by intrinsic motivation: for example, may wish to improve self-esteem, the quality of one's life, one's problem-solving skills or is seeking recognition. Training is complete when mastery of a practice or knowledge is acquired.

Knowles theory

Before 1950, the study of learning methods focused solely on pedagogy, on the way children learn. Moreover, at that time the universe of learning was almost entirely attributable to the school, understood in the traditional sense. It was in this context that the adult educator Malcolm Knowles first adopted the term "andragogy" to distinguish a type of education shaped on the unique motivations of adult students. While children required more extrinsic motivation and relied on teacher-led methods, Knowles noted that adults were self-directed and relied heavily on their past life experiences as they approached new learning opportunities.

According to his theory:

- Adults are self-directed
- Adults use their past experiences as learning resources
- Adults are motivated to learn in relation to their social roles
- Adults prefer to learn solutions that can be applied in realistic situations
- Adults rely on intrinsic motivations

Adult learning

Fully understanding the differences between pedagogy and andragogy could prevent the use of forms of learning experienced as "lackluster" by adults. Not so much because children and adults always learn differently (both, for example, have positive responses to gamification). The fact is that adults approach training with different motivations. They have experience, they know what has worked in the past and they have habits that influence how they learn and welcome new information. This is the reason why tackling new topics with a traditional pedagogical strategy could be ineffective.

Andragogy asks teachers to do a fine job, linking learning experiences to what adult learners already know. Requiring or allowing an opinion and "controlling" one's own knowledge optimally stimulates the minds of adults and helps them to exploit what they know a priori with respect to the new topics presented.

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