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Considerations Regarding the Future of Andragogy

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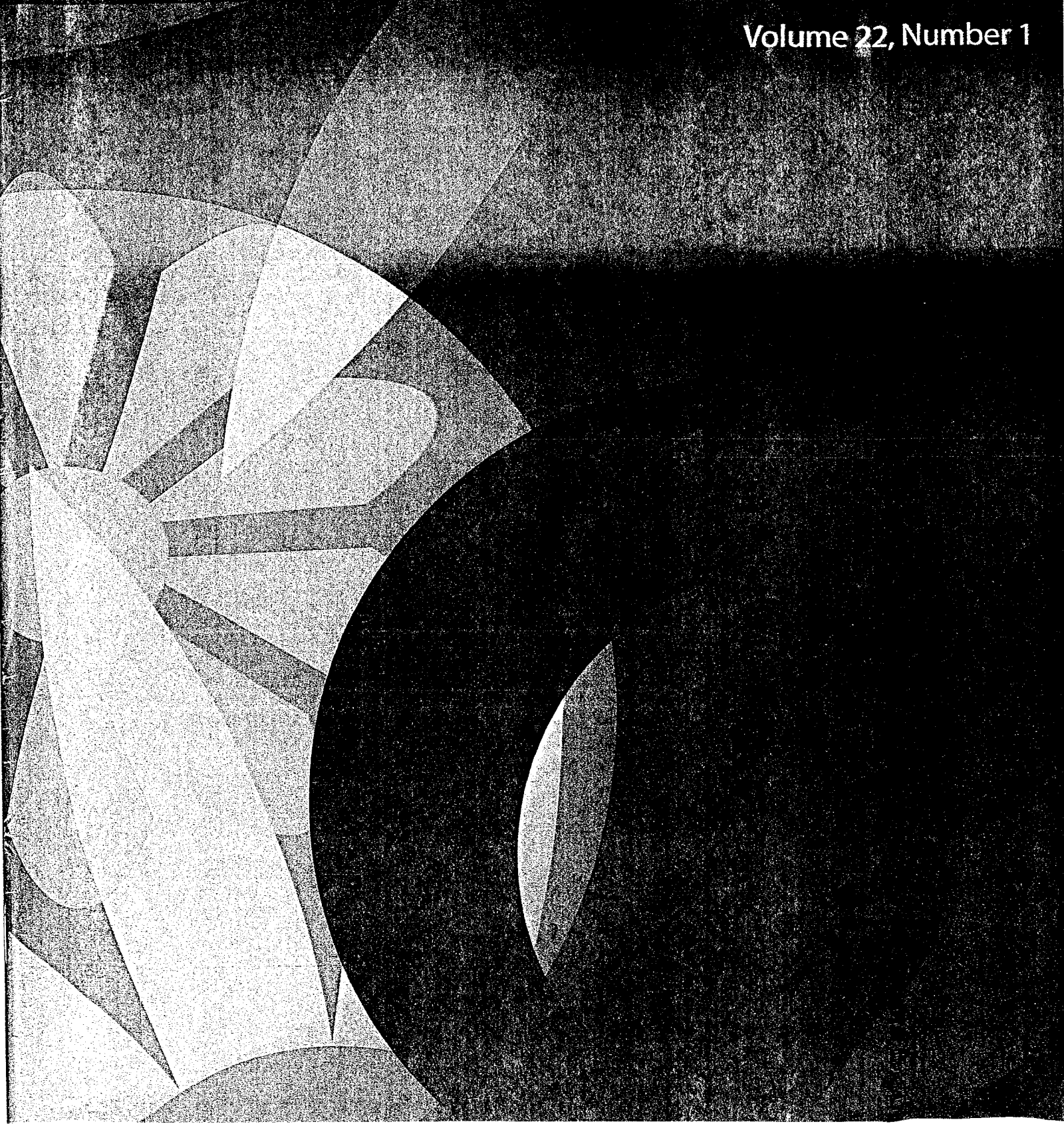
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FUTURES

Considerations Regarding the Future of Andragogy

By John A. Henschke

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Andragogy, the art and science of helping adults learn, has a long and rich history that has shaped understanding of adult learning and continues to be a strong force in guiding the way adults learn. While adult educators in the US are familiar with andragogy through the work of Dr. Malcolm Knowles, the theory of andragogy reaches a worldwide audience of practitioners striving to improve learning through its respectful and engaging method focused on the learner.

Background

The term 'andragogy' was first authored by Alexander Kapp (1833), a German high school teacher, but it lay fallow for many decades (Reischmann, 2005). In the 1920s, another German, Rosenstock-Huessy (1925) resurrected the term as he developed a method for teaching the German people, dispirited and degenerated in 1918 after World War I, to regenerate themselves and their country. Bringing 'andragogy' from the German Workers to America, Lindeman (1926) introduced the term andragogy twice, and explained it as a key method for teaching adults.

Malcolm Knowles acquired the term in 1966 from Dusan Savicevic (Sopher, 2003). Knowles (1970) infused andragogy with much of his own meaning garnered from his already extensive experience in adult education. The defining attributes of his theory include: acknowledging that learners as self-directed and autonomous and that the teacher is a facilitator of learning rather than presenter of content. Knowles successfully tested and refined this theory and design on a broad spectrum in numerous settings: corporate, workplace, business, industry, health-care, government, higher education, professions, religious education, and elementary, secondary, and remedial education.

Savicevic (1999) advocates that his research has established andragogy as a scientific discipline, that

studies education and learning of adults in all its forms of expression. The clearest articulation of andragogy from the European perspective is found where he provided a critical consideration of andragogical concepts in five Western and five Eastern European Countries (Savicevic, 1991, 1999). The critical element in European andragogy is that adults should assist one another to become more refined and competent. European andragogy also suggests that there should be differences in the aims of andragogy and pedagogy (assisting a child to become an adult).

Critiques of Andragogy

Andragogy has faced multiple critiques from adult education scholars. A complete list is not possible, given the space available in this futures column, yet a few will be mentioned. Jarvis (1984) wrote that the theory of andragogy had moved into the status of an established doctrine in adult education, but without sufficient empirical research to justify its dominant position. Welton (1995) asserted that "the 'andragogical consensus' (anchoring the study of adult education in methods of teaching and understanding the individual adult learner), formulated by the custodians of orthodoxy in the American Commission of Professors in the 1950s and solidified by Malcolm Knowles and others in the 1960s and 1970s, has unraveled at the seams" (p. 5).

Grace (2001) considered that Knowles' andragogy had been effectively dismantled by 1990. Pratt's (1993) perception was that after 25 years, Knowles' approach was not a panacea for a teaching approach in all adult education. Shore's (2001) perceived that Knowles' andragogy promoted unproductive debates framed along a binary path, such as adult/child, isolation/relation. Sandlin (2005) has serious reservations about its (andragogy's) prominence and thought it needed to be supplemented by three other perspectives: Afrocentric, feminist, and critical. Merriam (2001) acknowledged that andragogy is

one of the pillars of adult education and it will continue to engender debate, discussion, and research; however, the field needs to move beyond andragogy.

The common thread that runs through all of these critiques is that each one appears to start and stop the discussion on what Knowles did or didn't do with andragogy. There appears to be a woeful lack of a comprehensive understanding of the worldwide concept of andragogy; thus, it seems to render each of the pleas rather hollow.

Establishment and Research

Since 1970, multiple researchers and scholars in the US and abroad have worked to establish andragogy as a proven theory and strong method for teaching adults. Some have responded directly to the challenges and critiques posed, while others have researched andragogy to meet their specific contextual needs. Books on andragogy have been translated into many languages and are used worldwide.

Examples of this research and tools created are provided here. Hadley (1975) developed the Education Orientation Questionnaire (EOQ), an instrument describing the constructs of andragogy and pedagogy. Knowles (1984) presented the first book in which he cites thirty-six extensive case examples of applying andragogy in practice, revealing successes and failures.

Henschke (1989) developed an andragogical assessment instrument entitled, Instructional Perspectives Inventory (IPI) that included the central and major core on the teacher trust of learners. However, Stanton (2005) related the same concepts in readiness for self-directed learning, and there was not only congruence between the two, but also the IPI was validated as an almost perfect 'bell-shaped' measurement of an andragogical facilitator.

Poggeler (1994) listed ten trends which he hoped will be helpful for future development of European andragogical research, such as international knowledge, comparative understanding, political influences, "development-andragogy" of the Third World, and understanding the "lifeworlds" of the participants, and new types and alternatives of adult education.

Houle (1996), in talking about Knowles' work in andragogy, said that it remains the most learner-centered of all patterns of adult educational programming. He concluded by saying, "Even leaders who guide learning chiefly in terms of the mastery of subject matter . . . know that they should involve learners in as many aspects of their education as possible and in the creation of a climate in which they can most fruitfully learn" (p. 30).

Maehl (2000) suggests that Knowles led in the direction of making andragogy quite humanistic that

gained wide adoption in the field. The strength of Knowles' approach was its position advocating an adult learning program that is respectful, trusting, supportive, and collaborative.

Rachal (2002) provided a solid empirical research base, by clearly identifying seven criteria suitable for implementation in future empirical studies of andragogy: voluntary participation, adult status, collaboratively-determined objectives, performance-based assessment of achievement, measuring satisfaction, appropriate adult learning environment, and technical issues.

Bellamio (2006), a human resource development (HRD) professional working in the Xerox Corporation, Italy, had Malcolm's book *The Adult Learner* translated into the Italian Language. He saw Malcolm's andragogy as helping Italian HRD professionals take responsibility for improving their sphere of influence within their corporations.

As if seeking to culminate and bring together all these valiant efforts, Savicevic (2008) does a thorough historical tracing of the converging and diverging of ideas on andragogy in various countries. Savicevic also reflected about his perception of Knowles' position in sustaining andragogy over the long range of its history into the future.

Personal Experience

Forty years in development of a science is a significant period. I met professor Knowles four decades ago and argued about the term and concept of andragogy. Since then, andragogy has grown and become rooted in the American professional literature. There is no doubt that Knowles contributed to it, not only by his texts, but with his spoken word and lectures. He was a 'masovik', i.e. a lecturer on a mass events. He lectured at 10,000 people stadiums, as if he was inspired by an ancient agonistic spirituality! Knowles earned his meritorious place through his dissemination of andragogical ideas throughout the USA.

Current Research in Andragogy

In recent years, Henschke and Cooper (2007) looked into the world-wide foundation of andragogy. Out of what has now become a list of 330 published documents on andragogy by other authors, they identified six sections or themes depicting andragogy: (a) evolution of the term andragogy; (b) historical antecedents shaping the concept of andragogy; (c) comparison of the American and European understandings of andragogy; (d) popularizing and sustaining the American and worldwide concept of andragogy; (e) practical applications of andragogy;

and (f) theory, research, and definition of andragogy. This fully documented perspective has been absent from all previous author's published discussions. In addition, Henschke (2009) presented an additional perspective of this ongoing research into a chronological history and philosophy of andragogy. Many of these documents may be accessed on his websites identified in his authorship of this article.

Isenberg (2007), provided a break-through framework and dynamic design for bringing together the interaction of andragogy and Internet learning. To meet the goal of the UNESCO International Commission on adult learning for the 21st century, she focused on the six pillars of lifelong learning: learning to know, learning to do, learning to live, learning to be, learning to change, and learning for sustainability. Boucouvalas (2008) also highlighted the emphasis that Knowles gave to group/community/society in his treatment of andragogy.

Vodde (2008) used Rachal's (2002) research framework and found that while a traditional, pedagogical, military model of training may have at one time served the needs and interests of police and society, its applicability and efficacy has been called into question. He concludes that an andragogical instructional methodology was more effective.

Bright and Mahdi (2010) actively interacted as faculty and student in an adult education academic program. They studied the significance of inclusive education (andragogical theory) in collaboration between American and Arab cultures in meaningful ways, examining learning and teaching approaches that can influence political and social philosophies of leadership. They mentioned that education is a critical aspect in fostering and securing long-term peace and stability. They contend that andragogical adult educational theory, processes, and research are elemental to a vision of a peaceful world and a stabilized Iraq.

Future

Andragogy has much to contribute to the future of adult education and learning. Many of the 330 documents on andragogy that have been published can be found on my websites (<http://www.lindenwood.edu/education/andragogy.cfm> and <http://www.umsi.edu/~henschke>), in addition to my papers discussing the broad world-wide foundation of andragogy. In the future, the discussion of andragogy should go beyond Knowles' version and include the world-wide perspective of others who have written and published on andragogy. The broad perspective of andragogy should join other theories about adult learning within the field and has much to

contribute to the conversation. Continued research will help to establish andragogy as a scientific academic discipline. Lindenwood University has recently established an Academic Andragogy Doctoral Program, and this means that as a faculty member there, I am committed to being engaged in moving this forward. I will continue to be involved in the andragogy discussions at AAACE and the Commission of Professors of Adult Education and other conferences. I invite you to join in this movement.

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