



The Learning Theory Podcast

Episode 1

The Gogys

©2008, Daniel J. Campbell, Ed.D

Original Broadcast Date: 1/21/08

Introduction

Welcome to the Learning Theory Podcast. I'm your host, Dan Campbell, and I'm thrilled to bring you this first of what I hope to be many bi-weekly episodes of the Learning Theory Podcast. This series will focus on the major and minor learning theories; some sound, some not so sound, and some that just make you wonder what the hell were they thinking?

For you listeners who are educators or students of education, you probably have already figured out what the title of this episode, The Gogys, stands for. For listeners with MBAs, let me explain. I can assure you I'm not referring to an embarrassing condition which you would discuss with your physician; I'm not that kind of a doctor. When I say The Gogys, I am referring to the terms pedagogy and andragogy.

Definition of the Terms

(Warning, Latin content ahead – *add sound effects*). Notice that both words have the same ending element stemming from the Latin *agogos* meaning 'leading.' Pedagogy starts with a derivative of the Latin *paid* – meaning child, and andragogy starts with the Latin *andr* (spelled *andr*) – meaning man. So the literal definitions of the two terms are the leading of children, pedagogy; and the leading of men, andragogy (Smith, 1996, 1999). Sorry ladies, I know that's a sexist definition. Don't blame me, blame the ancient Greeks.

In modern usage term pedagogy has come to mean the teaching of children, and the term andragogy has come to mean the teaching of adults. Here is your payback ladies. Since very few men act like adults, an argument could be made that the term andragogy is really just for you!

Some of you may be tearing at your earbuds screaming these aren't theories. In regard to pedagogy, I agree. Pedagogy is not so much a theory, but instead description of the art or the science of teaching. For andragogy, however, the answer is not so simple. In her book *Adults as*

Learners, Patricia Cross (1981) discusses the debate as to whether andragogy is a theory, a philosophical position, a political reality, or a set of us hypothesis subject to scientific verification. This debate, while interesting, goes beyond what can be discussed in the timeframe allotted for this podcast. Regardless of whether pedagogy and andragogy can be accurately described as learning theories, they still provide a useful framework under which all other learning theories can reside.

Pedagogy

In pedagogical models, learning centers on a central figure, the teacher. The teacher determines what will be learned, how it will be learned, and how the outcome will be measured. In other words, the teacher is the central authority figure that assumes all responsibility and is the source of all knowledge. Two commonly held beliefs as to the origin of pedagogy are based in religious principles. The first holds that pedagogy can be traced back to the Calvinists whole believed that wisdom was evil and that direct adult control was required to limit children's learning and keep them innocent (Conner, 1997-2004) The second points to the 17th century when schools were organized to prepare young boys for the priesthood (Conner). Both of these place pedagogy in an indoctrination orientation. In modern times pedagogy is no longer strictly applied as indoctrination, but instead it is applied to give children the basic skills required to function in society.

Andragogy

The conceptual framework of andragogy can be traced back to the teachings of Socrates, Plato, Aristotle, and Sophists; in their views about learning throughout life and the manners in which knowledge is acquired at different points in life. Though this framework was revisited throughout recorded history, the theory was not formalized until the early 19th century by the

German social scientist Alexander Kapp (Smith, 1996, 1999). In the late 1960s Malcome Knowles popularized the theory by outlining four basic assumptions. As a person matures:

1. His [or her] self-concept moves from one of being a dependent personality towards one of being a self-directed human being.
2. He [or she] accumulates a growing reservoir of experience that becomes an increasing resource for learning.
3. His [or her] readiness to learn becomes oriented increasingly to the developmental task of his or her social roles.
4. And his [or her] time perspective changes from one of postponed application of knowledge to immediacy of application, and accordingly his [or her] orientation toward learning shifts from one of the subjects centeredness to one of problem centeredness. (Knowles, 1979 as cited by Cross, 1981, p. 223).

Knowles' assumptions can be summarized with four basic principles: adults need to be involved in the educational process, the learning should be experiential, the learning should have immediate relevance, and the learning should be problems centered. (Kearsley, 1994-2008)

Theory to Practice – Or Lack There Of

From these two descriptions, we can see that pedagogy, the teaching of children, would create very organized and controlled learning environment; while andragogy, the teaching of adults, would seem to foster an open and interactive learning environment. One would think that but theory to practice is not always so straight forward. The town I live in just opened two new elementary schools. These schools have classrooms with non-traditional geometries in order for the children to be able to break out into their own spaces for individualized small group activities. On the other extreme, I have observed training in the corporate setting where learners

start at 7:30, go to 5:00, get one 15 minute break in the morning, another in the afternoon, and have lunch brought in so they can't get away.

Modeling the Theories

Many educators would describe pedagogy as a behaviorist model and andragogy as a constructivist model. Both behaviorism and constructivism can be called learning theories in their own right, and we will explore these in future episodes. I mention them now because I want to make sure that listeners are aware of the generally accepted models assigned to pedagogy and andragogy. That being said, I would like to take some personal liberties with the terminology. Instead of using the terms behaviorist and constructivist I propose that pedagogy is a conservative teaching approach, whereas andragogy is a liberal teaching approach.

Just as conservative and liberal political philosophies have extremes on both ends, the conservative and liberal teaching philosophies of pedagogy and andragogy also have extremes. For example, the learner empowerment of constructivist theory can be considered a liberal approach to teaching, while the rigidity of an increasingly practiced theory called feminist pedagogy can be considered one of the most conservative approaches to teaching. I bet, that is the first time you ever heard of feminism associated with conservatism. Join me in the next two broadcasts of this series, constructivism and feminist pedagogy, and I will try to defend my argument.

Wrap Up

If you would like to provide feedback on this episode, please visit www.dancampbell.us, where you can find transcripts of this and future episodes, links to learning theory resources on the web, and of course a link to my email address. Thank you for listening! I will be back in two weeks with a new episode. Until then, go out and learn something new everyday.

References

Conner, M. L. (1997-2004). *Andragogy and pedagogy*. Ageless Learner. [Online] Available:

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

Cross, K. P. (1981) *Adults as Learners. Increasing participation and facilitating learning*, San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.

Kearsley, G (1994-2008). *Andragogy (M. Knowles)*. Theory Into Practice (TIP) database.

[Online] Available: <http://tip.psychology.org/knowles.html>

Smith, M. K. (1996, 1999). Andragogy. Encyclopaedia of Informal Education. [Online]

Available: <http://www.infed.org/lifelonglearning/b-andra.htm>