

# MAPPING THE FIELD OF ADULT AND CONTINUING EDUCATION

An International Compendium

VOLUME THREE: Leadership and Administration

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# ANDRAGOGIK, ANDRAGOGY, AND ADMINISTERING GRADUATE PROGRAMS

*Katarina Popović and Jost Reischmann*

*Keywords:* academic discipline, Andragogik, andragogy, change agent, competencies, identity, lifelong learning, lifewide learning, professionalization

**T**his article characterizes the (European) understanding of Andragogik. The main purpose is to strengthen the identity of the academic field. Andragogik—labelling an academic discipline—opens a widened understanding of adult learning and education beyond the role of “teacher of adults.” The diversified work reality of andragogues proves the following strength of andragogy: Graduates work successfully in the complexity of lifewide adult learning (Jackson, 2012; Reischmann, 1986) in leadership (by themselves leading and by supporting others to lead) and administration (by planning and organizing programs and measures). This complex understanding and performing of supporting change needs the following four groups of competencies: teaching, planning/organizing, consulting/counselling, and evaluation/research. Graduate programs have to prepare for these complex tasks.

## **The (European) Understanding of Andragogik**

*Andragogik/andragogy* labels the scientific discipline, the subject of which is the study of the lifelong and lifewide adult learning and education (germ. Bildung);

it includes "education and learning of adults in all its forms of expression" (Savićević, 1999, p. 97). *Andragogik* does not mean a theory, nor a concept or model: Where *Andragogik* is used, it functions as a header for (places of) systematic reflections, parallel to other academic headers like biology, medicine, and physics.

The first use of the term *Andragogik* by the German teacher and author Alexander Kapp in 1833 remained not much more than an oddity (Reischmann, 2004). But from the mid-twentieth century, societies around the world became challenged by manifold changes, leading to the increasing importance of adult learning and education (e.g., impressively described by UNESCO, 1997). Accordingly, a new reality developed with new types of professional institutions, functions, and roles, with full-time employed and academically trained professionals in the field of adult learning.

This development led to the need for two different labels for the academic and scholarly field (andragogy) versus the field of practice (adult education). In a number of countries *Andragogik/andragogy* became connected with new academic and professional institutions, publications, and programs, most notably in Eastern Europe.

*Andragogik*, as it is used in parts of Europe, has the advantage that different labels are available for the academic field (andragogy, andragogue) and for the practical field (adult education, adult educator), preventing confusion about the different responsibilities and competencies. Using the same label (as in the United States and other countries) is not beneficial to differentiating these roles because nearly everybody can be labeled as *adult educator*. This makes it difficult to build a specific professional identity of university programs, students, and graduates.

Similarly, the concept of lifelong learning was not beneficial for the professionalization of the field; on the contrary, because there aren't (and cannot be) experts and professionals in lifelong learning (when understood as an all-encompassing general concept), the global rise of lifelong learning left behind adult education and professionals working in this field, hindered their academic qualification, and replaced not only adult education but also andragogy (Popović, 2014).

## Workplaces and Functions of Andragogues

In many countries the working fields of the graduates of academic programs in andragogy significantly changed over the last three decades; they far exceed the traditional understanding of *adult educators* or *teachers of adults*. Andragogues work in manifold settings and institutions in business and industry, politics and churches, hospitals, museums, charities, tourism,

armed forces, cultural institutions, media, and as freelance workers in their own training and consulting businesses. Their task is to organize, manage and coach, inform, moderate, and motivate; they identify and solve problems, help to find visions and directions, mediate in tensions and conflicts, and sometimes teach and conduct trainings. The working fields of andragogues have become diversified, with an increasing range of needed competencies.

The unifying idea/concept linking these various andragogical work activities is: they support change—personal, organizational, and social. The term *change agent*, sometimes used in the United States, is probably the best one to describe the competencies and role of graduates from andragogy programs (Reischmann, 2015).

### **Implications for Administering University Programs of Andragogik**

In medicine or architecture, like in other professional fields, it is not enough to obtain theoretical knowledge through university education to meet the needs of the complex professional reality of lifewide learning. In addition to knowledge, competencies—the capability to act based on reflection—are also needed. Andragogues are expected to master the following four groups of competencies:

1. To teach, train, and facilitate learning processes
2. To plan and organize educational programs, measures, and interventions
3. To consult and counsel—individuals, organizations, and communities
4. To evaluate learning and education and to do research in the field of adult education and learning

Andragogues, as change experts, can practically perform and theoretically reflect, have a range of competencies, and produce the most successful mix of these ingredients (Lattke, Popović, & Weickert, 2012). Their work perspective far exceeds traditional educational institutions: Everywhere change happens, they can take leadership and initiate or support positive changes by the means of learning. In administrative functions, their focus is change through learning. The identity of andragogues is not defined by specific institutions or one single function; it is defined by complex understanding and performing of supporting change. This has to be considered in the curriculum of andragogical programs and degrees.

The discussion about Andragogik/andragogy as a unifying label for all professionals working in the fields of lifelong and lifewide learning has

important benefits. It broadens the professional perspectives and chances of graduates and practitioners, and for scholars, it provides an important impetus for the systematic research of *the entire field* of adult learning and education—formal, nonformal, and informal.

### Suggested Cross-References

For more information on concepts and ideas discussed in this article, please see the following articles in the compendium: 9, 13, 40, 43, 45, 52

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