A critique of andragogy in the South African TVET context

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ABSTRACT

Andragogy, the 'art and science of helping adults learn' (Knowles, 1980:43), had some purchase in the South African technical and vocational education and training (TVET) sector, where writers and lecturers have been attracted to the idea that adult education has its own theoretical and epistemological principles. Recently, a notable number of writings in African countries, including South Africa, have advocated the adoption of andragogic methods to overcome the inadequate provision of workplace (procedural) learning in relation to formal (propositional) learning in TVET institutions. However, this article argues that andragogy is culturally biased because it is based on white, male, middle-class norms of the 1960s. Its assumptions about adult learning tend to marginalise others on the basis of race, gender, and cultural difference. This tendency is given a peculiar form in South Africa owing to the historical relationship between andragogy and fundamental pedagogics in the academic theorisation of apartheid ideology. On the strength of these historical, political, and cultural levels of criticism, it is suggested that andragogy has little veracity or credibility for TVET.

KEYWORDS

Adult education; andragogy; apartheid; cultural bias; fundamental pedagogics; gender; race; TVET

Introduction

It has been suggested that andragogy is a 'badge of identity' or an 'article of faith' for many adult educators (Brookfield, 1986:90; Rachal, 1994:3). Central to this sense of identity is the notion that andragogy – the 'art and science of helping adults learn', as defined by Malcolm Knowles (1980:43) – represents a progressive break with the traditional teaching and learning methods of the past, where 'school learners sit, watch, listen, and write' (Macedonia, 2019:par 1). However, the present article argues that this sense of progressive education is misleading because the theory of andragogy is culturally biased in favour of *whiteness* and prejudiced against other races, genders and cultural groups. In South Africa, this bias has a particularly malignant history in the close association of andragogy with fundamental pedagogics, revealing inherited forms of oppression in the South African technical and vocational education and training (TVET) system that are still manifest today.

The article comprises five parts. First, some general background is provided regarding andragogy and its influence on TVET, including reflections on the aims of this article. Second, an account is offered of Knowles' defining theory of andragogy. Third, the optimistic adoption in recent times of andragogy as a guiding principle in TVET is explored, particularly in relation to the political economies of countries of the Global South. Next follows a discussion of the social and cultural assumptions of andragogy, which turn out to privilege white male rationality over the different cultural orientations of people of colour, other genders, immigrant communities, and other marginalised groups. Finally, the close historical association in South Africa of andragogy with fundamental pedagogics – often described as the official theory of apartheid education – is examined.

Background: Andragogy in TVET

My concern here is with various societal dimensions of the idea of 'andragogy' – the political, social and cultural arguments for and against it as the perspective of choice in adult, and particularly TVET, education. It is generally accepted that TVET students – post-school, past the age of 18, and focused on future occupations – are adults (although this notion itself can cynically be politically manipulated, as I shall demonstrate towards the end of the article). The distinction between teaching children ('pedagogy') and teaching adults ('andragogy') has thus had some purchase in TVET.

The notion that adult learning has its own theoretical and epistemological principles resonates with many theorists and educators. Reischmann (2004) observed that 'andragogy' was strongly adopted from the sixties in different parts of the world by amorphous communities of educators who taught adults in a situation in which there was minimal institutional recognition, theoretical knowledge and formal training in adult education: 'To be offered … humanistic values and beliefs, some specific methods and a good sounding label, strengthened a group that felt inferior to comparable professions' (2004:4). In TVET by the 1980s, andragogy was advocated strongly as the basis of programmes in 'occupational assessment', 'vocational training', 'job placement'

and other adult vocational training in the United States (US) (MacFarland, 1985; Henschke, 2016:5), 'human resource development' in Germany (Reischmann, 2004:4), and as common practice in vocational education in Australia (Choy & Delahaye, 2003). A recent United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) publication posits that the principles of andragogy provide the best possible understanding of the aims, purposes and professional identity of adult education in Africa (Nafukho, Amutabi & Otunga, 2005). At the same time, 'andragogy' does not have universal purchase as a working concept in adult education: for example, a recent overview of policymaking in the field, also a UNESCO document, does not use the word at all (Nikolitsa-Winter, Mauch & Maalouf, 2019).

The context of this article is TVET in South Africa, although most of the issues it engages with have global purchase in relation to patterns of inequality within and between countries. Only the final section is distinctively South African. More specifically, it is written as a reflection on my own experiences as a lecturer on a diploma course aimed at developing the pedagogical knowledge and skills of lecturers at South African TVET colleges. Most of these 'lecturer–students' are qualified and experienced craftspersons in particular trades or professions – boilermakers, chefs, electricians, hairdressers, information technology (IT) technicians, office managers, plumbers, etc. – but have no formal educational qualifications. The Advanced Diploma in Technical and Vocational Teaching is intended to provide them with some educational expertise related to TVET. It is designed as a national curriculum framework to be interpreted and recontextualised into actual courses delivered by various university providers. The course I teach is concerned with issues in the philosophy of knowledge (specifically the distinction between procedural, propositional and professional knowledge) and the psychology of learning (behaviourist, cognitivist, constructivist, socioculturalist and embodied perspectives and their implications for pedagogy).

I am constantly asked by students, 'But what about andragogy? Where does andragogy fit in?' or questions of a similar kind. There seems to be some kind of residue left behind by andragogy that is triggered by considerations of adult learning and which enters a mainstream course on psychological theories of learning willy-nilly. I am intrigued by the fact that I do not get asked similarly about, say, Mezirow's (1991) transformative learning, Revans' (2011) action learning or even Freire's (1970) critical pedagogy (*conscientização*), which are equivalent theories to Knowles' andragogy. Bélanger (2011) distinguishes carefully between (a) 'main learning theories' in adult education, such as those in my course, and (b) 'adult learning-related theories' – humanist theory (including Knowles), experiential learning and transformative learning (including Freire and Mezirow). Thus (a) and (b) are not equivalent categories – the axis of cohesion[1] of the theories in (a) is the development of the mind and

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1   Andrew Abbott (2001) usefully distinguishes the 'epistemological axis of cohesion' of different academic disciplines and fields, by which he means a symbolic language or pragmatic orientation that gives each coherence as community of scholars. A discipline does not require a single, overarching theory, but requires consensus on its core objects and/or objectives of study. So, for example, 'anthropology is largely organised around a method, political science around a type of [power] relationship, and economics around a theory of action' (Abbot, 2001:140).

conceptual change in adults, whereas in (b) it is the procedures that adult learners engage in that produce learning. So my purpose in researching and writing this article was to understand better this residue, where it comes from, and how best I might be able to respond to my students' questions on andragogy.

Malcolm Knowles' theory of andragogy

The term 'andragogy' was coined in 1833 by a German teacher, Kapp, in interpreting Plato (Reischmann, 2004; Loeng, 2017). Regarding TVET, it is of interest that Kapp's focus was on vocational education for different occupations in which he emphasised the inner building of 'character' through self-reflection rather than the outer 'objective competencies' (Henschke, 2009). The latter observed skills in tool use were for Kapp merely 'shadow figures' of the general, underlying occupational wisdoms, namely knowledge of legislation, the judicial system, gymnastics and medicine (Loeng, 2017:634). This is an echo from the past of the contemporary policy emphasis in TVET on 'soft skills' rather than 'hard skills'. Soft skills, such as critical thinking, project management, teamwork and conflict resolution are general competencies that underlie a wide variety of occupations; hard skills are job- or task-specific technical competencies (ILO, 2021; RSA, 2022).

In the late 1920s, Lindeman (1926) revived the term 'andragogy' to describe teaching methods specific to adults. However, this 'new' concept did not take hold for decades and 'pedagogy' tended to apply to any teaching or learning situation, including adult education. Lindeman's student, Knowles, was later to take up 'andragogy' as the name for his systematic approach to adult learning.

The concept of andragogy is today most closely associated with Knowles, who developed and systematised the theory in the United States in the 1970s. Knowles was strongly influenced by Carl Rogers' (1967; 1969) view that formal education denied self-actualisation: Rogers famously suggested that 'teaching is a relatively unimportant and vastly overrated activity' (Rogers, 1969:103). In the therapeutic context, Rogers' 'person-centred' psychology wanted to break with the idea that a psychotherapist treats 'patients' by modifying their behaviour using an external, often harsh reinforcement technology. In a nutshell, he insisted that his 'clients' were to be treated as adults, responsible for their own behaviour. He advocated a psychotherapy in which people were encouraged and supported to take and implement decisions to change their own behaviour. This was the *zeitgeist* into which Knowles moved as an academic in the 1970s. He described it as

> exhilarating. I began to sense what it means to get 'turned on' to learning. I began to think about what it means to be a facilitator of learning rather than a teacher (Knowles, 1989:14).

Knowles extended the idea of a responsible, self-directed adult into a criticism of traditional education, questioning whether standard pedagogical assumptions in schools also applied to

adult learners. He set out to develop a 'holistic' theory of adult learning anchored in distinctive motivations, interests, capacities and goals of adult learners (1968:386). Across his writings, Knowles developed the following five assumptions (summarised in Table 1) about the characteristics of adult learners that are different from formal schooling: self-concept, the learning process, readiness to learn, orientation to learning and motivation to learn.

Self-concept

Knowles (1980) conceives the human lifespan as a movement from dependency towards independent, mature, 'objective', *adult* understanding. Adults thrive on a sense of autonomy and self-determination in relation to their learning, whereas children feel dependent on the teacher for learning. Andragogy would thus conceive of TVET learners as self-directed, using opportunities provided for them by actual workplaces, college workshops and lectures to shape the course of their own learning. Learning procedural knowledge associated with tool-use, for example, TVET learners will 'learn by doing', refining their skills and correcting mistakes with little need for direct teaching.

The learning process

Knowles (1980) seeks to contextualise adults' learning in previous experience that they bring into the learning environment. They draw upon this reservoir of knowledge even when they encounter new ideas and skills. In contrast, children bring minimal experience to the classroom. They usually learn things for the first time, so pedagogy tends to be based on the instruction of new concepts. In TVET, andragogy implies that the teacher must tie course material to learners' past experience using strategies such as activity-based learning, problem-solving and discussions.

Readiness to learn

The idea of adults being eager to learn relevant tasks is central to Knowles' (1980) thinking. Andragogy assumes adults have jobs, family responsibilities and social location that determine what and when they learn. Adults value opportunities to learn about the specific roles they play in society. In TVET, andragogy would therefore assume that students want task-related know-how for work, unlike the general knowledge that schools emphasise.

Orientation to learning

Adults need to know why they are asked to learn something (Knowles, 1980). Their learning orientation is one of immediacy – they seek 'just-in-time' knowledge to apply directly to practical issues and problems in the world around them. School learning, in contrast, has a 'postponed application' – it is concerned with 'just-in-case' knowledge that is designed to prepare learners for all eventualities in later life. In the TVET context, andragogy therefore emphasises problem-based learning – the implication of Knowles' view is that lecturers ought

to make it clear from the start what the purpose of a learning activity or task is in relation to the knowledge and skills required for the workplace.

Motivation to learn

The learning motivation of an adult is internal (Knowles, 1984:12), driven by their understanding of the knowledge and skills necessary to achieve their potential; a school child's motivation to learn, on the other hand, is mostly external. So adult TVET learners would be understood as putting themselves into new situations to pursue their technical and vocational qualification goals, and they seek andragogic learning experiences that will allow them to do so.

Table 1: Knowles' distinction between andragogy and pedagogy (distilled from 1968, 1973, 1980)

	ANDRAGOGY	**PEDAGOGY (i.e. SCHOOLING)**[2]
Self-concept	Adults are self-directed learners moving towards independence.	Teachers are responsible for the learning of the children, who are dependent beings.
Learning process	Adult learning is problem-centred and grounded in experience.	School learning is based on the instruction of unfamiliar subject content.
Readiness	Adults want specific learning about their work and other roles in society.	In school, children need generic learning to prepare them for the future.
Orientation	Adults are interested in 'just-in-time' learning immediately related to their lives.	School learning is 'just-in-case' preparation for an adult future.
Motivation	Adult learners are internally motivated.	In schools, children are externally motivated.

Knowles does not consider andragogy as an epistemology so much as an approach that can draw on different theories. He encourages adult educators to realise fully the assumptions of andragogy by setting up the classroom or learning environment to facilitate a cooperative learning climate. This entails involving learners in diagnosing their needs, interests and skill levels and formulating learning objectives together. Knowles argues that adult educators should design a sequence of tasks to achieve these objectives, working collaboratively with learners to select methods, materials and resources for learning (Blondy, 2007:117).

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2 Rogers (1980; Rogers & Lyon, 2013) later developed strong criticisms of the way children were taught in schools, along similar lines to Knowles' criticism of pedagogy.

Andragogy in contemporary TVET contexts

At the systemic level, andragogy holds out the promise of a progressive teaching and learning methodology that can overcome the constraints of traditional education and be responsive to the needs of adult learners in relation to their lives, careers and workplaces. In post-school formal and non-formal TVET circles, it has been a prominent concept to try to account for the distinctiveness of this terrain. Although also not widespread throughout the literature – for example, it is absent in recent influential accounts of TVET 'pedagogy' published by supranational states (OECD, 2015; UNEVOC, 2020) – much contemporary use of the term 'andragogy' in TVET tends to conceive of it as the learning and teaching approach necessary for a successful workplace learning component in the TVET curriculum.

The TVET issue here is 'the gap between academic abstractions and situated [workplace] knowledge' (Shalem & Allais, 2018:8). Most contemporary writing on TVET grapples with the problem of the integration of theoretical learning in institutions with practical on-the-job training (Billett, 1993; Papier & Vollenhoven, 2017; Hordern, Shalem, Esmond & Bishop, 2022). There are strong suggestions that there is increasingly insufficient curriculum coverage of the *procedural* knowledge acquired in the workplace, in relation to formally acquired *propositional* knowledge, to achieve occupational expertise. Obviously, this debate about learning in real-world work settings is engaged through a range of theoretical lenses: 'workplace learning, internships, simulation, education with production, training with production, mentorship, coaching, apprenticeship and so on' (Russon & Wedekind, 2023:100). However, amid this broader literature, an expanding corpus of writing looks to andragogy to provide teaching and learning methods for TVET that will foster a 'paradigm shift' away from rigid formal institutional learning to more flexible workplace learning (Kanwar, Balasubramanian & Carr, 2019).

This seems to be particularly the case in countries of the Global South. In South-East Asia, there appear to be expanding cross-national networks advocating applied andragogy as a 'real-world' instructional strategy to effectively bridge the *practical skills students acquire in workplace learning to the formal curriculum of a TVET college* (Arifin et al., 2020; Rubayet & Imam, 2021). Numerous local studies in African countries recommend an andragogical approach as the basis of a move away from traditional subject-matter-centred curricula and associated academic assessment systems, to a competency-based curriculum centred on 'more practical' job-related skills acquired by direct experiential learning in industrial or community contexts (Lloyd, 2018; Med & Lukyamuzi, 2019; Ngwacho, 2019; Odigiri et al., 2019; Ngozwana, 2020; Akintolu & Letseka, 2021; Mutambisi et al., 2021; Anyiendah, Odundo & Ganira, 2023). Johnstone suggests, referring to Tourism TVET in South Africa, that andragogical thinking takes us definitively beyond reliance on only the formal knowledge of the lecture theatre to a recognition that 'imitation and observation in the workplace produces experts in a specific technical or vocational field' (2021:108).

To pull together the strands of the argument thus far: Knowles' andragogy claims to offer an instructional methodology in tune with the distinctive needs of adults. These ideas, when translated into principles for an education system such as TVET, envisage teaching and learning that are more closely tied to the everyday work and life needs of adults than formal schooling is able to do.

Political and cultural critique of the theory of andragogy

Contrary to this optimistic social promise, however, andragogy has faced severe criticism of its conception of and implications for political and cultural change related to education. Brookfield (2003) regards the theory as 'culture blind', arguing that its key notion of *self-directed learning* (see Table 1) marginalises people with racial and cultural identities that value the teacher as the source of knowledge and guidance. Dantus (2021) and Duff (2019), echoing this sentiment in more recent debates on the decolonisation of adult learning, both argue that andragogy is permeated ideologically by the discourse of universality and individualism characteristic of the dominant white male culture of the Global North. Many authors regard andragogy as predicated on the *individualist* norm of a white middle-class, US male of the mid-20th century, who was supposedly a self-motivated, self-starting, independent, resourceful problem-solver (Pratt, 1993; Flannery, 1994; Johnson-Bailey & Cervero, 2000; Birden, 2003; Lee, 2003; Sandlin, 2005; Brookfield, 2014; Duff, 2019; Dantus, 2021). Lee (2003) suggests that marginalised groups of people socialised in relatively different contexts tend to view learning and teaching in ways not compatible with the methodological assumptions of andragogy. 'What happens,' ask Johnson-Bailey and Cervero (2000:154), 'when the learner's culture places more emphasis on the community and therefore encourages the individual to refrain from sharing personal ideas or concerns?' Their answer is that andragogy, in its tacit, historically rooted white male individualism denies women, black (the cultural contexts of 'people of colour' – Lee, 2003), working-class and immigrant learners their situatedness in the actual hierarchies of everyday social life:

> [T]he unspoken assumption [is] that the activity of teaching and learning must happen in a parallel universe to the real world because the power relationships based on race that are omnipresent in the social and organizational settings of everyday life have been obliterated (Johnson-Bailey & Cervero, 2000:149–150).

In other words, Knowles' notion, in relation to the orientation and motivation of adult learners (Table 1), that individual learners – and teachers, for that matter – are naturally inclined to want to speak freely in a 'problem-solving' mode, further alienates already marginalised groups.

Lee (2003:15) charges that Knowles drew on 'a population that was not unlike himself' to provide samples of his approach. Reading Knowles, it does indeed appear that his research on the developing theory of andragogy tended to focus on white men as research subjects, as

pointed out by Flannery (1994), Duff (2019) and Dantus (2021). Certainly, the collection of case studies in business, industry, government and education that he introduces in *Andragogy in action* (1984) tends to be focused on educated middle-class white males (or white women in the 'female professions' such as nursing and social work). Even the two non-US chapters in the book – set in Brazil and Africa – reveal no strong sense of engagement with diversity along the lines of race, gender, class, citizenship or national origin. Knowles, however, takes them to be evidence that andragogy 'does not appear to be culture bound' (1984: 417). Critics have pointed out that there is hidden sampling bias in the book's 36 exemplars that generalises *whiteness* as a 'universal' principle of adult learning (Flannery, 1994; Duff, 2019). The bias was 'hidden' simply because mainstream US society, including academia, of the time did not recognise cultural diversity and attendant oppression among adults – an adult was an adult was an adult, to paraphrase Gertrude Stein.

Generally, research shows that women tend to be sidelined in andragogy because the 'speak freely' modality assumes political neutrality in relation to male privilege and domination brought into the learning environment (Lee 2003; Sandlin, 2005). In relation to Africentrism and race more generally, critics suggest andragogy's assumption of the individual pursuit of rational self-knowledge works against the more collective, emancipatory orientations of adult learners of colour (Guy, 1999; Merriweather-Hunn, 2004; Brookfield, 2014). Several research studies demonstrate this in relation to Chinese immigrant learners in the United States (Hvitfeldt, 1986; Pratt, 1991; Lee, 2003). These studies emphasise that alternative cultural configurations display a respectful attitude towards teachers and knowledge that is 'usually marked by an absence of questioning and critique of instructors in the classroom' (Lee, 2003:13). One might say, ironically, that a different kind of pedagogy to that of andragogy may be called for by these adult learners, perhaps one that recognises the more active, even activist, role of the teacher as a facilitator and mediator (Selepe & Moll, 2016; Russon & Wedekind, 2023).

Ironically, andragogy suffers from these theoretical flaws at the societal level precisely because of Knowles' search for the idealised or 'pure' adult at the level of learning. Because he focused intensively on defining the individual adult learner, he ignored the implications for learning of the diverse sociocultural contexts in which adults are necessarily situated. Andragogy assumes that adults operate in 'splendid solitude', entirely self-directed and internally motivated 'in learning settings apart from the constraints and impediments of their circumstances' (Lee, 2003:13). There is, of course, a paradox here: much of our knowledge is constructed without apparent help from others. However, the reason for this is that we have internalised *operative* knowledge and social structures as the forms of our own knowing and being, as both Piagetian and Vygotskian constructivism have shown (Moll, 2022). In similar terms, Pratt (1993:18) describes the neglect of the cultural context of learning in andragogy as the learner 'operating as if he/she has risen above the web of social structures'.

In this individualism, andragogy stands in stark contrast to the 'critical pedagogy' of Freire (1970; 1993), whose conception of the teaching of literacy was socially situated, embodied

and contextualised: he taught adults to read and write *in the process* of coming to understand and criticise their own workplace and socio-economic circumstances (*conscientização*). In contrast, the only sense of context that Knowles intimates is direct life experience (including work experience) and the preparation of the learner for an occupation.

There is a robust and deepening local literature in South Africa concerned with exposing and challenging inherited forms of oppression in the TVET system along the lines of race, gender and ethnicity, many of which arose under the peculiar South African conditions of segregation, apartheid and enduring coloniality (Gewer, 2016; Nkomo, Tshikovhi & Warchal, 2016; Soudien, 2018; Gamble, 2021). Some important examples of this literature engage with sustained tensions that mirror 'apartheid exclusion, discrimination, and alienation of people based on race' (Wedekind & Buthelezi, 2016:68), gender inequalities that permeate the experiences of women in TVET (Bonzet & Frick, 2019; Daniels, 2019; Matenda, 2020), the marginalisation of community voices and cultural wisdom (Hendricks & Aploon-Zokufa, 2021), and linguistic access in TVET (Lück & Magxaki; 2019; Stander, Du Plooy & Scheckle, 2022). However, insofar as 'andragogy' has any purchase in South African TVET today, it still seems to operate within the white middle-class male norms that influenced Knowles – it seems to me that there is something of this in the 'residue' that I mentioned earlier.

Historical distortion of adult learning in South Africa

There is an unfortunate history to the use of the term 'andragogy' in South Africa, in the doctrine of fundamental pedagogics, considered to be the theoretical formulation of apartheid education ideology. In politics, Verwoerd's notorious racist proclamations on education for black South Africans in the 1950s are well known. Perhaps less well understood is that these are the earliest formulations of TVET policy under apartheid:

> The Bantu[3] must be *guided to serve his own community* in all respects … there is no place for him in the European community *above the level of certain forms of labour* … . What is the use of teaching the Bantu child mathematics when it cannot use it in practice? … In the Native territories, … Bantu education can complete its full circle, by which the child is taken out of the community by the school, *developed to his fullest extent in accordance with aptitude and ability and thereafter returned to the community to serve and to enrich it* (SAHO, 2016; emphasis added).

In government, the Christian National Education (CNE) *beleid* (policy), which drove education after the whites-only election that brought the apartheid regime to power in 1948, was as blatantly racist and ethnocentric. Among its 'principles' were that all learners:

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3 Technically, 'Bantu' is a description of a subsection of the Sintu languages spoken by the Nguni people of South Africa (isiZulu, isiXhosa, siSwati, isiNdebele, Xitsonga). It also, for example, in isiZulu, means 'the people'. However, apartheid authorities used the term to refer to African people in general – as in 'Bantu education' – and it took on derogatory and even racist connotations as used by whites in the context.

should be taught in the light of God's decreed plan for the human race … separate nations and peoples … . [Therefore] Native education should be based on … trusteeship, non-equality, and segregation; its aim should be to inculcate the white man's view of life, especially that of the Boer nation, which is the senior trustee (Tatz, 1961:20; Hirson, 1979:42).

Education and training, instructed the *beleid*, must preserve the 'cultural identity' of black populations and lead 'the native' from 'a state of cultural infancy' to acceptance of Christian and national principles (Enslin, 1984).

In academia, fundamental pedagogics (FP) emerged to prop up these political and governmental machinations in justifying apartheid ('separate development'). In the heyday of apartheid education, FP was the prevailing dogma at white Afrikaans-medium universities and it dominated the curriculum at technical colleges and colleges of education that trained black teachers (Enslin, 1984:141–142). Its proponents sought to give it respectability beyond the nakedly racist, to be recognised in academic terms. The fundamental pedagogicians conceived FP as a 'universal science' that distils the 'essences' of education through contemplation of *pedagogical* practices that 'penetrates beyond culture, race, religion and time, for example, to find that which is universal' (Du Plooy, Griessel & Oberholzer, 1982:50). It supposedly reveals to us what any and every educational practice must be like in order to be authentic.

Fundamental pedagogicians needed a concept to justify the 'universal' idea of education as 'leading the educand [the child] to maturity', and this they found in a strong concept of *pedagogy*. So the pedagogic 'essence' of the child is that of 'becoming-a-person', 'becoming an adult', an 'adult-in-the-making', a 'not-yet adult' (Nel, 1974:70; Griessel, 1987:69; Du Plooy et al., 1982:86). It follows, then, that the 'essence' of education becomes the *achievement of adulthood* (Viljoen & Pienaar, 1971:131; Landman, Van Zyl & Roos, 1975; Griessel, 1987:64–65), and not just adulthood, but 'civilized adulthood' (Du Plooy et al., 1982:166). 'School education … [is] directed at accompanying pupils to proper adulthood' (Landman, 1985:105). And therein lies the rub: what is 'civilised' and 'proper' adulthood? For FP, it is the *philosophy of life* (or 'lifeworld') that

> every cultural group gives expression to *in its own individual way* … . Within a given cultural pattern every man [*sic*] in his own particular way gives shape to the idea of adulthood (Griessel, 1987:79).

A symptomatic reading of FP texts makes it clear that these 'philosophies of life' are the distinct 'nations' that must be educated separately and kept apart culturally (hence *apart*heid). Fundamental pedagogicians put forward the notion as a thinly disguised justification of racial segregation in education. Griessel (1987), for example, describes a philosophy of life as an ethnically distinct hierarchy of values:

> As a member of a group [the educand] must always choose the values and must accept personal responsibility for this choice. … [as] Afrikaner, English-speaking South African, Jew, Indian, Black … in national coexistence (1987:75).

In education, it is to be founded in a

> common language, common tradition or history and participation in a common mission. [These] are factors that are decisive … we talk, for example, of a typical Zulu, Englishman or Indian. … [an individual] must always choose the valid values (Du Plooy et al., 1982:152).

Thus, the function of education is to inculcate this basic ideology:

> An authentic educator brings up a child according to his deepest convictions as to what is proper for the child to do … in terms of the aim of education and the ingredients of parents' philosophies of life (Du Plooy & Kilian, 1981:50).

The 'science' of FP reveals these 'essences' to us, says Landman, stressing that *adulthood* is the aim of education:

> Education is in reality the actualization of a philosophy of life. It is the particular scientific task of Fundamental Pedagogics to expose the characteristics which determine the viability of a philosophy of life. … [Education is] completely unthinkable without the directive and normative force of a philosophy of life (Landman, 1985:101–102).

The salient point here, ideologically speaking, is that there is a strong concept of adulthood in the 'revelation of the pedagogic essences' that served to justify *apartheid* education.

In this context, fundamental pedagogicians seized on the term 'andragogy' to refer to the education of people who had achieved this understanding of otherness ('proper' adults, as it were). The general context was, of course, the increasing recognition of lifelong learning, which FP had to take into account. Two of the leading FP writers, Landman and Oberholzer, took this on in 'reconsidering FP' papers in the 1980s (Oberholzer & Greyling, 1981; Landman, 1989) in which they brought *andragogy* to the fore as a theorised practice within FP (strictly speaking, 'fundamental agogics' in their terms). However, both clung strongly to the firm distinction between pedagogy and andragogy in service of the ideological work of FP. Landman differentiated pedagogy as 'compulsory education' from andragogy as 'life obligation', suggesting that, in the latter, adults as human beings 'can reach a state of *more proper adulthood* without the agogic intervention of another adult' (1989:7). Oberholzer & Greyling (1981:71) introduced 'fundamental andragogics' in which the 'essential humanity' of dialogue between adults – 'human beings as persons with the potential to create, design and transcend their worlds' – determines the successful educational outcome What is

remarkable here is the affinity between these conceptions of the 'self-actualising educand' (Vrey, 1979) and Knowles' conceptions of self-determining learners (Table 1). This affinity probably accounts for the rapprochement between FP and andragogy (see Robb, 1990) and carries forward Knowles' construal of the difference between formal and non-formal learning.

One cannot end this reflection on andragogy and FP without mentioning the characterisation of TVET learners that FP seems forced into: Vrey points out that, in the contemporary college context, a youth is 'an independent adult', but 'he [sic] is economically dependent':

> The extended period of dependence *has forced the post school youth into the area of pedagogic concern.* Pedagogics … must define the characteristics of this group as incipient adults. … Help to this group cannot be defined as andragogic support: they are still dependent in too many ways and cannot be saddled with full responsibility (Vrey, 1979:190).

BF Nel (1974:246), another FP luminary, suggests that this 'cultural phenomenon' requires an extension of the period of pedagogy in response to the 'new social forces of an industrial urban society … [causing] an extended period of puberty'. FP finds it difficult to account for the failure of pedagogy – implicit in all its exaggerated accounts of successful education being the attainment of mature adulthood. Ironically, it is in the terrain that TVET occupies in South Africa that this can best be discerned.

This analysis of FP, in the unique South African political and social context, reinforces the sense that andragogy is implicated in a colonial and neocolonial bias towards whiteness. Far from being 'universally valid' knowledge about educating adults, it has contributed ideologically by virtue of its association with FP to the ongoing reproduction of inequality in this society. Given that the residue of FP still appears in TVET colleges, it seems it will be difficult to overcome this legacy for some time to come.

Conclusion

The argument in this article is that andragogy fails to realise the progressive potential that its proponents envisage in overcoming the legacies of formal institutionalised TVET. Rather, andragogy seems to lead us into oppressive practices in its implications for and applications in adult education. An account was provided of Knowles' defining theory of andragogy, showing the basis of his claim that andragogical methods break with the 'teacher-dependent, just-in-case, externally motivated' learning of traditional schooling and formal education. This promise of progressive change has been taken to be the basis of TVET programmes that can provide more adequate workplace learning opportunities: examples of this in Africa and other countries of the Global South were discussed. However, while andragogy is widely advocated for this purpose, especially in such political economies, it has been shown to be theoretically, politically and culturally flawed. Its ideological dependence on the cultural and learning-related norms of *whiteness* tends to marginalise

persons of other race, gender and sociocultural origin, and can privilege white male educational aspirations. Moreover, the article has revealed the sinister historical association of 'andragogy' with the educational doctrines of apartheid in South Africa, adding further to its legacy of racist and ethnocentric bias in this context. There might be important principles to be learnt from this regarding the future of TVET and other adult education systems in neocolonial contexts of the Global South. Andragogy seems to have little credibility in the contexts of increasing diversity of the TVET terrain. The argument suggests that our most productive route is to join Davenport (1987:19) and to conclude that TVET education 'could survive quite nicely without andragogy'.

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