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The Power of Andragogy/Adult Learning for Living a Viable Future

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Lindenwood College

From the SelectedWorks of John A. Henschke EdD

2010

The Power of Andragogy/Adult Learning for Living a Viable Future

John A. Henschke, EdD

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29th Annual Midwest Research-to-Practice Conference In Adult, Continuing, Community and Extension Education

September 26 – 28, 2010
East Lansing, Michigan

Conference Host
Michigan State University

Conference Sponsor
Higher, Adult, and Lifelong Education,
Department of Educational Administration
Michigan State University

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The Power of Andragogy / Adult Learning for Living a Viable Future

John A. Henschke

Abstract: The Sixth UNESCO International World Conference on Adult Education (CONFINTEA VI) was hosted by the Government of Brazil in Belem, Para, from 1 to 4 December 2009. This working conference, conducted interactively in an andragogical manner, provided an important platform for policy dialogue and advocacy on adult learning and non-formal education at the global level. Large and small group sessions on various topics contributed to the production of the final document – Belem Framework for Action: Harnessing the Power and Potential of Adult Learning and Education for a Viable Future. The conference brought together 1100 people from 144 UNESCO Member States, United Nations agencies, multi- and bi-lateral cooperation agencies, organizations from civil society, the private sector, and learners from all world regions. I was a member of the Official USA/UNESCO Delegation to CONFINTEA VI. UNESCO holds one of these conferences somewhere around the globe once every 12 years. The real question is how and to what extent will the hope and expectation of Implementing this Belem Framework for Action, as a guide for adult education and learning around the globe, be Enacted and Monitored in the areas of Lifelong Learning, Adult Literacy, Policy, Governance, Financing, Participation – Inclusion and Equity, and Quality?

Description of the Practitioner Concerns

The Sixth UNESCO International World Conference on Adult Education (CONFINTEA VI – Living and Learning for a Viable Future: The Power of Adult Learning) was hosted by the Government of Brazil in Belem, Para, from 1 to 4 December 2009. This working conference, conducted interactively in an andragoical manner, provided an important opportunity to make visible the power of andragogy [the art and science of helping adults learn], to produce The Belem Framework for Action Document, and became a platform for policy dialogue and advocacy on adult learning and non-formal education at the global level. The conference brought together 1100 people from 144 UNESCO Member States, United Nations agencies, multi- and bi-lateral cooperation agencies, organizations from civil society, the private sector, and learners from all world regions. I was a member of the Official USA/UNESCO Delegation to CONFINTEA VI. Some of the major objectives of CONFINTEA VI included : 1. to push forward the recognition of adult learning and education as an important element of and foundational factor conducive to lifelong learning; 2. to highlight the crucial role of adult learning and education for the realization of current international education and development agendas (EFA-Education for All; Millennium Development Goals; UNLD-United Nations Literacy Decade; LIFE-Literacy Initiative for Empowerment; and, DESD-Decade of Education for Sustainable Development, 2005/2014); and, 3. to renew momentum and commitment in developing the tools for implementation in order to **move from rhetoric to action.** Whether and/or how these objectives will be accomplished in the ensuing 12 years around the globe is of major concern. What this really means is finding the appropriate approach for moving this forward from developing the Belem Framework for Action document (the printed rhetoric that was finalized and accomplished in Belem) to taking action and doing what the document actually

says. The adopted definition of adult education from the Belem Framework for Action (2009) document was the same as had been espoused in previous CONFINTEA Conferences:

> adult education is the entire body of ongoing learning processes, formal or otherwise, whereby people regarded as adults by the society to which they belong develop their abilities, enrich their knowledge, and improve their technical or professional qualifications or turn them in a new direction to meet their own needs and those of their society. (p. 5)

The Importance of the Concern to both Research and Practice of Adult, Continuing, Extension, and Community Education

One of my long standing research findings is that bringing together the voluntary aspect of adult learning, the adult education messages of international bodies, and the desires for improving adult education within local settings is critical but not a natural fit. The power of andragogy / adult learning research is suggested by Dusan Savicevic (2006, 2008) saying that in 40 years he observed adult education research in the USA, not one major study had been conducted that did not mention andragogy as a concept. The power of andragogy / adult learning in practice is suggested by Cyril Houle (1996) who said that Knowles' work in andragogy remains the most learner-centered of all patterns of adult educational programming. He states that andragogy influences every other system, with the leaders knowing 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.

The Belem Framework for Action was adopted to help guide the nationsin the next 12 years into our adult education future towards lifelong learning, namely the six pillars of learning: to know, to do, to be, to live together, to change, and to develop sustainability. Lifelong learning seeks to address global issues and challenges, such as equipping us with necessary knowledge, competencies, capabilities, skills, values, to exercise our rights, to take control of our destines, to build and achieve equity, tolerance, inclusion, sustainability, alleviating poverty, and achieving a knowledge-based society.

There are sections and recommendations in the Belem Framework for Action on: Lifelong Learning, Adult Literacy, Policy, Governance, Financing, Participation – Inclusion and Equity, Quality, and Monitoring the Implementation of the Belem Framework for Action. The Annex of the Document addresses global and educational issues and challenges. One major resource they emphasized for moving this forward is Malcolm S. Knowles' "Andragogy in Action: Applying Modern Principles of Adult Learning." This provides 36 case examples of andragogy being applied in eight different categories of organizations.

However, there is still one lingering concern. Although the Belem Framework for Action may be viewed and used as a helpful guide by educational institutions and associations to voluntarily develop what they seek to accomplish in adult education for the next 12 years, it could easily be misunderstood as a mandate for certain actions and standards, if an andragogical approach is not employed in its implementation. This was obvious during the Belem CONFINTEA VI. There were those who were pushing for including language in the Belem Framework that would be mandating that certain actions be taken by all the nations. Most prominent in this regard was the desire and insistence on the part of some in the drafting committee, that 6% of GNP of each nation's budget be devoted to education. For this body of

1100 people at a UNESCO Conference to try forcing this kind of action upon governments of 144 nations is at best overwhelmingly ambitious, and at worst tantamount to making certain that the Belem Framework would not have been finalized and supported by consensus of those present. Much time was spent at the Conference, especially by the drafting committee, dealing with this thorny issue. The resolution of this issue came down to not a mandate but a wiser wording as follows: "...we commit ourselves to accelerating progress towards achieving the CONFINTEA V recommendation to seek investment of at least 6% of GNP in education, and working towards increased investment in adult learning and education" (Belem Framework for Action, 2009, p. 4). This was not the only issue in the Belem Framework that caused disagreement, and the drafting committee (with the close observance and assistance of various national groups who were concerned with and heavily invested in the outcome) spent almost countless hours seeking to bring consensus.

Recommendations

While they acknowledged the achievements and progress since CONFINTEA V, they were cognizant of the challenges with which adult educators are still confronted. Recognizing that the fulfillment of the right to education for adults and young people is conditioned by various considerations, following are parts of the recommendations made. (Belem Framework for Action, 2009).

Adult Literacy

Especially brought to the fore was literacy, which is the foundation of all of all other learning. Literacy is an indispensable foundation that enables young people and adults to engage in learning opportunities at all stages of the learning continuum. The right to literacy is an inherent part of the right to education. It is a prerequisite for the development of personal, social, economic and political empowerment. Literacy is an essential means of building people's capabilities to cope with the evolving challenges and complexities of life, culture, economy and society. The ultimate goal is to prevent and break the cycle of low literacy and create a fully literate world.

Policy

Policies and legislative measures for adult education need to be comprehensive, inclusive and integrated within a lifelong and life-wide learning perspective, based on sector-wide and inter-sectoral approaches, covering and linking all components of learning and education.

Governance

Good governance facilitates the implementation of adult learning and education policy in ways which are effective, transparent, accountable and equitable. Representation by and participation of all stakeholders are indispensable in order to guarantee responsiveness to the needs of all learners, in particular the most disadvantaged.

Financing

Adult learning and education represent a valuable investment which brings social benefits by creating more democratic, peaceful, inclusive, productive, healthy and sustainable societies. Significant financial investment is essential to ensure the quality provision of adult learning and education.

Participation, Inclusion, Equity

Inclusive education is fundamental to the achievement of human, social and economic development. Equipping all individuals to develop their potential contributes significantly to encouraging them to live together in harmony and with dignity. There can be no exclusion arising from age, gender, ethnicity, migrant status, language, religion, disability, rurality, sexual identity or orientation, poverty, displacement or imprisonment. Combating the cumulative effects of multiple disadvantages is of particular importance. Measures should be taken to enhance motivation and access for all.

Quality

Quality in learning and education is a holistic, multidimensional concept and practice that demands constant attention and continuous development. Fostering a culture of quality in adult learning requires relevant content and modes of delivery, learner-centered needs assessment, the acquisition of multiple competences and knowledge, the professionalization of educators, the enrichment of learning environments and the empowerment of individuals and communities.

Monitoring the Implementation of the Belem Framework for Action.

Drawing strength and impetus from our collective will to reinvigorate adult learning and education in our countries and internationally, we commit ourselves to the following accountability and monitoring measures. We acknowledge the need for valid and reliable quantitative and qualitative data to inform our policy-making in adult learning and education. Working with our partners to design and implement regular recording and tracking mechanisms at national and international levels is paramount in realizing the Belém

Framework for Action. The agreement reached at the conference gave anticipation that to the ends mentioned in the documents, commitment of the nations would be forthcoming to the extent it could be garnered from each nation. This would be coupled with asking support from UNESCO and its structures to follow-up and monitor this at the international level.

Statement of Evidence to the Belem Framework for Action included in the Annex

The Annex addressed global and educational issues and challenges indicating that although 43.5 % of the world lives in poverty at less than $2 a day, we are facing structural shifts in production and labor markets, while many still lack basic literacy skills, a number of concerted international efforts herald progress on these, with adult and lifelong learning being key components in meeting these needs, and raising the education level of people by a single year brings with it a corresponding 3.7 % in long-term economic growth and a 6% increase in per-capita income.

Also indicated was that progress in adult learning and education has been made since CONFINTEA V in 1997, held in Hamburg, Germany. The major documents produced at that conference are entitled: *The Hamburg Declaration* and *Agenda for the Future*. Some nations have introduced comprehensive adult learning and education policies and legislation, with some enshrining adult learning and education in their constitutions. Literacy plans, programs and campaigns have been reactivated and accelerated in some member states. Gender-sensitive adult learning and education programs have increased. Effective systems of information, documentation, monitoring and evaluation for adult learning and education have been introduced. Adult learning flourishes when connected with other sectors of society.

It was apparent that challenges remain for adult learning and education. A crucial expectation that adult learning and education would be rebuilt after CONFINTEA V was not met

by the time of CONFINTEA VI. The role of adult learning and education in lifelong learning continues to be underplayed. Not enough far-sighted and adequate funding for adult education and learning has been forthcoming. Primary focus of adult learning and education needs to shift from vocational and professional education and training toward a more comprehensive and varied approach. In many international settings, adult learning and education are referred to sparingly and almost exclusively as adult literacy. The lack of professional education opportunities for educators of adults has been detrimental to adult learning and education, and has impoverished the fabric of the learning environment, equipment, materials and curricula.

Various Approaches that have Attempted to Deal with the Concerns

I participated in CONFINTEA V in Hamburg, Germany where the Hamburg Declaration and Agenda for the Future documents were produced. I used them in my Master and Doctoral Adult Education Academic Program, but always with an andragogical approach. I used those documents in my International and Comparative Adult Education Graduate Courses at the University of Missouri-St. Louis; and, I used them at numerous adult education conferences for looking toward helping to build the future of adult education. In addition, I used them in corporate adult education, internationally in a number of different countries (Germany, Italy, Mali in Western Africa, Austria, Brazil, Peoples' Republic of China, Thailand, South Africa, Slovenia, Australia) and they worked well with the andragogical approach. The 2009 Belem Framework is the same type of document as the 1997 Hamburg Documents. Consequently, it would appear that using the same andragogical approach this time may meet with the same level of success.

Since the CONFINTEA VI Conference in Belem, I have already presented or will present, in an andragogical manner, the perspective of the "Belem Framework for Action – Harnessing the Power and Potential of Adult Learning and Education for a Viable Future" document to: An international educational group (Missouri, USA / Para, Brazil Partners of the Americas); a regional adult education conference (Missouri Valley Adult Education Association); a state adult education conference (Missouri Association for Adult, Continuing, and Community Education); my Graduate Andragogy Courses at Lindenwood University; an upcoming issue of Adult Learning (published by the American Association for Adult and Continuing Education); the 2010 Annual International Literacy Day Workshop with the faculty and doctoral students at the Chulalongkorn University, Bangkok, Thailand; the 2010 Midwest Research-to-Practice Conference in Adult, Continuing, Extension, and Community Education, and it will be published in the conference proceedings; and, I will present these materials at a number of other adult education conferences including the 2010 American Association for Adult and Continuing Education (AAACE), and the Commission on International Adult Education (CIAE) of AAACE.

Numerous UNESCO CONFINTEA VI Documents including the "Belem Framework for Action" are available for reading, downloading and printing from the following website: http://www.unesco.org/en/confinteavi This website will provide: Access to each day's (December 1-4, 2009) activities; the proceedings of the five regional preparatory conferences conducted in 2008; history of the six CONFINTEA conferences; documents from previous CONFINTEA conferences; national reports from the five regions; a Global Report on Adult

Learning and Education (GRALE) from 154 UNESCO member nations; and, new archives from various preliminary meetings and follow-up meetings related to CONFINTEA VI.

Discussion of the Conference Theme – Linking Theory and Practice

Linking theory and practice reflects the idea of congruence – making our walk and talk consistent with each other. This means that if an andragogical approach is used to implement practice and generate theory, it seems that we will not get caught in the dilemma of communicating, "do what I say, not what I do." Some excellent background thinking and educational theory went into the creation of these CONFINTEA V and VI Documents. For a year prior to each CONFINTEA Conference, UIL (The UNESCO Institute for Lifelong Learning) convenes five regional preparatory conferences around the world. This is for the purpose of generating and recording the ideas in document report form from that region about what they consider to be the most important issues and needs in adult education that need to be addressed. These five regional documents and other adult education conference documents become part of what is included in the final CONFINTEA document. An approach for bringing this together from around the globe, thus exemplifying and enacting modern adult education principles (andragogy), may prove to be most beneficial for addressing these practitioner concerns and serving well the constituencies in each of our adult education and learning spheres of influence.

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UNESCO CONFINTEA VI
(6th World Conference in Adult Education)
Belem, Para, Brazil December 1-4, 2009

"Belem Framework for Action"

Harnessing the power and potential of adult learning and education for a viable future

Preamble

144 Member States of UNESCO represented

- Civil Society Organizations
- Social Partners
- United Nation Agencies
- Intergovernmental Agencies
- Private Sector

The Fundamental Role of Adult Learning and Education

- We Reiterate This Agenda to Move It Forward With Urgency and Dispatch
- It Was Laid Down During (CONFINTEA I-V)

We Endorse the Definition of Adult Education

- First Adopted in Nairobi – 1976
- Further Developed in Hamburg – 1997
- "The Entire Body of Ongoing Learning Processes"

We Affirm that Literacy is the Most Significant Foundation

- Upon Which to Build
  - Comprehensive
  - Inclusive
  - Integrated Learning
    - -- Lifelong and
    - -- Life-Wide

    For All Young People and Adults

The Education of Young People and Adults

- Enables Individuals, Especially Women
  - To Cope With Multiple Crises
    - -- Social
    - -- Economic
    - -- Political, and
    - - Climate Change

We Therefore Adopt This

- Belem Framework for Action
- To Guide Us into Our Adult Education Future

Towards Lifelong Learning

Lifelong Learning Is "From Cradle to Grave"

- It Is Critical in Addressing Global
  - Issues and
  - Challenges

- We Reaffirm the Six Pillars of Learning
  - To Know
  - To Do
  - To Be
  - To Live Together
  - To Change
  - To Develop Sustainability

Adult Learning and Education

- Represent a Significant Component of the Lifelong Learning Process, and

- Cover a Broad Range of Content
  - --General Issues -Vocational Matters
  - --Family Literacy -Family Education
  - --Citizenship -Many Other Areas

Lifelong Learning Addresses Global Issues and Challenges

- Adult Learning & Education Equip Us With Necessary
  - --Knowledge -Capabilities -Skills
  - --Competences -Values

- To Exercise and Advance Our Rights
- To Take Control of Our Destinies
- To Build and Achieve
  - --Equity -Inclusion -Alleviating Poverty
  - --Tolerance -Sustainability -A Knowledge-Based Society

Recommendations

The Right to Education for All is Conditioned by Considerations of:

•- Adult Literacy

•-Policy -Governance -Financing

•-Participation -Inclusion -Equity

Adult Literacy

Adult Literacy is an Indispensable Foundation

- Enabling All to Engage in Learning at Each Stage of Life
- An Essential Prerequisite for Development of Empowerment
  - -Personal -Social -Economic -Political
- Building People's Capabilities to Cope with the Evolving Challenges and Complexities of
  - -Life -Culture -Economy -Society

Policy

Policies and Legislative Measures for Adult Education Need to Be

- Within a Lifelong and Life-Wide Learning Perspective
  - -Comprehensive -Inclusive -Integrated
- Based on Approaches
  - -Sector-Wide -Inter-Sectoral
- Covering and Linking All Components of
  - -Learning -Education

Governance

Good Governance Facilitates Implementation of

- Adult Learning and Educational Policy in Ways which Are
  - -Effective -Transparent -Accountable -Equitable
- Representation by and Participation of All Stakeholders Are Indispensable
  - -Advantaged Adults -Most Disadvantaged Adults

Financing

Adult Learning and Education Represent a Valuable Investment

This Brings Social Benefits by Creating a Society that is More

- -Democratic -Peaceful -Inclusive
- -Productive -Healthy -Sustainable

Participation, Inclusion and Equity

Participation, Incusion and Equity

- -Age -Gender -Ethnicity
- -Migrant Status -Language -Religion
- -Disability -Rurality -Poverty
- -Displacement -Imprisonment
- -Sexual Identity -Sexual Orientation

Quality

Quality in Learning and Education

- It is a Concept and Practice Which Is
  - -Holistic -Multidimensional
- It Demands
  - -Constant Attention -Continuous Development

Quality in Learning and Education (Continued)

Fostering a Culture of Quality in Adult Learning Requires Relevant

-Content -Modes of Delivery

-Learner-Centered Need Assessment

-Acquisition of Multiple Competencies and Knowledge

-Professionalization of Adult Educators

-Enrichment of Learning Environments

-Empowerment of Individuals and Communities

End of Meeting Statement

As a Result of this Adult Education Conference Session, I will _____

_____

_____