

forum

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Aristotle's View of the Andragogy/Pedagogy Issue. For some time now, adult educators have been disputing whether adults should be taught differently than children or the same. Houle¹ points to theorists who say they should be taught the same, whereas Knowles² says that children and adults should be taught differently. Adult educators seem polarized on the subject. Who is right? Because of the complexities of the human being, this question may never be satisfactorily answered, but within the writings of some philosophers, insights to the problem may be attained.

Aristotle never specifically wrote on the andragogy/pedagogy issue, but he did write about how man (humans) should be taught. According to Aristotle,³ all ages should be educated to serve the state, but that the approach one uses to teach humans to serve differs. Aristotle makes it clear that they should be educated according to "stages." This implies that he doesn't take an either/or position, but rather one that humans should be educated according to their situation within society and within their biological development.

Aristotle approaches the education of humans in terms of three general "stages" of human development, which he clearly admits are influenced by one's culture and society. He also admits that throughout life, humans develop habits and that these habits must be taken into account in the educative process. The implication here is that as one develops, goes through these stages, one's habits change and therefore the way one should be taught changes. Education for Aristotle is a dynamic rather than a static process as implied by the pedagogy and andragogy approach.

Keeping these points in mind, Aristotle approaches the education of humans in terms of the following stages:

Stage 1 (From Birth to Age 5)

During this stage, Aristotle claims educators (he called them "directors of education") should permit humans to act

freely; unrestricted for the most part by "study or labor" for as he has said, "During this stage if humans are made to study and labor their growth will be impeded." By this Aristotle meant physical education as well as education in the cognitive sense. Aristotle's method for helping the human being develop in this stage was to provide him with "amusement that is not vulgar, tiring, or riotous."

Aristotle further advises that during this stage educators should be careful of the kinds of stories they tell to these young humans; that educators should teach these young humans only those kinds of sports that will prepare their way for the "business of later life," and that educators should help these young humans to imitate the occupations of adults so a proper social-economic-political system can be perpetuated.

Stage 2 (From 5 to 7)

From around five years of age to about seven, Aristotle advises educators to restrict the presence of slaves around these young humans as much as possible. According to Aristotle, this approach will reduce the possibility of these young humans learning bad manners and attitudes. He also advises educators that during this stage these young humans should be educated mostly at home under the guidance of their parents. For Aristotle, this "home" education was a way to reduce the probability of these young humans from "acquiring traits that are mean and low."

Aristotle did admit that such traits could be learned in the home, too, but that the chances are less, and that if they're learned they can be controlled easier. Aristotle's remedy for controlling the "acquiring" of bad traits was to disgrace or beat a young human. For him, this was educationally justifiable because it was morally justifiable in the sense such disgrace and beatings would lead to a harmonious government.

This seems to be the final stage which may be called "child education" for Aristotle. Stage 3 seems to be the beginning of what Aristotle may have called "adult education."

Stage 3

It's unclear from Aristotle's writing at what age this stage begins. He defines this stage in terms of a human being holding government office and drinking strong wine. It's not until this stage that Aristotle refers to a human being's ability to follow the law independent of the guidance of parents. One can only guess at what age a human being is at this stage. Aristotle also has discussed this stage in much less detail than Stages 1 and 2.

Returning to the contemporary issue of how adult educators should approach (teach) adults, either as pedagogues or andragogues, I think it's clear that in terms of Aristotle's stage approach to education, adults should not be taught in the same way as children nor should children (as young humans) be taught in the same way as adults. Rather, human beings should be taught according to their "stage" in life, whether this stage is defined in terms of age or social-economic-political circumstance.

For example, some human beings may be at Aristotle's Stage 3 in terms of political and legal consciousness—able to demonstrate their understanding of the law, while other human beings of the "same age" may not. From Aristotle's discourse, the implication is that two human beings of the same age may be at different stages of development and thus shouldn't be approached in the same educative sense.

For Aristotle, the education of human beings isn't an either/or question or position as it seems to be for those who subscribe to pedagogy *or* andragogy, but rather "what stage is the human being functioning in."

I think if Aristotle were here at this moment he would agree that under some conditions a human being regardless of age must be approached in the pedagogue's sense and under other conditions human beings must be approached in the andragogue's sense. For Aristotle, education isn't an either/or issue, but rather the use of the method that best suits the situation. Adult educators can learn from such advice.

Footnotes

1. Cyril Houle, *The Design of Education* (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 1972).
2. Malcolm Knowles, *The Modern Practice of Adult Education* (New York: Association Press, 1970).
3. L. R. Lommis, *Aristotle* (New York: Walter J. Black, Inc., 1971).

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