

## Lifewide learning – Challenges for Andragogy

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*Background and aims:* A “society in change” needs experts that are competent to support change processes at many places. This paper describes why Andragogy/Andragogues could play an important role in these changes. The aim is to widen the perception to the potential of Andragogy as a profession and to strengthen the identity of Andragogues. *Methods:* For this, the concept of “lifelong learning” is complemented with the concept of “lifewide learning,” reminding that adult learning and education encompasses more than just teaching events. The methods are theory- and literature-reference, practical work (research and development), and empirical research. *Results:* Research confirms that Andragogues actually work successfully in a variety of functions and institutions, theories are available for a widened understanding of the role of Andragogues. As a result, it is claimed that the identity of Andragogues is not defined by specific institutions or one single function; a shared identity of Andragogues can be based on the role as “change specialist.” *Discussion:* Necessary for this is a change in perception of learning and the role of Andragogues. It also has consequences for the competencies that have to be included in the curricula for Andragogues. *Conclusion:* This new and widened understanding of “lifewide learning” and the resulting tasks can contribute to a unifying identity of professional Andragogues.

**Keywords:** lifelong learning; lifewide learning; Andragogy; competences; compositional learning; identity; profession

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### SOCIETIES IN CHANGE

Companies are more and more aware that to keep and develop a competent and engaged workforce and to avoid dequalification and conflicts specialist are needed. Institutions not only need these specialists for their own workforce, but as well for high-quality customer relations. Democratic politics discover how important it is to include citizens into decisions and to develop peaceful and respectful citizenship. Cultural, religious, or social groups recognize the vital need to deal sensitively with their target groups. A “society in change” needs experts, professionals, to support change and learning in manifold ways. Andragogy and Andragogues could be a helpful part in these lifelong and lifewide change processes.

#### Lifelong learning

Formal adult education has become the first answer to the learning needs of adults in general as well as in workplace learning. The concept of “lifelong learning” (in the European discussion first discussed with the French phrase “éducation permanente”) described in the beginning [and often nowadays again idea, that adults should attend throughout lifetime formal educational programs. (In contrast to a rich and complex understanding politics and economy narrowed “lifelong learning” often even more down to market- and company-centered formal continuous retraining of the workforce. Hake (2008) analyzed a UNESCO study “Making Lifelong Learning a Reality: Emerging Patterns in Europe and Asia” (2002), including case studies from Australia, China, France, Japan,

South Korea, Malaysia, Norway, Sweden, Thailand, and the United Kingdom. He found overwhelming statements that paralleled lifelong learning with employment-related activities; this “lead to the conclusion that the prevailing policy narratives in a range of Asian and European countries constitute a dominant discourse of ‘learning to acquire employability’, or what has been referred to as the ‘learning for earning’ narrative” (p. 176). Of course, learning in and for workplaces and better productivity is important (and the largest sector of adult learning), but other fields of adult learning should be valued as well)].

The positive aspect of this concept was the new awareness that adults are able to learn even in higher age – self-evident for most of us today. For Hungary, Fodor (2015, p. 79) states: “By 2007, there were about three times as many people enrolled in adult education as in 1995.” In Germany, 51% of the adults participate in 2014 in adult education ([Adult Education Survey, 2014](#), p. 4). It still can be puzzling that within one generation, the perception of adulthood overcame the old saying “You cannot teach an old dog new tricks,” in German “Was Hänschen nicht lernt, lernt Hans nimmermehr” (What Jacky has not learned, Jack will never learn). Also positive was: Money became available to offer and organize adult education, through governments, companies, and other sources.

The negative aspect was: Learning in this understanding depended – because limited to formal educational

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offers – from teaching and institutions. This was criticized pretty early: Kidd (1977, p. 13), Canadian scholar of adult education, warned already that limiting lifelong learning to school-like arrangements makes it a program how “one human being imposes his will, or knowledge, or skill, upon another.” And Cann (1984, p. 47) (Great Britain) argued: “Adult educators in Britain have an unnatural appetite for classes and getting people into groups in their centers.” Adult education in this perspective regards the adult as incomplete, deficient, lacking something. The consequence is that he has to be educated, trained, and treated.

**What is “lifewide learning”?**

In contrast to this view, the concept of “lifewide learning” (Reischmann, 1986; Jackson, 2012) refers to the fact that adults learn throughout life, every minute, through a composition of learning sources, situations, and occasions, ranging from outside planned circumstances to things happening in life, teaching us wanted or unwanted lessons. This learning shows clear results: Adults have knowledge and strategies and values at their disposal that enables them to live their lives – sometimes better, sometimes worse – in a complex and changing world. By actively passing through life, humans meet all sorts of learning challenges; these educates and transforms them, forming their unique personality and identity. And most of this learning results not from outside organized, formal education: No matter which field we take under consideration – profession, family, leisure, time, political, cultural, social behavior, valuing – we find wide fields of knowledge, abilities, attitudes, valuing adults have available and clearly do not come from any form of outside organized, formal education.

Understanding adult learning in this broad sense is also the perspective of this new journal: it “covers the entire range of formal, non-formal and informal learning activities – both general and vocational – undertaken by adults after leaving initial education and training” (Source: Council Resolution on a renewed European agenda for adult learning, 2011/C 372/01).

This broad understanding of “lifewide learning” (see Fig. 1) of adults can be structured in a scheme that includes

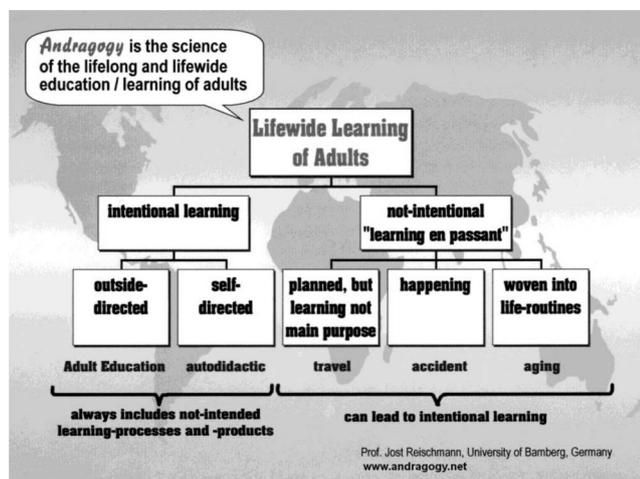


Fig. 1. Structure of “lifewide learning”

two types of intentional learning (outside directed by institutions and self-directed/autodidactic), as well as three types of partly intentional and unintentional learning that occurs simultaneously with activities not primarily aimed at learning. The terms commonly used for this part are “informal, non-formal, and non-traditional;” describing pretty helpless with “in-” and “non-” what is not meant. UNESCO (1997) even more vaguely used the term “otherwise” by understanding adult education as the “entire body of ongoing learning processes, formal or otherwise, whereby people . . . 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.” To describe these unintentional learning situations, I use the term “learning en passant.” “En passant” is a French phrase and means “by passing by.” This describes positively, that for these here-and-now learning challenges people have to be active, and that important learning takes place connected to other activities in the “school of life,” not only in intended learning/teaching situations.

I discriminate three different types of “learning en passant”:

- Learning en passant can happen *parallel to other planned and intended activities* (visiting a museum, taking a tourist trip, participating in a cultural, political, or social activity). The primary motivation is not to gain knowledge, but perhaps entertainment, doing business, or curiosity. Parallel to these activities, new information and insight is found. In these situations, it is not clear in advance that something will be learned or what would be learned. The main activity is perceived, but the learning segment remains hidden.
- *Single event learning (=happening)*: Sometimes learning is initiated by an explicit life situation that forces us to learn (e.g., accident, death of a relative, falling in love, or getting a traffic ticket). An outside event happens, not planned and not expected, making old experiences obsolete and bringing new perspectives into deliberation. These change-triggering situations can be accompanied by shock as well as by pleasure, the changes can be minimal to dramatic, the coping time can be seconds to years. The level of threat, stress, and frustration might be low, even a feeling of success, interest, and thrill can be observed. But it also might be highly painful, and people may wish they never had to learn that lesson. But the triggering situation will later on be clearly remembered.
- *Mosaic learning outcomes, woven into life-routines* resulting from various unidentifiable life events: We observe that a person knows or is able to do something or behaves in a certain way (e.g., aging, behaving as parents, and leading a group), but we cannot identify the situation when it was learned. Long-term complex competencies in profession, family, and other fields are composed of numberless learning events, while the learning events leading to this remains often not identifiable. Reading books, magazines, newspapers, watching television, talking to colleagues, observing others and exchanging with whomsoever, forms a universe of small-scale learning

experiences up to the gestalt, character, and competencies a person finally represents. The picture of a mosaic is appropriate in the sense that an endless series of learning has formed the whole image. These mosaicstones do not swing around in random chaos but are incorporated and organized into a gestalt.

“Learning en passant” in its different shapes makes aware that in coping with life-situations learning is always included, life-integrated. Some general aspects of this learning are:

“Learning en passant” is low compulsory and highly individualized. Different people learn different things from the same situation; there is nothing like a prepared curriculum. Often this learning includes not only knowledge, but also reality-handling, emotions, valuing, perspective transformation (holistic). By being integrated into life-near activities it is meaningful and useful, it is not only stored for “later” use. It can be successful without much effort (with increasing explicit effort, we move by definition over to self-directed or formal learning). It uses a wide variety of support (people, media, objects, and institutions), educationally prepared as well as natural. Often it uses and continues and reactivates and builds on previous learning, and can be a starting point for intentional learning. This learning teaches answers as well as opens questions when incorporating it into the set of experiences the person has already had.

These changes can be open and immediate; they can also be hidden and become visible much later. This learning encompasses the whole person, develops the person to his individual “form,” and leads to a unique “composition.” In this way, each individual forms himself based on his ongoing life in each minute.

This forming is not only important for private enrichment, but as well for workplaces and staff development in companies. In two directions: (a) New knowledge and working techniques are to a high degree learned (or not) in the daily work through supervisors, colleagues, handbooks, trial-and-error, etc. (b) Perhaps even more important: Attitudes like responsibility, initiative, identification with the company, “company-culture” grow through daily “learning en passant.” But a warning: This daily “learning en passant” can not only grow into a productive direction, it can as well lead to an expensive and profit-draining “I-do-not-care-about-the-company”-attitude. Andragogues (see sections “Andragogy and the practical value of the concept of ‘lifewide learning’” and “Competencies of Andragogues”) can engage here in an essential way.

### *Compositional learning*

The disadvantage of a graphical structure as above is that it seems to suggest that the different “boxes” are separated and independent. But that is not the reality: Learners compose many sources during a learning experience: Intentional learning by participating in the local adult education institution or self-directed learning, as well as combinations with different forms of learning en passant – trial-and-error, some help of a friend, reading a book/journal, watching television, exchanging with experts in hardware shops or pharmacies, “google-ing,” or talking to their children – the list is endless. Adults compose their

knowledge, valuing, and personality through many different sources and connecting, combining, and integrating them in ways that are meaningful to them. The different “boxes” in the above structural scheme of adult learning and education open a deeper understanding of learning in adulthood; but even important are the interactions between the “boxes” – how they are “composed.”

One of the main differences between traditional children school learning and learning of adults is that adult learning is mostly related to direct and “immediate” use in concrete situations within the context of their life. These life situations do not start or end within an organized learning program in an institution, but have many more motivators, supporters, testers, threads, reinforcement, control, informants, criticizers, training situations, and correctors that are scattered through different life situations. They together compose the individual learning biography.

### *Warning*

But there has also to be a warning: Certainly, it sounds like a romantic idea that all adults are lifelong and lifewide compositional learners. But this learning has also dangers, limits, and weaknesses.

For example: This learning happens – or not – by chance, by luck, or by contingency; it is not a reliable learning. The results are greatly individualized without standards and comparability in a group. Scope, content, dimension, and quality are highly dependent from the individual learner. No help is available if learning problems come up, if a learner goes in the wrong direction, if he/she misunderstands things and/or learns false things. In all these cases, nobody helps with feedback and advice.

Even worse: There is not only the danger of “not learning” or learning false things, but also negative, evil things are learned en passant: political fanaticism, sexism and discrimination, religious fundamentalism, political correctness, hopelessness and resignation, that lying and stealing are acceptable. Tóth (2015, p. 41) describes this in dramatic words: “citizens have learnt . . . informally . . . behaviour modes, which . . . mean hiding, adjustment, lip-service, withdrawal from public life, and the maxims of faked conformity. What is characteristic is distrust, the absence of interest, apathy and retreat into the private sphere!” For companies and society, these negative learning results have dramatic consequences!

The composition a person makes out of the en-passant experiences can not only support but also hinder a good development. Like in a music composition, there are virtuoso as well as foul results.

### **Summary**

The theory of lifewide learning makes aware, that intentional learning in adult education institutions or self-directed learning is only a segment of the learning and education of adults. Learning of adults happens in every moment of life, intentional and en passant, not only lifelong, but also *lifewide* in a multitude of traditional and non-traditional, formal, and informal settings (workplaces, leisure-time, families, churches, marketplaces, television, “the life” . . .).

This composition of learning experiences can enrich a person and lead to a helpful basis for further knowledge, abilities, and valuing but can also lead to limiting and dangerous outcomes. The concept of lifewide learning allows to perceive and use manifold learning sources and opportunities. It also helps to understand how blocking or negative learning results were learned en passant, and how they might be reduced, avoided, or healed. A British initiative is as an example of how lifewide learning can be developed and supported (<http://lifewideeducation.co.uk/home>).

## ANDRAGOGY AND THE PRACTICAL VALUE OF THE CONCEPT OF “LIFEWIDE LEARNING”

As it is the case often in pedagogical innovations, this new theory developed in interaction with observations in the practical field. Not a linear deduction leads from theory to praxis, but a circular relationship enriches both theory and praxis: We observe something, we start reflecting on the observation, these reflections lead to new observations, and this again to new reflections, etc. This circular relationship will be illustrated in the following when reporting to practical experiences in our Andragogy program at Bamberg University, Germany (<http://www.reischmannfam.de/andragalbum/Startseite.htm>).

### Andragogy versus adult education

Andragogy is the educational discipline, the subject of which is the study of the lifelong and lifewide adult learning and education; it includes “education and learning of adults in all its forms of expression” (Savicevic, 1999, p. 97; for more details, see Reischmann, 2004).

In many countries, this term is not or very limited in use (e.g., Germany and the USA). But using “adult education” for two different things – the field of academic theory/research and the field of praxis – starts confusion, misunderstandings, and irritation. “Adult Educator” is a very unclear term. It includes a wide variety of species: the grandma sharing her knowledge of baking cookies, the engineer instructing his staff about a new technology, the political, or religious missionary preaching at the marketplace (today: in television) about the true and only life or society – just “everybody” can be an “Adult Educator.” The case studies presented at two Conferences on the History of Adult Education (Friedenthal-Haase, 1998; Reischmann, 2006) illustrate that variety of understandings – from scholar to “the wise,” from academic specialist to “everybody.”

This unclear borderless term “Adult Educator” makes it difficult to discriminate professional academic educated staff – graduates of university programs – from “everybody.” The everybody-term “Adult Educator” is destructive for the specific role and perception of the academic discipline and their graduates. No wonder that professional academic graduates are missing a feeling of unity or identity in many countries – as Kleisz (2015, p. 22) states for Hungary: “The younger and trained generation does not feel the unity of profession.”

So as a first step it is suggested: Scholars in this academic field should feel challenged to explicitly clarify

and grow an own, proud, and strong identity. The terms Andragogy and Andragogue should be used to describe and guarantee quality standards, to claim academic theory and research, and especially offer a unique and specific “label” on the labor market (Our graduates reported that the specific label “Andragogue” indeed was helpful on the labor market for employment: It made the employers curious to invite them for interviews, and gave the chance to describe what they had to offer. In many cases, this led to employment).

The terms “adult education, continuing education” of course still make sense and will be used. But now they are connected more precisely and following the everyday-understanding to the fields of practice – in contrast to the academic field.

But a discriminating label alone is not enough. More is needed to build an identity.

### What does “lifewide learning” mean to Andragogy?

At first, it seemed that the theory of “lifewide learning” has not much practical value. If learning happens unplanned in time, content, sequence, and extend, how could schoolmasters make a practical value out of it? Even worse: This opening of the perspective had the danger that the concept of Andragogy became even more confused and borderless.

The opposite turned out to be true: Through this new theory, but as well through the experiences of our graduates (Reischmann, 2010) a *first mistake* became evident: Andragogues are not (only) teachers for adults!

Starting from the belief that our task was to educate teachers for adults, the experiences of our program around 1995 were shocking: We asked our students some years after graduation: “What is your workplace now after graduation?” The shocking answer was: Only a small portion (10%–30%) was employed in a teaching position at an adult education institution – most of the “Adult Educators” did not teach! About 30% work in industry, business, and organization in the field of staff development, 20%–30% of our graduates work as freelanced workers (“training, development, and counseling/consultancy”), about 10%–20% have a career at colleges/universities (Bender et al., 2008), the rest reported workplaces in manifold institutions and functions. Other programs at other universities reported similar results. Horror: Did we educate our students for unemployment or cab driving?

This “horror” gladly could be disproved by another result of our and others research: The graduates overwhelmingly told they had no problem finding a well-paid workplace, are happy with their employment, and feel that the study of Andragogy prepared them well for their specific workplaces!

It seems that for Andragogues the perception of the lifewide (positive or negative) learning processes and results opened a new approach of the new discipline of Andragogy and to the whole world of learning of individuals and of institutions. Vice versa: Many institutions start to have an idea that they need specialists for complex change processes – especially when they experienced professional work by an Andragogue. School-like activities (“teaching”) now are only one segment of the field.

The mistake to think that Andragogues are solely teachers for adults is widespread in amateurs making judgment about this academic discipline: politicians, university-presidents, and presidents of Chamber of Commerce and Industry (Kleisz, 2015, p. 19), not knowing that in their institutions already a considerable number of Andragogues do valuable work. Typical: “The lifelong learning strategy of Hungary for future years only consider ‘teachers’ as the reliable key personnel in this area” (Kleisz, 2015, p. 21). “Adult Educators” (teaching often just by intuition, sometimes with some educational training) may be teachers, but Andragogues are much more.

The more the role of Andragogues developed away from “schoolmaster” to “learning helper, facilitator, moderator, mediator, conflict solver, consultant, social engineer, change agent” the more it was perceived that these newly discovered theoretical concepts of adult learning and education offered new chances for practical activities of Andragogues – in manifold settings, institutions, and well-paid workplaces.

### Workplaces of Andragogy graduates

The roles and positions our graduates took over after finishing their studies puzzled us. As described, the majority of our graduates were not teaching in adult education institutions: They work in business and industry, politics and churches, hospitals, museums, charities, tourism, cultural institutions, and media, as freelance workers in their own “training and consulting businesses” (By these freelanced Andragogues training, development, and consulting offers could be made available to small- and medium-sized companies or institutions that could not hire full-timers), they moderate and coach, manage and solve problems, help to identify and solve conflicts and problems, help to find visions and directions – and sometimes do some teaching.

Asking for the name of their profession, we still got a vast and confusing variety of descriptions: teacher, trainer, evaluator, coach, moderator, human resource development (HRD) employee, personal or organizational developer, employee or head of learning institution, manager, administrator, journalist, and many others. In all these cases, our graduates told us: “But I am also doing . . .” – it seems most of these workplaces require a variety of competencies (more in section “Competencies of Andragogues”) to react as flexible as needed.

This leads to a *second mistake* when discussing Andragogy: the bureaucratic thinking that Andragogues are limited to one segment of the field (which could be social change, or second chance/compensatory education, or community education, or political education, or cultural capital, or HRD, or “learning to acquire employability,” or minority education – just to name some). Depending of the money-giver and power position, one segment is in an oversimplified way claimed to be the total, and the others are either not seen or not valued.

Carroll Londoner, past chair of the International Adult and Continuing Education Hall of Fame (<http://www.halloffame.outreach.ou.edu>) outlines this problem for the USA (private mail January 31, 2014): “The Adult Education programs in

the States have shrunk dramatically as the Universities do not seem inclined to support adult education because they do not understand it. They have too quickly identified the broad field of adult education with the notion of ‘adult literacy’ . . . We in the universities have not done a very good job of explaining to our administrators what the broad field is about and why it should be studied academically.”

It is a mistake to perceive and value just one segment as the only legitimate field for Andragogues. So a next insight has to be: The study of Andragogy opens the doors to a growing number of workplaces, in different institutions, in different functions.

### Summary

It is not a weakness that Andragogues can be found in a wide variety of settings; it is a *strength of Andragogy* that the graduates of our programs work successfully in the complexity of lifewide adult learning. For those whose thinking is limited to clear-cut images, this complexity seems chaos, while – when being able to complex thinking – this in reality is richness, flexibility, and future. When “potential users are still confused as to what to expect from these professions,” when “Deficits in a clear-cut image of these professions do not help actors in the professions to identify with them” (Kleisz, 2015, p. 21), then it is an important task of the professors of Andragogy to point out that the complexity of the andragogical field demands complex, not “clear-cut” answers. Andragogy (like many other professions) relates to a world, where professional acting cannot be allocated to clear-cut workplaces – not today, even less in 10 years from now. Expecting a clear-cut correlation (=studied subject A, entering workplace A’ for the rest of life) is a *third mistake* of those not understanding the reality of workplaces today: that functions, tasks, positions, challenges, and needs change in short years. The task of universities is to prepare for the future. That makes Andragogy so valuable, but also challenges traditional expectations.

And for those who need a clear-cut image: There exists a unifying idea/concept of all these andragogical workplaces: They organize, manage, inform, mediate, moderate, motivate, and interfere in tensions, conflicts, friction between

- people and people or
- people and organizations or
- people and things.

The concept of “lifewide learning,” “learning en passant,” “compositional learning” opened the perception for far more learning situations that could be worked on with andragogical interventions than just “teaching-learning.” Perhaps the term “change agent,” sometimes used in the USA, describes best the competence our graduates offer.

### COMPETENCIES OF ANDRAGOGUES

It is easy to claim that Andragogues are professional “change agents” in the broad field of lifewide learning. But what are the competencies needed for this role, and how can students be trained for these tasks?

“Competencies” in our understanding includes both

- the ability to perform and
- to reflect why and for what reason something is done.

Like in other professional fields, as for example in medicine or architecture, it is not enough that students gain theoretical knowledge, they also must learn to perform/act to a basic extend in the field (“Reflexionskompetenz und Handlungskompetenz”).

The described experiences, the feedbacks we received from our graduates (An important source of information about the workplaces and functions of our graduates was an alumni meeting we started every last Saturday in November. Graduates and students were invited for reporting, exchange, and presentations), and many exchanges in international conferences and meetings let us define four competencies Andragogues are expected to master (see Fig. 2):

- First, it is expected that an Andragogue is able to teach.
- Second, they must be able to plan and organize programs and measures.
- Third, they need the ability to consult and counsel.
- And finally, they must be able to do evaluation and research.

Certainly, there are many ways how these competencies can be learned. We decided to develop for our students a series of “Competency-classes” (Kompetenzseminare) to train them to perform in these four fields. These competency-based classes usually last three full days, filled with acting, training, trying, and demonstrating; with not more than 20 participants. The 3 days are theory-reduced and focus on performance. Of course, these competency-based classes only make sense in combination with the “normal” knowledge- and theory-oriented classes, lectures, and readings. Performance has to be melted in and interwoven with knowing and understanding to lead to competency.

### (HRD-) trainer

The first expectation of “Adult Educators” is that they teach – in adult education institutions or in companies and business (HRD). We found that teaching often was a starting point for our graduates, but that after a short while they moved up into a supervising position. However, even in this position it is expected that they can convincingly “teach” and advice others how to teach (“Train the Trainer”).

A first module in this competency is “*Visualising, Presentation, Moderation.*” Here, students learn to stand in front of a group, design presentation material, work with an auditory, present learning material, and interact with groups.



Fig. 2. Competencies for Andragogy students

In a second module, they learn how to *design classes and seminars*. A third module develops *communication-skills*. These competencies are supplemented by a traditional lecture and seminar in “didactics.”

### Planning/organizing

The success of an educational program does not only derive from the quality of teaching (micro-didactics), but also from the learning-supportive planning and organizing of the program (macro-didactics). The module “*program-planning*” supplies planning/organizing strategies under the perspective: How can learning be started and supported by organizational measures? This does not only relate to school-like settings, but includes under the aspect of “life-wide learning” the challenge how learning occasion can be identified and supported in workplaces, cultural institutions, hospitals, tourist places, etc. An important role for this competency plays the *internship* each of our students has to go through.

### Moderator – counselor – consultant – mediator – coach

A shared observation in adult education programs is: After the teaching sessions, teachers and learners often meet for a coffee or a beer. And then the “real” questions come up . . . This observation opened the insight into a new role of Andragogues: not presenting/transporting knowledge (teaching), but helping persons or groups to find their way.

“*Communication skills*” is a module in this competency – and overlaps with the teaching/training competency. This overlapping of modules and traditional seminars is important: It allows repetitions and the insight in interrelations. The competency class “*moderation-techniques*” too overlaps with the teaching module (see Fig. 3). In the competency seminar “*consulting-strategies and -techniques,*” our students learn a “new language,” and in all these classes, they learn a new approach and understanding to problems of people and institutions.

“*Coaching*” is a competency class addressing the widespread problem that most teachers in adult and continuing education are subject matter specialists teaching with limited educational/andragogical ability (see Fig. 4). This restricts the effect of instruction (knowledge, transfer, and application) and gives away the chance to develop company culture and “soft skills.” We developed a concept in which the subject matter specialist is supported before, during and after the course by an Andragogue. This competency-training builds on the prior trainings of seminar design and communication skills.

### Research and evaluation

The ability to do research is not only expected from scholars and members of research organizations, but also in the practical work in adult and continuing education for needs assessment, evaluation and quality control, planning of programs, and feedback to organizers and boards.

Research classes are always included in the normal curriculum of social science students, mostly in the



Fig. 3. Group training in moderation techniques



Fig. 4. Mutual planning of subject matter specialist and coach (Andragogue)

beginning semesters. What we changed: We added one class about *quantitative and one about qualitative research* in the final semesters of the study – the time when students have to prepare their thesis. This relates research work to a “real” research question, to a practical application and performance. To support this competence, we offer a *research colloquium* where students present and discuss their research work and *individual consulting*.

### Summary

One clear observation in the last three decades is that the working fields of Andragogues have become diversified and

reached new horizons. Change experts are needed that can practically perform and theoretically reflect, have the competencies to professionally teach, plan and organize learning, consult and moderate, evaluate and research – and produce the most successful mix of these ingredients. This has to be considered in the curriculum of andragogical degrees.

### PERSPECTIVE FOR THEORY AND PRACTICE

Adult learning and education is nowadays perceived much wider and much more important than 20 years ago: for economic prosperity, for the environment, for social expenditures, for enriching personal life, and for peaceful and respectful citizenship. UNESCO stated in the Hamburg Declaration 1997: “Adult education becomes more than a right; it is a key to the twenty-first century. It is both a consequence of active citizenship and a condition for full participation in society. It is a powerful concept for fostering ecologically sustainable development, for promoting democracy, justice, gender equity, and scientific, social and economic development, and for building a world in which violent conflict is replaced by dialogue and a culture of peace based on justice. Adult learning can shape identity and give meaning to life.”

Adult Educators are needed on all levers and in all fields: the volunteers, the partly paid part-timers, the fully employed subject matter specialists, the organizers and administrators, and teachers. But it also became clear that for the multifold and complex challenges of a “society in change” professional experts are needed to support change and learning successfully: Andragogues.

This new and widened learning perspective has consequences for the theory and practice of Andragogy:

- Andragogy as the academic discipline dealing with the lifelong and lifewide learning and education of adults has to perceive, research, and support the multifold learning situations in the life of adults and to develop theories that give deeper insight in the challenge of change processes in the life of adults. In addition, students have to be supplied with competencies that allow them to perform as professionals in the practical field.
- Institutions and professionals have for their practical work now a much wider pallet of competencies and interaction to identify, use, and support learning processes in change situations. But much more has to be done to learn about this pallet, to develop more strategies, to exchange what has been developed, and to collect experience what composition of activities are most successful in which situations.

Andragogues – as described – are more than teachers. And their work perspective is much wider than educational institutions: everywhere where change happens. Under this perspective, the number of different fields where Andragogues work is not confusing. 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 understanding of Andragogy and “lifewide learning” and the resulting tasks can contribute to a unifying identity of professional Andragogues.

The future will confirm how important this work is to make “adult learning: a joy, a tool, a right and a shared responsibility” (UNESCO, 1997).

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