

# Athletic Training Education: Educating the Future Athletic Training Professionals

David C. Berry, PhD, MHA, AT, ATC

Department of Kinesiology, Saginaw Valley State University, University Center, MI

Welcome. As the Editor-in-Chief of the *Athletic Training Education Journal*, I am honored and excited to introduce our 2021 special issue, “Educating the Future Athletic Training Professionals.” This special issue, like all special issues, has been in development for 18 months. The issue’s mission was to examine educational techniques (didactic and clinical education) that athletic training educators can use to ensure that future athletic trainers at all levels (professional, postprofessional, and residency) are educated using the unique and effective pedagogy practices that consider the needs and preferences of the learner. We believe that athletic training education programs must prepare all graduates to be competent, compassionate, patient-centered, professional athletic trainers who are ready to be integral members of health care teams at multiple levels.

To accomplish this, we sought educational technique manuscripts across all academic levels (professional, postprofessional, and residency) that we hoped would address the new 2020 educational competencies. We have curated a series of articles that examine topics such as mental health and safe space training in the curriculum, teaching dermatology and wound closures, using scavenger hunts to connect preceptors and students and my favorite, teaching of bleeding control using medical models. I think I can speak for the journal and its authors in encouraging readers to use these techniques as a foundation to engage and educate your students; modify them as necessary, and evaluate their effectiveness to ensure they work for your students and their soon-to-be patients. Take yourself and your athletic training program outside its comfort zone so that future athletic trainers can be exposed to foundational knowledge and skills through unique pedagogical strategies.

## WHAT IS PEDAGOGY, AND HOW DOES IT DIFFER FROM ANDRAGOGY?

As I was preparing this editorial, I searched the term *pedagogy* on Google. Although specific to the concept of pedagogy, many search results either mentioned or compared pedagogy

to the concept of *andragogy*. Given the theme of the special issue, I thought this would be an excellent opportunity to remind ourselves of what pedagogy is and how it differs from andragogy.

According to the *Merriam-Webster Dictionary*, *pedagogy* is the art, science, or profession of teaching, whereas *andragogy* is the art or science of teaching adults.<sup>1</sup> The word *andragogy* originates from the Greek words *andr* and *agogos*, which literally mean “leading man.” The term was first described in 1833 by a German educator and editor, Alexander Kapp, and resurfaced in 1921 when Eugen Rosenstock-Huussy reintroduced the concept of adult learning theory.<sup>2,3</sup> In 1966, Dusan Savicevic visited Boston, MA, where Malcolm Knowles was introduced to the idea and to its use in the European context.<sup>2</sup>

Knowles popularized the concept of andragogy in the United States in the late 1960s and early 1970s.<sup>4,5</sup> Andragogy has been seen as the single most popular approach in adult education and is directed at self-actualization, gaining experience, and problem solving.<sup>3</sup> Knowles hypothesized a set of assumptions about adult learners that they (1) move from dependency to increasing self-directedness while maturing, (2) direct their learning while maturing, (3) draw on accumulated life experiences to aid learning, (4) are ready to learn when assuming new social or life roles, (5) are problem centered and want to apply new learning immediately, and (6) are internally versus externally motivated to learn.<sup>6,7</sup>

On the other hand, pedagogy has been a staple of learning since the 1950s and is still a widely accepted educational structure across the world.<sup>2</sup> *Pedagogy* comes from the Greek words *paidos* and *agogos*, which literally means “leading children.” Pedagogy is, therefore, an educational method in which learners depend on educators for guidance, evaluation, and acquisition of knowledge and skills. Simply put, the pedagogical model assumes that child learners will learn what they have been told and when they are told<sup>7</sup> under the conditions provided to them. Similar to andragogy, a set of assumptions guides pedagogical theory—that child learners (1) depend on the educator while the educator evaluates

*Dr Berry is currently Professor and Department Chair for the Department of Kinesiology at Saginaw Valley State University. Please address correspondence to David C. Berry, PhD, MHA, AT, ATC, Department of Kinesiology, College of Health and Human Services, Room H212, Saginaw Valley State University, 7400 Bay Road, University Center, MI 48710. dcberry@svsu.edu.*

## Full Citation:

Berry DC. Athletic training education: educating the future athletic training professionals. *Athl Train Educ J*. 2021;16(4):235–236.

progress and assumes responsibility for what is taught and its efficacy; (2) come to the table with little life experience and are basically blank slates, making educators some of the most influential figures in their cognitive development; (3) are told what is needed to master a topic in order to move on to the next one, advancing only when they have completed the necessary steps; (4) are exposed to the learning prescribed and sequenced by the educator in a way that makes logical sense; and (5) are externally versus internally motivated to learn.<sup>8</sup>

Many associate pedagogy exclusively with children, but it is also associated with adult learning.<sup>7</sup> The andragogical model assumes that adult learners are actively engaged in their own information-gathering and learning process.<sup>3</sup> But many adult learners were exposed to classroom learning via educational experiences that promoted pedagogical practices during their primary and secondary education. I would argue that this continued to some extent into their higher education. As a result, some adult learners may be unwilling or challenged to participate in an adult education course structure later in life because of the perception that this style of teaching and learning (pedagogical) is normal.<sup>7</sup> Of course, many adult learners arrive in our athletic training programs or courses without any background knowledge of the field of study. For example, when an adult learner attends an entry-level master's athletic training program with no background knowledge of the area, a pedagogical approach may be an appropriate starting point.<sup>9</sup> Thus, athletic training educators may need to use pedagogical strategies to explain the foundational concepts of athletic training to new learners.

## WHICH MODEL IS APPROPRIATE FOR ATHLETIC TRAINING?

Under the pedagogical model, an effective educator who can reach learners is a necessity. This model depends on the educator's competency and understanding of the curriculum standards set forth by the accrediting body, institutional goals and objectives, and individual programmatic objectives and pedagogy strategies. Why? Because educators are expected to be knowledgeable about the most current evidence and information, given their obligation and responsibility to transfer their acquired knowledge and skill to learners. As a course or program progresses, learners can be asked to apply examples based on their own interest or clinical education to create a link between their experiences and the course content. This allows for transition from the pedagogical model to the andragogical model, enabling learners to move from "empty vessels" to "self-directed learners." And although some believe that adopting this strategy makes it difficult to change direction and encourage the learner to move away from dependence and become an independent learner,<sup>7</sup> it is required. Again, why? I would speculate that the transition allows new professionals to transition to practice more easily while assuming responsibility for their professional develop-

ment, which we know is needed for professional and personal growth.

Research in pedagogy and andragogy is ongoing, and investigators are discovering more and more about how to help children and adults learn. Therefore, no single list of pedagogical practices is set in stone. Instead, understanding your learners and yourself and how to engage learners actively to introduce, reinforce, and allow for self-directed learning is where it is at!

Please enjoy this issue and help us keep striving to globalize the preparation of athletic training and athletic therapy students.

## Acknowledgments

A special thank you to Kimberly S. Peer, EdD, AT, FNATA, Kent State University, and Ashley B. Thrasher, EdD, LAT, ATC, CSCS, Western Carolina University, who served as the guest editors for this special edition.

## REFERENCES

1. Merriam-Webster Online Dictionary. Accessed September 5, 2021. <https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/pedagogy>
2. Orito M. What is the difference between andragogy and pedagogy? Accessed September 5, 2021. <https://www.mandatorytraining.co.uk/blogs/statutory-mandatory-training/what-is-the-difference-between-andragogy-and-pedagogy#:~:text=Pedagogy%20comes%20from%20two%20Greek,which%20literally%20means%20leading%20children.&text=Andragogy%20generally%20focuses%20on%20the,much%20use%20in%20educating%20children>
3. Hughes B, Berry DC. Self-directed learning and the millennial athletic training student. *Athl Train Educ J*. 2011;6(1):46–50.
4. Knowles M, Holton EF, Swanson RA. *The Adult Learner: The Definitive Classic in Adult Education and Human Resource Development*. 5th ed. Follett; 1998.
5. Merriam SB, Brockett RG. *The Profession and Practice of Adult Education: An Introduction*. Jossey-Bass; 1996.
6. US Department of Education. Adult learning theories. Accessed September 5, 2021. [https://lincs.ed.gov/sites/default/files/11\\_%20TEAL\\_Adult\\_Learning\\_Theory.pdf](https://lincs.ed.gov/sites/default/files/11_%20TEAL_Adult_Learning_Theory.pdf)
7. McGrath V. Reviewing the evidence on how adult students learn: an examination of Knowles' Model of Andragogy. *Irish J Adult Community Educ*. Accessed September 5, 2021. <https://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/EJ860562.pdf>
8. Makhlof J. Pedagogy vs. andragogy: where many get it wrong in their learning strategy. Accessed September 5, 2021. <https://elmllearning.com/pedagogy-vs-andragogy/>
9. Knowles M. *The Making of an Adult Educator*. Jossey-Bass; 1989.