

Student Learning Pedagogy

Versus

Teacher Learning Andragogy

as Professional Development

Paul Pérez-Jiménez

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Dr. Irma Jones

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The heaven is spherical in shape, and moves as a sphere; the earth too is sensibly spherical in shape, when taken as a whole; in position, it lies in the middle of the heavens very much like its center; in size and distance it has the ratio of a point to the sphere of the fixed stars; and it has no motion from place to place.

-Ptolemy, "Almagest," 100-165 A.D.

### Student Learning Versus Teacher Learning in Professional Development

The need for teacher training or professional development (PD) holds few dissenters; yet, denouncing PD's lack of quality has gained momentum (Sparks, 2002; Boylan, 2018; Greenleaf, Litman, & Marple, 2018). To address the dwindling degree of excellence, Dennis Spark's chapter nine from *Designing powerful professional development for teachers and principals* "focuses" professional development on student learning information or "data as the most powerful form" of PD. Sparks, as a member of the National Staff Development Council (NSDC) decisively states, "[even though] other forms of professional inquiry are used to deepen teachers' understanding of teaching and student learning... these methods are not equal in their capacity to change practice and improve student learning" (Sparks, 2002, pg. 9-2). This paper disputes Spark's position and highlights, much like the beginning epigraph that features the Ptolemaic System's centeredness as an antiquated, egregious error, that the NSDC's sixteen-year-old pedagogical position does not reflect a new understanding of teacher identity and PD. In short, this paper contextualizes three claims against Spark's argument based on 1. contrasting pedagogy with andragogy known as adult learning which shares aspects with self-determination theory (SDT), (Knowles, Holton, & Swanson, 2015; Ryan & Deci, 2017), 2. emphasizing cooperative learning (CL) techniques missing in student learning pedagogies (Pérez-Jiménez, 2018;

Greenleaf, Litman, & Marple, 2018), and 3. synthesizing transformative leadership (TL) developments that allow teacher identity and agency (Boylan, 2018; Shields, 2018) to prove "other methods" are equal to and in some cases better than solely centering PD's on student learning information, data-driven pedagogical practices, and content reviews.

While PD's topics that emphasize student learning in which "students' strengths and weaknesses are discussed" may seem logical, for who would argue against teacher's discussing students' efforts. Upon closer scrutiny, PD participation, by nature, is limited to teachers and teacher trainers. Students are intentionally left out, which begs the question, when "students' strengths and weaknesses are discussed," who stands to benefit from that discussion if the students are not active stakeholders? In reality, PD's teacher trainers, often time administrators who have not taught in years, take the role of teachers and teachers then become the students. The teacher trainer assumes a traditional pedagogical role and teachers are subjected to the model they are to conduct in their classroom. Trainers teach the teachers. Trainers inevitably revert to teacher focused role known as the traditional pedagogical model and content. Pedagogy by definition means "teacher directed learning as the art and science of teaching children" (Knowles, Holton, & Swanson, 2015). Pedagogy underscores the student learner as dependent on the teacher's responsibility to make all the decisions about what is to be learned and to determine when and if it has been learned. Pedagogy assumes student learners have little to no experience, they are subjected to learn at whatever pace the teacher determines, and that they are motivated by external factors such as grades, low ranking, or fear of consequences such as not graduating (Deci & Ryan, 2017; Pérez-Jiménez, 2018; Knowles, Holton & Swanson, 2015). Essentially PD's using pedagogy attempt to teach teachers like children. Furthermore, PD trainers inescapably model strategies that they often do not know or have little experience with to both

experienced and novice teachers disregarding differentiation and causing the lack of quality previously noted. To compound the situation, trainers may direct their efforts away from the more important process to concentrate on content such as what should be taught, how it should be organized or sequenced in the name of efficiency (Johnson & Johnson, 2017; Knowles, Holton, & Swanson, 2015). Moreover, in all fairness "complicated situational contexts" such as school or district politics may pin administrators as trainers with no regard to their limited expertise in content, yet they must teach teachers that are often experts in their content (Olsen & Buchanan, 2017).

This scenario known as the "standard social science model" (Deci & Ryan, 2017) stands in contrast to PD's that empower teacher learning, practice self-directed learning that incorporates inquiry and is known as andragogy or the art of teaching adult learners (Knowles, Holton, & Swanson, 2015; Lopes & Cunha, 2017; Greenleaf, Litman, & Marple, 2018). Andragogical characteristics feature the adult learner as independent, responsible, and willing to learn. Andragogy accepts learner experience, internal motivation, and replaces content with performance, planning, self-diagnosis, self-evaluation. It involves learner initiative and a proactive tendency to self-actualize; in short, andragogy partners both the learner with the teacher in the learning process (Knowles, Holton, & Swanson, 2015; Lopes & Cunha, 2017; Greenleaf, Litman, & Marple, 2018).

Andragogical PD's empower learners as active cooperative partners in their learning process and coupled with the five CL elements they maintain a "social presence in light of current social or anti-social trends" (Pérez-Jiménez, 2018). Of the five basic elements required to implement CL only "individual accountability" is implemented individually, the other four: "positive interdependence, promotive interaction, social skills and group processing" are group

oriented (Johnson & Johnson, 2017). While pedagogical oriented PD are mandated by the trainer and are not necessarily prone to group work, the andragogical PD fosters interaction. In an academic setting with constant staff and department meetings as well as PD's that are pedagogical or content-driven, social interaction tends to be rare, and new teachers may be surprised at the lack of teacher colleague interaction. Pérez-Jiménez summarizes that CL courses should be made part of every student teacher's degree plan because "CL takes on the challenge and attempts to become part of the framework for educator development" (Pérez-Jiménez, 2018).

As the final claim, transformative leadership theory technically is either a product of, or it leads to andragogy and cooperative learning. TL, as its name suggests, involves a total transformation within a "volatile, uncertain, complex and ambiguous (VUCA)" setting. Shields (2018) states TL comprises the following eight principles:

1. mandate to effect deep and equitable change;
2. the need to deconstruct and reconstruct knowledge frameworks that perpetuate inequity and injustice;
3. the need to address the inequitable distribution of power;
4. an emphasis on both private and public (individual and collective) good;
5. a focus on emancipation, democracy, equity, and justice;
6. an emphasis on interdependence, interconnectedness, and global awareness;
7. the necessity of balancing critique with promise; and
8. the call to exhibit moral courage. (p. vii)

So much like andragogy and CL, TL accentuates social collaboration that is drastic. Although andragogy and CL may be implemented on a limited basis, TL must be implemented at the highest leadership level in order to take root (Shields, 2018). The added positive benefit is that it not only impacts teacher identity and moral, but grants agency to all involved and on a broader scale can impact the whole community (Boylan, 2016; Lopes & Cunha, 2017; Olsen & Buchanan, 2017; Shields, 2018).

Attempting to wrap up at this point is akin to sticking one's finger in the dike to hold back the water; however, futile it may seem...Sparks notion that the methods are not equitable now seems appropriate since after this exercise I now hold that professional development aimed at teacher learning is more important because in the long run it also affects student learning. In hindsight, although somewhat downplayed, Sparks premise was written one and a half generation back; contextually, it was written when mp3 iPods and the first cellphone with a camera were in vogue - both contraptions that the current generation labels relics and antiques. Researchers would hesitate to quote something that old and perusing this document's references highlights that 40% were written in 2018, another 40% was from 2017, 10% from 2015, and the last 10% was from 2002. Furthermore, the andragogical PD addressed emphasized a process method change, yet the topic of any new andragogical PD was intentionally omitted. In other words, nothing bars andragogical, adult learners from addressing a PD topic of their choice such as... ..student learning.

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