TEACHING THE BIBLE TO ADULTS

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Abstract

Adult education has for many years been seen as a mere continuation of a process already followed with children. Adult learners were therefore taught as if they were no more than grown-up children. Research on how adults think, reason, learn, understand and interpret academic material has led to the rethinking of the whole topic and to a new approach to adult education known as andragogy. Centuries' old views and practices relating to adult education have been questioned and new views put forward. Adult learners and teachers of adults have now become equal partners in the quest for knowledge, wisdom and academic excellence. This paper is an attempt at following these developments and relating them to Biblical Studies.

1.   Introduction

Paradigm shifts or movements are well-known and often discussed topics - especially in the humanities. One such movement was the one towards a greater awareness of the fact that no phenomenon exists in total isolation or abstraction but that it is always found within a particular context. This context gives meaning, content and substance to the phenomenon. In conjunction to this shift towards contextualisation, a movement towards relativity in thinking can also be discerned. Contextuality, relativity and a rediscovery of the value of dialectic thinking, led to an approach to adult education which has revitalised research and development in the field. This approach is known as andragogy (*aner* - Greek for man; *ago* - I lead) - a term challenged by some as being sexist. Proponents of the term, however, maintain that 'man' in this context, should be understood to denote 'mankind' or rather all adult people (Knowles 1990:51-65). (Whenever the term is used in this paper, it should be understood as referring to the education of all adult persons. No sexist slight is intended.)

2.   Adulthood

A few introductory remarks on the concept of adulthood seem appropriate. In most books on the psychology of adulthood an age-related distinction is made between early, middle and late adulthood. Early adulthood (the period we will be concerning ourselves with here) is given as the period between the ages of 20 and 40 years. Middle age comprises the 40 to 60 year period and all persons beyond 60 form late adulthood or the group known as the elderly (Louw, Gerdes & Meyer 1985:415,481).

Keniston (1982:83) refers to a younger category of early adults whom he calls 'post-adolescents' or 'late-adolescents-and-young-adults'. Although a case may be made out for a category of less mature adults, this paper will not make such a distinction. Whenever reference is made to adults in this paper, it is the early adulthood group that is implied. It is evident that this will not be a homogeneous group and that different levels of maturity may be involved.

Commons, Armon, Richards, Schrader, Farrell, Tappan and Bauer (1989:53) rightly stress that age, on its own, is a weak predictor of any type of development phase and that other criteria may have to be used. In this regard Knowles (1990:57), for example, refers to biological, legal, social and psychological definitions of adulthood. He then adds that the psychological aspects of adulthood are probably the most important ones from a learning point of view. Knowles further emphasises the development of a strong self-concept and the willingness to take responsibility for one's own life and learning as the most crucial factors in this regard (Knowles 1990:57).

Psychological aspects normally refer to the cognitive, affective, social, moral and religious domains. Although one cannot really divorce adults' thinking ability (i.e. their cognition) from the rest of their ontological characteristics, this paper will be concentrating more on people's thinking abilities, that is their ability to learn, to interpret and to understand. It should, however, not be seen as a negation of the other aspects of being human. With regard to the other, non-cognitive aspects of being, Even (1987:22) speaks of a 'baggage barrier' which adults have to contend with in any learning situation. By this she means individual and personal anxieties and difficulties, such as having a sick child at home, experiencing financial or career difficulties, which adults cannot easily set aside and which may seriously hamper their learning abilities at any given moment. People can therefore only make sense of any new information presented to them as it is 'filtered through the baggage barriers of personal life experiences, interests, style and needs' (Even 1987:25).

At this stage it may be useful to remind the reader that what follows regarding adult learning and teaching is in no way meant to be prescriptive. It is merely my own proposal, based on my eclectic reading and interpretation of the literature. Others may have good grounds to offer different approaches, different interpretations and different conclusions. That is their prerogative

and, as will be seen in the following exposition, that is what academic tolerance is all about.

How adults think will be the next topic of discussion to follow.

3. An epistemology of adulthood

3.1 Jean Piaget

For many years Jean Piaget's thoughts on cognitive development in people was considered to be the last word on the subject. A brief outline of Piaget's cognitive developmental theory may be useful at this stage. This review is a synthesis of ideas gleaned from Ginsburg and Opper (1979), Copeland (1984), and Piaget (1976).

Jean Piaget was well-versed in biology, philosophy (especially epistemology and logic) as well as in psychology. His theory was a unique synthesis of ideas from all these disciplines and for many years, even up to today, his ideas dominated all thinking on the subject of human cognition.

Piaget's basic premise was that human intellectual functioning was primarily logical and mathematical and therefore initially of a non-verbal nature. He contended that the degree to which children were able to think logically, determined the level or stage of cognitive development they found themselves in.

Piaget furthermore emphasised that children's cognitive growth is determined by their ability to perform certain cognitive operations. These operations included conservation, seriation and classification, with reversibility of thought playing a major role in the successful performance of each of them. The operations are quite involved and a detailed exposition is not really required for the purposes of this paper. Suffice to say that Piaget categorised children into four main cognitive developmental stages according to their ability to perform these logical operations.

a) The sensori-motor or non-operational stage (birth to $\pm$ 2 years) in which the child has no insight into logical operations at all.

b) The pre-operational or symbolic and intuitive stage ($\pm$ 2 to 7 years) in which the child has only partial insight and can only solve logical problems using a trial-and-error approach.

c) The first truly logical or operational phase is called the concrete operational stage ($\pm$ 7 to 11 years). Now children are able to develop full insight but can apply logic only to material things they can concretely perceive and manipulate.

d) The stage of formal operations ($\pm$ 11 years and older) is the final one, according to Piaget's theory. Children now have full insight and are able to reason abstractly. Their reasoning is said to be

hypothetical and deductive by nature and is geared towards the solution of problems. This stage does not develop fully overnight: There is a steady progression from thinking concretely to thinking abstractly, until people reach their full cognitive potential round about their eighteenth or nineteenth year.

3.2   Relativity and thinking

It is Piaget's fourth stage of cognitive growth that interests us in this paper. For many years the formal-operational stage was accepted as the end point of cognitive maturity (Blanchard-Fields 1989:73). With the advent of contextuality as a paradigm or meta-model of cognition, greater relativity in the approach to the whole problem of human thinking came to the fore (Hultsch 1977:368,369,374). In a contextual approach, an element is said to derive all meaning from its context and can only be understood in relation to this context (Kramer 1989:135). What is learned and remembered in a given situation would therefore depend on the total social and historical context. This led to the acceptance of the fact that learning and memory in adulthood never reach an end point, but are ongoing activities which continue throughout life (Hultsch 1977:377).

The most prominent researcher on the question as to whether there was something beyond the stage of formal operations was WI Perry (Nottingham 1983:10). He studied the development of Harvard undergraduates for a number of years and found that there was a progression away from formal-operational thinking - a stage in which they equated knowledge with truth and believed that such knowledge can be passed on from expert to learners. He termed this form of thinking 'dualistic' and opposed it to a subsequent form of thinking that he found in older students, which denoted the relativity of knowledge and accepted the validity of contradictory explanations. These older students came to realise that they were obliged to think critically and deeply about conflicting explanations before committing themselves to one as opposed to another school of thought (Nottingham 1983:11).

These students' thinking therefore developed from a simplistic position of wanting to distinguish between absolutes, to a more complex one where they accepted the relativity of knowledge and points of view (Nottingham 1983:22). Perry's research led one to expect a development away from adolescent formal-operational thinking in which distinctions between Right and Wrong, Truth and Falsehood, Good and Evil are deemed imperative, towards a postformal stage in which thinking becomes more complex and shows greater relativity (Keniston 1982:94).

A noteworthy point is that Perry's epistemological approach led to interesting research on the authoritarian personality. Perry proposed that thinking in absolutes, as is the case in formal operational (or adolescent) cognition, was found most frequently in authoritarian people (Irwin & Sheese 1989:114,115).

3.3   Dialectics and thinking

The next line of thought on the development of postformal thinking is found in Klaus Riegel's work on 'dialectic operations,' which he considered to be the final period of cognitive development (Riegel 1973b:347). He based his work on the assumption that over the years the underlying epistemological basis of science has changed extensively. Riegel (1973a:6) said people should no longer be seen as passive receptacles within a passive world, but rather as individuals who, through their own efforts, can transform the world, while, at the same time, being transformed themselves. Riegel's proposal of 'dialectic operations' as a postformal cognitive stage was derived largely from Hegelian-Marxist philosophy as part of a general anti-Piagetian position (Irwin & Sheese 1989:115; Riegel 1973b:352).

3.4   Problem-finding and problem-formulation

Arlin (1975:602) agrees that a fifth stage of cognitive development can be distinguished. She stated that whereas the stage of formal operations is a convergent one characterised by *problem-solving* phenomena, the fifth cognitive stage, as she sees it, is characterised by *problem-finding and the formulation of discovered problems*. It is the stage of 'creative thought, the envisioning of new questions and the discovery of new heuristics in adult thought' (Arlin 1975:606).

Einstein is quoted as having said, as far back as 1938, that 'the formulation of a problem is often more essential than its solution' (Arlin 1989:198) Or, as De Bono (1987) in a different context is quoted as saying: 'Once we can define an information universe, then we can explore what happens in that universe' (Deist 1992:317,318). Research on the relationship between problem-solving and problem-finding has yet to be finalised, but as things now stand it would seem that in order to formulate high level problems, one first has to have the ability to solve problems. Formal operational thinking in adolescence may well be a preparation for the ability to find and formulate new problems (Arlin 1989:198).

Most adults can both solve and discover problems. This means adults may at times choose whether they want to use a formal or postformal approach (i.e. a contextual approach). Being able to use both forms of cognition enables adults to develop a tolerance for ambiguities and contradictions (Nottingham 1983:11). It further enables them to use the tension between two or more contradictory explanations as if it were a creative force leading them to the discovery of new questions and new problems (Nottingham 1983:6). (See Deist 1991:41 on relativity and contextuality in the debate on 'academic standards', in this regard.)

3.5   Combining relativity and dialectics in thinking

In 1984 Michael Basseches proposed his own views on the fifth cognitive stage. Although he too accepts thinking during this stage to be basically dialectic, he does see a complementarity between formal and dialectic operations and is not so averse to formal operational thinking as Riegel (Irwin & Sheese 1989:115). Basseches's main contribution to the debate on postformal cognitive development was his formulation of the relatedness between what he termed 'dialectic thinking' and 'relativistic epistemology'. He proposed that dialectic thinking leads to the development of relativity in cognition (Benack & Basseches 1989:98). Relativity, as pointed out by Perry earlier on, was an essential element of postformal cognition. Basseches therefore was able to unite Perry's relativity and Riegel's dialectics into one theory of adult cognition.

To this, one should perhaps add, in closing this section, that relativity does not only lead to healthy scepticism, but more important, it leads to the tolerance of the divergent viewpoints of others (Keniston 1982:99). Considering the times we live in, tolerance is probably a most desirable trait in adult thinking and it is therefore reassuring that the latest research on adult cognition should point to the feasibility of people developing tolerance as the end product of their most advanced cognitive development. (See Klopper 1992:188,204 on religious tolerance in this regard.)

4.   The morality of adulthood

This topic warrants a paper on its own, but I will deal with it very briefly. Lawrence Kohlberg followed up on Piaget's research on moral development in children. He distinguished a post-conventional stage and thought it to be the end point of moral development in which people's own consciences and 'universal' ethical principles regarding equal justice for all and respect for human dignity and individuality, determined their moral thinking (Mussen 1970:276-277; Hurlock 1978:391).

Research by Gilligan and Murphy in 1979 (Nottingham 1983:10,19) indicated the existence of a stage of moral thinking beyond the post-conventional one. Now moral dilemmas are responded to within their social and historical context. Contextuality and relativity again seem to play a decisive role at this level, enabling people to recognise and tolerate contradictions in moral reasoning (Nottingham 1983:10).

Having so far dealt with adult cognitive development as well as the effect this has on moral reasoning, it seems logical now to deal with the ways in which adults apply their cognitive and reasoning abilities in learning, understanding and interpreting academic material.

5.   Towards adult hermeneutics

Learning and teaching, though related, will be dealt with separately in this and the following parts of my paper - merely for the sake of convenience. In both learning and teaching, aims and objectives are involved. As far as learning is concerned, it would seem as if doing so without a purpose or objective is rather nonsensical. Whenever one has to learn anything, there normally should be a reason why and a clear picture of the end result (objective) of such learning.

The following section will show how learning objectives determine the level of complexity of the learning process.

5.1   Bloom's taxonomy

Benjamin Bloom (1956) and his co-workers divided all human abilities and skills into three 'domains' i.e. cognitive, affective (emotional) and psychomotor (human movement) (Kachelhoffer 1983:13; Zais 1976:309). His taxonomy of intellectual tasks is most useful, as it provides us with a hierarchical exposition of people's cognitive functioning. The six 'mental abilities' are listed below from the lowest to the highest (Kachelhoffer 1987:143,144; Zais 1976:309 and Rogers 1986:52 were used as sources for the following sections).

5.1.1   Categories of intellectual functioning

a)   *Knowledge*:
Rote learning and memorising is required here, so as to enable one to recall detail, methods, structures and other knowledge at a later stage.

b)   *Comprehension*:
Understanding at a lower level, enabling one to use knowledge in similar situations but not yet to see the fullest implications thereof.

c)   *Application*:
A higher level of understanding enabling one to transfer knowledge to new or unfamiliar situations and to make generalisations and use rules.

d)   *Analysis*:
The ability to divide something into a hierarchically arranged organisation of its component parts; to see relationships and structure by analysis.

e)   *Synthesis*:
The ability to arrange and combine a number of unstructured elements into an organised whole; building up new concepts.

f)   *Evaluation*:
To assess and compare things critically by using set or selected criteria; to judge the value of acquired knowledge.

These mental or cognitive abilities determine what a person should be able to do after having learnt or after having been taught something. To illustrate this, a number of activities can be listed which relate to the specific cognitive levels. (These are verbs that are used to formulate learning objectives.)

5.1.2   Learning objectives

a)   *Knowledge*:
Define, describe, identify, sketch, set out, indicate, review...

b)   *Comprehension*:
Explain, paraphrase, summarise, interpret, reduce, reformulate, extrapolate, estimate, predict, reason out...

c)   *Application*:
Calculate, demonstrate how, solve, prove, adapt, deduce, conclude, generalise...

d)   *Analysis*:
Differentiate, discriminate, distinguish, illustrate how, indicate the differences between, compare with regard to, contrast, indicate the similarities...

(e)   *Synthesis*:
Classify, plan, create, develop, design, combine, diagnose, recommend, propose, indicate the relationship...

f)   *Evaluation*:
Respond to, criticise, justify, return a verdict, judge, select, evaluate, express a view on, express an opinion...

This leads one to the logical deduction that the way intellectual tasks are set for students will influence the cognitive level of their performance. If, for example, students are asked to paraphrase the first chapter of the book of Jonah, it clearly demands a lower level of cognitive performance than would be the case if they were asked to express an opinion on the role that the characters in the first chapter of Jonah play in, on the one hand, the author's development of the character of Jonah in the narrative and, on the other hand, the exposition of the message of this Bible book (Potgieter 1991:74-86).

5.2   Surface level and deep level processing

A much later development in our understanding of human learning took place about 1975 in Goteborg, Sweden, where Marton and Säljö from the Institute of Education at the local university did further research on the process of learning (Ramsden & Entwistle 1981:368). Their research actually started off as an attempt at determining how students read academic articles. They found that different students learnt different things from the same text and that their knowledge varied with regard to *what* is learned instead of *how much* is learned. This, they proposed, was due to different levels of cognition, which

they then termed *deep level* and *surface level* processing. In surface level processing students seem to have a 'reproductive concept of learning' which forces them towards using a rote-learning strategy. In deep level processing students tend to direct their efforts towards the intentional content of the learning material, i.e. they are directed towards comprehending the underlying meaning of what an author wants to say (Marton & Säljö 1976a:7,8; Gibbs, Morgan & Taylor 1982:128,129,139).

Another major contribution by the same two Swedish authors was their conclusion that students adapted their way of learning to their own conception of what their lecturers required of them (Marton & Säljö 1976b:115). While many students may be able to do deep level processing, it would seem that they do not do so because they interpret the demands of examiners as requiring mainly the recall of facts to the detriment of a deeper level of understanding (Marton & Säljö 1976b:125).

In a sense this links up with Bloom's taxonomy, as discussed earlier on. Marton and Säljö too stated that students' interpretations of the objective or meaning of a question influence the quality and level of their answers. They warned, therefore, that

> ...the criterion must be sensitive to the qualitative variations in outcome (1976b:116).

In Bloom's taxonomy above, *different questions* are used to elicit responses demanding cognitive activity or revealing knowledge at different levels. In the Swedish research qualitative differences in students' answers were found even when the *same question* or the same topic was put to every student.

Ramsden and Entwistle (1981:382) maintain that the approaches students adopt are, to some extent, shaped by the teaching, the way of examining and the way a course is organised. Newble and Entwistle (1986:165) found that some students would use a deep or a surface approach, depending on what they felt would earn them the best marks. Their main intention was to be successful; the level of their own understanding was not the main concern.

Säljö (1981:63) suggests that using either a surface or a deep level approach seems to reflect a 'meta-level assumption' concerning the relevance of the different kinds of learning activities in a particular context. Säljö agrees with Perry (1970) that, in this regard, it would seem as if a person's educational environment in itself seems to have a profound influence on shaping people's ideas about learning, knowledge, etc, and on the possibility of changing such conceptions. (See Deist 1991:39 on the relationship between culture, epistemology and standards, as well as Burden 1992:39-49 on how historical differences in thinking amongst people in South Africa is culturally linked.)

5.3   Learning styles

Learning styles may be defined as students' consistent or characteristic means of perceiving and processing information (Korhonen & McCall 1986:21). In a

way surface and deep level processing could also be called learning styles, but perhaps one should rather call them cognitive styles, which is a broader concept (Newble & Entwistle 1986:164). Many proposals have been made on what are termed students' learning styles but discussing them here is not really feasible.

I would, however, like to refer the reader to DA Kolb's *experiential learning model* (1984), as one of the more useful expositions of learning styles. According to Kolb (1984:167) most students of the humanities tend to follow what he terms a *divergent learning style* and therefore are able, amongst other things, to view a situation from a number of stances. It would be interesting to know whether students of Biblical Studies also tend towards divergent thinking. One would hope, though, that not too many would be *convergent thinkers* looking for single, straight-forward answers to all questions!

I close this section with the observation that there is very little conclusive evidence that matching instructional methods or styles to students' learning styles will lead to increased learning and understanding (Bonham 1988:12,16).

6.   Educating adults

Adults continue to develop cognitively throughout their lifetime and think and learn differently from the way children do. This poses a challenge to all who teach at tertiary level.

6.1   Salient features

Nottingham (1983:40-42) identified twelve features as being salient to adult education or *andragogy*, as they term it. (Please see my earlier note on the non-sexist connotation of the term as used in this paper).

a)   *A non-prescriptive attitude*, i.e. the absence of an authoritarian climate in class.

b)   *Issue centred education* involves exploration and deduction. Even in syllabus-bound courses the content can be presented in such a way that it relates to significant issues, questions or problems.

c)   *Problem-posing* is involved in creating an issue, question or problem-centred curriculum which is said to be a much more creative approach to teaching.

d)   *Praxis* refers to the application of ideas to concrete or real-life experiences. In this way changes in ways of thinking are more easily accomplished.

e)   *Continuous negotiation* forms part of the ongoing development of an adult group, and involves continually making many small decisions affecting the group, its members and its functioning.

f)   *Shared responsibility for learning* implies that in a teaching situation all members of the group, learners and tutors, are learning and therefore bear equal responsibility for their own learning and that of others.

g)   *Valuing process* means that members acknowledge the importance of group processing for learning and development. Such a group process should then continually be evaluated to ensure effectiveness.

h)   *Dialogue* refers to the practical process by which the theoretical implications of the andragogic approach is achieved. Listening to and hearing what others are saying and responding to their ideas, thoughts and feelings, is what andragogic dialogue implies.

i)   *Equality* within the andragogic group is essential, even if unequal power relationships or status exist outside.

j)   *Openness, trust, care and commitment* amongst all members for each other and the processes of dialogue and adult learning, are required.

k)   *Mutual respect* amongst members for the ideas, thoughts and feelings of others and for one another.

l)   *Integrated thinking* and learning indicates the situation in which individuals are in control of their own thinking and learning and no authoritarian pressure from others is tolerated.

The first and probably the most successful and best known exponent of andragogic theory and praxis is Malcolm Knowles. He was exposed to the term andragogy during a European trip in 1969. After his return to the USA he was responsible for popularising and introducing it there. His publications and presentations were probably responsible for the development of Andragogy as an accepted approach to adult education in the USA and elsewhere (Davenport & Davenport 1985:6).

Knowles's approach to adult education is probably the closest to meeting Nottingham's twelve features of adult education, as listed above. He based his educational model on what he termed the following important 'andragogical assumptions' (Knowles 1990:57-63):

6.2   Andragogical assumptions

a)   *Need to know*. Adults need to know why they have to learn something before undertaking to do so. Helping them to discover for themselves the gaps between where they are now and where they want to be, would also be beneficial to this end.

b)   *The adult's self-concept* is one of being responsible for their own decisions, own lives and own learning. They want to be seen by others and treated by others as people who are capable of self-direction.

c)   *The role of adults' experience is important.* Their experience can be said 'to be who they are', that is it determines their self-identity. If adults' experience is ignored or rejected in an educational setting, they perceive this as a rejection of themselves as persons.

d)   *Readiness to learn.* Adults become ready to learn those things that they need to, when their real-life situations demand such knowledge.

e)   *Orientation to learning.* Adult learning is said to be life-centred, task-centred or problem-centred. They are willing to devote energy to learn something if they perceive that it will help them perform their tasks or deal with problems better in their real-life situations.

f)   *Motivation.* Adults may also respond to outside motivators (better jobs, promotions, raises, etc), but the strongest motivators are internal (increased job satisfaction, improved self-esteem, quality of life, etc).

These 'andragogical assumptions' differ markedly from those regarding children, i.e. from 'pedagogical assumptions' found amongst many school teachers. These include that children only need to know that they must learn what their teachers teach them; their self-concept is one of dependency; school children's experience is not considered valuable for learning; they become ready to learn when teachers tell them to learn; they have a subject-centred orientation to learning; and, finally that children are motivated mostly by external motivators such as marks, teachers' approval and parental pressure (Knowles 1990:55,56).

Knowles shifted somewhat from his previous outright rejection of these 'pedagogical assumptions' in teaching adults. He now acknowledges that there are instances when using a pedagogical approach may well serve a purpose, for example when learners are entering a completely new content area and are much more dependent on direct teaching (Knowles 1990:64).

Davenport and Davenport (1985:8) also say that adult educators should consider *blending pedagogical and andragogical techniques* where the needs of a particular group warrant it. Alternatively, information could initially also be presented in the usual direct teaching, subject-centred way followed by a period in which the learners could be given the opportunity to apply the new information in a problem-centred approach to their own life-situations.

In an andragogical situation the role and actions of the teacher/lecturer will also undergo marked changes. Knowles (1990:77) agrees with Rogers on this and supports his contention that teachers/lecturers become 'facilitators of learning' and that the authoritarian role previously implied in being a teacher,

should fall away. Facilitators of learning accept the fact that adults need to know why they have to learn something, they respect adults' self-concept of being self-directed learners, they acknowledge the value of adults' experience in the learning situation, they realise that adults learn best when real-life needs are met and teaching is problem-centred, and, finally, they appreciate the fact that most adults are internally motivated (Knowles 1978:110).

Following this approach, there would seem to be much greater openness and mutuality in adult education. Facilitators realise that they too learn while the rest of their adult student group is being taught, i.e. that there is a mutuality of learning. The facilitator becomes a 'process designer and manager' and no longer stands in the authoritarian position as sole possessor and dispenser of knowledge (Knowles 1990:181).

7.   Andragogics in an African context

Before attempting the last section of this paper dealing with a practical application of adult education principles to teaching the Bible, a few brief remarks on the relevance of the andragogical approach for adult education in an African (and South African) context.

In an earlier section, reference was made to 'baggage barriers' as a term used by Even (1987:25) to describe all those things adult students bring with them from their life-worlds into the lecture room. Unfortunately problems of an emotional and material nature are not the only 'baggage' students bring with them. Other 'baggage' may be the consequence of historical, cultural, political, language, world-view and even paradigmatic differences between people, that lead to epistemological and hermeneutical difficulties in teaching Biblical Studies. These points are dealt with by Burden (1991:17-26; 1992:39-53) and Deist (1991:39-48). Both authors emphasise the value of a contextual approach to these problems and propose a 'pluralistic coeval dialogue' (Fabian in Burden 1992:51,52) as a possible route towards developing a tertium (Burden 1992:52; Deist 1991:46,48) or common ground in South Africa.

As stated before, the emphasis in the andragogical approach to adult education is on openness, mutuality, equality, non-authoritarianism, dialogue, continuous negotiation and self-directed learning, aspects which seem to fit in well with what Burden and Deist, quoted above, seem to have in mind.

Very little, if any, research has been done with regard to an andragogical approach when dealing with groups from diverse cultural and other backgrounds in South Africa. It always seems presumptuous when someone with a so-called 'Western' philosophy, using 'Western' thinking, offers opinions or pronouncements on what affects people with an 'African' philosophy and 'African' thinking (Van Niekerk, quoted in Deist 1991:39). It may therefore be a better idea to take note of what Charles Kabuga from the

International Co-operative Alliance in Tanzania (1977) had to say on the value of andragogy for Africans (Knowles 1990:233-239).

Kabuga says that, as an inheritance from the colonial days, African education systems are traditionally pedagogic in their approach to teaching children. However, he calls the 'pedagogic approach' one that, on the one hand, entails a one-way traffic glorifying the teacher, whose wisdom could not be questioned, while on the other hand there are the oppressed, silenced and 'domesticated' learners. He feels such an educational system may have brought forth people with great memories, but few with truly developed faculties (Knowles 1990:233). He further maintains that in Africa at large, school strikes, riots, rebellions, disciplinary problems in classrooms and the cry for involvement in university decision-making processes, largely follow the authorities' lack of recognition of the self-concept of students, and of accepting them as people who are fairly self-directing from early on in life (Knowles 1990:236). He then adds that many African people tend to be 'consumers' rather than 'producers' because the education system has made them 'parrots' rather than 'thinkers'. He sees the advantages of andragogics as being manifold: it liberates people to believe in themselves, to think and to create; it ends what Paolo Freire (1970:59) called a situation where:

> the teacher knows everything and the students nothing, where the teacher thinks and students are thought about (Knowles 1990:239).

Kabuga probably overgeneralises to make his point, but much of what he says rings true for South Africa too - and this applies to students from all population groups. Many young adults arrive at university barely able to function cognitively beyond rote learning and the regurgitation of rote knowledge - that is they perform at the lowest level of Bloom's taxonomy of intellectual tasks. This would seem a problem that cries out for further research.

8.   An andragogical approach to Biblical Studies

Teaching methods/techniques used in tertiary education may be graded according to the levels of lecturer and/or student involvement. At one end of the spectrum there are those with high lecturer/low student involvement and at the other end those with low lecturer/high student involvement. High lecturer involvement, however, often implies passivity in students with concomitant loss of interest and motivation in the learning situation.

A discussion of all the lecturing/teaching approaches at tertiary level justifies a paper on its own and is not required here. Suffice to say that from the point of view of adult education those teaching methods, techniques and approaches are preferred which allow for dialogue, mutuality, self-directedness, life-centredness, issue-centredness or problem-centredness. In adult education lecturers should be encouraged to keep to their roles as facilitators of learning by being non-authoritarian, supporting, guiding and motivating/encouraging.

Students, in their quest for excellence may, as I see it, at times still need the lecturer to intervene in the learning situation by criticising, questioning, refuting, supporting or suggesting alternative arguments, questions or directions of thought - but only if this is done in a non-authoritarian and non-disparaging manner.

That, in essence, is what andragogic teaching is all about. Biblical Studies may, as I now hope to indicate, prove to be a field of study which lends itself admirably to this approach. Put slightly more formally, I suggest an eclectic approach to helping adults study the Bible, which would entail the following:

8.1   Principles

a)   Epistemologically integrating Bloom's taxonomy of mental abilities with Marton and Säljö's suggestions regarding surface and deep level cognitive processing.

b)   Hermeneutically following a contextual approach in which students are encouraged to learn, understand and interpret material by using dialectics and relativity in their reasoning.

c)   Where practicable, reformulating curricular content into significant issues, questions or problems that students need to discover for themselves, formulate precisely and then reflect and conduct dialogue or discussions in an attempt to find solutions or answers. Consulting the literature would, of course, form an important component of their search.

What follows is an attempt to accomplish all three of these aims by setting a number of assignments, formulating learning objectives or posing questions relating to the book of Jonah. I do so merely to illustrate how andragogical principles could be applied in practice. *It is not meant to be an exhaustive study of this remarkable book, nor should it be interpreted as an attempt at exegesis.* (The references next to some of the questions/topics refer to material which gave rise to them in my own mind.)

It is suggested that teaching any of what follows should be preceded by an 'andragogical invitation' to students to acknowledge their own baggage barriers, to share responsibility for choice of learning material, by explaining the reasons for the studies, and by discussing with students the form in which tasks will be performed (for example essays, oral presentations, group discussions) and how the information will be retained for later use (such as by way of notes, hand-outs, academic articles).

8.2   Illustrating the levels of cognitive functioning according to Bloom's taxonomy

a)   *Knowledge*.

■   Outline the contents of the book of Jonah.

■   Identify main characters in the narrative (Deist 1981:17-20).

■   Indicate the different sections in the book.

b)   *Comprehension*

■   Paraphrase what happened to Jonah up to the time he was swallowed by the fish (Potgieter 1991:47).

■   Having first read it, would you describe the book of Jonah as a novella, history, a narrative with a message, folklore, a prophesy, an allegory or something else? (Potgieter 1991:2,3)

■   Explain Jonah's antipathy towards Nineveh (Deist 1981:11,12).

c)   *Application*

■   The historical prophet Jonah (2 Kings 14:25) was a fierce nationalist. What relevance does that have for the Jonah character in the book of Jonah? (Potgieter 1991:74-86; Van Heerden 1990:71)

■   Jonah can be described as a most reluctant witness. Which incidents point to this? (Potgieter 1991:74-86; Deist 1981:20-27)

■   How would you describe Jonah's personality and character? (Potgieter 1991:74-86)

d)   *Analysis*

■   Compare the different reactions to the storm at sea by the captain, the sailors and Jonah (Deist 1981:20-27).

■   Jonah is said to be a dissatisfied, headstrong, disobedient and indifferent person. Illustrate how these characteristics come out in the narrative (Potgieter 1991:74-86).

■   Analyse the sincerity of Jonah's repentance (Deist 1981:32-35, 60-64).

e)   *Synthesis*

■   Compile a picture of Yahweh by studying his actions and utterances in the book of Jonah (Potgieter 1991:86-88; Deist 1981:19-27,32-35,54-60).

■   How would you formulate the central or most important message of the book? (Potgieter 1991:3, 108; Deist 1981:57,58; Klopper 1992:203)

■   What does the book of Jonah have to say on the sovereignty of Yahweh regarding nations, his prophets and people in general? (Potgieter 1991:3,4,108-110)

f)   *Evaluation*

■ What is your opinion on the universalism/particularism controversy as evident in the book of Jonah? (Deist 1981:51-52;37-40; Potgieter 1991:4.110; Klopper 1992:199)

■ The Jewish religion of the time did not emphasise the attainment of salvation for a life after death. Why then did Jonah have to preach repentance and conversion to a pagan capital like Nineveh? (*Problem finding*). (Klopper 1992:195)

■ Express your opinion on the feasibility of Jonah as an unknown preacher/prophet from what was considered a despised small nation, having the tumultuous effect on Nineveh, as a world metropolis of that time, as narrated in the book of Jonah. (*Problem finding*). (Van Heerden 1992:398).

8.3 Levels of cognitive processing (Marton & Säljö)

As can be seen in the assignments above, surface or deep processing can occur at any of the levels of cognitive functioning - especially the initial ones. For example paraphrasing what happened to Jonah in the *Comprehension* section above, could be done on the *surface* by merely itemising occurrences or at a *deeper level* by also analysing the inner feelings, fears and prejudices of the character.

8.4 Formulating issues, questions or problems

Some of the assignments mentioned above can be generalised to form broader, more controversial or relevant real-life topics.

■ 'Good' unbelievers as opposed to 'bad' believers.

■ Fact and fantasy or fiction and non-fiction in the book of Jonah.

■ Caring and concern for one's adversaries - a realistic directive?

■ Nationalism (or particularism) versus universalism in religion.

■ Religious coercion and free choice.

■ Good and evil in people and nations.

■ Deep convictions as opposed to formalised religiosity.

■ God as the well-known but Great Unknowable.

■ Humour and its role in Jonah (Van Heerden 1992:389-400).

■ Missionary work as opposed to witnessing.

■ Naive realism and the historicity of Jonah (Van Heerden 1990:71-89).

Most if not all of these topics, may be approached in a dialectic manner (thesis → antithesis → synthesis). The theses and antitheses are given in some cases, but it is suggested that reaching a synthesis or tertium would, in many cases, require relativity in thinking on the part of the adult learner.

9.   Conclusion

Teaching the Bible to adults at a tertiary institution demands the same cognisance of new educational trends as teaching any other subject. One such trend in adult education is the so-called 'andragogic' approach according to which teachers are compelled to rethink their curricula, methods, techniques and presentations. This is deemed necessary as new ideas have come to the fore on how adults think, reason, learn, understand and interpret learning material and on the whole adult teaching/learning situation. Lecturers, it is suggested, should now become facilitators of learning who treat their fellow-adults as equal partners in the quest for knowledge and wisdom. Lecturers also become facilitators of adult cognitive development by encouraging freedom of conviction, of expression and of critical and creative thinking in the quest for academic excellence.

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