

## Root Meanings of “Pedagogy”

From Mary Elizabeth Mullino Moore. 2004. *Teaching as a Sacramental Act*. Cleveland, OH: The Pilgrim Press.

“. . . the word ‘pedagogy’ comes from two Greek roots: *pais* (child) and *pedon* (ground). The latter is related to *pes* (foot). These roots suggest two perspectives. As a combination of *pais* and *agein* (to lead), the word ‘pedagogy’ is understood as *the act of leading a child*. Knowledgeable people teach the young in the knowledge they need. As a combination of *pedon* and *agein*, ‘pedagogy’ is understood as *the act of leading people on a journey*, or leading across the earth. This involves walking with people, offering guidance when needed, and providing opportunities for people to discover new knowledge as they need it on their journey. Movement is primary here, as it is in related words: ‘expedition,’ (a journey), ‘expedite,’ (the act of speeding a movement or action), or ‘impede,’ (the act of hindering movement or progress).

The modern usage, pedagogy has, until the last twenty years, been associated largely with the first genre or definition. It has re-entered the vocabulary of modern education with expanded meanings, however. Paulo Freire and others have raised issues regarding the basic nature of pedagogy, echoing the morphology and multiple origins of the word itself. Freire, for example, poses educational questions regarding transmission vs. reconstruction in the starkest possible manner, reminding educators that education is never neutral; education always endorses the status quo or contributes to the revolution of the world. Because of this awareness, Freire argues for a pedagogy of the oppressed, which will contribute to the work of the oppressed to liberate themselves as well as their oppressors. Because of this awareness, Freire also argues for an education in process—a work of the people as they seek to practice freedom.

Given these diverse associations, one can describe pedagogy, or teaching, as an *act of walking with, sharing with, acting with, remembering with, and constructing meaning with people in a learning community*. Teaching is what Thomas Groome describes as ‘sharing faith’; teachers are wise companions on the journey.” (Moore 2004, 12-13 emphasis in text)