

# Education *and* Working-Class Citizens' Advancement *and* Wellness

A Publication in Honour of  
Professor Peter Brai Abu



**Edited by**

Kester, Kehinde Oluwaseun  
Momoh, Agbomehre Medinat  
Sarumi, Abidoeye Abideen

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## Contents

- Adult Education and in-service Training of the Working Class in Nigeria** 1  
Dimkpa, D. I; Zuofa, C. C. and Teibowei, B. J.
- Adult Education and the Working Class in a Knowledge Based Economy** 11  
Oghenekohwo, J. E. and Tonukari, P.
- Workers' Education and Workers' Advancement in Nigeria** 21  
Ekponyong, V. O; Ushie, G. B. and Abuoukwen, A. A.
- New Social Partners and New Voices in Industrial Relations: From Tripartite to Multipartite Voices in Nigeria** 29  
Oludeyi, O. S. and Akinsanya, A. O.
- Investment in Education for the Working-Class Citizens and Sustainable National Development in Nigeria** 43  
Ndomah, B. N.
- Education and Advancement of the Working-Class Citizens in Nigeria** 53  
Musa, W. and Momoh, J. I.
- Education and Career Advancement of the Working-Class Citizens in Nigeria** 67  
Maliki, A. E. and Oderhohwo, A. J.
- Building Youth Self-Reliance and Workforce: The Role of Entrepreneurship Education in Nigeria** 81  
Okri, J. A.; Adie, E. B. and Obi, J. J.

- Up-skilling Workers with Digital Skills and Competencies for Improved Job Efficiency and Organisational Growth in Post COVID-19, Nigeria** 89  
Ojokheta, K. O. and Aderinoye, R. A.
- Rethinking Workers' Education in a Knowledge-Economy: A Role for Information and Communication Technology in Nigeria?** 105  
Kester, K. O.; Omilani M. A. and Ogundipe, R. O.
- Training, Development and Education: A Tripod Advancement Antidote for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century Industrial Organisations** 117  
Akinkunmi, F. A. and Ojedokun, F. O.
- Education and the Occupational Status of Women in Nigeria** 129  
Ukpabi, I. D.
- Online Digital Learning and Teaching Staff Career Development in Higher Institutions in Nigeria** 139  
Aasa, V. O.
- Adult and Non-Formal Education Strategies for Sensitising Cervical Cancer among Female Working Class in Academic Community in Anambra State** 157  
Adebola, H. E; Chukwuemerie, O. C., and Awosika, O. F.
- Virtual Learning and University Education in the New Normal** 169  
Okcke, E. P. and Sadiku, B. O.
- Cost of on-the-Job Training: Whose Responsibility?** 179  
Akinlayo, M. O. and Adetunji, E. O.
- Stress: A Potential Precursor to Workers' Low Productivity** 191  
Moronkola, O. A.; Adebayo, F. C; Arawomo, S. B. and Moronkola, O. A.

<b>Applying Principles of Andragogy to Training Programmes in Organisations</b>	<b>201</b>
Akinyooye, F. E. and Fajimi, B. A.	
<b>Benefit Analysis of Post Brexit Experience on Nigeria: Some Implications</b>	<b>215</b>
Agboola, B. G.	
<b>Women's Family Demands and their Job Performance in the Nigerian Economy</b>	<b>225</b>
Olatunji, A. E.	
<b>Work-family Conflicts and Performances of Working Women in Nigeria</b>	<b>237</b>
Oladeji, S. O.	
<b>Application of Job Satisfaction Theories to the Roles and Responsibilities of Community Development Officers</b>	<b>249</b>
Sarumi, A. A. and Osu, U. C.	
<b>Top Five Environmental Concerns in the 21st Century: Its Solutions and Recommendations for Global Best Practices</b>	<b>259</b>
Ojong, A. A; Onnoghen, U. N; Omang, T. N., and Ogban, O. N.	
<b>Attaining Sustainable Development Goal Eleven in Cross River State, Nigeria: Role of Clubs and Associations</b>	<b>273</b>
Asor, L. J. and Beshel, C. A.	
<b>Environmental Education and Rural Transformation of the South-South Nigeria</b>	<b>281</b>
Tawo, C. N. and Obibessong, V. M.	
<b>Mitigating the Negative Effects of COVID-19 on Livelihoods in Osun State: The Role of Adult Education Programmes</b>	<b>289</b>
Orimogunje, O. P.	

**Constraints to Effective Implementation of Adult Education  
Programmes in Nigeria**

Erim, C. M.

299

**Empowering Young Adults through Life Skills Education**

Olabisi, B. C. and Edoho, G. E.

309



## Applying Principles of Andragogy to Training Programmes in Organisations

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Akinyooye, F. E. and Fajimi, B. A.

### Introduction

Organisations train employees for retention, performance, competitiveness and market leadership. Training is a strategy for productivity and profitability in today's competitive market. Employees' training is critical to performance and growth of organisations in Nigeria (Obulor & Ohaka, 2019; Kester & Okemakinde, 2014; Ugoji & Mordi, 2014). Workplace Learning Report stated that 93 per cent of employees stay longer in organisations for training opportunities (Biro, 2018). Failure to train employee is counter-productive (Rizkalla, 2014). 87 per cent of millennials relate training to career growth and 72 per cent want to financially contribute to own training in the workplace (Mann & Harter, 2016).

Executive management prioritise training because it is an important component of manpower development and human resources management functions (LaPrade, *et al.*, 2019), and is beginning to interrogate the relationship between training budgets and training outcomes (Nnanna, 2020). Organisations spend money on training to improve employees' competences and organisational performance, but, statistics indicate that training outcomes do not reflect employees' performance (Kester & Esan, 2012). Harvard Business School Professor, Michael Beer asserted that only 10 per cent of corporate training is effective and attributed this to contents, methods and learners' characteristics (Holland, 2016). Training outcomes are predicated on employees' characteristics as adult learners (Barrow, 2017; Kester & Okemakinde, 2014).

Gino and Staats (2015) opined that training programmes are not effective because fixed mindset, attribution bias, experience exhaustion, fear of failure, lack of reflection on duty, over-reliance on past performance, and need to conform to social norms against the need for innovativeness, characterise the adult learners and influenced training outcomes (Oladapo, 2010). Learning methods determine outcomes (Bakare, 2013) but, pedagogy has not correlated application of theory into practice for adult learners (Muirhead, 2022; Kester & Ogidan, 2011; Obisi, 2011).

Trivette, Dunst, Hamby and O'Herin (2009) operationalised findings in how people learn (Bransford, *et al.*, 2000) and concluded that the adult learning methods are significantly associated with positive learner outcomes but predicated on respondents' characteristics as adult learners and learning (Cheng, ., 2012). Kester and Ogidan (2014) supports Trivette, Dunst, Hamby and O'Herin and state that employees' characteristics is one of the three main factors of unsuccessful training programmes. This assertion is premised on literature that adult learners' response to training programmes depend on self-concept, experiences, readiness, orientation and motivation. Adult learners' characteristics reflect Malcolm Knowles' principles of andragogy, and Kester and Ogidan (2011) has opined that andragogy is better than pedagogical method of learning because it modelled the assumptions that adult learners' characteristics influence learning outcomes. This study proposes application of the principles of andragogy to the design and implementation of training programmes in organisations. Training is critical to performance and growth, but, training programmes are not effective because adult learners' characteristics that impact on training outcomes are overlooked in training needs analysis. Organisations should understand and analyse the characteristics of adult learners before they assess, design and implement training programmes. Understanding the needs, characteristics and environment of employees should be predicated on Malcolm Knowles' principles of andragogical learning that adult learners are autonomous, independent, practical, ready-to-learn, self-directed, goal-oriented, self-motivated, result-oriented, and voluntary learners with wealth of experience, orientation to learning, responsibilities, respect, self-esteem make andragogy the most suitable learning methods in the delivery of training programmes for employees. Organisations should establish *raison d'être* for learning, learning should be learner-paced and learner-oriented, timing should be right to learn, and process should be positive and encouraging in the application of andragogy to training programmes. We assert that organisations will achieve learning outcomes with the application of the principles of andragogical learning to training needs assessment, design and implementation of training programmes for employees' career growth, improved performance and organisational productivity.

## **Concepts of Training**

Time has given scholars opportunity to better understand what training means in the organization. Employee training has evolved in history as a significant manpower development construct in strategic human resources management and educational enterprise from its rudimentary apprenticeship system of the trade guilds in Western society (Somasundaram & Egan, 2004) and indigenous apprenticeship system in African society (Sarumi, 2011). Nigeria established Industrial Training Fund, Nigerian Council for Management Education and Training, and Centre for Management Development in the 1970s. Prior to this time, the private sector such as financial institutions like Standard Bank of

Nigeria Limited and companies like Lever Brothers, U.A.C, Nigerian Tobacco Company and A.G. Leventis had training schools for employee training.

The concept of training has been defined by 35 scholars between 1961 and 2002 as modification of behaviour and acquisition of predetermined learning, knowledge, skills, and attitudes to develop key competencies, correct deficiencies in performance while raising productivity, organisational efficiency, performance standards, improvement of conceptual, decision-making and interpersonal skills, and abilities the organisations will need in future (Somasundaram & Egan, 2004). This focuses employee training on four broad-based overlapping categories which indicate that training intends to enable the employees (i.) develop or acquire knowledge, (ii.) develop or acquire skills, (iii.) improve performance and (iv.) improve organisational efficiency. It is evident from this approach to training that the concept can be defined as a job-specific, agenda-driven plan of action and activity-based process of equipping employees with the requisite behaviour, knowledge and competency through learning for performance, productivity and sustainability of the organisation, whilst engendering the personal and career growth of employees.

Training is an activity and a process that is planned and systematic with the objective of eliciting a change in behaviour and an increase in skills, competency and efficiency of the employee for personal growth and to perform current tasks and future responsibilities effectively (Rodriguez & Walters, 2017; Ferreira, 2016, Obisi, 2011). Masadeh (2012) reviewed literature and postulated that training is a subset of learning which is an overarching concept, but, this paper posits that employee training in the workplace is an abstraction that seeks to engender a predetermined behaviour and competency through a mechanical process or predictable response towards a goal (either personal or corporate). Oladapo (2010) said adult learning takes place when a person observes the behaviour of another and replicates the same behaviour at a later time. This underscores the importance of learning as a path to the effectiveness of employee training in the workplace (Kester & Ogidan, 2010).

Essentially, training portends short- and long-term benefits to organisations. It is both a recruitment and retention tool. Training enables organisations to attract and retain talents, improve productivity and earn more profits. Organisations that spend over US\$1,500 (an equivalent of N630,000) per annum on employees training report 24 per cent higher annual profits than organizations that spend less (Vinikas, 2021, Rigoni & Asplund, 2016). The American Society for Training and Development (ASTD) surveyed 2,500 organisations and found that those that trained their employees recorded 218 per cent higher income per employee, 24 per cent higher profit margin and 6 per cent higher shareholder return than the organisations that did not train their employees.

Employees are attracted to brands that invest in capacity development, and loyal, committed and stay longer on the job. Training increases work efficiency and leads to job satisfaction among employees. It promotes teamwork and organisational culture. Dermond (2019) stressed

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that training is beneficial to both employees and employers, and stated that while employees are empowered to actualise their career aspirations and build their competency for improved performance, employers are able to improve morale in the workplace, correct performance weakness, reduce employee turnover and develop their employees as future leaders for succession planning and organisational sustainability.

Employee training involves on-the-job and off-the-job training with different training programmes to change the behaviours of employees and improve the performance of organisations. Training covers the entire lifecycle of employees from recruitment with onboarding training through maintenance with various forms of training such as vocational and technical education, labour education, supervisory training, management education, trainers' education and professional education to exit management with post-service training to prepare exited employees for productive life after retirement. Coaching, mentoring, job rotation, in-house training, in-service training and work group are other types of employees training in organisations (Igwe, 2011).

### Employees as Adult Learners

Kapur (2015) described employees as adult learners who are socially accepted as adults and are involved in systematic learning process which could be corporate-sponsored or self-mentored and is undertaken as full-time or part-time formal, non-formal or informal learning. UNESCO (2011) defined adults as persons who are regarded as adults by the society to which they belong to improve their technical or professional qualifications, develop their abilities, enrich their knowledge with the purpose to complete a level of formal education, or to acquire knowledge, skills and competencies in a new field or to refresh or update their knowledge in a particular field.

Employees are presumed as adults under the Labour Act in Nigeria, and are persons who exchange their knowledge, competences and experience as labour. That is, as a factor of production in contractual employment relationship with the employer.

Kaufman (1999) in Budd and Bhave (2010) describes the employee as 'homo economicus', an economic being with self-concept (Oladapo, 2010) and rational behavioural characteristics (Fajimi, 2022). Budd and Bhave (2010) was instructive to emphasise employees as adult learners and highlighted scholars who dimensioned the various characteristics that envisage employees predilections to training outcomes because employees are perceived as making satisfactory rather than optimal decisions that reflects a variety of *intrinsic* and *social goals* beyond selfish desires for income and leisure – such as *equity* and *voice* (Budd, 2004), *dignity* (Hodson, 2001), *justice* (Folger & Cropanzano, 1998), *purposeful activity* (Max, 1844/1988, 1867/1936), *power* (Kelly, 1998), *individual fulfillment* (Donovan, 2001; Latham & Pinder, 2005; Maslow, 1943); *status* (Lin, 1999), *identity* (Leidner, 2005; Tajfel, 1978; Turner, 1982), *full citizenship rights* and *self-determination* (MacLean, 2006), *pursuit*

of a 'calling' (Weber, 1904/1976), *social exchange* (Emerson, 1976; Kirchner, *et al.*, 1996), *altruism* (Piliavin & Charng, 1990).

In addition to self-concept in adulthood which involved self-identity, self-esteem and self-ideal which organisations should consider when designing and planning training programmes for adults, Oladapo (2010) added that physiological, psychological and intellectual characteristics determine adult learning needs with implications for learning in the workplace.

## Training Needs Analysis

Training Needs Analysis (TNA) is a diagnostic tool for the inventory of training areas, assessment process of employees' training needs, collection of relevant information of the training that employees' need, and identification of gap in knowledge, skills and behaviours that employees need for performance, productivity and profitability of the organisation. Basically, there is a need for training when there is a gap between current performance status of the employee or a team and the expected or desired performance of this employee or team within a given timeframe. Organisations often set annual performance plan to guide operations at the beginning of their financial years.

This plan is distilled into specific, measurable, achievable, realistic and time-bound (SMART) goals for all employees, and it forms the basis for allocation of resources and managerial supervision. In the course of execution of tasks, many factors (internal and external such as personal problems, physiological problems, psychological problems, environmental problems, organisation climate problems, conflicts, socio-economic problems or incongruence between task performance and personal objectives) interfere with the employees' capability as adult workers to achieve their set goals. Hence, organisations design training plan and implement training programmes as a means of supporting and building the capacity of these adult workers to achieve their deliverables to meet organisational objectives.

Organisations should understand the characteristics of adult learners before they assess, design and implement training programmes in the workplace. The suggestion of Usman, Agyeni and Matthew (2015) that most employees sometimes fail in the organisations, because their needs were not identified, is the reason training needs analysis did not guarantee successful training outcomes. Experience across organisations reveals that organisations seldom analyse the characteristics of employees as adult learners to domesticate their peculiarities within the context of organisational climate and culture. The focus has always been performance appraisal and extraction of training needs from the outcomes of this exercise.

Training officers identify training gaps and match these prospective corrective training programmes with the anticipation that there will be behavioural and operational change after the training. A case of putting the cart before the horse? This approach can hardly produce results. The process should involve (i.) an analysis of the characteristics of employees as adult learners in the context of organisational climate and culture, (ii.) review of performance appraisal

and identification of training gaps, and (iii.) training needs analysis. The emphasis in the design and delivery of training programmes for employees as adult learners is to understand their characteristics and needs as adult workers in relations to their performance in their organisation, climate and environment (immediate and remote as well as personal, interpersonal, physiological, psychological and social).

## **Development of Training Programmes**

Milhem, Abushamsieh and Arostegui (2014) cited Bahlis and Tourville (2005) who suggested six strategies for developing training programmes for employees as adult learners (Onichakwe, 2013). These strategies are proactive and anticipatory checklist to guide the design of training needs analysis and development of training programmes. The training objectives should be clear, reflect the training needs and align with the organisation's performance goals. The target of training should be established and aimed at improving employees' performance through learning once it is established, that the gap in performance, is caused by a deficit in the employees' behaviour or competence. The goal of training should be to bridge the time between gap identification and competency acquisition by identifying future gains and performance indicators, eliminating barriers, determining cost-benefits analysis, instituting consequences, establishing rewards and setting up mentorship programmes to monitor performance on a sustainable basis.

The fourth strategy involves the choice of learning delivery methods which may be multimodal by should be learner-centric. Organisations should weigh the cost-benefit analysis of using either external facilitators or in-house personnel. The former is more cost effective when considering the pros and cons of experience and expertise. Finally, developing training programmes should benchmark different types and approaches of training to determine the most viable and cost effective. Recycling errors of failed programmes which do not achieve their objectives and anticipated improved performance is a strain on the resources of the organisation. According to Yamnill and McLean (2001) in Milhem, Abushamsieh and Arostegui (2014): the acquisition of knowledge, skills, behaviours and attitudes through training has little value if the learned characteristics are not generalised to the job and not maintained over time.

The development of training programmes should involve needs assessment, training design, delivery and evaluation to ensure that the needs of employees as adult learners have been factored into the training objectives and learning outcomes. The process of addressing gaps in current performance and anticipated output should harmonise the learning objectives, employees' characteristics as adult learners, subsisting knowledge and future competencies. This will guide pre-training conditions such as adult learners' individual characteristics, motivation for learning, previous knowledge, learning atmosphere as well as designation of trainers as facilitators rather than pedagogical teachers.



The training methods and adult learning approach and post-training conditions such as training evaluation, knowledge transfer and post-training mentorship are important in the process of developing training programmes. Ferreira (2016) cited Kirkpatrick (1977) model of evaluation and stated that assessment of training process requires four levels namely reaction, learning, behaviour and results (Obashoro, 2017) to ensure that training programmes achieve intended objectives and result in change in behaviour of employees as adult learners.

## Principles of Andragogy

The proposition that the strategy for learning delivery method should be learner-centric by Milhem, Abushamsieh and Arostegui (2014) and Kester and Ogidan (2011) makes andragogy the fulcrum of the multimodal approaches to adult learning in the design and delivery of training programmes in organisations. In the early 1970s, Malcolm Knowles introduced the term andragogy, which focuses on special needs of adult learners. He identified six components about adult learning: (1) need to know, (2) self-concept, (3) prior experience, (4) readiness to learn, (5) learning orientation, and (6) motivation to learn. Andragogy has been described as the art and science of helping adults to learn based on the assumptions that they have self-concept, learning experience, readiness to learning and orientation to learning (Kupar, 2019).

The application of Malcom Knowles' principles of andragogy for adult learning solves the gap in the training needs analysis and the design of contents for implementation of training programmes for the employees as adult learners in organisations. Specifically, Kester and Ogidan (2011) identified the adaptation of the elements of andragogical process to training programmes and situated conducive climate, engagement of learners in training needs assessment and contents design, support for learners in training implementation and involvement of learners in post-training evaluation contribute to learning outcomes.

Understanding the needs, characteristics and environment of employees should be predicated on the principles of andragogical learning that adult learners are autonomous, independent, practical, ready-to-learn, self-directed, goal-oriented, self-motivated, result-oriented, and voluntary learners with wealth of experience, orientation to learning, responsibilities, respect, self-esteem make andragogy the most appropriate learning principle in the delivery of training programmes for employees as follows:

- ***Need to Learn***

Adult learning is different from pedagogy and requires an understanding of how adults learn and their need for learning (Ibeh, 2010). Gill (2001) in Majid, Jelas and Azman (2005) agreed with Knowles that "... the needs of adult learners are very simple. They do not need the basics; they need answers to particular questions... The adult learners want information that is useful immediately".

Employees as adult learners want development opportunities. Employers should harness this need to learn and their thirst for knowledge to train employees. Management rely on

the human resources (HR) department to organise training programmes to solve performance or personality problems. At such a time, the HR department should not only be too eager to prequalify training consultants, but first, create conversations with management to identify the problems and establish the need to learn among employees. Without this, training programme will flop, and the organisation may waste resources prescribing wrong solutions to real problems. This can cause cynicism among employees and apathy within the organisation. There should be an environment that enhances the need to learn among the employees. These are adult workers and will respond to training that promotes their need to learn.

- ***Interest to Learn***

Adult learners are life-centred in their orientation to learning in the sense that they are task-centred and problem-centred. Irrespective of their ages, employees want to learn and acquire knowledge of how to work better and contribute to the various development tasks of their ages. Although their cognition may seem to be slowing down, their agility, mental acuity, and willingness to learn and perform tasks to handle every-day problems at work fuel their interest.

- ***Timing/Suitability***

The timing and adaptability of training programmes to the needs and situations of adult learners are important in determining the effectiveness of programmes. There is a physiological and psychological need for adult learners to rest at intervals even in the afternoon. Facilitators must ensure that execution of training programmes for employees meet their timing requirements.

- ***Learners' Experience***

Instructor-led training conjure in the minds of adult learners the rigidity of learning experience which will deprive them of an atmosphere of learning, participation, experimenting and ideas sharing. Organisations may build peer-to-peer learning to minimise internal competition and engender cooperation among employees. Peer-to-peer learning induce acquisition of knowledge, application of knowledge acquired, feedback and reflection on learning experience. This will make the training sessions focused on the need to interact among adult workers who will readily share their hands-on experience with their colleagues who will under the chaperon of the facilitator sharpen or moderate the experience to develop a model for problem solving in the workplace. Learners' experience sharing also improve communication and promote networking among employees. They openly share their ideas about what works and does not work in the workplace.

- ***Readiness to Learn***

It is an understatement that the adult learners become ready to learn once they know that the knowledge will enhance their capabilities to cope with their life challenges. This is a

truism that adult learners want to acquire skills that they can use to cope with everyday life challenges.

- **Motivation**

Based on the principles of andragogy, adult learners respond to external motivators (such as a caring environment, and presence of friendly people in the workplace) and internal motivators (such as positive self-esteem and mental wellness). It is the responsibility of facilitators to ensure that the conditions of training programmes do not inhibit promotion of these motivators.

### **Applying Andragogy to Adult Learning in Training Programmes**

The application of andragogical principles to adult learning in training programmes targets employees as adult learners and fit their needs and characteristics to their environment and training objectives (Kester & Ogidan, 2011). CARDO, the Swedish industrial conglomerate conducted training programmes for its managers in two business units for a change management initiative to enhance improved performance. The outcome underscores the importance of the application of the principles of andragogical learning to the context of training needs analysis. After the training, the two business units performed differently. The results: one unit significantly improved its performance whilst the other falter. Upon investigation, it was obvious that the readiness of the senior management team and the environment for change was what propelled the unit that performed well. The unit with poorer outcome did not see the need to reinvent the wheel and hence its leaders did not configure their environment for change to enable the training outcomes in their managers (Holland, 2016).

The organisation will rely on the training team's (including the training and development officer, training assessors, curriculum designers, facilitators) skills to apply Malcolm Knowles' principles of andragogy to the design and implementation of training programmes to engender its effectiveness and learning outcomes in line with organisational performance goals. These five principles will enable the team to apply andragogical principles to adult learning in training programmes in organisations:

- **Establish *raison d'être* for learning.**

Adult learners need a reason to learn, and the contents of the training programmes should be structured to appeal to the personal and career goals of the employees. The end-goal of the training should be made known to the employees and benefits that will accrue to them should be clear from the beginning. The training need assessment, pre-training conditions, facilitation and use of andragogical learning, and post-training conditions should accentuate the rationale for getting the employees away from their work into the classroom or field for learning experience. Facilitators should make the reason to learn valid, objective and transparent enough to align the employees' goals to the overall corporate strategy of

the organisation. This will lower resistance and increase buy-in and full participation towards achieving the desired learning outcomes.

- ***Learning should be learner-paced.***

The team's skill to moderate the individual learners' needs and personalities is important to accommodating their learning skills within the regulated training framework (curriculum, venue and timeline) without giving an impression of physical or psychological constraints which the learners will resist. The team should know the different employees and their adult learners' styles: some are visual (*do you see how this works?*), auditory (*how does that sound to you?*) and tactile or kinesthetic learners (*let me do it*).

- ***Learning should be learner-oriented.***

Employees training is learner-centred. The content and facilitation should promote the adult learners' learning experience. Andragogical learning should be fully participatory and facilitators should encourage the use of teamwork, demonstration, experiments, small group discussions, questions-and-answers sessions (Socratic method), assignments, projects, shadowing, brainstorming, buzz, collaborative learning, role playing, skits, focus group, games, correspondence, syndicate, case study, mock debate, panel discussion, simulation and field-trip (practical study trips) to promote self-discovery and comprehension towards achieving learning outcomes. The facilitators should ensure that learning activities are interesting to sustain the attention span of adult learners and give them the freedom to express themselves and explore their environment.

- ***Timing should be right to learn.***

The choice of venue, time and learning duration in between the learning modules should fit adult learners' demands. Facilitators should avoid prolonged hours of sitting or learning engagement. As unorthodox as it sounds, the training team should survey adult learners' preference for venue, time and duration for every training and go with the selection of the majority to achieve favourable learning outcomes. The responses should be structured (not open-ended questions) to guide the preference subject to the budget and realities of the organisations. Facilitators should not take their availability for granted and be flexible with training agenda when the employees make suggestions as adult learners.

- ***Process should be positive and encouraging.***

Employees need reassurance for returning to the classroom for learning experience. Facilitators should allay their fears and calm their nerves – these things are either taken for granted or often overlooked in the workplace training in organisations, but they go a long way to determine the success or failure of training outcomes. Facilitators should

be mindful of their own temperament and work at maintaining cheerful, bright, positive and encouraging disposition even when the session seems difficult for comprehension of the adult learners. Employees as adult learners could be demanding and highly opinionated: the facilitators should be patient and tactful in navigating through their prejudices, assumptions and idiosyncrasies to focus on their learning objectives and outcomes. Facilitators should make learning stimulating and interactive to guide employees as they contribute their knowledge and share experiences on subject of discussion. They should be given ample time to ask questions until they grasp the concepts being taught.

### **Implications for Practice**

This paper has highlighted the implications of applying the principles of andragogy to adult learning in designing and implementing training programmes in organisations. The emphasis is to explain the theories of andragogy within the framework of training in organisations for employees who are adult learners with peculiar characteristics that can enhance training effectiveness and post-training performance when correctly harnessed. Organisations will benefit from the application of andragogical principles to employees training, but, should ensure that their training team in the human resources management department acquire requisite learning in adult education from tertiary institutions offering out-of-job courses in this specialisation. Courses and certifications in adult education can also be obtained through open distance learning (ODL) mode from various institutions and independent adult educators licensed to offer training and capacity development in this area. The use of training consultants is valuable but pre-qualifications should be done to select competent and knowledgeable adult education consultants to work with the organisation to implement the application of andragogical principles to employees' training for impact, performance improvement, productivity, profitability and sustainability of the enterprise.

### **Conclusion**

This study concludes that the application of Malcolm Knowles' andragogy to training can make training programmes effective and employees become productive because their characteristics as adult learners have been aligned to andragogical principles used to carry out training needs analysis, design and execution of training programmes. Organisations should seek to continuously understand and analyse their employees' characteristics as adult learners in their training needs assessment, content development and delivery of training programmes for their employees. This will enable them regularly establish *raison d'être* for learning, learning as learner-paced, learning as learner-oriented, timing should be right to learn, and process should be positive and encouraging. This application will enable organisations to achieve learning outcomes to engender employees' career growth, improved performance and organisational productivity.

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