

## Meeting On-job Adult Learners' Special Needs: Insights from Improved Opportunities and Obstacles to Development (O and OD) System's Trainings in Tanzania

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### Abstract

*Community participation is a precursor to development, yet, its nurturing calls for enormous efforts and time. It is against this backdrop the government of Tanzania in collaboration with Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA) is rolling out Opportunities and Obstacles to Development project (O and OD) through training of the local government staffs. The study seeks to identify and examine the methodologies employed in O and Od trainings. It focuses on the adults' special needs and the extent to which they are embodied in the implementation of the training. This study employed interviews, Focus Group Discussion, documentary review as well as observation in data collection. The collected data were analyzed through thematic analysis in which themes were generated. This study upholds the fact that adult learners are special because: they know why they learn something; they need to be seen and treated as capable and self-directed; they have vast learning resource from life experience, and their need to learn what will help them confront their real-life situation. To cater for the above needs, the O and OD trainings employ various strategies such as: role-plays that are performed by trainees themselves, field study visits to different places where O and OD is being implemented and case studies which are also widely used to provide trainees with the first hand experiences. These methodologies give the trainees a first-hand experience which improves their problem-solving skills in the field.*

**Key words:** Training, Adult learners, Special needs

### 1. Introduction

The improved Opportunity and Obstacles to Development, well-known by its abbreviation, O and OD, is a participatory community planning process which aims to empower the people through a bottom-up approach (Prime Minister's Office - Regional Administration and Local Government the United Republic of Tanzania, 2008, Mlupilo, 2005, Cooksey & Kikula 2005) The O&OD planning methodology has been developed to serve as an engine to empower the grassroots and enhance service delivery for poverty eradication. Participatory approach creates a sense of ownership, self-reliance and reduces dependency syndrome among the grassroots. (Mwanga 2011, Mwakisysya *et al*, 2020)

Community participation is akin to self-mobilization realized when people develop contact with external institutions for resources and technical advice but retain control over how resources are used (Pretty 1995). That is only possible if local government, which is a veritable instrument for rural development is well equipped to sensitize and mobilize the various communities in their areas of authority in order to get involved in the overall development process (Ezeani 2006) Along the same line, Tahir *et al* (2014) observe that local authorities constitute a human resource that attains improvement in performance when participate in training and development activities. Providing adequate training to the employees enables them to be up to date and competent in their jobs (Hall and Le Cavalier, 2000).

### 2. Literature Review

Andragogy has permeated the field of adult education, (Atherton, 2003) as such it has emerged as a learning framework due to its increasing popularity in the past four decades, swaying a sizeable number of education practitioners towards it (Ekoto and Gaikwad 2015). Conversely, some scholars have expressed some reservations on the tenets of andragogy. Let us review the prominent ones:

Some scholars have been skeptical on *Self-Directed Learning*. They contend that some adult learners are more dependent on educators than children and do not desire to be self-directed, as such self-directed learning is not an exclusive adult learners' attribute (Merriam & Caffarella, 1999, Taylor and Kroth 2009). However, it is important to note that as an individual biologically matures, the psychological process of gaining self-concept begins in adolescence and develops rapidly through young adulthood (Knowles et al., 2014). Thus, the Integral to self-concept are the needs to be accountable for one's decisions and one's direction in life which is expressed by a desire to be treated by peers as a person capable of directing their behavior, beliefs, and values (Ferreira D and Maclean G 2018). But again, according to Caffarella (1993), self-directed learning does not necessarily mean solitary learning or isolation. Rather, the adults in this type of learning seek assistance in the form of human and material resources like friends, colleagues, experts in the content areas, books, magazines, journals and other audio-visual materials. Seeking assistance should not be mistaken for dependence. Caffarella (1993) goes on to argue that an adult educator is needed to facilitate the process of learning. It is the interest of this study to see how O and OD trainers are able to create a climate in which self-directed learning thrive.

Abdullah et al (2008) take self-directed learning to distance learning. They observe that in distance-learning the students are unable to meet their lecturers or interact with them very often on face-to-face basis, they are not involved in regular classes and they don't have the opportunity to discuss their problems with their lecturers, yet distance-learning students manage to tackle these problems and overcome their grievances and carry out self-directed learning themselves. Being adults, they take their own responsibility for learning. Children can not manage this kind of learning experience. Since the O and OD trainings are not run through distance learning, the current study seeks to find out how the O and OD facilitators appreciate adult self-concept in learning despite face-to-face interactions.

Pessimism has also been cast on *Adults Bringing Experience with them to the Learning Environment*. This assumption has been challenged on the basis that experience is not always a valuable asset in learning because some adults have had the worst experiences in their lives. It is further argued that age is not a determinant factor for experience (Brookfield, 1995; Merriam, 2001; Pratt, 1991; Blondy, 2007) On the contrary, Taylor, Marienau, and Fiddler (2000) view life experiences as absolutely essential to the learning process and recognize that adults are likely to have lived through many more experiences that influence learning than children. Besides, Muduli et al (2018) postulate that experience influences students' learning styles. They further observe that as people mature, they accumulate a growing reservoir of experience which becomes source for learning. Thus the importance of experience in learning can not be over-emphasized.

Thus, we have seen that adults are supposed to be self-directed and they need to know why they need to learn something. They have accumulated more and different experiences than children and their learning is linked to their social role and stage or life. They engage in problem-centred rather than subject-centred learning and they are internally, rather than externally, motivated (Tusting and Barton, 2003). Silberman and Auerbach (1998) maintain that to meet adults' needs, educators have to promote an active approach to training. Participants must be actively engaged during a training program for results to occur. If there is little activity, participants will be bored, will forget and eventually fail to apply what they are learning.

However, the studies quoted above in defense of andragogy lack the application of its principles. They do not provide the on ground and first-hand experience about how the adult learners needs can be taken care of. This study aims to find out the extent O and OD trainings appreciate the special qualities and needs of the adult learners as stipulated by andragogy.

### **3. Theoretical Framework**

This study is guided by adult learning methodology, *andragogy*, as espoused by an American adult educator Malcom Knowles. Knowles (1980) defines andragogy as a learner-centred teaching philosophy assuming students are independent and sovereign learners who take the initiative in, control of, and responsibility for achieving their learning goals, and the teacher plays the role of a facilitator, emphasizing the problems rather than the content. Merriam and Caffarella (1999) and Blondy (2007) add that andragogy contrast sharply with the assumptions of pedagogy, which posits that learners are dependent personalities who bring little or no experience to the educational activity and learners attend to such activities because they have been told to do so. The proponents of andragogy delineate qualities that make adults a group of learners with special needs as:

*The Need to Know.* Adults want to know why they need to learn something before undertaking learning. Adults become ready to learn things they need to know and do in order to cope effectively with real-life situations. Adults want to learn what they can apply in the present, the training become less effective if it focuses on the future or that does not relate to their current situations.

*The Learners' Self-Concept.* Adults believe they are responsible for their lives, they need to be seen and treated as capable, independent and self-directed. Thus, according to Brookfield (1986) facilitators should create environments where adults develop their latent self-directed learning skills.

*The Role of the Learners' Experiences.* Adults come into an educational activity with different experiences than do youth (Knowles 1980). The adult learners are loaded with vast knowledge they gather from experience which is useful in the process of learning. Alajlan (2015) emphasizes that this accumulation of experiences cannot be ignored in the classroom by adult teachers, otherwise adult learners will feel that they are being marginalized and become passive learners.

*Readiness to Learn.* Adults become ready and motivated to learn things they need to know and do in order to cope effectively with real-life situations (Knowles 1980). Adults want to learn what they can apply in the present, making training focused on the future or that does not relate to their current situations, less effective. According to Knowles (1984) adults learn primarily out of necessity and that triggers their readiness.

*Adult Learners are Problem Oriented.* Adults are life-centered (task-centered, problem-centered) in their orientation to learning (Knowles et al 1984). They want to learn what will help them perform tasks or deal with problems they confront in everyday situations and those presented in the context of application to real-life (Merriam & Caffarella, 1999).

With those adult learners' traits, training should be active and engaging with participants doing most of the work (Knowles et al., 2014). Brookfield 1986 and Silberman & Auerbach (1998) observe that adult educators need to appreciate learners' motivation, needs, interests, and goals, creating a greater need for individualization of teaching and learning strategies. McKeachie (2002) adds that richest resource for learning resides in adults themselves; therefore, tapping into their experiences through experiential techniques (discussions, simulations, problem-solving activities, or case methods) is of utmost important.

#### **4. Research Methodology**

This study was conducted during the improved O and OD trainings that were done in Morogoro Municipal, Kondo and Chalinze District Councils. These are among the areas where improved O and OD is being rolled out. The study adopted a qualitative descriptive design because it aims at finding out the views on Improved O and OD trainings. Qualitative research tools included Focus Group Discussion, in-depth interviews with key informants and documentary reviews.

In-depth interviews were administered to the 6 key informants after the training sessions. An in-depth interview is a qualitative research technique that involves conducting intensive individual interviews with a small number of respondents to explore their perspectives on a particular idea, program, or situation (Boyce and Neale 2006) The key informants were the Improved O and OD National Adviser, 2 Senior Facilitators from President Office-Regional Administration and Local Government (PO-RALG) as well as 3 out of 8 randomly sampled Master trainers from the Local Government Training Institute which is a centre of excellence for Improved O and OD. All these respondents were in attendance during the 5 day-long training retreat. The interviews were, for convenience sake, conducted each day after the training sessions have been wound up. Not more than two informants were interviewed per day, at least an hour was spent per person. The conversations were tape-recorded at the respondents' consent. Through interviews the researcher was able to understand key informants' opinions and views regarding training and its methodologies.

Another data collection method employed was the Focus Group Discussions and it involved the trainees. Since trainees change with training retreat, FGDs were conducted in 2 training retreats to cover a wider number of trainees. A group of 7 to 8 members were formed. A total of 8 Focus Group Discussions were conducted. At the participants' consent the discussion was audio-taped. With focus group discussion it was possible to exhaust all the methodologies used for training, members reminded each other about every method that is applied during the training. FGD was useful as it stimulated participants to reveal essential information about their opinions, beliefs, perceptions and attitudes towards the improved O and OD trainings.

Observation was also used for data collection, as the name suggests is a way of collecting data through observing. It is a social research technique that involves the direct observation of phenomena in their natural setting while taking recording. In each training session the researcher was so keen on how the participants were taking part in every aspect of transactions. It enabled the researcher to learn trainer-trainee relationship and participants' attitude towards training.

Some data came from documentary review. Documents Reviewed included the evaluation forms. The evaluation is done by the trainees to express their feelings at the end of each training retreat. The researcher also had a thorough look on the handouts used for training, from the handouts the researcher found out the content and activities for learners. The use of a variety of data collection methods in this study – interviews, FGDs and documentary review – helped the

study to benefit from the strengths of each method and to offset their weaknesses in collecting valid and reliable data. (Fussy 2018)

Since this is a qualitative descriptive study, the thematic analysis was used for data analysis (Creswell 2009). The analysis was done through the following steps: First, audio data recorded from the in-depth interviews and FGDs were transcribed to produce written text. Then, the textual data including documentary review information were repeatedly read through to establish a general understanding and to reflect on their overall meaning.

Second, the author organised the data to produce themes and sub-themes for analysis. Finally, the author discussed the findings by relating them to the theoretical framework guiding the study.

## 5. Findings

As mentioned early, adult learners have special needs that have to be taken care of for their learning to be beneficial. The participants taking part in O and OD trainings are adults working in the LGAs with special learning needs. This part presents the training methodologies used in the rolling-out of improved O and OD project, these methodologies are designed to appreciate and thus meet the adult learners' special needs.

### i. Case studies

Case studies are widely used during the O and OD trainings. Heath, J (2002) observes that case studies are narratives that present learners with problems and challenges based on real life situations and drive them to make difficult decisions. They are designed to raise questions and to present just enough data to stimulate/engage learners to find their own answers. By doing so, case studies put the responsibility of learning squarely on the shoulders of the learners. A case study presents a situation about a failed project or success story of a certain community project, the trainees read them, explain, in their groups, the reasons behind either failure or success of the project. Here is an excerpt and the questions for discussion:

#### **Case study 1: Kondoa DC -Conventional O&OD**

*Kondoa District Council is one of seven districts of Dodoma region. It is located 160 Km north of Dodoma the Regional Headquarters. It has population 269,704, annual growth rate is 1.7%. Most of households in Kondoa DC derive their economic livelihoods from agriculture and livestock by 90%.*

*The fundamental function of the Council is to provide quality economic, social and environmental services to all citizens. This includes facilitation and supporting them to make use of the Opportunities and Obstacles to Development (O&OD) a national planning and budgeting process, so as to identify opportunities and obstacles existing in their localities, prioritize them, implement their initiatives, manage and monitor the quality of their projects.*

*Political leaders and citizens all depended on external support to finalise their development projects. The community members didn't know how to identifying the opportunities in their locality. There was no ownership of development projects by the community. Moreover, there was low willingness to contribute for education project. For that matter Kondoa District Council has been striving to engage community in the planning of development project using the national Opportunity and Obstacles to Development (O & OD) process starting from problem identification, prioritization, activity planning and budgeting, implementation, management, M&E. In this process the following key aspects were considered in the O&OD process.*

*Questions: Read the case, make critical analysis and discuss following questions*

*(A) What do you think was the reasons for having many incomplete projects?*

*(B) To what extent are community members participating? Is it enough for community to be able to implement their projects?*

Case studies give trainees opportunities to use the knowledge and skills that they have acquired to solve a given problem. Normally case studies are not imaginary but are real situation problems which the participants may face when executing their duties in their working stations.

### ii. Role Plays

Role playing is when two or more people take on personality, trait, actions, and mannerism that are not their own in order to act out a scenario. These role plays are composed and performed by the trainees themselves. Participants belong to different permanent groups in which they do all the tasks assigned to them. Members of discussion groups assign roles among themselves for performance, and become actors. A performing group is composed of up to 7 members, this group come up with a scenario reflecting the content that has been covered and act it out. The performances are not more than 20 minutes long. Part of the role play and the question for discussion is provided below:

Aid worker (AW): What is the biggest problem in this village?

Villager (V): A lot of children are ill

AW: What kind of illness is it?

V: The most frequent one is diarrhea

AW: Why do the children suffer from diarrhea?

V: I think because we don't have safe drinking water

AW: Where do you fetch water from?

V: From a nearby pond. We have clean water in the forest, but it takes nearly an hour's walk and it's a heavy load.

AW: Don't you have a drinking water well?

V: No, we don't.

AW: Do you think it is convenient to have one?

Questions

• Why did the community project fail?

• What should an aid worker/facilitator have done at that time for sustainable community project?

### iii. Presentations

Presentations by the trainees is an important factor in O and OD trainings. Presentations are group based-activities just like other training strategies we have seen. They are preceded by group discussions, and therefore they are a forum for class-wide sharing ideas. Each group is to appoint who is to make a presentation on its behalf to the entire audience of participants. These presentations are normally on case studies, lessons from role-plays, field study visits and the morning recap which is a summary of what was done the previous day. With these aspects, it is possible to have many presentation sessions, which in turn make it feasible for each member of each group to have a chance to present before the end of a training retreat. Each presentation is 10 minutes long. After a presentation, comments and questions session from the floor ensue, a moderator, usually a chairperson chosen from among the trainees at the beginning of the retreat presides over the discussion.

### iv. Field study visit

Field study visits are made to make ideas grasped in the classroom practical. It is an opportunity for the trainees to translate classroom content into real life. The preferred visited places are those with success and failed stories in as far as projects initiation and sustainability is concerned. The trainees are prepared well in advance on which issues they should pay much attention while in the field. Each participant is provided with a copy of a guidance. Here is one of the field visit guidance:

#### Guidance on the field visit to Maseyu village

**Our major Objective: To create good communities whereby people can solve their challenges/improve their life (empowered communities) through Community Facilitation**

#### 1. Objectives of the visit

(write down the shared objectives for all of us)

#### 2. Places/ projects to be visited

- a. Village office
- b. Dispensary
- c. Pre-primary school
- d. A group activity/project

#### 3. Focuses

##### a. Community Initiatives (CIs)

- i. Trigger of the CI
- ii. Social Preparation, Planning, Implementation and M&E process
- iii. RON
- iv. Functional typology
- v. Level of implementation unit (Social-geographical unit)
- vi. Assistance from outer organizations (LGA, NGO, companies, etc)
- vii. Impact of CIs on People's life

##### b. Ward Facilitators (WF's) facilitation

- i. Relationship between WFs and the community (attitude of the WFs)
- ii. Activities conducted by WFs and the influence of those activities to people

##### c. Community Empowerment Process

- i. *Capacity building through experience-based learning*
- ii. *Important actors in the community for the sustainability/reproduction of CIs*

**Clarifications on some of the guidance items:** The objectives of the visit are a consensus reached after a discussion among the participants. CIs (Community Initiatives) are projects initiated by the community such as construction of a school or a dispensary. M&E is an abbreviation for Monitoring and Evaluation. RON is a short form of Resource Organization and Norms. These are key elements of development, according to O and OD. WFs are Ward Facilitators, they are Ward Executive Officers who were once trainees.

#### v. **Lectures**

Aware of importance of engaging the learners in training process, lectures are kept brief, they are normally used to introduce a new concept or topics. It is a rarely used method. They are usually 20 to 30 minutes long, punctuated with active learning activities to reenergize participants for the next wave of information. An example of a scenario used to keep the trainees active during a lecture is cited below;

*After a trainer has introduced a sub-topic on Knowledge, Attitude, Skills (KAS) as key attributes of the WF, to test their understanding, she asks the participants to explain how does each attribute relate to competent car driving. After a discussion in their respective groups, the consensus was:*

*Knowledge –understanding or knowing how to drive. It is a knowledge without practices, being able to explain without practicing.*

*Skills- the driving itself, carry out the driving action.*

*Attitude- driving a car by adhering to all safety traffic rules (positive) or reckless driving (negative)*

#### vi. **Ice-breakers and humours**

These are narratives, sayings and statements that are humorous. They are used to spice up the content delivery during trainings. We consider some of them here;

*God who created you without your co-operation will not save you without your co-operation. (Saying)*

This saying implies that in as much as God is our Grand creator, he will only provide for us if we do our best to develop ourselves.

*A surgery on a head instead of a leg, a leg instead of a head*

This statement highlights the importance for the WFs to properly use Social Context Analysis (SCA) to establish a real felt-problem that a community is facing so as to be able to initiate efforts towards a proper and genuine felt-need to curb the problem.

*A man kept a urine in a small bottle at home before taking it to the doctor who asked for it for medical examination. His wife accidentally kicked the bottle and the urine spilt on the floor. Knowing how **bitter** the husband is, the wife refilled the bottle with her urine. The husband, unaware of what happened, took the urine to the doctor only to get a shock of his life to be told, he was three months pregnant!*

This narrative reminds the WFs in-making about having positive attitude towards people they are serving in the community. They should establish cordial relationship to elicit communities' cooperation.

#### vii. **Reflection**

Reflection gives the participants an opportunity to review how the training is carried out, it is done at the end of the session every day. Reflection is conducted in two folds;

First is the reflection by the trainees; here the trainees are given 5 minutes to be silent and try to recall what they have learnt for the whole session in a day. Then the silence is broken by an explosion of ideas in reflection of what was learnt. Each participant is given an opportunity to speak.

Second is by the trainers; the reflection by trainers is more evaluative of how the entire transaction did take place for the day. Observations are given on the pace at which the trainees are able to grasp the content, their eagerness to participate during presentations and discussions and of course, the effective utilization of the training methodologies.

#### viii. **Discussion**

Discussion is a dominant strategy in O and OD trainings. Discussion is blended with almost every other training methodology:

*Case Study Discussion:* All groups are provided with the same case study. At the end of each case study there are questions for discussion. The trainees discuss these questions in their groups by giving their opinions as a way of

sharing what has each one of them grasped. A secretary takes notes of the key points. Group discussion may last for an hour.

*Role play Discussion:* After role plays have been performed, participants discuss analytically their content and messages. These role plays are about communities that have either done well or failed in sustaining their development projects. The participants in their groups discuss among other things the factors for either success or failure of the projects. The secretary who is one the discussants takes note of the main points.

*Field study Discussion:* Discussion is also important for field study visits to places where the projects are being implemented. Before a trip, participants discuss about the objectives and the projects to be visited. The objectives clearly outline the main issues to be observed by the participants during the visit. The discussion on the objectives enables the participants to prepare questions which will help them to elicit information from the members of the community. Field study discussion is also done after returning from the field study trip. The trainees get a chance to share about what they observed and learned from the field.

*Discussion after Presentations:* Presentations are products of discussions done in each group. Each group has a chairperson and a secretary for recording the main points and a maximum of five members. As discussions are taking place at the level of groups, while the trainers move around for observation, follow up and guidance. Finally, the presentation ushers in plenary session during which each group appoint a member to make a presentation on a subject at hand.

*Plenary Session:* A plenary session is a session for discussion, it is thus a converging point of all the ideas that were raised and discussed in all the groups. Therefore, a plenary session follows after group discussions about case studies, role plays and field visit studies. During plenary session, the trainers make a close follow-up of the transaction whilst observing reticence. This helps to give the trainees freedom and an opportunity to express their ideas. Should there be an idea that proves to be difficult to comprehend for all the discussants, which has rarely occurred, the trainer may ask some questions that lead to understanding the idea. Examples of those questions are:

1. *If you find yourself in that kind of situation, where people refuse to take part in a project because of their political affiliations, what would you, as a Community Facilitator, first do?*
2. *Do you think the facilitator, in this case, did enough to acquaint herself with the community?*

These questions enable a trainee to discover some relationship, principles and acquire reasoning skills to analyze the challenging concept.

**ix. Maintaining Small size of the class participants**

The number of participants for O and OD training is not more than 30. In event of big number of participants, clusters are formed, with each cluster allocated its own days for training. Crowded classes are avoided for smooth management. The participants for the trainings are from District Councils, preferably District Community Development Officers (DCDO), District Planning Officers (DPLO), Ward Executive Officers (WEOs), village Executive Officers (VEOs) and Mtaa Executive Officers (MEOs). In the rolling out of O and OD, the trainee is a prospective trainer.

**x. The use of Evaluation Forms**

At the end of each training retreat the trainees are given an evaluation form for them to gauge the content and the methodologies of the training. Part of the evaluation form is shown below:

**Q1. Did you find the sessions and topics of the training appropriate according to the needs of your job?**

Q1.1: Topic 2 Overview of Improved O&OD Project

	← Appropriate		Inappropriate →	
5	4	3	2	1
<input type="checkbox"/>				

Q1.1s Please describe the reasons.

Q1.2: Topic 3 Understanding on community and sustainability of development (PLSD)

	← Appropriate		Inappropriate →	
5	4	3	2	1

□                      □                      □                      □                      □

Q1.2s Please describe the reasons.

Q1.3: Topic 4 Community facilitation (Insights from Participatory Approach)

← Appropriate					Inappropriate →	
5	4	3	2	1		
□	□	□	□	□		□

Q1.3s Please describe the reasons.

The comments gathered through evaluation forms are used to improve the content as well as the methodology of training.

## 6. Discussion of the Findings

The O and OD training methodologies are indeed expressive of adult learners' special needs as enshrined by andragogy. This part provides an evidence to that regards.

*The Need to Know:* Adults need to know the aim of the learning subject and how it helps them attain their goals so that they can be motivated, engaged, and active in the class. In as much as the learners had some understanding on the need to know, the O and OD training methodologies played a big role to enable the participants realize the need to learn. With time, the learners showed a high degree of understanding the need to be trained. This was revealed by the comments they give during the discussions of the content, giving the application of the content they have received in their day to day execution of duties. With methodologies which are very engaging the learners were able to clearly see the need to be trained. When asked about how have they benefited from training, most of them opined that:

*“Improved O and OD is a tool that each public servant needs for maximum performance”*

This response is a reflection of what the trainees said when they were asked at the beginning of the training about what they were expecting out of the training. Here are some of their comments:

*“This training should help me to solve people’s problems in my ward”*

*“In my ward some people do not participate in development activities for political reasons, I expect after this training I will be able to persuade all community members to take part in development activities irrespective of their political or religion inclination.”*

*The Learners' Self-Concept or Self-Directed:* Adults believe they are responsible for their lives, they need to be seen and treated as capable, independent and self-directed. The O and OD training methodologies give an opportunity to the participants to do a lot of learning on their own with little guidance from the trainers. The participants were, inter alia, able to compose role plays and to perform them, correct each other, extract key information during field study visits, case studies and to present and discuss them. More important was the ability to review the training session and be able to give constructive ideas on the training improvement through ‘Evaluation Forms’. For instance, the idea of translating the learning materials from English to Kiswahili was originally conceived by trainees. Appreciating self-concept learning methodologies participants shared this observation:

*“At the beginning we were afraid, and thought we can’t catch up with the training, on the contrary, the training methodologies have been so involving.... giving us opportunity to do more, being active than mere passive listeners. That is so exciting and boosts our confidence!”*

*The Role of the Learners' Experiences.* The adult learners are loaded with vast knowledge they gather from experience which is useful in the process of learning. Participants for O and OD training are public servants serving as WEOs, VEOs and MEOs whose experience has proved to be useful during the training. From their experiences, they presented and discussed different challenges they had faced when executing their duties and how the content they had received will help them to overcome them. The training methodologies give way to real life-situations to come on the scene and

facilitate learning. Through role-plays, case studies, discussions learners were able to bring a lot of real life incidences from their working place to the learning room. Here is an example of an experience shared by one of the trainees showing the impact of not doing a thorough Social Context Analysis (SCA) and Social Preparation before starting a project:

*“In my ward we started a project to build a dispensary, but because of political affiliations, some people did want to participate, they view a project as an initiative by ruling part CCM. Moreover, they believed it is the government duty to do everything for them including building a dispensary. This caused delaying in completion of the project.”*

Experiences from the participants like the one recorded above, played a big supporting role in the process of learning. The O and OD training methodologies are so engaging and as such, they appreciate and capitalize on learners' experience as an important ingredient in training adults.

*Readiness to Learn.* After knowing the need and the value of receiving training the participants become motivated and ready to learn. The readiness to learn was evidenced by trainees' active participation from the beginning down to the end of each session. This was primarily caused by the fact that the O and OD content is applicable to their current working situations. Their readiness was witnessed by their active engagement in learning. They actively did whatever they were supposed to do without close supervision from the trainers. Many participants claimed that they do not need an external force to attend and participate in learning.

*“We like and we enjoy training”*

*Adult Learners are Problem Oriented.* Adult learners are problem-centered rather than subject-centered. This being a fact, during training, the participants were presented with different problem-based case studies for them to come up with the solutions. Commenting on the use of case studies participants were quoted as saying:

*Through Case studies we see the applicability of what we learn during training and boost our confidence that we can successfully solve and avoid development hurdles back to our area of jurisdiction.*

## 7. Conclusion

Engaging and active learning is achieved through the use of, among others, case studies, discussions, field study visits, role plays, ice-breakers and humours. These in turn, result in better retention, recall, and use of learned content outside the training room because they bring real-world problems into the training. Moreover, strategies presented in this paper, encourage critical and independent thinking, creativity and excitement in learning. Directed learning characterized by too much reliance on the trainer by the trainees should be avoided during adult learning as it belongs to the scrap heap of outmoded approaches.

Finally, it is important for trainers of trainees to receive a brush-up course on training to enable them appreciate the special needs of adult learners. Since there are still trainers who are products of the old pedagogical directed learning, they are likely to perpetuate the same approach when engaged in training. Adult learners' special needs should not be ignored or taken for granted as they are a cornerstone for effective learning. Appreciating adult learners' special needs make them feel confident and actively participate in learning.

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