Research article

The andragogical value of content knowledge method: the case of an adult education programme in Kwa-Zulu Natal Province of South Africa

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**ABSTRACT**

The South African government has made a significant progress in the area of policy development and practice for Adult Education since independence in 1994. Still, there has been a tremendous increase in the number of adults without education. For example, KwaZulu-Natal, one of the provinces in South Africa, still recorded an increased number of illiteracy rate among adults, which further causes poverty and unemployment. The focus of this study is to explore the extent concept and ideas of andragogy are used by adult facilitators in delivering the content knowledge and how is andragogy effectively used in the knowledge transfer in Adult Education Programme in KwaZulu-Natal province. The study explores the concept of andragogy through the theoretical lens of the Theory of Andragogy. The qualitative research method was used for the study. The thematic data analysis revealed that the stakeholder involved in the planning and policymaking could do more to improve the curriculum by making it adult-friendly and adjusting the teaching method by considering the experience of adult learners during the teaching and learning process. This will make in support of the theory of andragogy which believe in the art and science of teaching an adult. It was also of importance that the study shows the level of involvement of adult learners in determining the learning method.

1. Introduction

The term andragogy as used by several researchers is most closely associated with Malcolm Knowles, a teacher who had contributed immensely to the field of adult learning. Andragogy coined by a German educator named Alexander Knapp in the year 1833 which was later popularized by Malcolm Knowles in the 1960s (Maddalena, 2015). According to Malcolm Knowles, andragogy is the art and science of adult learning, hence andragogy refers to formal and informal learning engagement by an adult (Kearsley, 2010). This is in contrast to pedagogy, which is the understanding of the science and practice of children learning. Andragogy as a term is equivalent to pedagogy. Andragogy emanated from the Greek word “man-leading” while pedagogy means “child leading” (Graham, 2017; Pappas, 2013). In his study, Graham (2017) affirms that Knowles was convinced that adult learning had to be self-driven. Rather than having teacher-centric education is, adult learning should be centred on the students and teach them the power of self-motivated learning. Andragogy appears to have benefited from a wide coverage and speedy acceptance in America and Europe (Maddalena, 2015). For instance, Maddalena stated that in the United State of America, the emerging fields of management and organisational development: as well as psychotherapy and social psychology have inspired new interest. Savicevic (2008); Seyoum and Basha (2017) reveal that andragogy has spread to some countries in Europe such as England, Russia, Finland, Poland, Netherland and France among others. They also stated that andragogy has been used in different field of study among which are education (Seyoum and Basha, 2017), management (Forrest and Peterson, 2006), medicine (Bedi, 2004; Taylor and Hamdy, 2013), criminal justice (Birzer, 2004) and Information Communication Technology (Noor et al., 2012).

Additionally, research has been conducted to ascertain the use of andragogy in education (Henschke, 2008; Kapur, 2015; Romiszowski, 2019; Seyoum and Basha, 2017; Zmeyov, 1998). The aforementioned information reviews the applicability of andragogy in multiple disciplines. Maddalena (2015) agrees that discussing interpersonal and intrapersonal aspects of an individual level of understanding requires our awareness of how adults learn as an individual and as member of a developing community and organisation.

Furthermore, Maddalena (2015) stated that the main reason adult learning and education has not achieved a significant impact is that most...
teachers of adults still apply the traditional pedagogical approaches, in other words, they teach adults as if they were children. It is expedient for the 21st-century facilitator to review the six crucial assumptions that were developed by Knowles based on the premise that adult learners are different from the assumption of child learners. Based on this premise, the purpose of this study is to explore the value of andragogy as an approach in facilitating content knowledge by facilitators to adult learners.

However, Knowles et al. (2012) conclude that the philosophies which guide the concept of andragogy emanated from the need to create an educational platform that addresses the needs of adult learners and incorporate their lives and careers. Similarly, Knowles in Herod (2012), emphasizes that adults learn in a different way compared to children, which made him describe andragogy as “the art and science of teaching adults”. In this light the objectives of the study are:

- To explore the role of andragogy in content delivery by the facilitators in Adult education
- To examine the impact of adult education’s content knowledge delivery using andragogy
- To examine the effectiveness of andragogy in learners’ active participation in adult education
- To identify the suitability of the andragogical methods to adult learners.

2. Literature review

2.1. Andragogy as a form of instruction

Andragogy is anchored on the premise that educators coordinate the learning process and facilitate the acquisition of content by the learners. Robinson (2002) notes that andragogy encourages the involvement of learners in their learning experiences and sets the parameters of those experiences.

Rather than following the traditional approach he emphasized the mutual engagement between the facilitator and the learner. Similarly, McCall et al. (2018) claimed that andragogy gives more attention to the learning process and internalizing the needs of the learners rather than the teaching process and the teachers’ delivery.

However, the vocal points of andragogy as originally developed by Eduard Lindeman and revised by Knowles et al. (2012, p.3), is based on six main assumptions:

- Adult learners need to know: Adult learners will always appreciate if they know the value of their learning and why they need to learn.
- Self-concept of the learners: Adult learners are self-directed, independent and autonomous in their learning.
- Experience of the adult learner: The prior experience of the adult learner is a huge repository of resources for learning. The adult learner is inclined to learn by drawing from their reservoir of experience.
- Adult readiness to learn: Adults at any point in time are ready to learn what they believe they need to know.
- Orientation to learning: The orientation to learning for any adult is to materialise for immediate use. Adult learning orientation is problem centred, life focused and learner-centred.
- Motivation to learn: The adult learner is more intrinsically motivated than extrinsically.

They desire the value of learning.

Andragogy as a concept faced multiple critiques from various researchers in the field of Adult Education. For instance, Cunningham (2001) opined that the effectiveness of the term andragogy had been dismantled in the 90’s. Pratt wrote in Cunningham (2001) that how the theory of andragogy has been perceived as a teaching approach in adult learning and education will totally have a different dimension after 25 years because it is not a panacea. Sandlin (2005) had a strong reservation about andragogy as prominence and thought it needed to be supplemented by the other perspectives which are: Afrocentric, feminist, and critical. Similarly, Merriam (2001) probed andragogy not to be a theory, but mere good practices and descriptions of what the adult learner should be like. Another critique is how the assumptions are attributed to adult learners alone. Merriam concluded that the descriptions are not accurate that some children are independent and self-directed while some adults are highly dependent on educators for structure. Herod (2012) argues that many researchers realise that relating andragogy to adult learning and pedagogy to children learning is rather inappropriate. Herod further stressed that a child can perform better when a teacher adopts a facilitating method. Another concern by Holton et al. (2009), is that andragogy does not have a standardized definition and it is subject to various meanings and interpretations. Kamp (2011) argues that andragogy could be identified to mean a bunch of assumptions such as the Adult Education method, adult learning theory, adult learning technology, and Adult Education technique.

However, there is a large volume of published studies describing the role of andragogy has been used in the education and learning of adults. It has become popular among teachers and authors in many countries and growing research. Seyoum and Basha (2017) argue for use of andragogical methods to sustain quality Adult Education programmes, the findings show that the usage of different teaching methods was below the expected level, because it lacks active learning activities as an alternative to sustaining the quality in the learning of adults. In the same vein, Zmeyov (1998) traced the origin, development and trends of andragogy in relations to adult learning and education. Singh (2015) draws our attention to the distinctive feature of andragogy or facilitated learning that encourages a cordial relationship between the learner and the facilitator while also developing self-awareness in learners. Similarly, Wankat (2002) stated that andragogy serves as a reminder for educators to always consider and engage learners actively, and also to create facilitative atmospheres that can motivate adult learners to learn better. It is worthy of note that scholars have consistently maintained that andragogy is a scientific discipline that involves teaching and learning which aid adults to record a high/full level of humanity (Merriam, 2001; Prince, 2004). Brockett and Hiemstra (2018) establish that andragogy is helpful to the overall understanding of adult learning modes or patterns, the context in which they (the adults) learn, as well as the process they get involved in while learning. Furthermore, for the purpose of demarcating other areas of education from Adult Education, andragogy could be a rallying point (Omoregie, 2021).

2.2. Pedagogy and andragogy

There have been ongoing debates about the concept of andragogy vs pedagogy. In an investigation into andragogy and pedagogy, Herod (2012) found that the two concepts can be difficult for most adult learners and inferably, refers to the concept as facilitated learning and directed learning respectively. Herod reported that the key difference that exists between facilitated and directed learning are their objectives. According to Maddalena (2015) presenting Knowles’ comparison of assumptions between pedagogy and andragogy. Maddalena considered pedagogy learning as “directive/classroom” and andragogy learning as “self-directive/experiential”. Herod (2012), points that the learning of adults takes different forms compared to children, hence describe andragogy as the art and science of teaching adults. Herod further contrasts between pedagogy and andragogy as follows (see Table 1):

2.3. Theoretical framework

This study is underpinned by the Theory of Andragogy which was originally postulated by Lindeman in 1926 and later popularized by Malcolm Knowles in the 1970s and 1980s in the United States of America. Andragogy is well noted to be the art and science of teaching
adults. Scholars like Hiemstra and Sisco (1990) and Ntombela (2015) affirm that andragogy is based on the submission that the educator facilitates and manages the learning process and the acquisition of content knowledge with the learners. This assumption indicates that the theory is distinctively based on the unique characteristics of the adults as learners. The theory further portrays adult learners as individuals who are self-directed, motivated, and ready to apply their prior experience to solve real-life problems.

The theory of andragogy is however known to be a widely used theory in the field of adult learning. As such Knowles puts emphasis on the role of an adult facilitator as a teacher who guides the process in teaching and learning. Relating this to the study, adult facilitators have the sole responsibility to identify the relevant education, encourage adult learners by selecting exercises based on their relevance for content knowledge and the intended outcomes, and to consider adult learners’ preference to embrace skill development. The theory is distinctly based on the unique characteristics of an adult as a learner.

The core principle of andragogy and adult learning principles apply to all adult learning situations.

Adult learners in literacy programmes and other learning programmes are affected by these principles. As shown above in andragogy principle of adult learning, the theory encourages the facilitators, professionals and policy makers of an adult literacy programme to put into consideration in developing curriculum, policy making and facilitating of the learning programmes. The theory portrays adult learners as individuals who are self-directed, motivated, and ready; have the prior experience and appreciate the problem-solving approach. According to Ajani (2021), the rationale for andragogy in acquisition of knowledge and skills by adults in any learning space is for the adult learners to learn purposively and to determine learning pace. Hence, facilitators of adult education enables their learners to learn meaningfully at a coordinated pace.

3. Methodology

3.1. Research design and setting

The qualitative research approach was employed for this study with the lens of interpretivist paradigm. This approach used the paradigm to interpretively explore the views of adult facilitators on the use of andragogical approach in facilitating content knowledge in adult education classes. In this study the researcher considered this paradigm approach mainly to address the research objectives through the in-depth and comprehensive data that was collected (Creswell, 2014). In order words the design was considered suitable for this study because it aimed at exploring the individual experiences of adult facilitators who are fully engaged in the teaching of adult learners in KwaZulu-Natal province of South Africa. KwaZulu-Natal is one of the provinces in South Africa and is located in the Northern part of the country. KwaZulu-Natal is predominantly a Zulu speaking province which are divided into four racial groups namely: Africans, Coloureds, Indians and Whites but have some other ethnic groups who migrated from other provinces such as Xhosa, Africans, Sotho, Venda, Tsswana, and Tsonga among others for different purposes. Qualitative research approach was employed as suitable for this study because it was the approach that allowed for the phenomenon to be studied in its actual form based on values, motives, aspirations, beliefs and attitudes of the participants in relation to space and their social interactions (Astalin, 2013).

3.2. Procedure

KwaZulu-Natal in South Africa was purposively selected as the study area because is one of the province in the country that still records an increased number of illiteracy rate among adult learners and because of the researchers longstanding relationship through research studies and academic involvement with the adult literacy centers in KwaZulu-Natal (HRSC, 2014; Akintolu, 2019). The KwaZulu-Natal province has one major metropolitan municipality (the eThekwini Metropolitan Municipality) and other ten district municipalities. Four districts (Zululand, Amajuba, iLembe and King Cetshwayo) were then conveniently selected from KwaZulu-Natal provinces due to researcher proximity and long-standing relationship through community impact projects. The researchers then sought written permission from the Department of Basic Education, which was granted, with the assistance of the Center Managers of the districts. The Center Managers further introduced the researchers to the adult facilitators who are fully engaged in the teaching of adult learners. The adult literacy centers in the four districts were selected using a purposive sampling procedure; from which eight adult facilitators, who are primarily involved in teaching the adult learners, were also selected. Recruitment of the participants was based on voluntary participation of the adult facilitators, these participants have similar characteristics of providing in-depth information to the research questions (Creswell, 2014). Participants have over 5 years working experience teaching adult learners.

The rationale for selecting this number of participants is based on the submission of Black (2019) that subjects or group selected as a sample in purposive sampling are chosen by the judgement of the researcher involved. Black, while cautioning researchers against choosing large sample in qualitative study, stressed that purposive sampling is effective when only limited numbers of people as primary data sources for a study.

3.3. Data collection

A one-on-one semi-structured interview was conducted by the researchers with each of the adult facilitators at different literacy centers between January 15 and February 28, 2020. The focus and objectives of the interview allowed the researchers and participants to explore the use of andragogical approach in facilitating content knowledge in adult literacy programmes. The researchers prepared an interview guide in accordance with the research objectives to determine the usage of andragogical approach in teaching adult learners. Leveraging on the advice on the interview procedure as explained by (Cohen et al., 2011). The interview guide contained specific questions about the use of concept of andragogy for adult learners such as: Is the concept of andragogy considered in developing adult learners’ curriculum? What is its application? Does the curriculum create relationship between what adult learners learn and the real life? What impact do the curriculum have in preparing the adult learners? Does the curriculum enables the learners to choose what they want to learn and how they wanted to learn it? Does the programme enable learners to imagine learned information in real life setting? Each of the interview session lasted for about an hour.
3.4. Ethical consideration

The researchers obtained permission from the University Research Ethics Committee to conduct the study in the Kwazulu-Natal Province of South Africa. The approval obtained was presented to the Department of Basic Education and thereafter to the centre managers who later introduced the facilitators to the researchers for collection of data. All participating facilitators were duly briefed before they endorsed the consent forms. Participants were also presented with a copy of the consent forms by the researchers written in the English Language and the contents of the consent form was explained to each participant before their interview. Once that was done each of the participants completed and appended their signature to the consent form. Every participant was assured of confidentiality and anonymity of their information.

3.5. Data analysis

All semi-structured interviews were audio-recorded with the permission of the participants. The audio was transcribed and coded to generate themes for presentation and discussion of findings. The researchers used a thematic analysis to identify the recurring themes in the interviews, in order to use the themes to describe and address the research objectives. The coded interviews were organised using the repetitive themes from the transcription. In order to ensure confidentiality and anonymity, pseudonyms were used for the participants, to protect their identities. Hence, the participants in the study were identified as follows (F1, F2, F3, F4, F5, F6, F7, and F8). Meaning Adult facilitator 1 to 8. Presentation and discussion of generated themes are as follow:

3.6. Findings

The themes were thematically derived from the transcribed interviews’ data for presentation and discussion based on the study’ research objectives. The main aim is to establish the impact of andragogy in adult education during facilitation of learning experiences by the facilitators.

3.6.1. Theme one: responsibility

Responsibility for learning in adult education was explored from the facilitators. This theme explains the role of responsibility in adult education, whether the adult learners should take responsibility on what and how they learn or these should be the responsibility of the facilitators. This theme explains the role of responsibility in adult education during facilitation of learning experiences by the facilitators.

3.6.2. Theme two: effectiveness

To determine the effectiveness of curriculum contents during facilitation, the participants were asked to express their views on this. Participant F5 stated that curriculum considered the personal goals of adult learners because it offers various modules:

“Yes, because they offer modules like agriculture, auxiliary health care, languages which is English communication as a medium of instruction, so I think they do’.

Another participant F6 also revealed that

“Yes, the curriculum is fine because at the end of the year the learner can use what he was taught in the curriculum in his/her real life. So, I think the curriculum is fine. If the teacher uses the curriculum”

3.6.3. Theme three: appropriateness

The appropriateness of the curriculum using andragogy was checked with the facilitators. The facilitators had many diverse views on this. Participant F1 agreed that the contents of the curriculum is appropriate through andragogy:

“yeah it does for example, in English what we teach is what it’s require to use outside, they write cv, some become secretary, we offer them computer studies, computer is used everywhere, skills like flower arrangement, while some do it to start their own businesses”.

In a similar view, another participant F5 has this to say:

“Yes, they do. For instance if they bring skills to the center it is always related to the real life because if you go outside some of the job needs their services like gardeners, sowing, agriculture etc. With ABET (Adult Basic Education and Training) level 4 the adult learners get the employment with the skills learnt at the center and there is a linkage with the skills they acquire at the community learning center to TVET college. Sometimes they learn computer to give them insight on how to use computers”.

Contrastingly, participants F4 added that the curriculum has no relationship with what the adult learners require in the real world. Participant F4 said:

“No it doesn’t. Again, it’s the responsibility of the facilitator to do that”.

While participant F3 opposed the view of both participants F1 and F5 to express that there are vocational skill modules that are yet to engage the adult learners in the practical aspect is missing:

“It is partly, though it is not practical. For example in agricultural science they just learning theory because we don’t have land and equipment for practical. And also, for business they do costing and retailing it is theory they don’t get into a practical part of it. By that I can say the curriculum partly create between what learners learn and the real world”.

The participants expressed their opinion on how the curriculum creates relationship between what adult learners learn and the real life situation. While interviewing, some of the participants agreed to the fact that the curriculum has a seemly relationship with what the adult learners experience in real life while other do not. Hence, the theme of appropriateness emerged from this objective.

3.6.4. Theme four: positive impacts and powerful effects

Adult education is a critical part of the society. It is not everyone who has access to conventional educational facilities. Thus, the participants revealed that adult education is a system that has significant impact in every society. Participant F5 revealed:

“Yes, it does. Because it develop and enlighten their mind, for the fact that you are at this stage is not the end of your life you got another chance in life with this programme”.

"The curriculum does not cater for the adult learners. It’s the facilitator that has to break it down and shape it in such a way that it appeals and caters for the adult learner” (F1).

Another participant also supported the F1 views:

“I will say it does for example in this centers unlike some other centers stop at level 1, 2, 3, so after level 4, these learners don’t know where to go, because after we take them to matric (high school qualification examinations) we don’t leave them hanging but other centers just let them be” (F4).

It is a general view among the participants as they believed that the curriculum does not give consideration to adult learners to be responsible for what they learn. Participant F3 expressed this:

“No, the curriculum does not allow individuals consideration or uniqueness of adult learners. For example here we don’t have materials for learners who are blind, deaf etc. They just put in one stream without putting into consideration other learners with disabilities”.

3.6.2. Theme two: effectiveness

To determine the effectiveness of curriculum contents during facilitation, the participants were asked to express their views on this. Participant F5 stated that curriculum considered the personal goals of adult learners because it offers various modules:

“Yes, because they offer modules like agriculture, auxiliary health care, languages which is English communication as a medium of instruction, so I think they do’.

Another participant F6 also revealed that

“Yes, the curriculum is fine because at the end of the year the learner can use what he was taught in the curriculum in his/her real life. So, I think the curriculum is fine. If the teacher uses the curriculum”
Another participant F7 expressed that adult education is needed in many government facilities to support those who are interested in acquiring knowledge and skills through adult education:

“Yes, like the case that we have in Department of Health, Department of Correctional Services they sometimes say we want the level 3 or level 2 learners, they don't want Grade 12 because the Adult Basic Education and Training (ABET) helped them in that aspect”.

While another participant F4 expressed this:

“The only positive impact that they will experience is passing the course content. But in terms of other things, the curriculum is too rigid”.

This participant F4 further explained the importance of contents in subjects like pure science and not social science subjects like life orientation:

“Well, I would admonish and refer them to the medicine science. I don't teach that as subject so I can't lay effect on that. I'm purely on the pure sciences”.

This participant F8 was so brief by saying:

“Yes it does, going to next level of learning, Colleges, and after matric they go to college to study education”.

Conversely, the participants indicated that the contents of adult education impact many of the adult learners, as their facilitation of knowledge and skills are relevant to prepare them for responsive lives and using andragogy will promote adult learners’ active participation.

3.6.5. Theme five: choice of content and how to learn it

Findings from the participants revealed that the contents of the subject matter a lot in facilitation. This implies that the facilitators of adult education need to prepare and strategise how their learners can effectively learn. Participant F2 pointed that:

“As an educator, I need to prepare, because teachers always need preparation, to attain lesson learning objectives. I come with my prep, then I teach them, then I see if they gained knowledge, then I give them activities. They used to work in groups and individually. So I can say that as an educator, I guide them on what to learn, they do not choose themselves”.

Participant F1 could not hide his feelings towards this supporting participant F2 saying:

“I am not going to agree, this program sometimes is not friendly to the learners, sometimes you find in a centers the learners studying languages in ECD, no social sciences, no pure math’s, after level 4 they are expected to choose in matric, imagine a student moving from level 4 to level 12 with no background in basic sciences, they are expected to do science and science is done once a week in school, time is against them”.

Another participant F6 expressed his opinion on contents facilitation in adult education:

“Not exactly, they cannot choose. But as I said we look at what they want in that vicinity, not exactly to choose but you see from their performance that they like this thing, know that after this thing they can use it anywhere, I think that is, though they cannot choose but it goes with what the teacher has chosen and then even he/she cannot choose what they want to do. But at the end they are happy to do that”.

While some of the facilitators however are of the opinion that adult education enables learners to freely choose what to learn and how to learn it. Participant F8 has this to say:

“Yes, it enables the learners. Yes, some of the learners do come to center because they want to learn how to count (numeracy); some come because they want to speak in English so they can communicate”.

Following the views of F8, participant F7 remarked as follows:

“Yes, they freely choose what they want to learn because others just like agriculture, others like social sciences, others like auxiliary, others like SMME (Small Medium and Micro Enterprise), others like EMS (Economics and Management Science) etc. you see that the area at which that person is good then you take the strength they have. They choose for themselves, firstly you discuss the qualification of the courses available with learners to really decide the area at which they prefer”.

Participant F4 in his opinion explained further on the issue:

“Yes and no. It doesn't allow them to freely choose what they want to learn. They have to follow the curriculum policy statement, as laid out for them. They will come out. They have to know everything because everything is tested. And the part where they are free to not learn, or learn, they can choose to focus on the strong points in the curriculum, to get a minimum pass. But if they want a distinction, to experience a positive success, of being ... Mathematics and Science, they have to learn everything they don't have a choice. If they do make a choice, they are now ..., to a very low pass”.

3.6.6. Theme six: application of theory to real life setting

Under this theme, some of the participants expressed their dissatisfaction on how the programme has not enabled learners to apply acquired knowledge and skills to real life situation. Participant F4 declared:

“It doesn't. The facilitators are the ones that create the imagination for them”.

In contrast, participant F6 responded as follows:

“Yes, sometimes when we are in the classroom they do something like project, when they doing the project they sometimes imagine, like in tourism they cut some pictures they do the project, maybe there are something there that inspire them to be like tour guide and the likes”.

To support participant F6 view further, participant F7 had this to say:

“Yes, they imagine it while in class. I was having a learner who cannot read for two years until the ceremony” (graduation).

4. Discussion

The concept of andragogy as applied to the teaching and learning of adult learners has history that dates back to some decades. Issues with andragogy in relations to adult learners remain one of the major discussion in the field of adult learning (Baatjes, 2008; Ajani, 2021). Concerns about meeting the literacy needs, integration, and social inclusion of adult learners in yielding the desired results in developed countries, with many currently acquiring the needed content knowledge. However, majority of the facilitators interviewed in this study revealed that they hardly engaged or applied andragogy in their method of delivering content knowledge to their adult learners. According to Ajani (2020) and Ngozawana (2020), the use of andragogy in teaching and learning for adult learners is to drive learning effectively in these adults, who consciously understand why they are learning. Amongst the eight participants (facilitators), five of these participants stated that the curriculum does not clearly cater for the need of the adult learners. Hence, using another method in developing curriculum to engage adult learners during teaching and learning has to be considered appropriate and safe to meet the need of adult learners (Hamlin, 2020); unfortunately, the findings from this study showed that the curriculum do not accommodate the concept of andragogy in the development of the curriculum. Akintolu (2019) in his study on the adult learners’ motivation to learn, indicated that prior experiences of the learners are significant to the facilitation of contents of the curriculum as ignored by some of the facilitators. Some of the facilitators considered that the curriculum should acknowledge
andragogical approaches to drive the self-directed and autonomous learning in adult learners and that the teacher as a facilitator of learning, will be enhanced rather than being a mere presenter of the learning contents (Henschke, 2013).

This implies that the understanding of andragogy as an effective approach to contextualize facilitation of learning, should be given more publicity in many adult literacy centers in South Africa. Seemingly, Graham (2017) claims that as an adult moves into the workforce, he must orient his learning toward the skills necessary for his job tasks. Findings from the participants indicated that the facilitators failed to understand how andragogical pedagogies are used to deliver the curriculum to their adult learners, but these facilitators make additional efforts to simplify the contents for easy understanding and application to their learners. However, the curriculum is meant to address the need of adult learners, using andragogical pedagogies to ensure immediate implementation of the acquired knowledge in the real-world situations. So, the concept of andragogy is consciously considered in their acts of teaching adults.

In the views expressed by the participants revealed that the adult education programme only caters for some subjects that may not be relevant to adult learners after the programme. More so, some adult learning centers still lacked the practical aspects in some modules. Brockett and Hiemstra (2018) establish that andragogy is helpful to the overall understanding of adult learning modes or patterns, the context in which they (the adult learners) learn, as well as the process they get involved while learning. Furthermore, for the purpose of demarcating other areas of education from Adult Education, andragogy could be seen as a rallying point. The finding from this current study indicated that the adult learners could not choose what they were willing to learn. In that they were taught what they found in the curriculum which seemingly was not what the adult learners needed. Andragogy enables the adult learners to be engaged in critical thinking to decide what they accept as learning (Ferreira et al., 2018). Contrary to the concept of andragogy, the facilitators still taught the adult learners as they would teach child learners. Omoregie (2021) posits that there is difference between adult learners and young learners in acquisition of learning. Mews (2020) agrees that adult learners learn faster as they understand why they learn in adult education.

Facilitators needed to be orientated on how to facilitate learning in adult learners (Arghode et al., 2017; Loeng, 2018). Considering the concept of andragogy as the art and science of teaching adult learners by Knowles, Maddalena (2015) opined that it is expedient for facilitators to fit into the 21st century skills in order for adult learning programme to achieve its aim and to fully exhibit the concept of andragogy. So based on this argument, the adult learners are not given an opportunity to choose what to learn. Instead, the facilitators make the choices of what adult learners are to learn. This approach does not only relegate andragogy to the periphery, but it also silences the adult learners' right of choosing the solutions that best meet their pressing needs in adult education. Hence, the study established that the modules developed for adult learners are not facilitated to encourage individual learning which speak to the need of adults as self-directed learners. However, the module contents do not consider the relevance of the content and the skills that the adult learners need to acquire from the programme. Andragogy is anchored on the premise that educators can coordinate the learning process and facilitate the acquisition of content by the learners (Loeng, 2018), rather than following the traditional approaches that emphasize on the mutual engagement between the facilitator and the learner. Similarly, McCall et al. (2018) claim that andragogy pays more attention to the learning process and internalizing the needs of the learners rather than the teaching process and the teachers' delivery methods.

4.1. Limitations

The limitation to this study could be down to the participants selected for the study. These participants might not have a holistic view and may have provided generic responses to the interview questions. This reason for this is based on the sample size adopted for the study which is purposive sample. The interview focused mainly on the opinion of facilitators, this might lead to imbalance of information. However, the main aim of the study was to explore the value of andragogy as an approach in facilitating content knowledge by facilitators to adult learners. Also, due to the vast land of the province selected as case study, the participants for the study were purposefully selected which may not represent the general views of other facilitators in the province. However, the researchers were specific that the participants though represented different districts in the province, their views could not be generalized for their districts as well.

5. Recommendations and conclusion

Despite all the positive responses from the adult facilitators, there seems to be a disconnection between the contents delivered to the adult learners and the realities of their real world. The study affirms that andragogy plays a prominent role in adult education. The facilitators have not understood the importance of andragogical pedagogies in facilitating learning in adult education. The study recommends enhancement of adult literacy programme by recruiting personnel and policy makers that are experts in adult learning systems. The facilitators for adult education should be regularly and appropriately capacitated to understand curriculum design, and to deliver the contents effectively to the adult learners in real world contexts. Stakeholders involved in the planning and policy-making should improve the curriculum to be more relevant and friendly interactive to develop the adult learners' skills. This will drive the tenets of andragogy in teaching adult learners. In addition, it is suggested that facilitators should be encouraged to design contents based on andragogical pedagogies to deliver knowledge and to attain intended outcomes, with consideration for diverse adult learners' characteristics. Prior research by Genet (2014) has established that facilitators of adult learning and education should acquire expertise and knowledge to teach adult learners differently from young learners. In other words, facilitators should have the prerequisite skills before recruiting them to provide adult literacy and education to adult learners, in quality to empower adult learners as participatory learners for responsive and better lives.

Declarations

Author contribution statement

Morakinyo Akintolu, Moeketsi Letseka: Conceived and designed the experiments; Performed the experiments; Analyzed and interpreted the data; Contributed reagents, materials, analysis tools or data; Wrote the paper.

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Declaration of interests statement

The authors declare no conflict of interest.

Additional information

No additional information is available for this paper.
