

# A Study of Online Training programs and its Impact on Learning and Development Activities in selected Government Training Institutes

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## Abstract

The present study is about the effectiveness of online training methodologies being used in the various government training institutes, all across the country. Before COVID-19 pandemic almost 99% of the training and developmental activities were being conducted in the classrooms and technology was hardly being used, except for sending distance learning materials or for some evaluation requirements. Suddenly, lockdown happened and all public activities came to a halt. Changed circumstances demanded suitable changes in the administration to address the pressing needs of learning, while facilities for online instructions were in their initial stages in these institutions. How to respond to the learning needs of the employees, in the changed scenario became a moot question before the authorities. In the changed circumstances, when everybody was supposed to work from home, it was a challenge to train and motivate the employees to consider home as their office and discharge their daily duties. These training institutions rose to the occasion and started training activities with almost non-existent infrastructure and nearly untrained faculty members to handle this new mode of instruction.

In the premier government training institutes, faculty members have to compulsorily attend Trainers Development Programs, organized by Department of Personnel & Training, Government of India. These training programs were conceptualized by the Thames Valley University, London in nineties, based on the principles of adult learning propagated by Malcolm Knowles and David Colbe. The study explores the challenges in incorporating these principles for imparting training, which were the guiding principles for designing the content in the offline mode. These principles of adult learning made the learning process more effective and enjoyable for the participants. The central theme of this study was to find out whether these principles could be used while imparting training and also how much effective such training programs were.

Data was collected from faculty members posted in various government training institutes from all over the country through questionnaires. Data analysis has been done with the help of graphic representations. The outcome of the study shows that the technological infrastructures need to be upgraded in these institutes, in order to improve the effectiveness of online training programs. Out of six principles of adult learning, used earlier for imparting training, only the principles of relevance, involvement to some extent and learning

by doing could be incorporated, However principles of use of all senses, self-directed learning and use of experiences of the participants for peer learning could not be utilized, in the absence of classroom environment. The study also indicates that trainers need to be trained further to make effective use of technology, as an overwhelming majority voted for bright future of blended learning. Online learning

## INTRODUCTION:

Training and development is one of the most important organizational process for continuous upgradation of knowledge and skills of the employees, required for fulfilment of various organizational goals. Almost every organization has relevant policies and established norms to be followed in this regard. It is an effective way to increase the efficiency of the workforce and also prepare them for

### Definitions:

As discussed above **training and development activities** are an integral part of the human resource development practices in any organization. Now let us explore some of the definition of 'Training'.

In view of Flipppo, E.B. (1984) "Training is the act of increasing the knowledge and skills of an employee for doing a particular job." Whereas Yoder, D. (1969), in his book "Personnel Management and Industrial Relations" has defined training as an organized procedure by which people learn knowledge and skills for a particular job. Goldstein and Ford (2002), have defined training as a systematic approach to learning and development which aims at improving individual learning and organizational effectiveness. Aguinis and Kraiger (2009) have argued that training not only leads to benefit for individuals and their teams but also leads to the economic growth of the nation.

With the advent of technology, various technological breakthrough have happened in the arena of interpersonal communication. Aguinis and Pierce (2008) while doing their research on performance management and organizational behaviour have observed that due to easy availability of mediums such as internet, which are cheaper and faster, human resource management and training initiatives have taken a global shape in the form of e-learning. Several organizations took advantages of it and have started using the concept of blended learning, where the learner could have a classroom learning to be followed up with virtual learning instructions or vice versa.

Though e-learning has several advantages over the traditional methods of learning such as, wider

activities are going to exist in future along with the traditional classroom instructions and therefore contents need to be updated to incorporate principles of adult learnings for making them suitable for online instructions.

**KEY WORDS:** Training and development activities, e-learning, blended learning, Malcom Knowles, Principles of adult learning.

any change in their job profile, policy modifications or any change in the existing technological practices. This not only results into a competent employee but also a motivated one, leading into better employee engagement. (Applebaum, Bailey, Berg & Kalleberg (2000). These findings have further been supported by Obeidat, Masa'dehabd Abdullah in their study on the relationship among human resource practices, organizational commitment and knowledge management process (2004).

participation, immediate feedback and assessment and increased opportunity of interaction, it also has its own drawbacks like loss of interest, dropouts, lack of interaction in case of asynchronous learning. (Hoic-Bozic, Mornar and Boticki, 2007)).

For addressing those problems, the concept of **blended learning** was introduced for effective learning with the help of technology. In this methodology, face to face interaction became less, study materials being delivered to participants in their mails. This further facilitated learning once they came back to the classroom.

Blended learning is learning based on use of different mediums, such as, face to face lectures, internet, use of technology to create an efficient learning environment. It consists of online and offline learning, delivery of content through internet, individual or group learning and synchronous and asynchronous interactions. (Bersin, 2004)

### BACKGROUND:

Though learning and development activities became the core area of human resource development practices in private organizations and other public sector undertakings, it remain a neglected area in the government sector.

In the initial phases, that is the pre- independence period, the training and learning activities were not organized for the lower cadre officials but for officers there was a structured training program in the beginning of their career to make them aware about the various existing laws and their applications in public life. In this context, British can be credited for laying the foundation of modern bureaucracy. However, post-independence, the focus of

governance became the common welfare of the people instead of helping in perpetuation of British rule in India.

Bureaucracy was assigned the job to implement the policies of the government to fulfil the aspirations of people of a newly independent nation and accordingly various recommendations were made periodically to make it more sensitive and responsive towards the requirements of common masses. Some of the initiatives are, Gorawala Report (1950,) Recommendations of Iyengar Committee (1952), Krishnamachari Report (1962), Recommendations of First Administrative Reforms commission and recommendations by L. K. Jha committee. It was this committee which came out with the idea of administrative reforms through training as a new concept.

With the introduction of New Economic Policy and decentralization of power through the 73rd and 74th amendments in the laws related to Panchayati Raj institutions and Urban Local bodies, it was realised that to implement these policies and make the administration more responsive, the bureaucracy needs to be sensitized towards the changed realities. Accordingly, Department of Personnel & Training (DOPT) was named as the co-ordinating agency of the central government in this regard. National Training Policy, 1996, was announced which comprised of a set of operational guidelines for developing the human resource of the various government departments. It was considered that the training was one of the effective tool for performance enhancement through development of relevant knowledge and skills and improving the overall administrative culture in the governance process, through focussing on responsiveness, commitment, accountability and infusion of scientific temper. The earlier notion of expenditure of training is a wasteful expenditure was junked and for the first time requirement for training for all the cadres of all the departments were recognised and slogan of “Training for All” was coined. A well trained employee was now considered as an asset.

After a decade, again it was realised that adequate reforms are required in view of the changed policies of governance such as focus on transparency and Right to Information, speedy disposal of public grievances and citizen centric approach. Accordingly second Administrative Reforms Commission was constituted in 2005, which submitted its report between 2006 to 2009 in 15 parts. Apart from regular administrative reforms related to recruitment, compensation, performance management it put emphasis on learning and development and suggested that this process may be made mandatory while doing appraisals of the government servants. Its main focus was to provide framework for ethical governance and complete

accountability. In view of its recommendations, DOPT announced National Training Policy, 2012. Government of India was able to get financial and help from United Nation Development Programme (UNDP), for implementing this ambitious programme.

This policy apart from addressing the training requirements emerging out of the recommendations of the Second Administrative Reforms Commission also laid emphasis on the use of distance and e-learning methods for large number of civil servants, spread all over the country along with regular classroom training method. It talked of facilitating the availability of learning materials on e-portals or other modes of distance learning. Best practices being followed in the international arena may be followed in this regard.

Apart from dedicated professional training bodies for different services, there are 24 state administrative training institutes and a large number of regional training institutes pertaining to several departments of the government. Under supervision of DOPT, a detailed trainers' development programme was conceptualized, so that a pool of well qualified trainers could be developed to carry out training and learning activities in the various government training institutes. These qualified trainers were supposed to inculcate the required knowledge, skill and attitude, so that not only quality of performance improves but also motivates the trainees to develop a culture of life-long learning. This programme started in early 1990s in collaboration with Thames Valley University, UK. Subsequently, indigenous practices evolved and became an integral part of these programmes.

### **Context of Present Study:**

Information and communication technology (ICT), has become an integral part of training and development activities in the recent times. The challenge is to innovate appropriate pedagogic methods for facilitating learning through the use of modern technology. Use of technology has helped in training large manpower at the same time with use of audio-visual facilities and internet. Merriam, Caffarella and Baumgartner (2007), have in fact observed in their study that online learning has emerged as a widely accepted and recognized system of learning and has become very popular in the recent times. In view of Allen and Seaman (2005), discuss that online platform provide various options to learners in the form of blended learning or fully online course and short modules at self-paced learning.

However, such breakthroughs failed to make much inroads into the government training sector. Training and development activities continued to be carried out in

traditional physical mode and very few technological interventions were introduced in this area. Technology is being used for management of training activities but for imparting training, classroom mode has been much preferred method. Suddenly, came the Novel Coronavirus pandemic and there is a lockdown. Resuming work in an office set up became a challenge for both employers and employees, it was particularly difficult for the training institutes, where lots of courses were being conducted and hundreds of trainees were participating on every single day.

We all are aware of the fact that come what may, the regular normal activities cannot be postponed indefinitely, hence workplaces have started to re-open, but in a different manner. Employees started working from home and official activities resumed. It became a challenge for training institutes to resume their learning and developmental activities. However, technology came to their rescue and online training / instructions started through various digital platforms as an experiment. Since these mode of instructions were not encouraged earlier, initially it was a novelty for both trainers and trainees. In course of time, it rather became convenient for trainers to impart training from the comfort of their homes or offices to employees.

More than six months have passed, since such interventions have been introduced and use of these modes, for the first time in the government sector, would make for an interesting area of study. To what extent these training programs have been successful in achieving their objectives, and up to what extent they have been able to equip the trainees with necessary knowledge and skills required for their job.

Imparting knowledge through online modes is possible but training people in skills is a challenge, and especially from a distance, as per principles of andragogy, where the form of learning should be mainly experiential for the greatest effectiveness. Therefore, some of the main focus areas of my study would be on the experiences of faculty members and trainers; how they coped with the challenge, the problems they faced, and the ways they overcame them. This study could also ascertain how the outcomes of these training programs are going to affect the training modalities in future.

### STUDY GAP:

While going through the available literature, it can be noticed that online learning has been termed as the future of learning process. As it provides flexibility of time and space for the learners, is cost effective and learning can be

done at learners' pace. However very few studies have been so far conducted on the efficacy of these courses. Ramayah, Ahmed and Hong (2012) have done their study on e-training in multinational companies in Malaysia. They studied variables like motivation to learn, management and organizational support, self-efficacy, ease of use and content. While they studied the relevance of content but they did not examine its suitability for adult learners. Further there are hardly any empirical studies available about the use of principles of adult learning in development of online content.

### RESEARCH QUESTIONS:

1. Which principles of adult learning are being used while imparting training by the trainers?
2. To what extent these trainings have been effective in achieving its objectives?
3. What would be the future of these online trainings when the pandemic would be over?

### CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK:

While designing the training programmes, in the government institutes, the trainers were encouraged to focus on the methodologies and content which are in consonance with the ideas of adult learning. For this purpose they are required to get themselves familiarised with the concepts of adult learning such as 'facilitated learning' by Malcolm Knowles and 'experiential learning' by David Kolbe. In fact the entire content of trainers' development Program by DoPT is primarily based on the philosophy of Knowles and Kolbe.

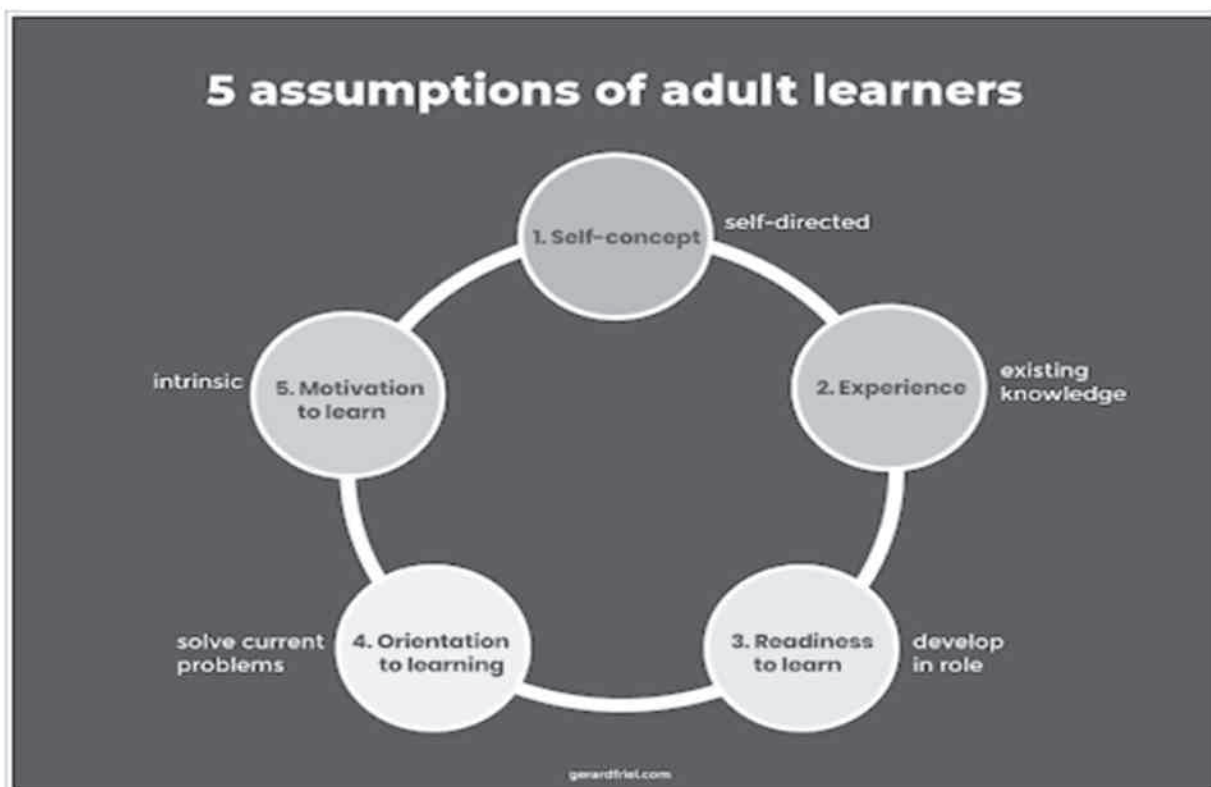
Though concept of andragogy was coined by Alexander Kapp in 1833, it came into prominence due to Malcolm Knowles. He is an American theorist and is one of the greatest pioneers of adult learning in the decades of 1970s. He defined andragogy ( adult learning) as the "art and science of helping adults learn." He identified mainly six principles of adult learning to be utilized, when interacting with the adults for educational purposes. These principles are, adults are generally independent and motivated to learn, they bring with themselves a repository of knowledge and experiences, they have a goal while learning something, they seek relevance and practicality of ideas being discussed with, involvement of all the senses in the learning process and lastly, they want to be treated with respect. He observes, "Adults should be aware of the need to learn, to recognize the opportunity to learn from all life situations and the richest resource for learning resides in themselves." ( Knowles, M., 1973 ) He was of the view that the learning for the adults should be under their control and focussed more on hands on training or in other words



learning by doing. He conceived of five assumptions which should be the basis for any adult learning program- self-

concept, learning experience, eagerness to learn, problem centric learning and self-motivated learning.

**Chart 1: 5 Assumptions of Adult Learners, as per Gerard Friel**

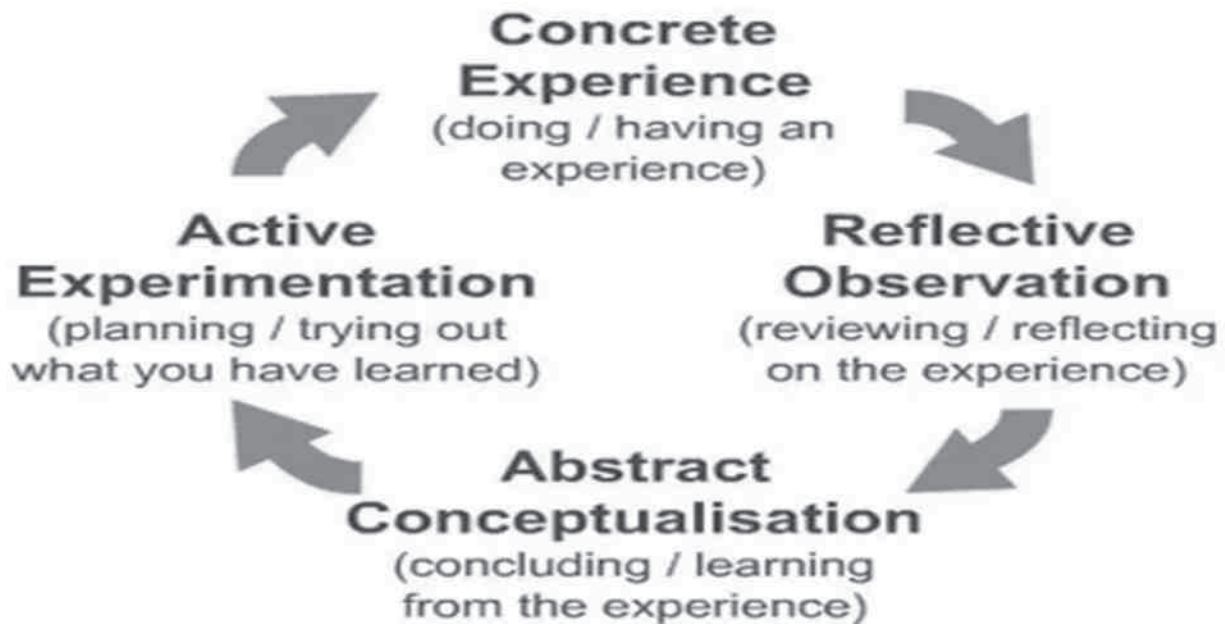


Source: Gerard Friel (Website) <http://www.gerardfriel.com/instructional-design/adult-learning/>

David Kolbe is another important adult learning theorists from 1980s, who has been discussed at large while imparting training to the designers for preparing design and content to make it more meaningful and relevant for the adult learners. He defined learning as a process in which knowledge is achieved through the transformation of experience. It is a departure from the cognitive and behavioural theories and takes a holistic approach towards learning. He proposed that adult learning would be more

effective, in cases where they are directly involved in the learning process than merely receiving knowledge in the form of a class room lecture. He further talked about the experiential learning cycle consisting of four stages. Concrete experience, reflective observation. Abstract conceptualization and active experimentation.

**Figure 2: Learning Cycle as conceptualised by David Kolbe**



Source: Kolbe, 1984, published on Simply Psychology by Saul McLeod, 2017.

<https://www.simplypsychology.org/learning-kolb.html>

As per Tainsh (2016) for making the online courses effective, they should be consciously designed on the basis of effective adult learning tools and assumptions. In his study he has tried to explore the relationship between the six assumptions of adult learning of Knowles and the contents of online learning courses. In his outcome he has very emphatically suggested that to make the online contents effective one should must take care of the six assumptions of adult learning. While going through the earlier papers related to adult learning, it was noticed that it was framework provided by Knowles, used most frequently in context of development of content for adult learning.

In view of the above discussion, it would be appropriate that the questionnaire for assessing the impact of on line training programs should be based on the framework provided by Knowles and Kolbe, as these theoretical frameworks are the most widely relied upon, while developing content for the adult learners. Moreover, these concepts have been the guiding principles for government trainers in preparation of course contents from the beginning itself.

While formulating the questionnaire, the assumptions of both Knowles and Kolbe have been taken into account to determine the relevance and effectiveness of content and methodologies used for interacting with the adult learners.

#### **OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY:**

In view of the above description the objectives of the study are being proposed as under:

To explain whether the principles of adult learning is being used while imparting training by the trainers

To discuss the effectiveness of these trainings in achieving its objectives.

#### **METHODOLOGY:**

The present study is descriptive in nature and it explains the application of principles of adult learning as propagated by Malcom Knowles and David Kolb as different variables and in the online training programs and the effectiveness of such programs. The variables have already been defined and the study will attempt to analyse its applications and implications on the effectiveness of the online training programs.

Study is based on primary data collected from the trainers who are engaged in online training programs, especially during the pandemic. A Well-defined questionnaire was used for the study.

### HYPOTHESIS:

On the basis of the above discussion following hypotheses are being proposed to be studied:

To ascertain whether principles of adult learning is being used while imparting training by the trainers.

To examine the effectiveness of these trainings in achieving its objectives.

### SAMPLE:

The trainers across India, engaged in online training are the population. The respondents were picked up as samples

from the Directory of trainers available with various training institutes. Purposive sampling method has been used for selection of such samples. Around 75 questionnaires were mailed, out of which 53 responses complete in all aspects have been considered for this study.

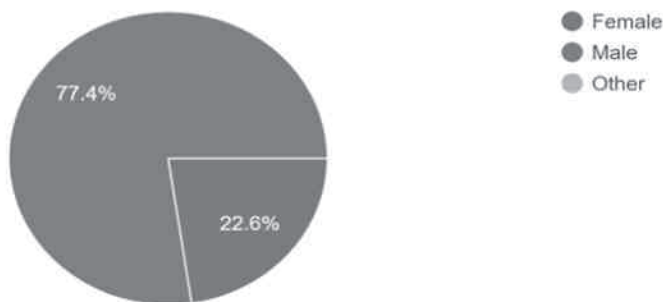
Analysis of variance and geographical analysis along with graphical representation have been used for analysing this data.

### DATAANALYSIS:

To have an understanding of the online training methodologies being used and its impact on learning and development activities, data was collected and analysed. Out of 53 respondents, 77.4% are males and 22.6% are females.(Chart 3)

Chart3: Composition of Sex.

Sex  
53 responses



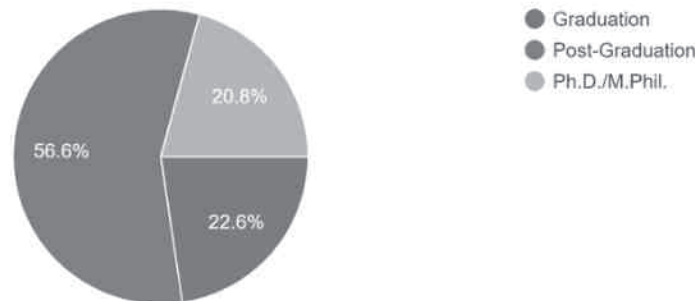
Source: Questionnaire Sent to Respondents

22.6% of the respondents are graduates, 56.6% are post-graduates and 22.6 are having degrees of M. Phil./ PhD.

(Chart 4)

**Chart4: Composition of Educational Qualification Among Respondents**

Educational Qualification:  
53 responses



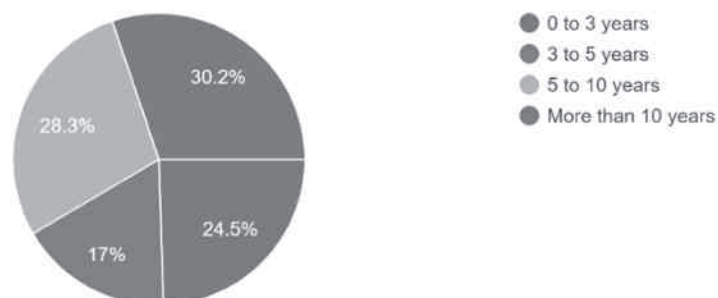
Source: Questionnaire Sent to Respondents

All the respondents have been trainers in various institutes for some time to gain substantial experience in this area. On analysis of data, it is seen that, 24.5% have experience up to

3 years, 17% have up to 5 years, 28.3% have up to 10 years and 30.2% have experience of more than 10 years of imparting training to the government employees. (Chart 5)

**Chart5: Duration of Association with Training Activities of Respondents**

How long you have been associated with training activities?  
53 responses



Source: Questionnaire Sent to Respondents



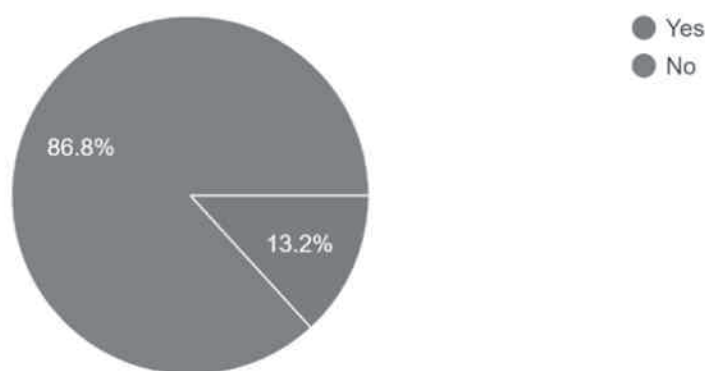
As discussed earlier, these trainers have experience of substantial amount of time still data related to imparting on-line training is shows that majority of them are not using the e-learning facilities. 86.8% of the respondents that before pandemic they have been mostly using the

traditional classroom and face to face interaction for training purposes, only 13.2% responded that earlier also they were using some on-line methodologies for learning interactions.(Chart 6)

**Chart6: Experience of Imparting Online Training by the Respondents**

Had you been imparting on-line training before the pandemic?

53 responses



Source: Questionnaire Sent to Respondents

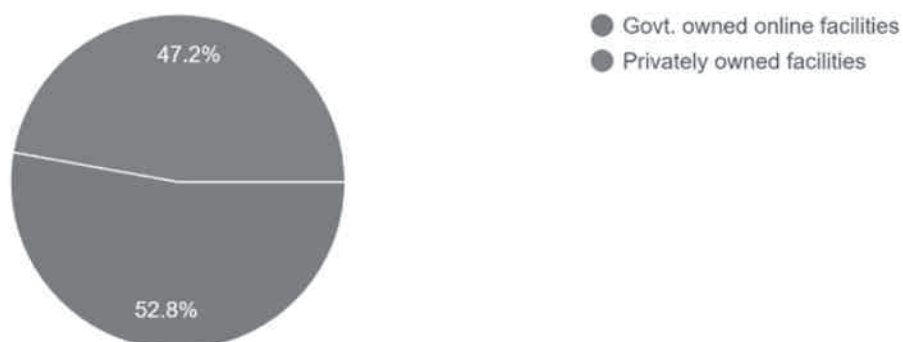
Since large number of trainers stated that they have not been using the on-line methodologies for instruction, it was necessary to ascertain whether appropriate infrastructural facilities were in place or not. In view of uncertainty about the duration of pandemic, DOPT, the regulatory authority for training programs for government employees, instructed that training activities may be conducted online. It was various government authorities which were working day and night during this period and certainly needed

regular updating of their knowledge and skills, when country needed their services. It was surprising to note that 52.8% of respondents informed that they have been using government owned online facilities for providing training and 47.2% said that they have been using private on-line platforms for this purposes. (Chart 6) This shows that government has recognized the advantages of online learning and has been moving in that direction, it just required some momentum in that direction.

**Chart7: Composition of Various Digital Platforms used by the Respondents**

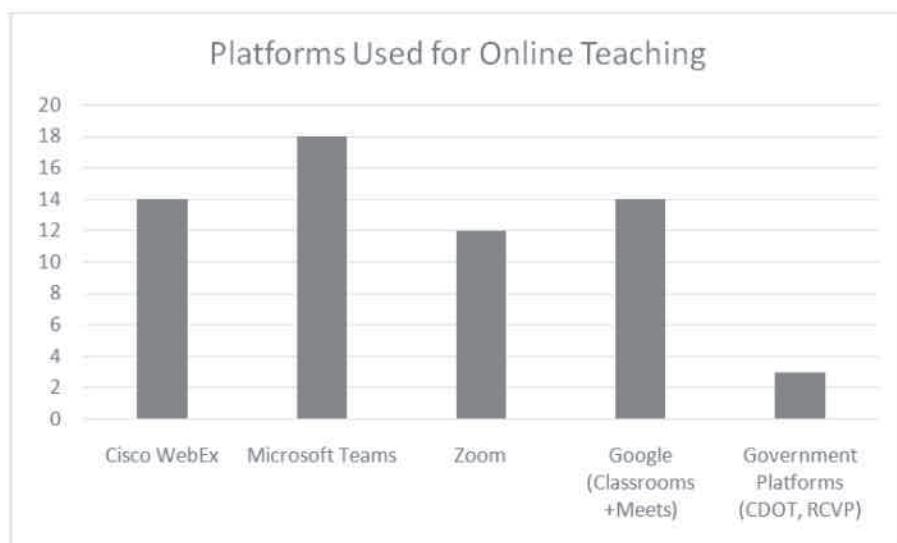
Which mediums are being used by you for providing online training?

53 responses



Source: Questionnaire Sent to Respondents

**Chart8: Share of Different Digital Platforms for Imparting Training by the Respondents**



Source: Questionnaire Sent to Respondents

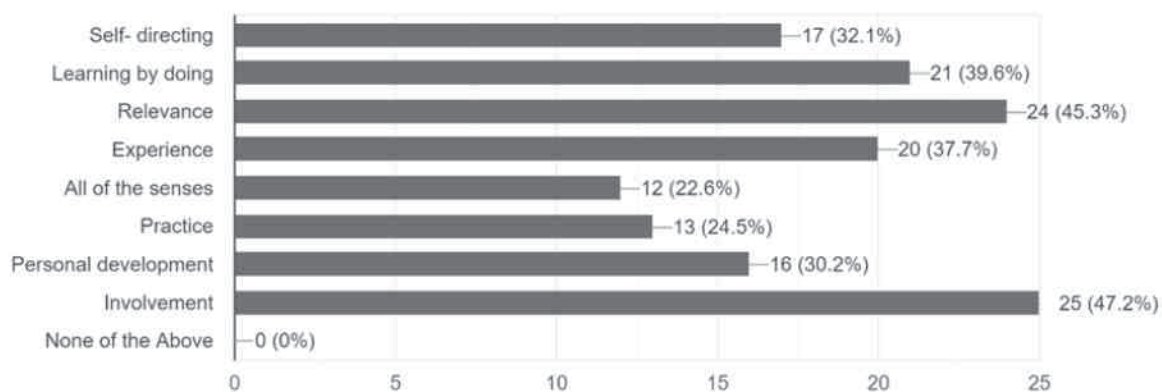
It is an anomaly that in the previous paragraph, the trainers responded that around 47.2% used government owned online facilities but when subsequently asked to specify the name of the platforms for imparting training an overwhelming majority replied that they used private platforms like Cisco WebEx, Microsoft Teams, Zoom,

Google Classroom Meets, only a miniscule minority (2.5%) had government owned platforms. It shows that while basic infrastructure for conducting online classes is in place, within the government institutions, there is non-availability of medium for last mile connect.

**Chart 9: Various Principles of Adult Learning Utilized by the Respondents While Imparting Training**

Since training activities are mainly associated with adult learning, please specify which principles of adult learning are being utilized by you for providing training.

53 responses



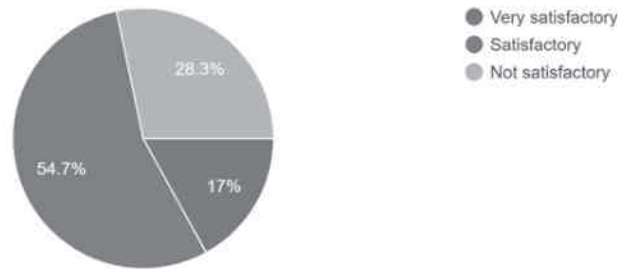
Source: Questionnaire Sent to Respondents

As discussed in Chart 10, the theories related to adult learning of Malcolm Knowles and David Kolbe became the basis for designing the training and suggesting methodologies for imparting training, the respondents were asked which principles of adult learning they have been able to incorporate, while imparting training. The six principles espoused by Knowles were used as criteria to assess this aspect of training. Though the trainers have been successful in using the criteria of relevance, involvement, learning by doing to some extent, 45.3%, 47.2% and 39.6% respectively but the data does not reach even 50% of limit.

The trainers have rated the principles of personal development, use of all the senses for learning and experiences, have not been able to apply while the training programs were in progress. It shows that the basic principles to be applied while designing and imparting trainings to the government employees have not been put to use in the practical sense and the process of learning and development process must have not been as effective as in face to face situations. This phenomenon becomes self-explanatory, when the question related to effectiveness of training program was asked.

**Chart 10: Composition of the Experiences Regarding Outcomes of Online Instruction Among Respondents**

How has your experience been regarding outcomes of such online instruction?  
53 responses



Source: Questionnaire Sent to Respondents

In response to the query related to assessment of effectiveness of online training, respondents are of the view that outcome has been 17% very satisfactory, 54.7%

satisfactory and 28.3% found it non satisfactory. Here also we find that the programs have not been able to achieve their purpose.

**Chart 11: Composition of Perception of Future of Online Training Among Respondents**

How do you perceive the future of online training?  
53 responses



Source: Questionnaire Sent to Respondents

On the basis of their current and previous experiences, respondents were asked to visualize the future of online training programs. Only 3.8% were of the view that online training only can be used in future, 13.2% said online training is not effective at all, while 83% of the respondents are of the view that a hybrid method (blended learning methods) could be used for future.

## DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION:

Training interventions in the government sector has become a very significant part of the careers of the government employees. As per the National Training Policy, 2012, induction and orientation trainings have been made compulsory for all the employees in service. Apart from that to encourage learning in between the concept of mid-career training and various in-service courses have been made available to the employees for their professional as well as personal growth. While doing this study various national and state level training institutes were contacted and they conveyed that thousands of training programs are being conducted every year for the benefit of employees. It is also been seen from the above analysis that the status of online training before pandemic was not very encouraging, however with all the constraints and lack of experience in this area, with 54.7% effectivity we can safely ascertain that the future of online learning is bright in government sector. An overwhelming majority of 83% of respondents have voted in the favour of hybrid or blended learning as the future preferred mode of training.

Government has certainly been aware of this fact and has already launched Integrated Government Online Training Program(i-GOT) platform in 2019, for training under supervision of DOPT. The main aim of the platform is to provide opportunities for learning to a large number of civil servants working all over the country. Latest technologies would be used to facilitate learning by making available vast learning resources through MOOCs mechanism. Module related to Covid-19 and handling of situation arising out of its several ramifications has been one of the most successful course of this newly launched platform.

Apart from that educational initiatives like SWAYAM and National Program on Technology Enhanced Learning(NPTEL) by Ministry of Human Resource Development, Government of India, have also been made available to the government employees for further learning and development, these courses can be done at self-pace learning and are interactive and help of top academicians have been taken while preparing their content to make it competitive at the level of various MOOCs, like Coursera, Udemor or EdX.

NPTEL was founded in 2003 by seven Indian Institutes of

Technology and Indian Institutes of Sciences. It is one of the largest online repository of the world of courses in engineering, basic sciences and selected humanities and social sciences. At present it is one of the most subscribed educational channels with 1.5 million subscriptions and 819 million views.

SWAYAM is program initiated by the government of India, designed to achieve the three cardinal principles of existing education policy- access, equity and quality. Launched in 2017, it offers over 2150 courses and so far over 10 million have taken courses.

In the conclusion, it can be said that continuance of learning and developmental activities was a formidable challenge before the government organizations in view of the constraints imposed by the pandemic. But it is equally true and worth appreciating that in the given constraints of time and space, the trainers have given a praiseworthy performance and provided a solid base for future build-up in this area. Further efforts in the area would help in fulfilling the aim of 'training for all' of National Training Policy, 2012, in lesser cost and wider outreach. With use of blended learning, as also suggested by the trainers themselves, as the preferred mode of training in future, government is surely going to create an amicable environment for learning and development for its employees.

## SUGGESTIONS:

Analysis and study of data related to effectiveness of online training reveals many insights which can be used for formulating policies and making training more relevant effective in future.

Development of infrastructural facilities, such as organizational platforms for last minute connectivity can be done instead of using private platforms. Private platforms have their own limitations as certain sensitive government data or information could be used by the agencies for training purposes and it will lose its confidentiality.

Trainers need to be trained further for adapting to the emerging technology to use it in an efficient manner to make the learning experience more meaningful. Along with training in pedagogical aspect of innovative training methodologies, they also need to be trained about the technological aspects of it.

It is also suggested that research in the area of developing relevant content should be made to ensure that the principles of adult learning are incorporated, so that the participants find it engaging and relevant for their professional and personal development. May be it should



be made commensurate with the concept of blended learning.

Equally true and worth appreciating that in the given constraints of time and space, the trainers have given a praiseworthy performance and provided a solid base for future build-up in this area. Further efforts in the area would be required.

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